



NEWSLETTER OPLAN[©] 1

When Poverty Meets Communion:
first pages of a 31-year story



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Presentation

The Leo Andringa Poverty Observatory (OPL) is an international research center that analyzes development, poverty, and vulnerability from a multidimensional perspective and through the "lens" of the economy of communion, seeking to identify and measure our contribution to the global anti-poverty agenda.

Based on more than 30 years of experience, this observatory studies and sheds light on what happens when poverty meets communion, that is, what effects emerge where the link between vulnerability and opportunity happens. The result is a *modus operandi* marked by fundamental values: the value of work, the culture of encounter, and the sense of global community, our central contributions to building a new economy and our economy of communion, born because "there are no more needy among us," words of EoC founder Chiara Lubich.



OPLA - Poverty Observatory, is named after one of the recently deceased lead authors of the EoC, Leo Andringa, for his insight into the necessary gentleness in the process of distributing development aid to people experiencing poverty.

1.2 CONTEXT

Between October 2019 and April 2020, a survey was conducted by OPLA in order to gain a more objective understanding of the contributions of the EoC to the cause of eradicating poverty, which motivated its beginning in 1991 ("...we will not rest as long as there are poor among us...", Chiara Lubich, May 30, 1991).

In this regard, forty interviews were conducted (between October 2019 and April 2020) with people from around the world who told how they have tried to implement the principles of the economy of communion with respect to fighting poverty. This newsletter aims to summarize the main results of these interviews, as well as other experiences since the interviews were conducted.

2. VALUE PROPOSAL

From the analysis of the interviews and the texts produced over the years, it was possible to identify the phenomenon that occurs when poverty meets people and organizations that are part of the economy of communion: communion is achieved. *We all have the experience of communion and each of us can define it in a unique and particular way.*

With the OPLA we seek to identify, based on an analysis of the stories of those who have lived it, the recurring elements found in our experiences of communion, so that we can better evaluate and measure *the impacts of our actions and the use of our resources.*

We realized, also based on the listening processes experienced in Brazil in recent years, that communion could be defined as a culture of encounter, capable of generating connection and sharing of intentions, talents, gifts and resources with the goal of building a sense of a more fraternal, just and equitable global community.

In the experiences analyzed, we identified four elements that make up the life of the EoC in the world, despite the cultural diversity that characterizes us: *the value of work; the culture of encounter; the sense of global community; and the link between vulnerability and opportunity*, that is: communion in life and in the economy, of intentions, gifts, talents, and resources.



VALUE OF WORK

The EoC sees work as everyone's essential contribution in building and improving the world. Through work, people can feel useful, worthy, they can feel that they are doing their part for society, and that they live for something greater than themselves. Work, therefore, has a dynamic at two levels: personal and community. You do something for the community, and in doing so, you fully realize yourself as a person.

CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

Encounter. The potential of the human being is born from the culture of encounter. This is one of the cornerstones of the EoC. The encounter always takes place between people who, in the encounter with the other, discover who they are. Because the other acts as a mirror, in contrast with the other one can clearly understand one's own characteristics and, therefore, one's own potential and fragility, realizing in this way that one can be a gift to the other. By promoting these encounters, the EoC aims to establish a true culture of encounter, which underpins the change in the socio-economic paradigm on which it is based.

SENSE OF GLOBAL COMMUNITY

We often talk about inclusion. However, to say that you include someone presupposes that the other comes from outside, a particular group - you can only include what is outside. Therefore, the EoC assumes that we are all part of a global community, which conceives us as interconnected and interdependent.

VULNERABILITY-OPPORTUNITY CONNECTION

Let's talk about the Economy of Communion. But what does communion mean? Our culture has brought us an awareness of the need for a new commitment to the restoration of social equity that we want to see realized, because all people deserve to have a life of dignity. In this sense, communion is realized when there is an encounter between vulnerability and opportunity. It should be emphasized that there is no such thing as a giver and a receiver, but within the dynamics of the EoC everyone can offer what they have, ensuring that there is no difference between what should normally be seen as 'promoter' and 'beneficiary'.

3. EXPERIENCES

The word experience is derived from the verb to experiment. The EoC was born with the desire to offer a solution to the problem of inequality: while flying over São Paulo, Chiara Lubich wondered why the resources generated and concentrated in the skyscrapers were not circulating in the poorest communities. The solution she proposed is simple: *let's work together, share our wealth, our resources, our gifts, because we are members of a single global community.* His words, addressed to a group of young people the day after the EoC was founded, say a lot about our mission: 'don't rest while someone will still be hungry'. Today we know that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, and that economic scarcity is *an expression and result of various absences and vulnerabilities of resources of different natures: emotional, psychological, relational, cultural, political, and many others.* The EoC is a movement of people who choose together to experiment with different ways and strategies to generate and share wealth and gifts to defeat the various forms of poverty that exist in the world today. Let us look together at some of these experiences.



