

Rethinking Economics: A Narrative Review of Reciprocity and Community-Based Exchange Systems

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ABSTRACT: This study presents a comprehensive narrative review of community-based economies and non-market exchange systems, focusing on their role in promoting resilience, inclusion, and sustainability. The review seeks to understand how practices such as complementary currencies, informal barter, and cooperative networks support economic well-being through moral and social values like reciprocity, trust, and solidarity. A systematic search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, using targeted keywords to collect empirical and theoretical studies spanning global contexts, with emphasis on marginalized, indigenous, and multiethnic communities. Findings reveal that non-market systems are not residual, but active mechanisms through which communities address inequality and institutional neglect. Case studies such as Kenya's Sarafu currency exemplify how localized financial systems can strengthen social cohesion during crises. Likewise, cooperative practices among women and multiethnic groups demonstrate the capacity of reciprocal economies to challenge systemic inequities and transform social roles. However, challenges persist, including legal ambiguities, limited state support, and global market pressures. The discussion emphasizes that sustainability of these systems depends on integrative political, legal, and economic frameworks that recognize the legitimacy of alternative economies. This review underscores the necessity of rethinking development strategies by embedding moral and relational principles into policy design. It calls for inclusive governance, adaptive legal environments, and continued research into the evolving dynamics of community economies in the digital era.

Keywords: Community-Based Economy, Non-Market Exchange, Reciprocity, Solidarity Economy, Moral Economy, Informal Cooperation, Complementary Currency.



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the discourse on alternative economic systems has gained increasing relevance as communities around the world confront the structural limitations of market-based economies. In particular, non-market economic exchanges grounded in values of solidarity, mutual assistance,

and trust have emerged as vital mechanisms for social and economic resilience, especially in local communities. These community-based economies encompass a broad range of practices, including collaborative consumption, time banking, and the sharing of goods and services without monetary compensation. Studies have shown that these forms of economic interaction are present in diverse cultural settings, from indigenous and rural populations to more developed capitalist societies (Martini & Vespasiano, 2020; Bâ et al., 2023; Hendrickson et al., 2020). As practical alternatives to the mainstream market logic, these systems foster not only economic sufficiency but also strengthen social ties and collective identity (Migliaro, 2023; Hendrickson et al., 2020).

The growing prominence of community-based economic practices reflects a broader movement toward solidarity-based models that prioritize people over profit. Evidence suggests that these practices are not marginal or residual, but central to the livelihoods of many communities, particularly those facing structural exclusions. For example, cooperatives and informal networks of resource exchange have proven effective in reducing economic uncertainties and enhancing access to vital services in marginalized populations (Rymsza, 2015; Kumbamu, 2017). In Ecuador, for instance, community-centered strategies have contributed significantly to poverty alleviation and social support mechanisms among vulnerable groups (Guerrero et al., 2021). Moreover, these inclusive local economies are often rooted in culturally specific norms of reciprocity, which not only improve material wellbeing but also promote dignity, agency, and cohesion (Kumbamu, 2017; Migliaro, 2023).

At the heart of these systems lies a set of shared social values that reflect the collective orientation of community members. The readiness of individuals to participate in non-market exchanges stems from culturally embedded norms of mutual care, which serve as critical resources in environments where access to formal markets is restricted. Community-driven initiatives thus operate as alternative infrastructures of resilience, enabling resource circulation and participatory decision-making that enhances communal welfare (Olmedo et al., 2023; Kumbamu, 2017; Santos, 2023). Time-based exchange systems, in particular, illustrate how time can be converted into economic value through reciprocal relationships that sustain livelihoods without monetary income (Shmidt, 2021; Olmedo et al., 2023).

Beyond their practical functionality, non-market economic practices play a significant symbolic role in resisting dominant narratives of capitalist individualism. They offer a counter-narrative grounded in relational values and community interdependence. As such, they not only fulfill immediate economic needs but also act as vehicles for social transformation, fostering a sense of collective purpose and ethical responsibility (Guerrero et al., 2021; Dillahunt & Malone, 2015). This dual role underlines the increasing significance of these models in a world where conventional economic systems often fail to ensure equitable and sustainable livelihoods.

