

Economy of Communion

a new culture



20 years of the EoC
a great celebration

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From the street
to the market



Message
from the youth



Poverty and
development

Economy of Communion
a new culture

Special edition of
Economy of Communion
published in English as supplement
to *Living City* magazine
AIEC – Associazione Internazionale
Economia di Comunione
(EoC International Association)

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Città Nuova/Umberto Paciarelli
Living City/Stella Vischer

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Previous issues of the publication
Economy of Communion
are available at: edc-online.org

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20 YEARS OF THE *ECONOMY OF COMMUNION IN FREEDOM*

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Economy of Communion in Freedom (EoC). This innovative economic system features profit sharing to help people in need and to fund structures and programs that spread a culture of giving. EoC is for everyone, whether we own a business, work in a business, run the “business” of our family or act as a consumer.

Close to 800 businesses around the world follow this model envisioned by Chiara Lubich in Brazil in 1991. More than 1,700 people participated in a festive celebration in Sao Paulo, Brazil on May 29 following the first International Assembly for members of the EoC regional commissions, entrepreneurs, students, researchers and interested observers.

In North America the EoC is entering into academic life with an ever-growing number of economists, scholars and entrepreneurs interested in this new way of looking at society’s economic structure. Courses and seminars on the EoC have been offered at universities including: Adams State College in Colorado, Trinity University and St. Mary’s University in Texas, the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, Fordham University in New York and The Catholic University of America in Washington.

Two professors, one at Maryville College in Tennessee and the other at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, are working on a research project involving the EoC businesses in North America.

The most recent encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, mentions the EoC and has generated increasing interest not only in academic circles but also within the wider media.

— Clare Zanzucchi

The Economy of Communion can offer a sustainable future for humanity, based on the awareness that the human

person's need for fulfillment is satisfied only by overcoming egoism in order to build fraternal relationships.

20 years of a clear economic alternative

Alberto
Ferrucci



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As her plane was waiting to land in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1991, Focolare founder Chiara Lubich saw a carpet of slums surrounding a forest of skyscrapers. She asked God, confident in the power of prayer, for a “third avenue of economy” that could offer, in the ruins of Marxism and the injustices of the free market economy, a sustainable future for humanity in the third millennium.

This “third way” is based on the knowledge that human beings are not moved only by personal interest, but also by the profound need for overcoming one's self-interest that results in building fraternal relationships.

Twenty years ago, trusting in God and in the Brazilian people's generosity and ability to dream, Chiara launched the Economy of Communion in Freedom (EoC), an economic initiative that applies the logic of heaven — mutual love — to human relationships.

This logic can already be seen in a more intimate environment, the family, where everyone is equal and one provides for the other, ready to make any sacrifice in favor of the weakest.

The worldwide Focolare Movement responded to Chiara's invitation with enthusiasm, creating little

cities, industrial parks and especially businesses that operate in the market economy. These businesses, conducted with respect for private property and personal initiatives, addressed the challenge to demonstrate that economic activity can be viable when performed in a climate of freedom, equality and fraternity. In the midst of this style of business activity, many experience the joy that comes with an inclusive work environment that builds a community of one heart and soul.

Chiara, with her innovative idea, asked experts in business and economics to put their skills and talents to work, and launched a new “lay vocation,” a way where people could reach holiness by working in a business. Many accepted the commitment to begin this work, knowing that success and personal fulfillment could be reached not in having or in consuming, but in living mutual love. Among those who accepted the call to live this lifestyle are entrepreneurs and economists, people who began productive business parks, students and academics wanting to study the EoC and those who provide studies for people who are interested in the framework of a culture of giving and of sharing. These are concrete applications of this “third way” of conducting busi-

ness, a way that could offer a new approach to the problems of today's economy.

This lifestyle envisions and aims to model a new economy that could aid in providing balance in a polarized society. It could be a sign of hope for people around the world, especially young people, who seek to build a life of promise in their communities.

On the occasion of the EoC's 20th anniversary, we wanted to offer a printed sample of our magazine, *Economy of Communion — A New Culture* in the English language (until now availa-

ble only online at edc-online.org). Originally addressed to entrepreneurs, academics and students who are close to the EoC project, this special edition is more of a general introduction to the EoC for all readers of *Living City*, as well as for the general public.