3.1 AFRICA



Communion that allows and reinforces the valorization and growth of the local culture and economy: an experience of encounter between Ireland and Burkina Faso.



Paul O'Connelly, an entrepreneur from Ireland tells us:

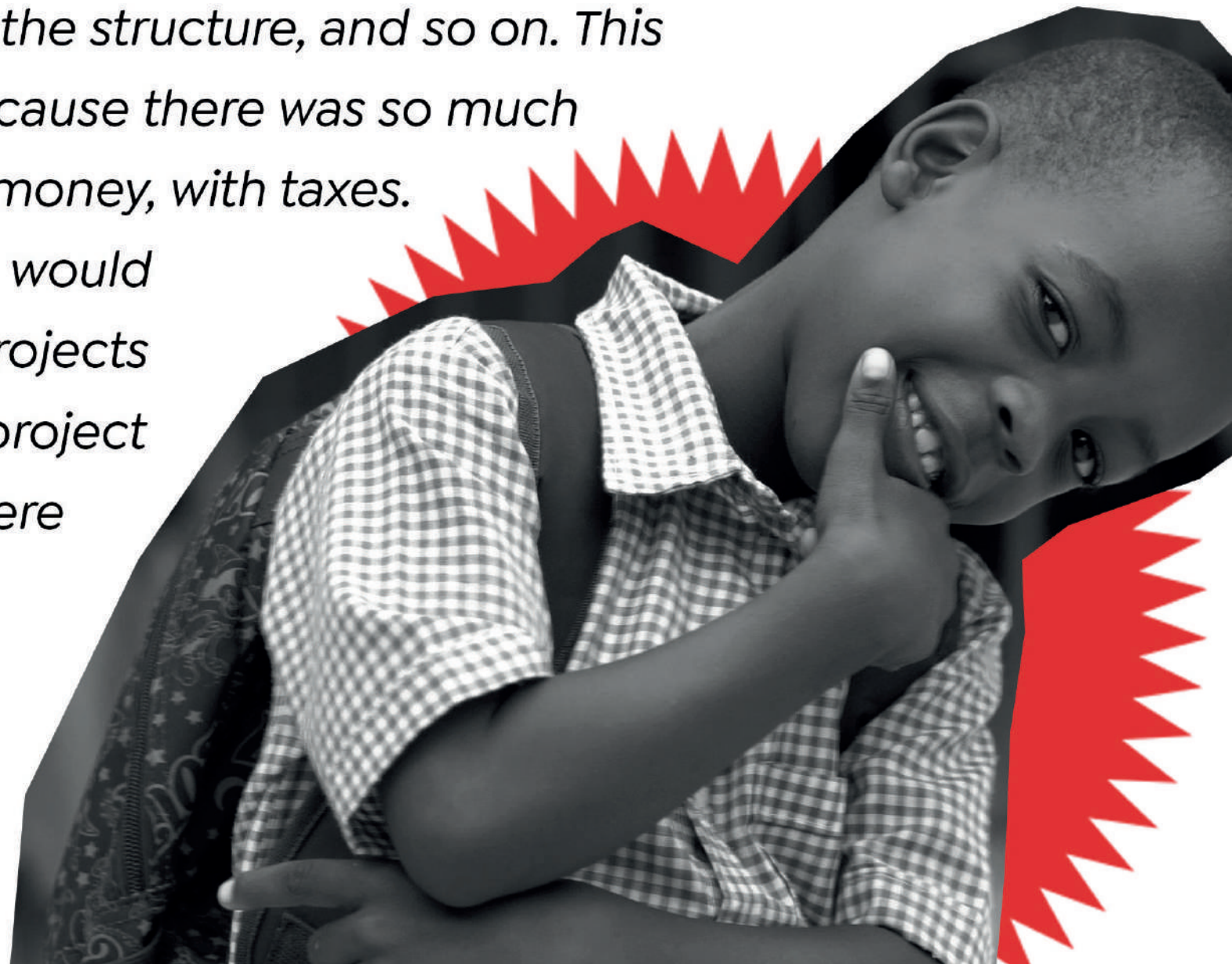
"My company then contributed to the EoC from the beginning - to the general EoC fund, not to a specific project. But then, eight years ago, I met a priest from Burkina Faso. He was doing a master's degree at an Irish university on non-profit business. He knew something about the EoC, so he came to my house, and in the conversation we had, it turned out that he really wanted to set up an agricultural school in Burkina Faso. So because he was so dedicated to this, I felt it would be good and made the decision to send some of my funding to his agricultural school instead of to the general EdC fund.