Despite the promise of these models, scholars face considerable challenges in documenting and analyzing community-based reciprocal economic systems. One of the most persistent issues is the difficulty of capturing the value of non-monetary transactions, which often evade conventional data collection methods rooted in quantitative metrics. Many such exchanges are informal, undocumented, and context-specific, making them resistant to standard empirical approaches (Crowdy & Horst, 2022). Furthermore, information asymmetry and the lack of formal records in

these communities contribute to the anecdotal nature of much of the available data (Guerrero et al., 2021), thus limiting the generalizability of findings.

Additionally, the literature reveals a gap in theoretical and practical integration when addressing the sustainability of reciprocal and community-based economies. While economic analyses often dominate the discussion, the social and environmental dimensions of these systems remain underexplored (Piani et al., 2019). Although there is a growing body of research on solidarity economies, there is limited understanding of how these models can be scaled and adapted across different sociocultural and geographic contexts (Guerrero et al., 2021). Moreover, practical guidelines for building and maintaining resilient reciprocal economies are scarce, especially amid global challenges such as climate change and systemic impoverishment (Lan et al., 2017).

This fragmentation in the literature also extends to methodological approaches, with many studies operating in disciplinary silos. As Veen (2019) notes, the absence of a coherent interdisciplinary framework hampers the development of robust theoretical models. To address this gap, scholars have called for integrated methodologies that combine ethnographic, participatory, and systems-based approaches capable of capturing the nuanced interactions that sustain non-market economic systems (Boonyabancha & Mitlin, 2012; Migliaro, 2023).

Given these limitations, further research is urgently needed to explore the intersection of reciprocity-based economies with broader concerns such as social justice, ecological sustainability, and inclusive development (Shmidt, 2021). Understanding the social dynamics underpinning these practices is essential for crafting policies and interventions that support community resilience and well-being in diverse settings (Jaye et al., 2017). By expanding the scope and depth of inquiry into these systems, scholars and practitioners can better articulate the potential of community-based economic models to contribute to systemic change.

This review aims to investigate and analyze the emerging dynamics within solidarity and moral economies, especially in the context of growing global concern over deepening economic and social inequalities. As awareness rises regarding the uneven distribution of resources and well-being, there is an urgent need to examine how value-driven economic practices can function as viable and sustainable alternatives to profit-centered models (Piani et al., 2019; Alarcón & Sato, 2019). This review endeavors to deepen the understanding of how these practices are implemented across various contexts and to elucidate their transformative potential in reshaping social and economic relations.

Geographically and demographically, this review is confined to the Global South, focusing particularly on indigenous communities and urban marginalized populations. Existing literature frequently highlights cases from the Global South, where informal economies dominate and structural barriers to resource access persist (Carvajal & Calvache, 2019; Guerrero et al., 2021). Indigenous communities represent a critical focal point due to their historically entrenched traditions of solidarity and reciprocity, which are embedded in their everyday social practices (Santos, 2023; Alarcón & Sato, 2019).

Urban marginalized populations also provide fertile ground for inquiry, particularly in their adaptive strategies for collective survival amid constrained economic environments. In many such communities, the development of solidarity-based economic practices includes elements of social entrepreneurship and community innovation aimed at addressing local issues (Orlić & Bokan, 2022; Hill et al., 2020; Córdoba et al., 2021). These examples are crucial for informing policy strategies that aim to enhance local economic sustainability and empower communities to become agents of change (Olmedo et al., 2023).

In sum, this review seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the study of solidarity economies, highlighting their role in improving community well-being in often-overlooked regions and populations. It aims to contribute to the development of alternative paradigms for economic development that prioritize inclusivity, equity, and sustainability. Through a systematic synthesis of current literature, this paper provides a foundation for further research and policy development in the field of non-market community-based economies.