We hope that those who read these pages will feel drawn to subscribe to *Living City* which regularly carries articles and news about the EoC initiative.

livingcitymagazine.com
Alberto Ferrucci is editor of Economy of Communion and a member of the international EoC commission.

More at edc-online.org -

To order more copies of this publication and of the special issue of *Living City* on the Economy of Communion, contact: livingcity@livingcitymagazine.com or write to: Living City, 202 Comforter Blvd, Hyde Park, NY 12538, USA - Tel. +1-845-229-9416. To contribute to the Economy of Communion, send your check or money order payable to *Living City* to the addresses above or donate online at livingcitymagazine.com.



Given the high request for more about the Economy of Communion, Living City magazine will profile an EoC business and other EoC developments every month.

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EoC outlook for 2031

More innovation, more creativity, and that entrepreneurial spirit

Luigino
Bruni



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What are the challenges we have to face and overcome in the next 20 years (and beyond) if we want the Economy of Communion to continue and to be faithful to its calling?

First, a challenge concerning EoC companies: these past 20 years we have understood, despite many mistakes, that the EoC's main contribution to alleviate extreme poverty, thus building an economy and world of communion, will not occur primarily by redistributing wealth (taking money and resources from the "rich" to give to the "poor"). Rather, its contribution will lie in creating new wealth while including in the process people in difficulty who are disadvantaged (creating new "cakes," not just re-cutting the "slices" of a given cake differently).

This inclusion is important because if those receiving benefits from the created wealth do not participate in the production process in some visible and tangible way, the aid they receive is likely to evolve into a paternalistic welfare approach. When Chiara launched the EoC in Brazil she said, "We have to create new businesses," not "We need to convert business people to be more generous and giving."

The EoC is therefore primarily a proposal that is productive, not redistributive, although the two aspects do not necessarily exclude one another. This is because the EoC redistributes wealth mainly by creating it differently, in a way that is inclusive, sustainable, fraternal and fair, where we look for both employees and management to participate in an authentic manner.

The primacy of the creation of wealth over its redistribution is still a challenge to be recognized and taken seriously. For example, in these first 20 years the act of giving by the entrepreneur has often been emphasized, and rightly so (because it is essential). Many have given much, risking without guarantees, giving even when business caution would have suggested accumulating reserves.

But sometimes this giving was too simplistically and reductively defined as "giving money" and less often as "giving and creating opportunities, creativity, talents, jobs..." We forgot that the first gift of the entrepreneur is to risk with an entrepreneurial spirit, which is a talent for solving problems, creating new things, innovating, and having the ability to change the world in which we operate.

This is a first and important frontier for the years ahead, that is, to re-launch a new season of enthusiasm, creativity, new ideas, new businesses and new projects to bring entrepreneurs, new and old, closer together with more networking, to their rightful place as builders and innovators, functioning not as generous philanthropists but as builders of a new economic model. The first gift is always the gift of life, and the entrepreneur of communion also and above all gives life, innovating and fraternally creating new realities and opportunities with and for others.

There is also a second step to take in the life of the EoC. For creativity and enthusiasm to become real in this new season, the EoC vitally needs to relate directly with the real and tangible faces of poverty. In recent years we have seen that the most powerful and prophetic experiences arise from those entrepreneurs who live where poverty is clearly visible, where they try to find new solutions utilizing the creativity of love and communion. If there is no direct contact with poverty in some context, over the years the key players in EoC companies lose sight of the deep meaning of what they do. It is not enough to raise money in





Europe, in the U.S. or in the richest countries and use it in other parts of the world.

The metaphor of the seed and the tree can help us grasp this new phase of the EoC. If the seed lives, it remains alone; if it dies, it saves its DNA and can become a tree. The first phase of the EoC, with nearly 800 companies that collect hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly to support the needy of the Focolare, must evolve and transform into something else, even “die” (in the Gospel sense). This will result in the EoC realizing its true identity: to be a way for all to help “loosen” the crowns of thorns in the world, not just in the Focolare.