*I have a 150 euro contribution that I make regularly (every month) and 100 goes to him while the other 50 still goes to the general fund. So this is what goes every month as a **sustainable contribution** to him. But then, if my business does well, I can give more (for example, this year we sent him €11,000). So there is a basic contribution of about €3,000 that goes to his school every year, but some years it is much more. And then the value of money in Burkina Faso is much higher, so the contributions from here are much more out there. So because there were large contributions at the beginning, and various people who knew the project were making various donations, there was a fair amount of money that went out to the agricultural school that was set up 5-6 years ago and then continues to grow.*

***They built classrooms, also houses for the cattle, for the pigs,** etc. The last contribution was partly from the EdC and partly from the Contea Council, which gave 3,500 euros. Over the years, let's say you spent the money on what it was intended for - the bricks, the walls, the structure, and so on. This relationship was very important because there was so much confusion in Africa with corporate money, with taxes.*

He understood this situation, so he would always send us pictures of all the projects we funded and you could see the project that was built, finished. We went there three years ago



We built a milking panel so they could milk the cattle. We decided not to send the milking equipment from here, but to buy something there, because the cost of sending it to that country is very high. So this is a request: should we have recipients send this material (milking equipment, school supplies, clothes) and spend this money, or should we give them the money. During this trip we met the local community and the relationship was deepened because we went there, we understood better what was needed, we understood what the area was like. It was good to deepen the relationship by making the trip, meeting the local people, the local tribal leaders, the young people who study at the school and produce crops. The school has fifty students this year, boys and girls, about 18 years old or younger. In Burkina Faso there are many people who go to university and graduate, but have no technical experience. So he really wants to give the students the technical skills to take care of the cattle, cultivate the fields, take care of the chickens, produce eggs."



All people have something to share. This is the Economy of Communion!



Steve Azeumo, an EoC entrepreneur from Cameroon tells us:

"EoC-In Cameroon Hub is an incubator and coworking space. When we go to universities, various schools and other places we get in touch with young people and entrepreneurs. First, the young people who contact us can start training for a minimum of 3-6 months and a maximum of 2 years. In the beginning we help them to mature their business ideas. We tell them one thing: if it is a concrete business idea, it implies a vision that you are ready to commit your whole life to - your life is, in a way, based on this idea. That means you have to really focus on it and try to consider it and make it a real business. Then in our coworking space we give them a table so that they can have a kind of office where they can work. Fourth, we do a survey with them to assess what their weaknesses are, what they should be trained on, what they need to further develop their business ideas.



*During their stay with us, they mature their ideas very well and develop a business plan. It is true that during this crisis there are people who try to abuse others by using the excuse of the crisis to enrich themselves, while there are others who are really in need. So, to help them, we said: **let's organize the training**. We organize it together with the young people we had trained before and who can now give their skills and time, and we try to **build relationships with the participants**. The training aims to help the participants get on their feet and try to feed their families through their concrete skills that they have decided to learn and specialize in - shoe factory, soap (powder, liquid, cubes), etc. In this last year (since December 2018), we have been able to train over 400 young men and women. But how did it all start? In the beginning, we were faced with the crisis, but we didn't know what to do, and we wondered what it could be. We didn't want to feed people. Because you can't feed someone all year round. So, reflecting on this together with the young entrepreneurs we were incubating at that time, we came to a conclusion: **let's share our skills**. We couldn't give away our money, our business, but we could share our skills and start working together. That's how it all started. Sometimes we don't even have food to give to the trainers. But the participants themselves bring food to share with them. And imagine that 10 of them live together and often don't have enough food to cook for themselves. But we see them arriving with a basket full of food for the trainers, and the trainers are very happy."*



3.2 NORTH AMERICA



Companies that generate economic and social innovation, at the service of the common good