METHOD

The methodology adopted in this review follows a systematic narrative approach designed to collect, screen, and synthesize academic literature on community-based economies and non-monetary exchange systems. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, encompassing economic theory, sociology, anthropology, and development studies, the literature search strategy was constructed to encompass a wide range of reputable academic sources that reflect the multifaceted dimensions of the subject. This methodological framework ensured that the review captured both theoretical contributions and empirical studies that collectively enrich our understanding of reciprocal economic systems.

The literature collection process focused on several key academic databases known for their comprehensive indexing of peer-reviewed materials. The primary databases consulted were Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. These platforms were selected due to their high citation coverage and diverse subject inclusion, enabling the capture of both macro-level theoretical insights and micro-level case studies. In addition to these, specialized databases such as JSTOR and SpringerLink were consulted to ensure the inclusion of foundational studies, working papers, and less mainstream but contextually relevant research outputs (Piani et al., 2019; Migliaro, 2023).

To enhance the specificity and relevance of the search results, a targeted keyword strategy was implemented using a combination of predefined keywords and Boolean logic operators. The core search terms included "community-based economy," "reciprocity," "non-market exchange," "solidarity economy," "social networks," and "local exchange trading systems." Boolean operators such as AND and OR were strategically utilized to combine terms and adjust the breadth of the search. For example, queries such as ("community-based economy" AND "reciprocity") OR ("non-market exchange" AND "solidarity economy") were employed to retrieve literature that explores the intersection of economic behavior and social norms. Similarly, search strings such as

("social capital" AND "local exchange") AND "sustainability" and ("community currencies" AND "economic practices") were used to probe the sustainability dimensions of community-driven economic models (Worsley et al., 2021; ИИМАТ, 2021).

The search was conducted in English, and only literature published between the years 2000 and 2024 was included, to capture both seminal works and more recent developments in the field. Duplicate results were manually filtered out, and all retrieved articles were stored and managed using a reference management tool to facilitate organization, annotation, and later thematic synthesis. Initial screening was based on the relevance of the article titles and abstracts to the review topic. Full texts were then retrieved and further examined for methodological rigor, thematic alignment, and contribution to the field.

Inclusion criteria were developed to guide the selection of articles. Eligible studies were those that (1) addressed topics related to community-based or reciprocal economic practices; (2) presented empirical or theoretical analysis of non-market exchanges; (3) discussed implications for sustainability, community resilience, or social cohesion; and (4) were published in peer-reviewed journals or conference proceedings. Priority was given to articles that explicitly linked economic practices with community dynamics, cultural traditions, or governance mechanisms. Studies that focused exclusively on traditional capitalist market systems, without addressing community-based alternatives, were excluded. Additionally, studies that lacked methodological transparency or empirical grounding were also omitted to preserve the academic quality of the synthesis.

The review incorporated a broad spectrum of research designs, reflecting the interdisciplinary and pluralistic nature of the field. This included qualitative case studies, ethnographic fieldwork, participatory action research, comparative analyses, and mixed-methods studies. Each type of study contributed distinct perspectives to the review. Ethnographic and case study research, for example, provided valuable insights into the contextual and cultural specificity of community-based exchange systems, revealing how social values and collective memory influence economic behavior. Quantitative studies, though fewer in number, offered critical data on participation rates, socioeconomic impacts, and sustainability outcomes. Conceptual papers and literature reviews were also included where they offered significant theoretical frameworks or historical analysis.

The literature screening and evaluation process followed a multi-phase protocol. In the first phase, all search results were screened for eligibility based on titles and abstracts. Articles that met the initial inclusion criteria were then subjected to full-text review. During this second phase, each article was evaluated for methodological quality, relevance to the research questions, and potential contribution to the synthesis. A third phase involved thematic coding of the selected articles using qualitative data analysis software, which enabled the identification of recurrent themes, theoretical frameworks, and key findings across the literature. This process was conducted independently by two researchers to reduce selection bias and ensure consistency in thematic interpretation.

Each selected article was annotated based on a standard coding protocol that captured bibliographic data, methodological design, theoretical orientation, core findings, and geographic context. This structured coding allowed for a systematic comparison of findings and facilitated the identification of both convergent and divergent perspectives within the literature. Through this

iterative coding and analysis process, key themes such as resilience, trust networks, social innovation, and the interplay between traditional and modern economic practices emerged as central to understanding non-market exchange systems.