One of Chiara’s writings, “The Great Attraction of Modern Times” (see sidebar), is considered the Magna Carta of the EoC. It will become even more so in the years to come. In order to become more itself, the EoC will continually and increasingly need to “lose oneself in the crowd in order to fill it with the divine, like a piece of bread dipped in wine.” It will need to get lost in the crowd, disappear and practically die in order to inform society and the economy.

But there is more in the Magna Carta of the EoC: “become partakers of God’s design on humanity, mark the crowd with the embroidery of light and at the same time share with others shame, hunger, suffering, and brief joys.” In these words you can glimpse a task of light, a vision, a knowledge that reflects a sense of history, a sign of the times, and a beacon of light for many.

The EoC has been, is and is not yet. This is true even when it is praised, because people see a new perspective that is a gift for everyone. But “in the meantime,” we need to share with the people of our time the suffering, hunger, difficulties and joys — the hunger and joys of everyone, of our people who yearn and wait, perhaps without knowing it, for an economy of communion.

Luigino Bruni is professor of economics at the Bicocca University and the Bocconi University of Milan, and director of the International EoC commission.

The great attraction of modern times



“This is the great attraction
of modern times:
to penetrate to the highest contemplation
while mingling with everyone,
one person alongside others.
I would say even more:
to lose oneself in the crowd
in order to fill it with the divine,
like a piece of bread
dipped in wine.
I would say even more:
made sharers in God’s plans
for humanity,
to embroider patterns of light on the crowd,
and at the same time
to share with our neighbor
shame, hunger, troubles, brief joys.
Because the attraction
of our times, as of all times,
is the highest conceivable expression
of the human and the divine,
Jesus and Mary:
the Word of God, a carpenter’s son;
the Seat of Wisdom, a mother at home.”

Chiara Lubich

From *Essential Writings*, New City Press, 2010



The experience of an EoC entrepreneur

Working in communion

John
Mundell



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One of the distinguishing characteristics of our EoC business lifestyle is the fact that behind each moment of each business day, an EoC business owner tries to live with a continuous awareness of the other person in order to create and maintain a workplace and business of communion.

There are many, many business owners in the world, and many socially-responsible companies that do “good works” with “good hearts,” but that alone is not enough for us. We desire an added dimension, an intangible but nevertheless real product: communion.

Each one of us — business owners, employees, advisors and interested academics — must examine this idea of working in and for communion, on three levels.

- On the business level — that is, within the company, between the employees and those who support the business operations, between the company and its clients, between the company and its competitors, and even between the company and the daily mail carrier.
- On the local community level — within the local geographic area where the business operates, including the local Focolare community.
- On the global level — within the world community, including the global Focolare community.

Let's take the second level of working in communion — within the local geographic community. It develops gradually over time. As it develops, it affects how the business is seen by all who come in contact with it.

Any business, whether it wants to or not, influences — for good or not so good — people and businesses outside of its regular operations. The idea of spreading the “culture of giving” by the business' example begins at this level.

When the employees of an EoC business understand that the company is not only interested in itself, they begin to see its wider mission as part of a community.

For example, when we purchase company supplies from nearby businesses and eat at local restaurants, even when it might be cheaper elsewhere, they see that we value “relationships” more than “monetary costs.” When we give them time to help in local social projects in our neighborhoods, they see that it is not all about profit, and they experience a new world, where everyone gives and receives.

Becoming part of the community changes attitudes within the company; giving back to the community evangelizes everyone within the company.

These changes are both personal and companywide, and when they become visible to the community because they are real and mutual, they can show other business owners and community members a new way forward to a more authentic and close-knit community. The culture of giving begins to spread beyond the business, and manifests itself in small and not-so-small ways.

John Mundell is the president of Mundell&Associates, an EoC environmental consulting company in Indianapolis.





Escaping the risk of delinquency to grow a new business — the story of a purse company in Brazil

From the street to the market

They sell purses, jackets and women's clothing made of discarded scraps of leather, fabric and old jeans. The employees, many of whom are teenagers, come from poor backgrounds. Most of the workers come from a poor neighborhood nearby, Jardim Margarida.

The factory's name, From the Street, perfectly explains this business that set up shop at the EoC Spartaco Business Park, just three miles from Mariapolis Ginetta, the Focolare community near Sao Paulo. Seeing the dozens of young people working there and listening to their stories, you can understand its success.

