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Voice of Humanity: Sufficiency Currency

The Sufficiency Currency Project seeks to create the infrastructure for a sustainable economy based on an alternative currency system that would work for coordinating regenerative projects such as permaculture, ecovillages and urban commons. The existing monetary system doesn't map well onto the regenerative economy, so the Sufficiency Currency Project is designing economic signaling systems that align with the values and goals of the regenerative movement.

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Background

Regenerative agriculture, cooperatives, permaculture, intentional communities and urban commons are providing alternative ways for people to live together. Concerns about ecological disaster and the recent loss of jobs due to the pandemic have spawned an increase in people's need for an alternative form of economy and sustenance. The thousands of existing and successful projects have proven the potential for a regenerative economy and alternative ways of living, yet, these projects remain loosely associated or isolated. The lack of coordination reduces the impact and power of these projects, and makes it difficult for people to join them, even when there is a desire for people to do so.

In the greater economy, signaling systems include our national and international legal structures, civil societies, and, predominantly, the financial and monetary system. Similarly, to become an effective global movement, the regenerative economy requires signaling systems that allow coordination.

The monetary system allows large-scale international coordination and collaboration. However, as a store of value, money doesn't represent the "value" of concern to the regenerative and peer-to-peer movement. Therefore, to coordinate effectively, these communities require an alternative to money that represents their values, enabling large-scale coordination and collaboration. The Sufficiency Currency Project aims to create an alternative to money as one of the coordination mechanisms required for regenerative projects to communicate effectively among one another.

Purpose

The first year program of the Sufficiency Currency project seeks to address the following two challenges:

- What are the protocols that connect the regenerative and peer-to-peer movements into a cohesive and interoperable economic and political system?
- How can we make it as easy as possible for people to transition from the default economic model to the regenerative and peer-to-peer models if they wish to do so?

This paper outlines a Minimum Viable Product designed to address these challenges.

Challenge

For more than four decades, alternative currencies such as mutual credit, hour banks, complementary currencies and—most recently—cryptocurrencies, have been looking to revolutionize how humans transact. Yet, despite these many attempts, something fundamental has never changed: we still live in a fundamentally scarcity-based monetary system, we have not reached greater equality among human beings, financial systems are fundamentally extractive and the main economic measure for nation-states is GDP growth.

Fundamentally underlying this problem is the structural convention we call money, and what money represents. Most of us have used money for so long, it's almost as if money is a natural construct—but it is not. Money is a form of communication and coordination—a very powerful form of communication and coordination that has allowed humans to coordinate very large-scale projects and develop technologies. Yet it has created externalities that have placed

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humanity in an existential crisis that can't be resolved through monetary calculations. A new convention for communication and coordination is needed.

We have been educated that money is a store of value, yet, if we pause for a moment, we notice that money doesn't encompass much of what people value: relationships, oxygen, clean water, freedom, time, creativity and interaction. In fact, it has become a tool of separation, bondage, and pollution to our water and air. If money is simply a social construct, couldn't we construct something new?

This paper discusses the concept of sufficiency currencies and suggests a prototype that could be implemented across a number of communities to test and refine its deployment. For the purposes of this paper, a "currency" is defined as any visible current—any measure that the group wants to make visible.

Form follows function

When designing a currency, the first question to ask is: what is the purpose of the currency?

The goal of the Sufficiency Currency is simple: **to care for as many as people as possible with the resources of a group of communities.**

If successful, this currency would bring more and more people and communities into the Sufficiency Currency economy. That is, growth is not individual or monetary, but only measured by the outcome of people who have food, shelter and safety.

What would that currency look like?

Elements of the Sufficiency Currency

The Sufficiency Currency would have three measures: sufficiency, carrying capacity and reputation. The initial design of the currency would be to provide food, shelter, human relationships, power, work tools, hygiene, education, internet and shelter.

Other provisions such as clothing, health, personal growth, etc., will be to the discretion of individual communities. The first priority for the Sufficiency Currency will be to bring more people into communities where they can enjoy the benefits of a decent live. Over time, the currency can move certain items from "wants" to "needs" as the economy becomes stronger.

As such, the currencies that would be measured

- **Sufficiency** is a community or individual-based measure of what an individual or community needs for sustenance. Do all members have the shelter, food, electricity, supplies you need to perform your function in the society? The movement might include people in the city who do IT services and some hydroponics as well as people in ecovillages who have more food generation capacity but need IT or hardware "maker" services. Every individual and group can broadcast their needs and offers, so that the movement as a whole can communicate and trade within the group. You don't need "money" to barter because the digital platform would make the matches, and the basis is sufficiency. If you are in good standing, and you have a need the community can fulfill, the community fulfills it. If the community can't make all people's needs, the community brainstorms how to fulfill the needs.