To ensure robustness, the credibility of each article was further evaluated by considering journal ranking, citation metrics, and the author's scholarly record. Articles published in high-impact or specialized journals were given greater analytical weight, although promising studies from emerging scholars and regional journals were also included when they contributed novel or underrepresented perspectives. Attention was paid to ensuring regional and cultural diversity in the selected studies, with representation from Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and indigenous communities in North America and Oceania.

This methodological framework thus enabled the review to construct a rich and multidimensional synthesis of community-based and reciprocal economic systems. The approach combined systematic database search techniques with rigorous qualitative assessment and thematic integration. By emphasizing both theoretical depth and empirical relevance, the methodology ensures that the findings presented in subsequent sections reflect a comprehensive and critical engagement with the literature on solidarity and non-market economies. As the field continues to evolve, this approach offers a replicable and adaptable model for future reviews that seek to map complex socio-economic phenomena grounded in human relationships and community values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the narrative review, organized according to four emergent thematic areas that reflect the diverse manifestations of non-market exchange systems and community-based economies: complementary exchange systems and social currencies; moral economy and social capital; cooperation and solidarity in multiethnic communities; and gender transformation in community economies. These themes synthesize both empirical evidence and theoretical insights, offering a multifaceted understanding of how reciprocity and solidarity shape economic behaviors and community resilience.

Complementary exchange systems and social currencies have garnered significant academic attention as effective community responses to economic hardship and systemic exclusion from formal markets. Empirical studies document how local currencies and barter systems facilitate access to goods and services in contexts where national monetary systems are either unstable or inaccessible. A prominent example is the Sarafu network in Kenya, a blockchain-based complementary currency that enabled economically marginalized communities to sustain transactions during periods of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Bâ et al., 2023). Sarafu functioned not only as a medium of exchange but also as a mechanism for reinforcing intra-community solidarity. It fostered cooperative networks among users, thereby strengthening the social fabric of the communities involved. Other studies reinforce this observation, showing how complementary currencies contribute to local resilience by increasing resource access and reducing dependency on volatile formal markets (Guillemot & Privat, 2019; Worsley et al., 2021; Hamidi et al., 2024).

Despite their potential, these systems also encounter several structural and operational challenges. Community acceptance of non-official currencies is often hindered by regulatory ambiguity and low levels of public trust in alternative financial mechanisms (Piani et al., 2019). In some cases, misunderstandings about the functionality and legitimacy of these systems reduce participation rates. Furthermore, the dominance of traditional financial institutions frequently marginalizes such initiatives, limiting their scalability. Technological and logistical barriers in managing and distributing community currencies also pose persistent issues, particularly in low-infrastructure settings where digital literacy may be limited (Hendrickson et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these challenges do not negate the evidence of impact; rather, they underscore the need for supportive policy frameworks and participatory design in scaling these innovations.

The second thematic focus pertains to moral economy and social capital, highlighting the ethical and relational foundations of community-based economic practices. Trust, moral obligation, and reciprocity are recurrently cited as core values that sustain non-market exchanges. Ethnographic research reveals that trust enables transactions to occur without formal contracts or monetary payment, relying instead on social expectations and communal oversight (Ozanne & Ozanne, 2016; Nair, 2022). In such environments, reciprocity functions not merely as a transactional norm but as a moral anchor that reinforces social cohesion and mutual accountability.

Theoretical discussions often invoke the concept of "moral capital" to explain how ethical commitments and social norms can be converted into tangible economic value within community systems (Laville, 2023). Moral capital, akin to social capital, operates as a form of embedded currency that enables access to resources, reinforces network solidarity, and upholds social integrity. This is particularly salient in indigenous and rural communities where historical practices of gift-giving, bartering, and shared labor have long functioned as mechanisms for survival and communal prosperity (Sun & Meng, 2023). Such models defy the purely utilitarian logics of mainstream economics, advocating instead for frameworks that recognize the social embeddedness of economic behavior.