"Ours is more than a business," explains Divani, 18. "We help one another, because we work as a family. We begin each day by reading a sentence from Scripture, and trying to put it into practice helps us overcome daily difficulties."

Joao Bosco Lima de Santana, an entrepreneur, went to Italy to specialize in purse production and then returned to his country to start a profitable business. But his true motivation is deeper. When he was young, he was touched by Chiara Lubich's proposal to "lay down your life for your own people."

When he met Fr. Renato Chiera and his home for youth that welcomes teenagers and children from the street, he found an outlet to "use his skills and expertise to give young people a profession."

Miguel, 20, is the business supervisor. After his father, a restaurant owner, left the house taking with him all they had, his family moved to the slums. "I was 11," he remembers, "and I wondered how I could help mom and my two brothers. Selling drugs seemed the only solution." In six years he became the slums' main distributor. Eventually he was arrested and imprisoned. "Out of 26 friends, I'm the only survivor. They were all destroyed by drugs."

He later met Fr. Renato, then Joao Bosco,



and with his new job, he rediscovered life: "I feel the responsibility to help those who had my same experience."

Love renews things, ideas and people. "In our company the young people are central, not the training, nor the production — even though we focus on good quality," Joao Bosco says.

Through the Youth for United World and Equiverso cooperative, From the Street products are now being exported to Europe.

Paolo Loriga is the executive editor of Citta Nuova.



May the 2031 economy be one of communion

The EoC proposes that economies and businesses should adopt, along with the principles of liberty and equality, the principle of fraternity. In so doing, business and economic activity can contribute to the fulfillment of every human person, responding to our deep-seated desire for happiness and a sense of purpose.

At the end of the Economy of Communion (EoC) in Freedom Assembly 2011 held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the youth participating in the assembly launched a message to all those who believe in, desire and commit themselves to building a more just and solidarity-based economy. Their convictions are as follows.

WE BELIEVE

We believe it is possible to build an economy based on the principle of fraternity. Such an economy can be called one of 'communion' and is possible for at least four reasons:

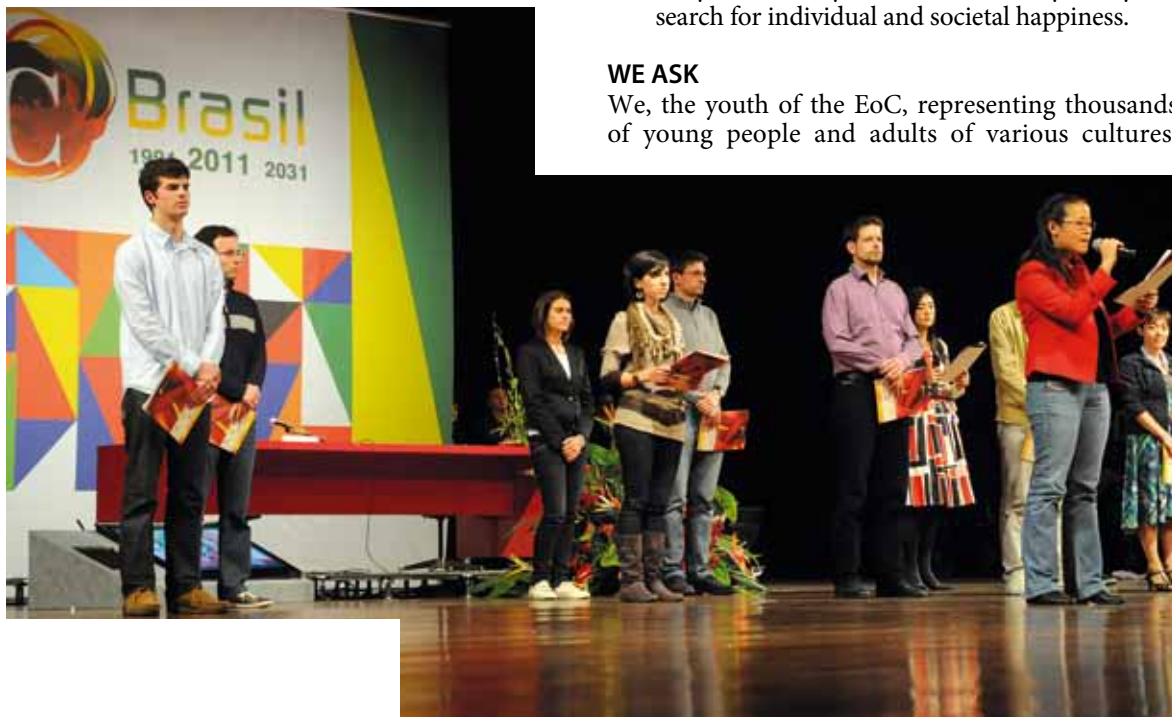
1. We already see a fraternal economy in the daily choice to live the communion of goods by millions of people who in some way share the