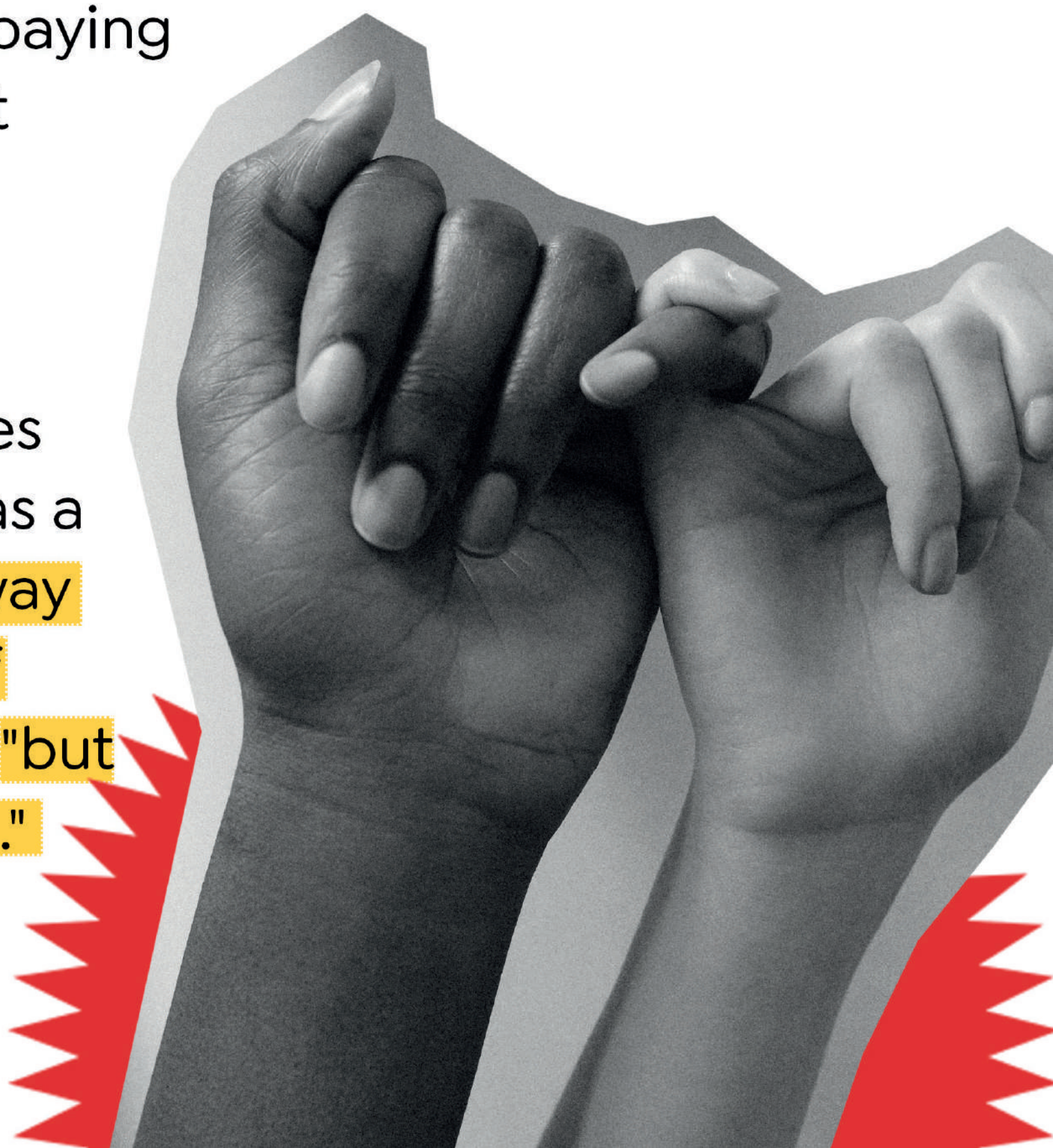


Communion Properties is a company started by Andrew Gustafson, from the United States, who felt the call to collaborate with his community.

The company invests money and energy in dilapidated buildings and rehabilitates what others reject; it gives confidence to employees, taking them from the margins of society without being scandalized by the stains of their past; and it gives confidence to tenants whom few landlords would trust. Andrew tries to base his business decisions on reasons beyond mere profit. "Where people no longer see hope," he says, "we see an opportunity, both in the houses and the people [...] and we give them a second chance." Many of the houses the company buys are 'condemned' to uninhabitability by the city administration (which forbids their use until they are fixed). Others no one wants them, except the homeless who occupy them illegally. Currently, Communion Properties manages 35 buildings with a total of over 80 housing units and over 120 tenants. In addition, it is responsible for 116 restrooms in the downtown area.



"One of the most valuable aspects of my job – Andrew is convinced of this – are the relationships with my co-workers and tenants. So the daily meeting to assign tasks to his workers is done sitting on the porch of his house, each with his good cup of tea. And the relationship with non-paying tenants, even the most problematic ones, he never wanted to delegate to others, thinking that therein lies the beauty of his task as a businessman. "In this way there is no shortage of wounds," says Andrew, "but blessings arrive as well."