In examining the interplay between moral economy and social capital, it becomes evident that these systems are not only economically functional but also normatively instructive. They inform policy debates on sustainable development and community empowerment by offering alternative logics that prioritize well-being and collective responsibility. Thus, understanding the moral economy is essential for designing inclusive interventions that respect local values and practices.

The third thematic area addresses cooperation and solidarity within multiethnic communities, where intercultural dynamics complicate but also enrich non-market economic interactions. In diverse social settings, collective action and mutual aid become indispensable tools for navigating institutional exclusion and socioeconomic marginalization. Studies have documented how multiethnic communities form informal cooperatives that pool resources, exchange goods, and share knowledge, especially in environments where formal economic channels are inaccessible or discriminatory (Crowdy & Horst, 2022).

These practices often serve as grassroots responses to structural inequalities, enabling marginalized groups to construct alternative safety nets. Informal food-sharing networks, cooperative housing arrangements, and rotating credit associations are examples of solidarity economies that emerge in these contexts. Such systems are particularly effective in cushioning communities from economic

shocks while also enhancing agency and self-determination (Veen, 2019). Furthermore, these informal exchanges foster intercultural understanding and bridge social divides, creating a shared sense of belonging among ethnically diverse populations.

Yet, the persistence of informal solidarity in multiethnic contexts is not without constraints. The lack of institutional recognition and legal protection exposes participants to risks, including exploitation and unequal distribution of resources. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that these communities exhibit remarkable resilience, leveraging trust and reciprocity to mitigate their vulnerabilities (Igwe et al., 2020; Rymysa, 2015). The insights gleaned from these cases call for policy frameworks that legitimize and support informal economic practices without undermining their grassroots character.

The fourth and final thematic focus of this review explores the gender dimensions of community-based economies, with particular attention to the transformative roles played by women. In many contexts, women are the primary actors in sustaining moral economies, particularly through their involvement in food production, caregiving, and community organizing. These roles not only uphold the social infrastructure of their communities but also challenge traditional economic paradigms that undervalue care work and communal labor (Carvajal & Calvache, 2019).

Evidence from rural and peri-urban settings shows that women-led cooperatives are instrumental in redistributing labor and enabling more equitable access to resources. Within these organizations, women engage in collective decision-making, capacity building, and market participation, thereby redefining gender norms and expanding their socioeconomic agency (Schnur & Günter, 2014). For example, participation in community cooperatives allows women to develop new skills, assert economic independence, and advocate for their rights in both household and community spheres (Reis, 2021). These developments signify not only shifts in economic participation but also deeper transformations in gender relations and power dynamics.

Moreover, the cooperative model enables the pooling of resources and labor in ways that reduce the burden on individual women, especially those juggling unpaid domestic responsibilities with informal economic activities. In doing so, it creates pathways for women to engage in the public sphere, make collective claims, and resist structural marginalization. The gendered nature of these community economies underscores the need for feminist economic analyses that center women's experiences and contributions in shaping sustainable and just economies.

Taken together, these four thematic areas illustrate the diverse expressions and critical importance of community-based, non-market economic systems. Whether through complementary currencies, moral frameworks, intercultural solidarity, or gendered labor, these systems provide alternative models for organizing economic life that are responsive to local contexts and embedded in social relationships. They challenge prevailing assumptions about rationality, efficiency, and value in economic behavior, advocating instead for a relational and justice-oriented paradigm.

The global comparison of these practices, drawing from regions in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and indigenous communities in North America, reveals both common patterns and context-specific adaptations. While the principles of trust, reciprocity, and solidarity are universally salient, their institutionalization varies according to cultural norms, policy environments, and historical legacies. These insights highlight the necessity for flexible and

context-sensitive policy interventions that honor the autonomy and knowledge of local communities while supporting their efforts to build resilient and inclusive economies.

In sum, the findings of this narrative review underscore the transformative potential of community-based economic practices rooted in non-market exchange and moral economy. These practices not only serve immediate material needs but also cultivate the social and ethical foundations of collective life. As the world grapples with intersecting crises of inequality, ecological degradation, and social fragmentation, the relevance of these alternative economic systems becomes increasingly apparent. They offer not only practical solutions but also normative visions for reimagining the economy as a space of care, cooperation, and shared humanity.