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- **Carrying capacity:** The movement as a whole would have to have measures of its carrying capacity in terms of available capacity to have people join the movement. The carrying capacity may come with conditions. For example, an agricultural community might be able to absorb 10 new people as long as 50% of them are able-bodied workers on the farm. The movement as a whole might identify that in the winter of 2022, they are going to need more grains than they can harvest in Spain and the community cannot provide that, so they will need €5,00 in resources to feed everybody this winter. Another example could be a community in Italy may be able to identify land the government wishes to have rehabilitated/repopulated and they don't need money but they do need a lawyer, permaculture education, and 4 families with EU passports to commit to living there. Etc.
- **Reputation** would start as a basic "good standing" certificate and develop into a multi-dimensional currency that would represent key values and talents an individual brings to a community. This might include emotional intelligence, professional skills and values. Communities could welcome members and guests based on these skills and values. Initially, every community would issue a "certificate of good standing" to each of its members. This certificate represents you have done sufficient work to be taken care of by the communities movement. Each village might have a different standard, or if you are the truck driver who goes between communities, your reputation would be measured in a certain number of deliveries per month. If you are in good standing, you can use the resources of any community in the network. So the truck driver can expect to be hosted, fed and offered whatever community services are available when they make a delivery.

The Sufficiency Currency doesn't give visibility to individual wealth, though in most communities, individuals may also have monetary currencies of individual wealth or accumulations in hour banks or mutual credit. In the Sufficiency environment, nobody is trying to make a profit, just increase the capacity of the movement to take in new people and regenerate the earth. We give freely to increase our capacity to get more humans inside the movement and regenerate the earth, so we can have fewer people starving and suffering. By joining the movement, you are 'insured' because you will be taken care of in your retirement by the community and your children will be cared for inside the community if something happens to you—therefore hoarding is no longer a requirement to ensure your long-term security.

The use of a Sufficiency Currency means each community does need to make decisions about the quality of life they want versus their capacity to bring in more people. For example, they may need to work harder or live in smaller housing units to adopt more people into the community. They may decide they can offer reiki or a massage freely to all community members. At first, communities will be brought in if they align with the values of the other communities, through a manual consensus mechanism (discussion). As the system develops, the reputation currency will develop such that communities can assess one another individually on the basis of values, and decide whether a "good standing" reputation in a particular community maps onto their values system.

Conceptual Use Case

The illustration below shows conceptually how rural intentional communities and urban commons' can potentially work together in a sufficiency economy. The rural economy provides foods, retreats, and crafts. The Urban commons provides a storefront or café to sell these items, as well as technical and software services, and possibly even a few extra hands at harvest times. All of the locations provide education—though presumably different types of education in each place, depending on the expertise of the residents.



Since it's unlikely the community can be fully self-sufficient, cash is still one of the needs of the community, and each community will have its own group decisions about how much income people should contribute to be in good standing in the community. Also, when there are community projects or needs, each individual does have the autonomy to decide to give more, based on their values. At particularly difficult times, people may choose to give more, or as the community provides more of the person's needs, the person may choose to contribute more. Temporary or trial members would have different obligations than permanent members in communities.

Product Specification

The Currency software for the initial implementation will primarily be used by community organizers. Each individual will need (ultimately) to have a personal app, but given the size of intentional communities today (generally 10-100), most communities will have one manager or a small group of community managers who know what is happening with all community members and can represent the needs and capacity on behalf of the community. This also has the advantage of shifting people's thinking from individual to community, and allowing people's contribution to be assessed in light of the community needs.

Dashboard

The community dashboard would show the activity of the community in terms of the community growth, participation in the platform itself, needs that are met versus needs that had to be met using cash, surplus and gaps, and the capacity of the community. The dashboard is designed to manage the health of the system as a whole.