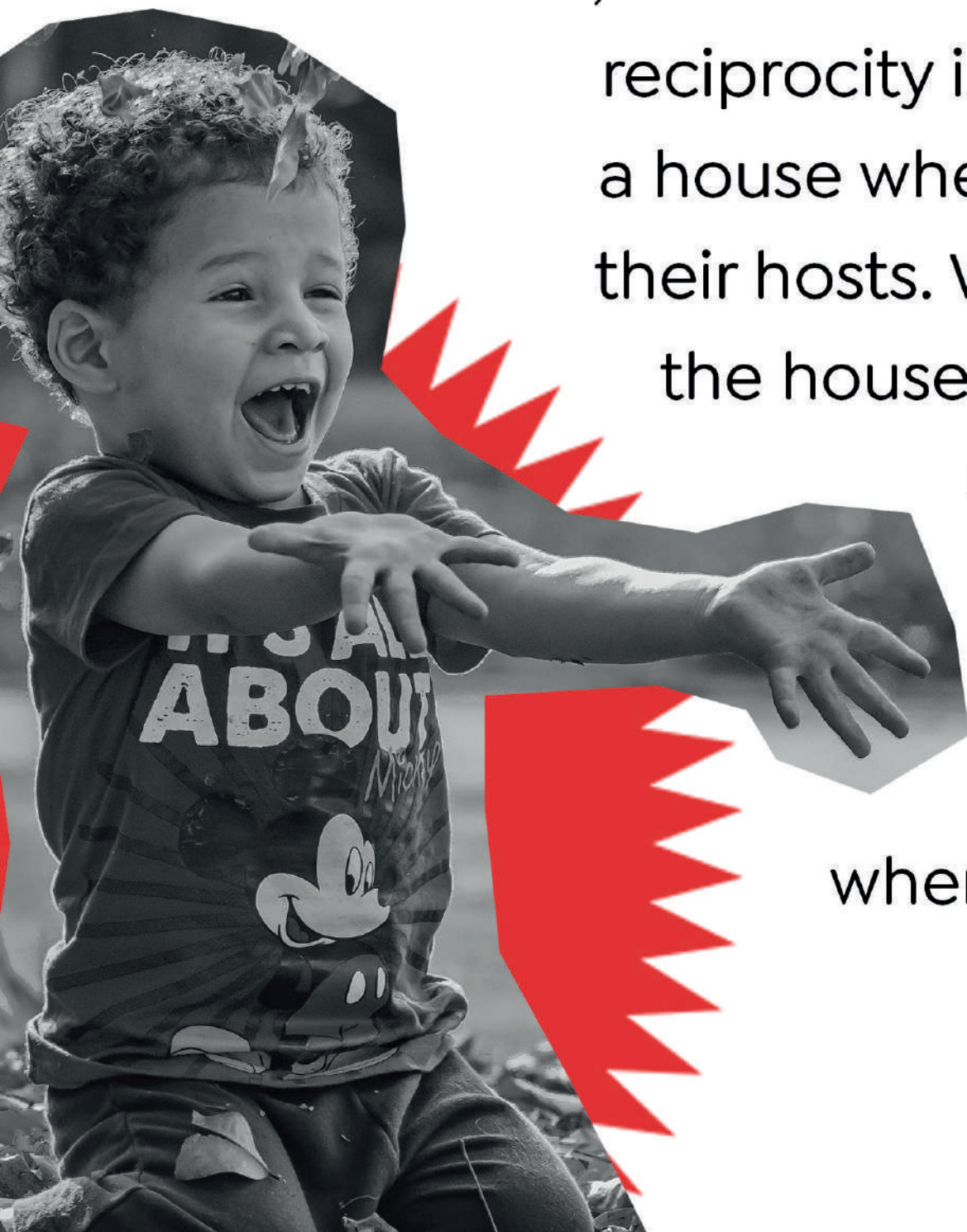
John Mundell, from the United States, tells us how Project Lia was started:



"In the last years, we have put a lot of effort, including through the internship program, into a new Project Lia with the idea of **employing women** coming out of prison. **This is a poverty issue for us**, because when they come out, they have poverty relationships. For example, they come out of prison and they may have all the previous relationships that were negative for them. That's why we decided to focus and give them **the opportunity to start new working relationships, housing relationships**. In the last few months we bought a house, because one of the problems in finding housing for women coming out of prison is that people don't like having ex-prisoners in their houses or apartments. When you want to rent a house, you have to fill out all this information, and when they find out that you've served time in prison, they don't want to let you do that. That's why we now have a **house for women**."



That's also part of the EdC, because we had this real estate company in addition to Mundell & Ass. that managed the house for internees and the other buildings that we have. So this other EdC entity called Mundell New World- Mundell New World- (Chiara gave it this name a long time ago) **offers cheaper housing.** First of all, it offers housing knowing that the women are out of prison, but also at a low cost that they can afford. Also, the house is located along a bus route so they can go to work, etc. Another important thing is to take reciprocity into consideration. Now that we have a house where the women live, we have become their hosts. We are looking to make them live in the house and take care of it. Paying the rent on time, taking care of the garden - it's another step towards becoming responsible for what they do, both where they live and where they work.



This has only started in the last two months, but it has been a very good experience. As a result, for example, one of the women has asked us to take her to church. **It is a relationship that deepens over time based on this reciprocity.** For example, three weeks ago we went to the home of one of our women because we expected her to be at work and she wasn't. I asked what was going on and she said it was the anniversary of her son's suicide. Her son had committed suicide many years ago. Wow, that is the worst thing you can imagine happening...so just being with this person that day was part of it all. Not solving anything. **Just being there."**





3.3 SOUTH AMERICA

Communion generates protagonism and creates agents of social transformation.



In 2016, the EoC in Brazil began a journey to **organize and professionalize the management of Economy of Communion resources**, with the aim of bringing greater transparency and assertiveness to the use of money. The National Association for an Economy of Communion (Anpecom), in partnership with Action for a United World (AMU) and the Focolare Movement, structured SUPERA (Program for Overcoming Economic Vulnerability), a project that provides **support to people in situations of economic vulnerability** through temporary economic support; access to secure sources for basic needs (housing, health, education, food); and processes for human, business, and cultural flourishing. Supera also identifies and supports civil society organizations to implement projects committed to EoC values in vulnerable communities. In 2021, Supera impacted the lives of 8,523 people, mobilizing BRL 318,618.00.



