

# **Balancing growth and solidarity in the Argentine community currency systems (*Redes de Trueque*)**

UNRISD, Geneva, 6-8 May 2013  
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# SSE & scale

- SSE inseparable from locality, solidarity and small-scale.
- Capitalist discourse presents SSE as inferior in terms of efficiency, rationality, universality and productivity
- So can SSE initiatives scale up? Should they?

# Questions

- In what ways do SSE scale up?
  - What are the challenges?
  - What are the gains?
  - To what extent does growth affect social cohesion and economic impact?

# SSE as exchange system

- Moulaert et al, SSE as social innovation:
  1. Institutional innovation
  2. Social justice, embeddedness, solidarity
- D. North, personal vs impersonal exchange
- Uzzi, Etzioni: small networks grow by extending trust to referred newcomers

# Research method

- Fieldwork in 2004 and 2006
- 3 cities > 1 million
- 44 exchange centres (clubes de trueque)
- Survey 368 responses (samples 10% to 15% parts)

# The Argentine RT

- Started in 1995, fiat currency after 1996
- Unit of account: credits (=1 \$ = 1 US\$)
- 2.5 M users in 2001-2002 (20% EAP).  
Fallen to 100.000 in 2006 (still largest w/w)
- Local, regional & national associations
- Majority of disenfranchised middle class

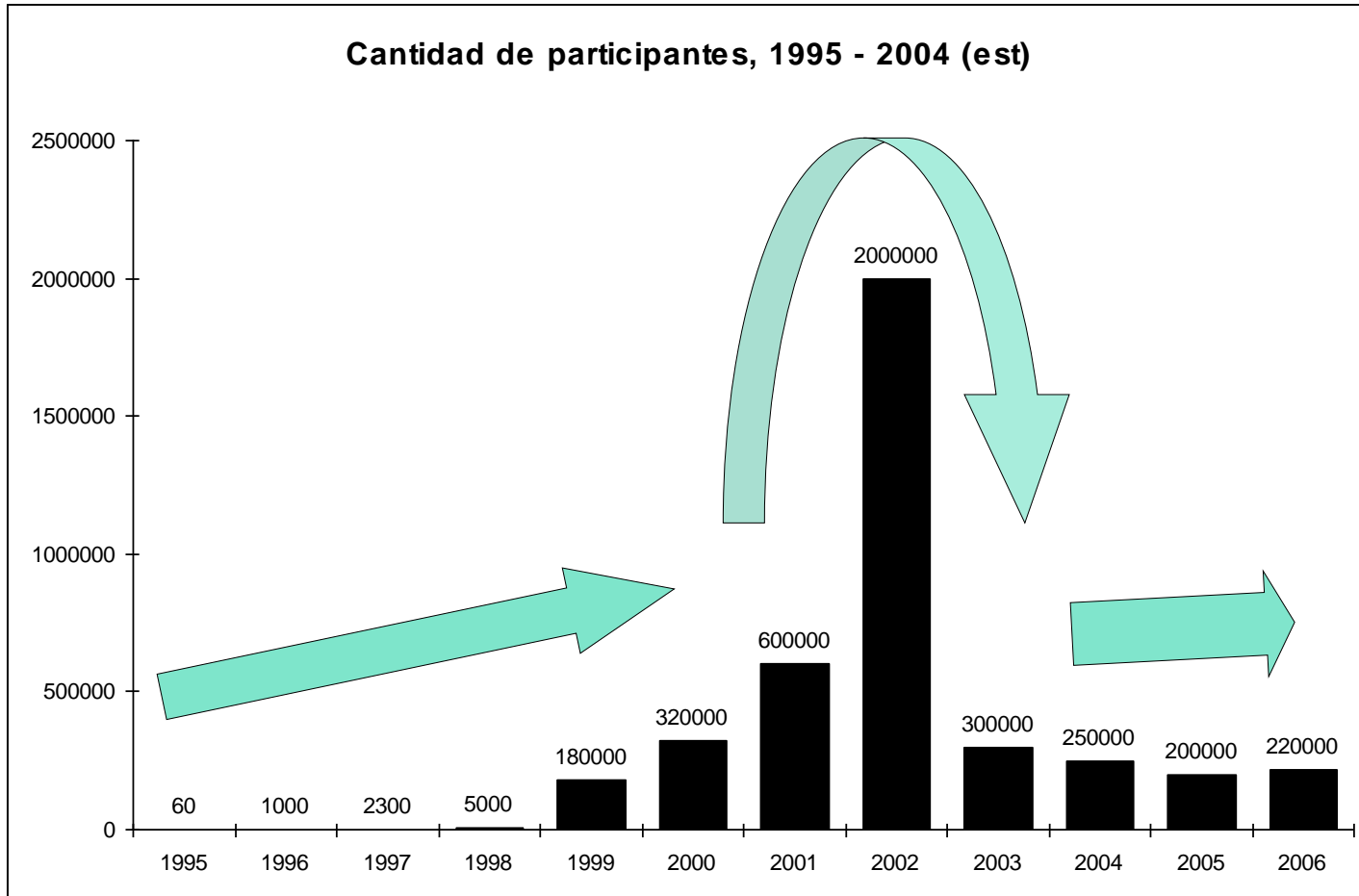








# Evolution in membership



03/05/2013

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# Original growth by referral

1. Discourse of scaling up!
2. Expansion of first CT: personal exchange
3. From one to two CTs

Interconnected

Printed vouchers

Transfer of trust by referral

# 2nd growth by institutions

## 1. From two to five CTs

Limits to transfer of trust but reputation

Assumption of solidarity

First regulations by negotiation and agreement

## 2. From five to dozens

Creation of impersonal institutions

Disputes, conflicts: institutional design threatened

Limits of solidarity and commonalities

# Necessary conditions

To scale up, SSE initiatives combine:

1. the extension of a morality of solidarity and reciprocity from old participants to newcomers
2. reputation of the leaders
3. institutional innovation on-going by negotiation and agreement