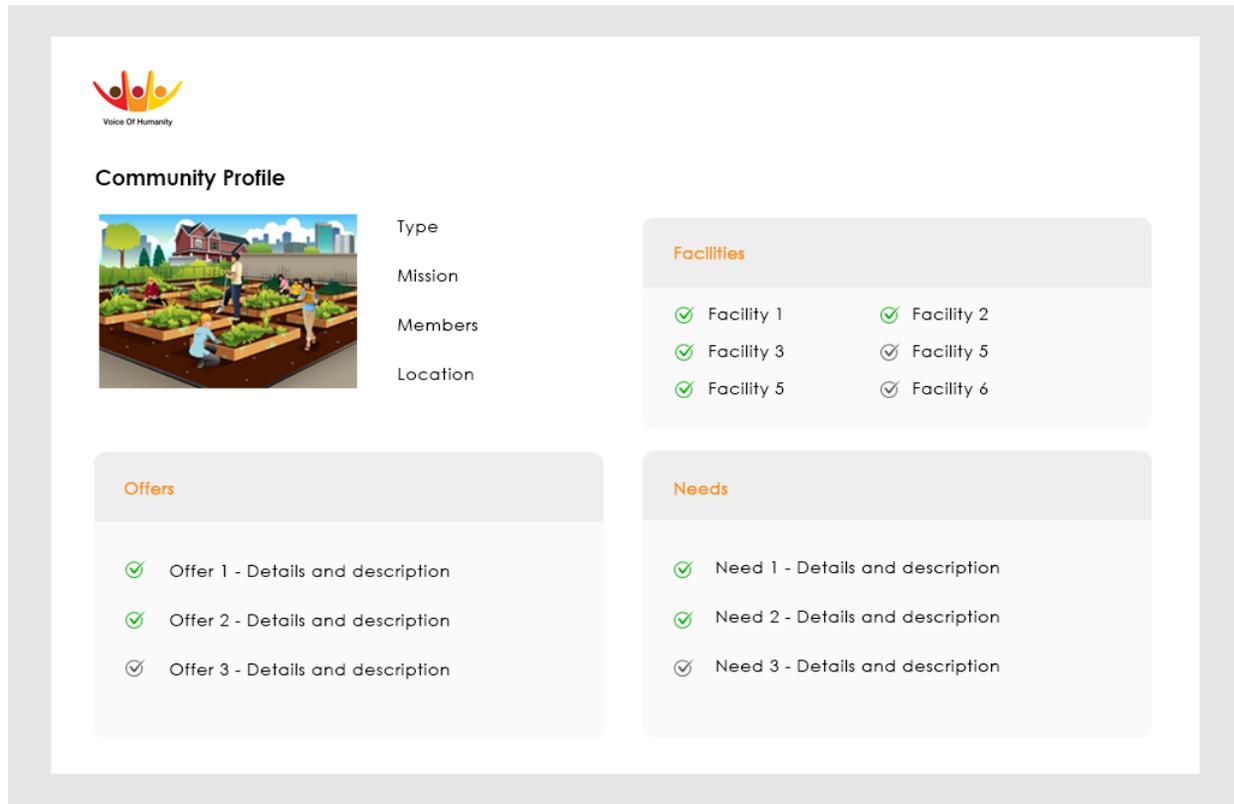


Community Interfaces

The Community Profile screen allows each community to give an overview of their community and community values, their general needs and capabilities to give, and specific lists of their

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open offers and needs. The future iterations will go deeper into values, so that communities can make their own decisions based on who they want to interact with.



Community Profile

Type

Mission

Members

Location

Offers

- Offer 1 - Details and description
- Offer 2 - Details and description
- Offer 3 - Details and description