The findings from this narrative review reinforce the enduring significance of community-based economies and non-market exchange systems in supporting economic resilience, especially within marginalized and culturally diverse populations. These systems consistently draw upon values of solidarity, reciprocity, and trust, which both align with and complicate established economic theories. In particular, the literature highlights how these practices support a moral and social economy that defies conventional notions of self-interest and market efficiency (Igwe et al., 2020; Rymysa, 2015). Instead, they foreground relational motivations and ethical obligations as critical to understanding the organization of local economies (Jaye et al., 2017; Nair, 2022).

In doing so, these findings challenge classical economic assumptions that posit rational actors and profit maximization as the core drivers of human behavior. Rather than operating purely within utilitarian frameworks, community members engage in exchanges based on shared moral principles and collective well-being. The continued relevance of concepts such as "moral capital" illustrates the theoretical need to consider how trust and social norms function as economic resources, shaping interactions in ways that are not reducible to monetary incentives (Laville, 2023; Sun & Meng, 2023).

Nevertheless, community economies do not always offer seamless alternatives to formal economic systems. While the ideal of solidarity may underpin many such initiatives, practical implementation often reveals tensions and contradictions. For example, research on recovery during the COVID-19 crisis illustrated how community-led responses filled the void left by inadequate state interventions (Igwe et al., 2020; Córdoba et al., 2021). These efforts, though commendable, also exposed the fragility of informal systems when stretched beyond their social capacities, underscoring the necessity of structural support. Such findings echo broader critiques regarding the limitations of relying solely on voluntary social networks for large-scale economic resilience (Boonyabancha & Mitlin, 2012).

From a systemic standpoint, political, legal, and global economic structures significantly shape the viability and sustainability of community-based economic practices. Politically, state support can create enabling environments for community enterprises through inclusive public policies, legal recognition of alternative currencies, and participatory governance mechanisms (Piani et al., 2019). Conversely, political instability and exclusionary governance constrain communities' ability to mobilize resources and secure autonomy (Guerrero et al., 2021). In such settings, community actors often resort to informal or even illicit practices to meet their basic needs, which can further marginalize them from formal support systems.

The legal context is similarly influential. Supportive legal frameworks that legitimize alternative economic forms—such as the formal recognition of barter systems or cooperatives—can help institutionalize and scale grassroots economic models (Feng et al., 2021). However, when legal systems are rigid or antagonistic to innovation, they inhibit the flexibility required for community initiatives to adapt to evolving local conditions. Many communities practicing non-monetary exchange face legal ambiguities or outright restrictions that hinder their growth and legitimacy (Schnur & Günter, 2014; Orlic & Bokan, 2022).

At the global level, market dynamics such as international competition, trade liberalization, and financial volatility further affect local economies. These global economic shifts often exacerbate inequality and weaken the competitiveness of local production, forcing community enterprises to operate within asymmetric power structures (Dongping et al., 2023; Lan et al., 2017). However, globalization also presents opportunities. In certain contexts, transnational networks and digital platforms have facilitated knowledge exchange and cross-border cooperation, enhancing the capabilities of community economies to innovate and scale (Suutari et al., 2023).

These systemic dynamics necessitate the rethinking of development strategies and the formulation of integrative policies that align local initiatives with broader economic planning. Policies must be designed to accommodate the multidimensional nature of solidarity economies, which span economic, cultural, and environmental domains. Piani et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of multidimensional indicators to assess the performance of solidarity economies. Such frameworks can guide more effective policymaking that takes into account the diverse realities and aspirations of communities.

The findings of this review also contribute to a growing consensus that local cooperation, particularly in multiethnic contexts, plays a crucial role in mitigating the effects of inequality. Informal solidarities and support networks enable communities to transcend formal exclusion and build alternative infrastructures for survival and empowerment. However, as noted by Guerrero et al. (2021) and Jones et al. (2019), these systems require intentional support to thrive and scale. Investment in infrastructure and institutional support for community organizations can enhance their resilience and amplify their impact.