same spirituality of unity, a culture of giving, and reciprocity.

2. We see that a fraternal economy is a reality in the experiences of hundreds of EoC businesses which, despite difficulties and failures, remain faithful to EoC's values. These businesses allocate profits for brothers and sisters in need, create jobs, spread a culture of giving and infuse their management decisions with the EOC's values, influencing relationships with clients, workers, suppliers, and society at large.
3. We can see a trend toward an effort to live fraternity in various social, civil, and solidarity-based economies around the world – a movement that is growing and that expresses in many languages that another post-capitalistic alternative to the market economy is possible.
4. Finally, we believe that an economy of communion is possible because every person on Earth has "inscribed in the depth of his or her being, whether believer or non-believer, the vocation to communion and love," as Chiara Lubich told us. Only an economy of this kind can fully satisfy our search for individual and societal happiness.

WE ASK

We, the youth of the EoC, representing thousands of young people and adults of various cultures,





countries, religions, and economic and social conditions, ask for concrete changes. In recent years, economic development has been drugged with ethically questionable behavior that has put our world economy at risk. The Western economic and financial system remains structurally fragile and requires new rules able to bring it back to its principal function of serving the common good. That is why we ask governments to:

1. Involve civil society in the development of policies that value part-time work including those responsible for childcare and assistance to the elderly or disabled
2. Encourage employed work by providing tax relief; support work opportunities for families with dependent children; ensure environmental protection
3. Discourage highly speculative financial transactions
4. Combat tax evasion and reduce military spending to solely protect populations
5. Abolish customs barriers for products from countries that respect labor and the environment

CONCLUSION

We young people are aware of being the first generation in the history of humanity to face the serious risk of having a future that is worse than that of our parents due to the deep wounds that have been inflicted on the environment, air, water, and non-renewable energy over the last century. Moreover, a growing individualistic solidarity ideology is on the horizon of our post-modern civilization.

At the same time, we trust and are certain that Divine Providence exists and is at work in our history, and that we too can have a future that is better than the past. We believe that the EoC began, here in Brazil twenty years ago, to nourish and to be a concrete answer that gives us hope.

We young people here in Sao Paulo believe that if our convictions, hopes and commitments are shared by many people on all continents, and if our everyday behavior reflects these beliefs, the aspiration for an economy that is not only efficient and just, but also fraternal, it will not be a simple utopia; it will become a reality.

We solemnly commit ourselves to this task, confident that many others will join us. We are convinced that communion is the most profound calling of every person, enterprise and community.

"That all may be one."

— Sao Paulo, May 29, 2011



The crucible of *EoC entrepreneurship*

John
Gallagher



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The entrepreneur occupies a unique social role ... In addition to family, friends and neighbors, the Economy of Communion entrepreneur stands shoulder to shoulder with employees, suppliers, advisers, competitors, customers and others, all also immersed in the challenges of everyday life. The entrepreneur intentionally takes on a “layer” of responsibility that a non-entrepreneur does not ... In the very act of starting a business and sustaining a business, the entrepreneur also takes on a very real responsibility for a particular set of relationships that are now governed by the business. And the entrepreneur takes on a responsibility for the business itself. To my mind, this places the entrepreneur in a ‘crucible of formation’ that is different from other life and livelihood choices and vocations ...

This is true of all entrepreneurial ventures — that there is a set of responsibilities assumed. But there are two important implications, I think, in the case of an EoC entrepreneur.

First, there is a long tradition of received wisdom and practical experience about how to be a successful business person. We know much about the mechanics of business and indeed in our global economic system business practices are similar and widespread.