Francesco Tortorella, AMU's coordinator, recounts the path taken together in structuring Supera:

"The path that led to the development of the SUPERA program has its roots in 2009 when, 18 years after the birth of the EoC, the EoC itself questioned the results that the help offered to so many Brazilian families in need had generated in those years. Since 1991, in fact, the communion of goods from EoC companies and individuals was distributed to needy people and families in a very spontaneous and simple way, as a sharing, without much analysis, evaluation or organization. It was, above all, an experience of communion. This reflection brought to light the fact that it was not possible to know the results of this aid, precisely because there was a lack of specific analysis and organization in the management of this aid. So we organized a week-long training meeting in 2010 in Belem for people involved in the management of the aid in the Focolare Movement in Brazil, together with AMU, AFN, EdC and Youth for a United World.



In the years following those reflections and that meeting, the management of this aid gradually passed to ANPECOM, which gradually developed the desire to organize and manage it professionally and more effectively, while maintaining the vital spirit of the experience of communion. Thus, around 2015, ANPECOM and AMU began together a gradual evolution of the management of aid to families for basic needs: food, health, study, housing. For a few years, we worked hard to put each person's life and story at the center of this action: getting to know, listening, visiting, understanding their needs and dreams, identifying the personal and family goals to be obtained, thinking about what to do to achieve them, and organizing to follow this path. This is how SUPERA took shape. It was necessary to identify and form a team of volunteer workers who, in the various regions of Brazil, could accompany the paths of the needy people who would participate in the program, with the necessary basic skills, and the ability and desire to create communion. A computerized data management system was created and organized to monitor the situation of all SUPERA participants in the country.



This gradual work has made it possible to delve deeper into the life of each person "helped" and together identify with them the most effective ways to improve their life without depending on someone else's help, but by putting into play their own abilities, access to public services available in the area or the opportunities offered by local civil society organizations, even receiving temporary economic support from the EoC if necessary, but above all being accompanied and guided along this path by the ANPECOM community. The launch of the SUPERA program has meant a greater protagonism of Brazilian civil society in relation to the needs of people in need: ANPECOM has taken on the responsibility of experiencing that communion is possible even when managed in a professional way, and that these two aspects are not at odds with each other, on the contrary, they can reinforce each other.



I personally and AMU as a whole have learned a lot from this collaboration with ANPECOM, from the seriousness and competence with which Celia has coordinated the program from the beginning, and from Maria Helena's perseverance and ability to bring people together and improve their talents to better serve those in need. For AMU, this path represents a very significant experience of cooperation with a local partner, of intercultural dialogue and mutual training, a concrete experience of how it is possible to transform aid into reciprocal development. The great ANPECOM team has shown that together we can experience that model of human development "of communion" to which we all aspire".



Celia, the project coordinator, tells us about an interesting case that happened in the project:

"We have several participants, so we have seen how this reciprocity has grown, so that a participant who had received support one year, the next year starts helping other people. He may not be able to give money, but he starts to help concretely by donating his time, his professionalism. An example is a young woman who studies physical education. After the annual EoC meeting and the Anpecom assembly, where we always try to bring at least one representative of the SUPERA participants from the various regions of the country, she started thinking and said: now I realize that I can give a lot. And she started to help the children. She calls it a project (and I can say it is a great project) where she teaches three different kinds of sports to at-risk kids. It started with boys and girls and lately it has also included mothers to whom it offers a physical education program. So it may not be giving something in a material sense, but it is still giving to its community in this way. And it is such an interesting thing that it has even attracted the attention of the municipality, which has called her and proposed her to be part of a public project in her town. And she is very happy because she says: besides giving, I feel that I am gaining a lot - experience, for example (she is currently in her third year of university). One thing she said to me last year was: "I never thought I would help someone to realize their dreams. I am helping these kids realize their dreams."



Camila Leofico, who won a scholarship and participated in the program, talks about her participation:

"With Supera I learned that I also have something to give, I have my time and experience in handball. So I started training students in a school, but seeing the importance of being able to involve other children at risk I created a handball and futsal project: Projeto Renascer. Currently, 106 children and teenagers between the ages of 8 and 17 participate in the project. We work a lot with the idea that life is like a game: we win, we lose, we have difficulties, we make mistakes and we do well, but we can never give up and we have to always believe that we are capable of winning".

In November, at a handball tournament, Camila received the best coach award



Valdeci Ferreira, along with his wife, also participated in SUPERA and told what they experienced through the project:

Valdelci Ferreira says: "I think it is rewarding for those who donate and also for those who receive.. and when we receive things, we can also give them to other people. That is why I think it is important for us to participate in SUPERA. Where we live is very nice, because it is what God has given us, but our dream was to enlarge our house to have a space for my children, to have a place for them to study because they work very hard, but we couldn't afford to give this to them. If we receive, we must also give, and that is what is happening here. As I am receiving this help to improve my house, I thought I should give something to Marcio who is also renovating his house, so I offered to do the roof of his house, and we will do the roof there and I think he will be very happy to receive help, because from the moment I am receiving, I can also give".