Gender emerges as another key dimension within community economies. The review highlights the transformative potential of women-led cooperatives in reshaping gender norms and advancing economic equity (Carvajal & Calvache, 2019; Alarcón & Sato, 2019). These cooperatives provide platforms for collective agency, skill development, and resource sharing, empowering women to assert their economic rights and leadership in traditionally male-dominated spaces. Policies that support women's education, access to markets, and leadership development are thus essential to realizing the full potential of community economies. In contexts marked by structural marginalization, reciprocal relations fostered by female leadership often serve as the backbone of household and community resilience (Migliaro, 2023; Rymysa, 2015).

Given the cross-cutting influence of global economic structures, policy coherence between local and international agendas is critical. Trade regulations, climate adaptation strategies, and financial governance frameworks all intersect with the everyday functioning of community economies. As such, international cooperation and multilevel governance mechanisms must be leveraged to protect and promote economic models grounded in reciprocity and solidarity (Gheorghe et al.,

2018; Lan et al., 2017). Collaborative frameworks involving governments, civil society, and private sector actors can help create synergistic environments for community innovation and sustainability.

Despite the insights generated by this review, limitations in the existing literature remain. A significant portion of studies relies heavily on qualitative methods, which, while rich in contextual detail, may lack scalability or comparability across regions. Moreover, most studies concentrate on isolated case studies, with limited exploration of translocal dynamics or long-term impacts. There is also a tendency in the literature to romanticize community economies without adequately addressing issues of intra-community conflict, exclusion, or power imbalance. Addressing these gaps requires the development of interdisciplinary research methodologies that combine ethnographic depth with policy relevance.

Further research is needed to map the institutional ecosystems that enable or constrain community economies in different socio-political contexts. Comparative studies across regions, longitudinal evaluations of project outcomes, and experimental designs assessing policy interventions could provide more robust evidence for the scalability of non-market systems. Additionally, greater attention must be paid to the role of technology, particularly digital platforms, in mediating reciprocal exchanges and facilitating new forms of collective action. As digital currencies, decentralized networks, and platform cooperatives expand, they introduce both opportunities and new governance challenges that merit careful examination.

Ultimately, the findings underscore the imperative for inclusive, context-sensitive development frameworks that recognize the legitimacy and potential of economic practices rooted in community values. These frameworks must move beyond tokenistic engagement to genuinely empower local actors and integrate their knowledge and priorities into the design of sustainable economic systems. Embedding values of reciprocity, care, and collective well-being into economic policymaking is not merely a moral imperative but a pragmatic strategy for building resilient societies in an increasingly volatile world (Crowdy & Horst, 2022; ШИМАН, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This narrative review has demonstrated the critical role of community-based economies and non-market exchange systems in fostering social resilience, economic sustainability, and collective well-being. The findings underscore that values such as reciprocity, trust, and solidarity are not merely cultural ideals but operational principles that enable communities to navigate systemic exclusion and economic instability. Key insights highlight the effectiveness of complementary currencies like Sarafu, the strength of moral economies in sustaining informal networks, the vital role of intercultural cooperation in multiethnic contexts, and the transformative leadership of women in economic cooperatives.

The discussion revealed that despite their potential, these systems face structural barriers rooted in political inattention, restrictive legal frameworks, and asymmetrical global economic dynamics. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy interventions that legitimize and institutionalize community economies. Governments must provide enabling legal environments,

invest in infrastructure for grassroots initiatives, and integrate community-led solutions into national development plans.

Future research should pursue longitudinal and comparative studies across diverse geographies to better understand the conditions under which these systems thrive. There is also a need to explore the intersection of digital platforms and non-market economies to identify innovations that can scale community resilience.

Ultimately, fostering solidarity-based economic systems is not only a response to inequality and market failures, but also a proactive strategy for inclusive, culturally embedded, and sustainable development. Supporting community cooperation, moral exchange, and reciprocal practices is fundamental to addressing present and future economic challenges.

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