But there is a very real problem at the heart of our best business and management thinking, and this is the question of instrumentality, which in turn, is a question about the fundamental purpose of business.

One dominant view is that the purpose of business is to satisfy shareholders. This has the effect of exploiting every aspect of the business, including most of its persons, to the interests of a much smaller group of persons, the shareholders. Everything about the business — including employees, customers, suppliers and competitors — becomes a means to the shareholder’s ends, which is generally characterized as profit maximization. This shareholder view of business is somewhat countermanded by a stakeholder view of business whereby the

purpose of business extends beyond the narrow interests of shareholders to include the interests of a wide range of possible constituents, namely anyone with a “stake” in the enterprise. This view at least opens the possibility for considering the legitimate needs and aspirations of all persons associated with the enterprise.

So, the Economy of Communion entrepreneurs, not only have taken on a particular set of responsibilities to a broader and wider group of persons, but they also take on these challenges of instrumentality. For an EoC entrepreneur, rather than persons serving the business, the business must serve persons. And rather than the spirituality serving the business, the business must serve the spirituality.

These challenges form the crucible of EoC entrepreneurship. For many EoC entrepreneurs business practices, decisions and policies are formed in this very crucible. They are formed in the day-to-day experience. The EoC entrepreneur may very well grapple with questions, problems, difficulties and situations where answers are not readily available.

The formation of EoC entrepreneurs then is a challenge for the EoC in the future, for it is not enough to simply encourage people to become entrepreneurs. We must learn to live in the crucible.”

John Gallagher is Professor of Management at Maryville College in Tennessee.



Three types of companies with *ideal motives*

Luca
Crivelli



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There are three types of companies that transcend traditional business principles, organizations that have what we might call “ideal motives.”

A first group consists of companies whose business serves to solve, in an indirect manner, social problems: for example, social entrepreneurship initiatives created to finance non-profit organizations. Their ideal goal is to partially or totally donate the profit earned in the market place. As such, their ideal goal becomes concrete only in retrospect when the profits are donated and then contribute to maintaining entities that operate beyond the market.

Another circle includes companies that are created to contribute directly and solve social ills: those companies working for the benefit of disadvantaged people. Examples of this type include Muhammad Yunus' Grameen Bank and the subsequent development of so-called microcredit institutions. These institutions, along with the Grameen Bank and other multinational companies, are involved in launching activities designed to meet the needs of vulnerable people and to accomplish this task at the lowest possible price.

A third type of organization is one that, alongside its social goals, aims to humanize the economy, making the company more inclusive; examples here include credit unions, civil companies, and European social cooperatives.

The EoC's identity

It is not possible to associate EoC companies with just one of these three types of organizations with ideal motives. Allocating profit according to the three purposes, and the fact that funds are managed by the structures of the Focolare Movement (and through its NGO), would seem to show a certain affinity between the EoC and other North American social entrepreneurship structures. But ever since May 1991, Chiara indicated that job offers to those without opportunities and community participation in the ownership of business parks and manufacturing facilities — “We are poor, but many” — are two of the best ways to directly solve exclusion and poverty problems. This would seem to move the EoC businesses closer to the social business of Yunus.

Finally, the EoC is not limited to promoting entrepreneurial initiatives but aims to create a different economic system. Just think of the creation of alternative products

and Chiara's invitation in 2007 to create “businesses of communion,” rethinking the traditional organizational structure for businesses. The fact that we cannot classify the EoC completely within any of the three categories above indicates that its identity must lie elsewhere.

Chiara revealed the EoC's true identity when she described the EoC as being entirely “a structure of love.” The ultimate goal of EoC companies is to help achieve universal brotherhood. Any action toward anyone who comes into contact with the company can increase communion and help achieve the real goal.

Size and fragility

But the EoC's greatness is also its limitation. If its purpose is to promote fraternity, it is by nature vulnerable and fragile because it has such a far-reaching goal.

“Generating communion” is an objective which is difficult to measure, to have key performance indicators and build frameworks, and it could easily succumb to relying only on the numbers listed on a company's income statement. If we do not strive to attempt to formulate institutional solutions and lasting accountability mechanisms, the EoC is likely to remain an ethic of intentions, a lofty but nebulous ideal. That is why mature companies have adopted accountability practices and taken on stringent commitments. These can be applied to the three types of organizations with ideal motives that were mentioned above.

