

Economy of Communion

a new culture

Editor's insert from Città Nuova n. 13/14 - 2015

One Company is not Enough

41

Nairobi 2015: Yes to an Economy of Communion



The Gospel lived in community



Together we can make dreams come true



The Pact: My company is not enough

**Economy of Communion
a new culture**

Newsroom insert
AIEC – International Association for an
Economy of Communion

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Table of Contents

3	The New “Bomb” of Nairobi	<i>Alberto Ferrucci</i>
4	Being Creative. For the Other	<i>Alberto Sturla</i>
5	Ubuntu Means Sharing	<i>Geneviève Sanze</i>
6	Life in the Community of Glolé	<i>Gilbert Gba Zio</i>
8	For an African Economy Faithful to Its Vocation	<i>Maria Voce</i>
9	Let's Learn to See the Tree Growing	<i>Luigino Bruni</i>
10	Together We Can Make Dreams Come True	<i>Anouk Grevin</i>
12	One Company is not Enough	<i>Ornella Seca</i>
13	The Style of an EoC Company	<i>Giuseppe Argiolas</i>
14	Real Wealth and Poverty	<i>Luca Crivelli</i>
15	The Richness of Communion	<i>Lorna Gold</i>
16	Formy 33	<i>Vittorio Sedinì</i>

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Let's create our future! It is in our hands!

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Info: www.edc-online.org; **Facebook:** EdC Giovani

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The New Bomb of Nairobi

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Leaving the central committee of the EoC for new tasks in the service of the Work of Mary and the Church, at the close of the conference for which she gave her spirit and inspiration, Geneviève Sanzeci confided: «I do not fear anymore that the Economy of Communion may get exhausted, because it has already become a culture: for these three hundred people who came here from all over the world, the Economy of Communion is now a way of life».

The conference in Nairobi was so special that Maria Voce, who had opened it with her message, felt inspired to use the words of the Brazilians upon the first announcement in 1991, namely that in Nairobi a *new bomb* had exploded.

The EoC entrepreneurs and scholars came to Nairobi notwithstanding the discomfort of long journeys, the unusual environmental conditions and the fear of terrorist actions that had led to move the conference to the little town of the movement. Once here, they were given the *gift* of meeting many young Africans, led by entrepreneurs of the Pan-African commission who

came to the school that preceded the congress, sometimes with trips that lasted several days, bringing their dreams to be realized with a new economy.

The *gift* was to see how the seeds of this new economy flourished, as they fell in a terrain not yet dried up by the culture of selfishness and all the rubbish spread by contemporary Western media - that is rejected in such an extreme way by Islamic fundamentalism, but is also alien to Pope Francis, who has not watched television for twenty-five years now.

An example of this creativity made fertile by love was provided by the head of a village from the Ivory Coast: despite a situation that we would call poverty, interpreting the words of the Gospel within his culture he has put together the resources of everyone to

build houses for strangers, travellers passing through the village and pregnant women at risk, as well as warehouses for the products made by the villagers. He even had the wisdom to reject the precious gift of a well that would have compromised the greater common good, the harmony among all the villagers. His example was later followed by other villages, too.

The magic moment of the conference came when each and every participant engaged in a natural way of listening to the projects, dreams, studies of the other and when the gradual blooming of business cards started on the billboards pointing out the dreams of young future entrepreneurs as a sign of the willingness of those who are less young and more

experienced, offering their help to realize them. All this was happening in a dynamic where you could not see who is the one giving and who is receiving as all was about love and everyone was given a hundredfold of what they originally had. This is why the entrepreneurs, from whichever latitude they came, realised that for them "one company is not enough", and together with the young people they felt the urge - in an explosion of colour, African clothes and others, white faces and others - to sign a pact: I promise to dedicate my life as an apostle of the Economy of Communion and so make my contribution in the most just and fraternal way possible so that the greatest dream of Chiara may come true: «*That all may be one*».



Changing things by taking care of one person at a time

Being Creative. *For the Other*

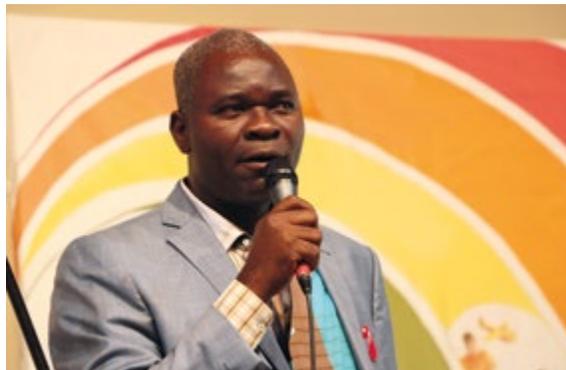
ALBERTO
STURLA



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Between 26 and 31 May this year I had the opportunity to participate in the fifth international congress of the Economy of Communion. I took part in the work like someone who is simply curious, but as I write this I realize that in fact someone had to represent Liguria, the region where I come from and where some significant EoC initiatives can be found on both the national and international level. First of all it was fascinating to experience the diversity of member companies: from the joint-stock company to the small agricultural enterprise, from the bank to the stationery shop. There is no minimum economic size for the EoC. It is about a "vocation" that commits the employer just where he is, with the means at his disposal. To this structural diversity a creative one is added, expressing the commitment to the poor and the community. You can see how entrepreneurs do not interpret this commitment the same way, but decline it in an original way according to their respective contexts. There are companies that donate a portion of their production to the poor living in their area, and some others that through self-financing provide services that otherwise no one would finance, and also some others that are protagonists of local development projects. Examples of concrete actions are innumerable.