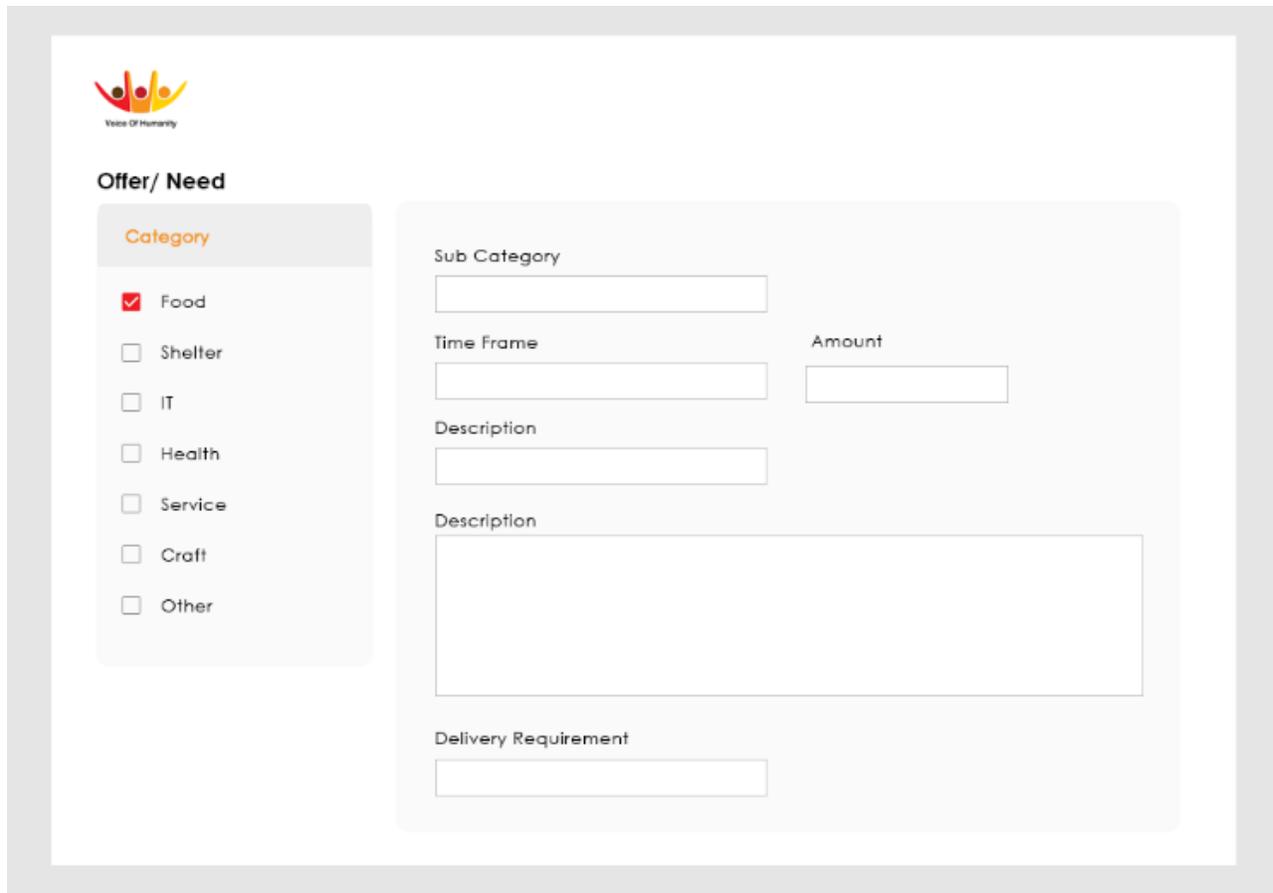
Facilities

- Facility 1
- Facility 2
- Facility 3
- Facility 5
- Facility 5
- Facility 6

Needs

- Need 1 - Details and description
- Need 2 - Details and description
- Need 3 - Details and description

To register a specific offer or need, the community manager fills in the Offer/Need form. The offers and needs are in specific categories. Categories allow communities to meet their needs, for example, while someone might prefer potatoes, they can get corn. An electrician might also be able to provide other building improvement services in a pinch.



The screenshot shows a web form titled "Offer/ Need" with the Voice of Humanity logo in the top left. On the left side, there is a "Category" list with the following items: Food (checked), Shelter, IT, Health, Service, Craft, and Other. The main form area contains several input fields: "Sub Category" (a single-line text box), "Time Frame" (a single-line text box) and "Amount" (a single-line text box) positioned side-by-side, "Description" (a single-line text box), "Description" (a large multi-line text area), and "Delivery Requirement" (a single-line text box).

The delivery requirements are also included, so people can match needs to locations that can serve one another. In the initial implementation, we will choose communities with proximity so they will all be relevant, and in the future geolocation capabilities will be able to make more efficient matching.

Every community member will also have an identification to indicate they are in good standing. The standing of members will initially be reviewed manually on a quarterly basis and everyone will just have a static identity that lists their skills. Over time, we will develop more sophisticated methodologies for reputation and commitment levels for different types of participants in communities.



Member ID



Name

Community

Status: IGS
Trial
Probation

Skills: Carpentry
Permaculture
Leadership

Offers and Needs Lists

The offers and needs lists is simply a searchable marketplace or classified ad interface at first. Communities will manually need to fulfill their needs while the app collects data on how the matching is done in reality. In future iterations, the matching between needs and offers will be automated, and logistics can be built in as well.

Offers List	
Category	Category
Offer name	Offer name

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Pilot Implementation

- Recruitment of 5-10 communities within national boundaries and driving distance of one another (UK, Spain, Germany are good candidates).
- Launch session 1-2 days with community representative and app design experts.
- Iterative development process of initial app.
- Launch in 3-5 communities of the app. 2-3 day training and discussion. Group values regarding needs vs. wants, group coordination around the app, collection of individual information, discussion of collective needs and offers.
- 6 month trial and iterative feature development
- Reporting and conclusions.

One-year Budget for Pilot Implementation

Description	Month 1-3	Month 3-6	Month 6-12
Salary costs: operations	\$ 45,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 120,000
Community interaction: travel	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,000
Development costs	\$ 15,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 180,000
Marketing and documentation		\$ 10,000	\$ 71,000
	\$ 66,000	\$ 151,000	\$ 383,000
Total 1 Year Budget			\$ 600,000