A first group of EoC companies has been radically committed to donating a substantial portion of their profits, faithfully following the logic of the three thirds. (In the last 10 years a little more than five percent of the companies have donated 80 percent of the EoC profits.)

A second group took a direct role in the fight against various forms of poverty, developing microcredit activities, creating business incubators to reduce youth unemployment, hiring disadvantaged workers and producing innovative products to reduce environmental impact.

A third group of EoC companies is trying to rethink the management tools needed to achieve brotherhood in corporate governance. At the forefront of this endeavor are the social cooperatives, but also many “normal” companies that have instituted forms of “governance of communion.”

Luca Crivelli is professor of economics at the University of Lugano, Switzerland.



Poverty and development: *an African perspective*

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Once again, Africa has much to teach us in a subtle way that typically leaves us Westerners bewildered and embarrassed because we lack certain cultural categories and shared definitive concepts. Take development and poverty, for example. These two issues were addressed by the Central African Republic's Genevieve Sanz, an economics expert who made valuable contributions during the 2011 International Assembly of the Economy of Communion.

"The distinction inherited from the opposition between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' was based on a Western assumption," began Professor Sanz, immediately indicating one of the original sins of the cultural phenomenon of poverty. Since then, the theory of underdevelopment has experienced growing support, and developing countries have accepted this premise seeking the means to develop it further."

According to professor Sanz, "Today, in 2011, the reality of promulgating development is certainly less successful than expected, and it is essential to rethink the idea of development, using more sophisticated and anthropologically complex categories than measured development and underdevelopment on the economic resources spectrum." The effects of the current economic situation are obvious: plundered wealth, increased poverty, higher unemployment and an exploited environment, while the dominance of the strong over the weak continues.

The professor invited everyone to free themselves from cultural anchors that until now have been considered indispensable to the economy; she asked us to seek a new understanding of the concepts of "poverty" and "development." The Economy of Communion, in her opinion, offers both an innovative key and prospects for solutions that are suitable for the African peoples.

"You cannot get out from under the plague of deprivation solely with money, nor with only the redistribution of wealth or the construction of public goods (schools and streets), and not even by intensifying trade relations between North and South. Of course, all these things are necessary, but they are not sufficient," she said.

Urgently needed are "deep and authentic





Economics Professor Genevieve Sanz of the Central African Republic looks to the Economy of Communion to free people from the plague of insecurity.



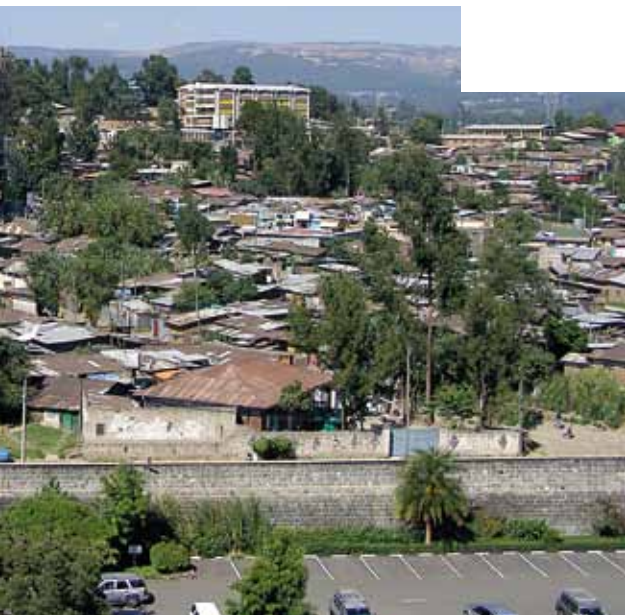
relationships among people who are different but are accepted as equals: each one different and each one equal.” The EoC proposes two elements that mark these relationships: reciprocity and communion. Living these words gets us out of the plague of insecurity because they go beyond someone being good to someone else; communion gives life to reciprocity.