Rosa, wife of Valdeci Ferreira says:

"I always asked my husband to enlarge the house because the space was too small, I always complained to him, then he told me that one day, when he could, he would enlarge it. One day he started to make the kitchen here, where the wood oven was, so we were a little happy, but he couldn't finish the kitchen or enlarge anything in the house and we lived like this. But the joy we feel is very great for what is happening, the children always say: now I will have a room, I will have a place to study. I would like to thank the people who help and say don't give up on people who need help, because many people need help, it's not just us, there are many people who need help... don't give up on the mutual love you have for each other. By giving you will always receive! Thank you!"



Challenging economic paradigms: companies working to serve people



"Some years ago I was working in a bank when I heard Chiara Lubich speak about the economy of communion. This had a strong impact on me because I didn't work for the poor, I worked for the rich, because the bank has the profits, but they go to the owners, not to the poor. So, together with my children who were teenagers, we decided that I would work for the poor, as Chiara asked. I found the answer in the bank building where I worked. The cleaning women were poorly paid, poorly advised. So I said I could do this, but with a lot of love - pay them the right amount, supporting them in developing skills that would give them more and more value as people. When they are employed in the company they receive a decent salary with all the necessary social benefits. In Paraguay, we are the only cleaning company that pays at the end of the month, while other companies only pay in the middle of the next month.



The same applies to the other social benefits we offer our employees. We also pay overtime. Since we are a cleaning company, there is always work on the weekend, for example, and this is paid double. The contract also provides for different types of training - on health, on family, on safety. In February we will ask everyone: who wants to study? There are some who, for example, show a desire to do a short course for electricians, or others who want to finish their studies. Based on this we make a plan. We usually pay their travel expenses so they don't have the excuse that they can't go because they didn't have any money. And the education is then free, we take over the costs. This is in the education area, but also in the health area. We also have a hair salon where four people work. Because when you have to hire and pay a hairdressing team or the ophthalmologist or other medical examinations, we cover the costs of these services. The incentive for the person to finish school, university, studies in general, is always on our side. For example, I have an employee on the administrative side who started working with a specific schedule to allow her to finish school. So, several times you have people who ask to work a specific schedule in order to complete their studies. And we try to facilitate that, to give them that opportunity to be able to finish. Our goal is always to make sure that the person has more knowledge, finishes his or her studies and then can also make a greater contribution by working for us.



3.4 ASIA



The company generates human prosperity



Matteo Choi and Fonte from South Korea tell how they try to promote human flourishing from a business initiative

"The 'Sacred Heart' bakery, located in the city of Daejeon in central Korea and with about 400 employees, for example, distributes daily the remaining fresh bread that they could not sell. This is a large amount of bread that they distribute **every evening after closing** to about 80 social works (which take care of orphans and others). So in just one month, the bread distributed in this way is worth about 40,000 euros. In addition, they have a group of volunteer employees called "Sacred Care" who once a month, on their day off, go to these houses (for example, to a Don Bosco house) and play games there, study with the children, bake bread, etc. In addition, they also try to help employees in difficulties - for example, when they need to pay for the care of their elderly parents. It is the company itself that provides support for the cost of an operation, for example. For years 'Sacred Heart' has had a dream, a desire to organize a course in which **this idea of economy of communion and civil economy can be spread.**





They are thinking about it, but they don't yet have enough elements to start. They have a stable program with which they train employees to improve the technique of making bread. Some employees even go to Japan to participate in training every year, they still get their salaries, even if they don't work directly in Korea. This is why the employees usually have **great trust and loyalty to the company.** It is not common to train employees in this way, because then the entrepreneur also runs the risk of losing them when they become good and prefer to start their own companies."

Generate a systemic vision on the importance of poverty eradication



Consulus is a Singaporean consulting firm that seeks to implement a radical choice: prefer the poor. Lawrence Chong tells us how:

“Most consultants, when they grow, their prices increase and therefore they cannot serve small businesses. But from our point of view, we have a way to increase our influence through consulting to create **a fairer economy**. So we have made the commitment that, however much we grow, our business model must allow us to serve companies that have no money. That is why we have adopted a 1/3 profile. One third of the companies we serve are very wealthy and we don't give them a discount. We then have a second third that are influence projects where we can influence the EoC itself. We are very interested in serving these companies. Maybe they can't pay much, but they still pay us. And then we have a third of the projects that we follow and subsidize them. For example, if the project is worth \$10,000, we charge \$2,000. We may even offer our service for free, but we still want them to pay, so that they feel that they are paying, that we are serving them.





That is what we are doing with ANPECOM – they pay us \$500 for something that is worth \$5,000. That's why we remain as a network – we don't increase the cost of the whole consulting business so that **we can always be able to interact with small businesses that are struggling**, but at the same time, care about employing 5, 2 people. This is an important mission, an important aspect for us. A second thing we decided was: we don't want to give according to our profit. Because if you give according to your profit, that means you only give when you have it. But Chiara never said: 'When I have it, I give it'. So, at CONSULUS every year we give. We also decided that we will not only give money. For example, we can give a week's work that would otherwise earn us \$10,000. For a consultant, a consulting firm, **it is time that has the most value**. So we decided to give that real value, doing these projects as if they were paid. We work with a big network in Singapore that runs a lot of charities and gives \$1.5 million, doing everything for free. It is a personal encounter with the people they serve (elderly, disabled, etc.), getting to know them makes them identify the help they need. This involvement, **knowing their concerns, their fears** are very important to us."

3.5 EUROPE



The company working for a global community



Livio Bertola, Italian entrepreneur, talks about how he seeks to put his business at the service of a community that goes beyond borders:

"What can be done concretely? Starting from the territory itself, the company **must exist for the community**, it must help the community where there are also people in need. We, for example, have been hiring refugees for some years now, migrants who are being expelled all the time. We chose precisely those migrants who came from the poorest countries (from Central Africa, from the Sahel region) - we made a targeted choice because we wanted to choose the poorest among the migrants there. In addition, also from other religions different from ours. A good part, even now, are Muslims from Senegal and neighboring countries. Today they are well integrated, some of them are team leaders to whom we **leave the production activity in their hands**. We have done some training. There is total confidence. All this shows that this perceived 'danger' of the 'different' is nonsense, because people of good will are everywhere. In order to help these people, we not only gave them the work, but also helped them find housing, trained them, and even helped them economically when we saw that they were at risk of usury with the banks (therefore intervening, acting as guarantors)".



Communion of goods, talents and gifts: a collaborative and communion economy



From Portugal, Herman Rodriguez, tells us how communion and the collaborative economy take shape in the initiatives launched by the EoC core:

"So from the very beginning we have tried to emphasize the importance of this impact on poverty. Of course this often doesn't just involve giving money, but it is inherent in the way we behave and relate to each other with a great concern not to create more poverty, but on the contrary, **to help develop the local economy as well**. All these elements are already present in the projects. We then observe acts of reciprocity, even in small things. A few days ago, for example, we started to prepare a small community store in the pole. So many of those we followed as centers, began to understand what they didn't need and brought them to us. Then one of the interior design entrepreneurs offered to help us make the small store beautiful; others brought furniture... Another example was when one of the businessmen - a photographer - offered to take pictures for the one who sews children's clothes. Another offered to do the photo shoot in her house because she has a beautiful garden, etc. So **there is this dynamic of sharing the talents and also the material goods.**"



LAST WORDS


for AMU e OPLA



When I believe that I, like anyone else, need something and at the same time have something to give... when I believe that I, like anyone else, am poor and rich at the same time... I am no longer afraid of encountering poverty and I am no longer afraid of hurting the dignity of those in need, because I don't go to help them thinking that I am capable of solving their problems, but I go to them unarmed, with my own hands, to be with them, to listen to them and to understand them: what do we want and what can we do together to make our lives flourish?

Facing the encounter with poverty in this way implies an inner revolution.

For those who are used to help, to finding solutions to the problems of others, this implies accepting that they are poor, that they need others, accepting that they are not indispensable. It implies learning to be silent, not to propose solutions before listening. It implies learning to do the midwife's job: accompany the mother to the most beautiful moment of her life, the birth of her child, and then disappear. That child is not hers and the midwife knows it, it is not born thanks to her, but thanks to the mother who carried it and she knows it. But without her company the mother, alone, would not survive.



.Living to bring poverty and communion together implies this: to accompany people to their most beautiful moment, **the one in which their life flourishes and blossoms together, in a movement in which everyone grows in synchrony.** From the encounter between vulnerability and opportunity, between poverty and communion, a true Economy of Communion is born, where we are all equal and able to build together **new pages** of human history.

And there is so much life! Having the opportunity to travel the world through the told experiences of the Economy of Communion is certainly an opportunity to do two things: to renew within oneself the hope, indeed the certainty, **that life not only can flourish, but that it already does!** On the other hand, it is also a new commitment to make, or redo, **the choice to live** for a world where poverty can truly find communion, and to roll up our sleeves **to take on all the responsibility that this entails.** It is true that what we live, in a sense, influences how we see the world and the situations around us. It is equally true - or perhaps even truer - that the world can change, as can our view of it, depending on how much life we know. OPLA, then, is nothing more than an answer to the following question posed by Rutger Bregman in his book "Humanity: a Hopeful History": **"how would you change your life and your worldview if you knew that people were good?"**

GO, TOGETHER!

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