Lowering her papers, Professor Sanz asked the 650 participants at the assembly: “Who are the poor among us? And who are the rich?” The looks and glances among the participants were interrupted by the voice of the moderator: “If we take the charism of unity [the Focolare spirituality of communion] seriously, many things will begin to change. We realize that wealth and poverty are mainly matters of relationships and that, in every case, wealth becomes part of a good and happy life when it is shared with others.”

For Dr. Sanz, therefore, it is time to “overcome the ‘poor people’ and ‘rich people’ categories and discover that everyone in the world has a gift to offer to the others.” It is time to “discover that the poverty of others also contains wealth and values that allow everyone to experience how important we all are to our happiness.

“It is only when those in trouble feel loved, respected, and are treated with dignity, that they can find the will to climb out of the plague of instability and get back on their journey. It is only then that aid, funds, contracts and business relationships can be used as secondary elements and tools toward personal and global development.”

Basically, the Central African professor is asking for a Copernican revolution. And that is exactly what, in her opinion, the EoC is undertaking, both in the choices of entrepreneurs who are part of it and in the work of scholars who are putting down its theoretical foundations.



Spreading the ideals of the Economy of Communion in *academia* around the world

The first thesis on the Economy of Communion dates back to June 1992, just one year after the project was launched. In fact, in 1991 Chiara Lubich entrusted the EoC's "cultural enrichment" to the youth, inviting them to "use their energy for this program" and make the EoC's experience of life a "theory" that could spread in the economic, theological, sociological and philosophical sectors.

Since then and with great generosity, hundreds of young people have embarked on this adventure, risking something as important as their theses and dissertations in various fields of study. It is largely due to them, especially in the early years, that the ideas of the EoC spread in academia around the world.

An electronic archive, started in 1994, today lists over 300 theses on the EoC. Written in 14 different languages, they come from all the continents. Here are some recently posted additions that can be found at ecodicom.net.



Antonella
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Studies *on the EoC*



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Master's in Foundations
and Perspectives of a Culture of
Unity — Economics

Sophia University Institute,
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January 2011
Language: Portuguese

Processes, management, structure
and corporate culture in an organization
with ideal motives

Thesis chair: Dr. Luigino Bruni

EoC companies, and more generally Organizations with Ideal Motives, are challenged to develop and grow while remaining true to their ideals and values from which they originated. The thesis, by applying the theoretical model of Edgar Schein, studies the mechanisms of fixation and transmission of culture within the EoC company, Azur Crafts.



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November 2010
Language: Portuguese

Crisis as an opportunity
to rethink economics

Thesis chair: Nuno Ornelas Martins

Generally, markets are not capable of self-regulation, which suggests the need for a radical paradigm change, one that renounces the current vision of economics formulated on the rationality of a self-interested economic agent. It is necessary to identify legal and fiscal configurations that allow the development of new forms of business, which seek profit as a humanizing instrument of the market and of society.



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October 2010
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The Economy of Communion and the educational challenge

Thesis chair: Prof. Giovanna Acciarito

The EoC project is analyzed for the importance it has given to education and formation of people with a global mind who can give their contribution to the civil, economic and political life of their country. The EoC gives an educated answer to the economic, social and cultural world, forming with courage, perseverance and bold training the highest treasure of our culture and civilization: the human person.



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Ways of fighting poverty: Economy of Communion and microcredit

Thesis chair: Prof. Liliana Bàculo

The study focuses on interviews with EoC businesses and the Moscati Foundation for Microcredit in Campania. The study concludes that both microcredit and the EoC create beneficial effects in the areas of production, increased employment, income, consumption and worker participation — therefore, human development.



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Key connections for a way of communion: linking the Economy of Communion project to corporate social responsibility and workplace democracy

Thesis chair: Dr. John Dugas

This thesis evaluates the extent to which the EoC project embodies the criteria established by the paradigms of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and workplace democracy, while examining the practices of EoC businesses in Brazil and Argentina, and the possibility of establishing a link between the EoC and the larger debates of CSR and workplace democracy.

International archive of theses on the Economy of Communion:

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Theses and dissertations on the EoC are available online at ecodicom.net. The EoC website edc-online.org is in five languages. Go to the home page and in the sub-menu there is an update of EoC events and news. See other sections for bibliography, statistics, audios, videos, articles and more.

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