I was struck to hear competent entrepreneurs talk about gift, gratuitousness, trust, providence: concepts completely out of the economic discourse



and now brought to the attention of the productive and scientific community through the constant and silent activity of a few hundred companies, almost all of them small if not microscopic realities, spread all over the world.

For these companies, belonging to the EoC does not mean showing off some kind of a certification as a label (which does not exist and I think it is better that way), it is not cleaning their conscience with the kind of philanthropic actions that are so pervasive in the social reports of certain multinationals that are directly responsible for so many distortions. It means to try to change things in the only way possible: by taking care of one person at a time.

I have had the opportunity to appreciate how practice is being flanked by a solid theory, that finally, even if timidly, is being recognized by the *mainstream* school. But without forgetting that «the EoC is for the poor, not for the teachers», as Chiara Lubich said.

Finally, I am taking home with me the beauty of nature in Africa, where I was able to immerse myself for a few days before the congress, in the places where, in very ancient times, man who was not yet Man learned how to cooperate. It's written in our DNA: through their actions EoC entrepreneurs remind us of the things that really matter.



The culture of communion helps us look around, without being locked inside our poverty

Ubuntu Means Sharing

GENEVIÈVE
A.M. SANZE



«I am what I am because of what all of us, without exception, are».

An anthropologist proposed a game to the children of a tribe in South Africa. He put a basket of fruit near a tree and told the children that the one to reach it first would win all the fruits. At his signal all children simultaneously sprang...joining hands! Then they sat down to enjoy their reward. When the anthropologist asked them why they had done so, they said *Ubuntu*, that is: how can one of us be happy if the others are sad?

This trend towards community solidarity expresses the essence of African culture. We can share our joy, pain, goods and difficulties. Although the individual may have a significant role, there is no room for selfish individualism. This may be the gift of our continent to the entire human race, to modern global society that is characterized by selfishness, fear of the other and a tendency to get closed in around ourselves.

Perhaps many of us cannot produce great wealth or create jobs, but surely we can stand together and form a communion, the first response to situations of crisis, in order to create relationships, peace and

trust with God and with our brothers and sisters. Communion is more important than any economic wealth.

It is not only communion between a person in need and another that offers help, the first communion is that of the souls, of life, of the hearts: everyone has a heart, life and soul to give and share.

We must find new ways to enter into the culture of the other by becoming aware of its diversity and recognizing its richness. If we engage in helping an entire people in general, we make its poverty clear, and it loses its wealth, becoming doubly poor and entering a vicious circle that makes it dependent from us from which it cannot break free because it doesn't think to be able to do so. Chiara said: «You have to stand in front of everyone, ready to learn».

With this attitude I can give the person who is in front of me the opportunity to give me something, and this other person can feel important, because I need them. You can donate a house to a poor person, which for them is an absolute necessity. In return that poor person gives you a piece of fabric: the value of these gifts cannot be compared. The poor man has not even tried to figure out if this

cloth is as important to you as is the house for him, he simply gives you what is most precious for him. Unless we learn to value that humble piece of fabric, no house donated will become well-being. Whoever receives a gift must first have an experience of being welcomed as a gift. This is where the secret of communion lies.

Returning to Africa, the culture of communion helps us to look around, without being locked inside our poverty, without stretching out our hands waiting for the help of others, but to be and give together. With the Economy of Communion we have seen poor people regain their full freedom of life, dignity, joy and responsibility, in a new relationship with society.



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One day we said to ourselves: what should we do for our little village? I realised that the Words of Life lived could give me the guidelines...

Life in the Community of Glolé

GILBERT
GBA ZIO



My name is Gba Gilbert. I live in Ivory Coast, in a village called Glolé. When I left school, I felt a call from God within me. Since I did not understand it, I just kept going to church, listening to the word of God asking me to do something. But what? During this research I met the Focolare Movement.

Though I had been quite inactive till then, I suddenly realized that it was necessary to make some decisions in life. I realised that the Words of Life lived could give me the guidelines... Thanks to this new life of the Gospel, we got married in church with Martine, along with eight other couples. It was a marvellous day of celebration!

A small group was created that way, and we met frequently to strengthen our communion.



House for the “strangers” (guests)

One day we said to ourselves: what should we do for our little village? There are many people who travel through our area; they walk many miles and have to sleep on the road side till they reach their destination village. We usually give our own bed to our guests every time. This is also the Gospel’s way, but we said to ourselves: «Couldn’t we do more? Why not build small houses, so when someone arrives we could offer them somewhere to sleep?». So we started to make bricks, singing songs of joy. There were some bricklayers in our group and so we built 12 small houses with one bedroom and a small living room each. Now we can say to the strangers who arrive: «We have a house, come and sleep there». There is always some food, too, as we are farmers. This way we have made the first steps.

House of health

It takes a seven-kilometre track to get to the paved road from our village. During the rainy seasons no vehicle manages to get through and so you have to walk. Then there are 30 more kilometres to reach the first town called Man. Therefore it is not easy to travel, especially if you have to do it because of an illness.

One day there was a woman who was giving birth and it was a complicated labour. We took her to the asphalt road in a wheelbarrow to get her in a car. Thanks God the woman was saved; but it was tough. Therefore it was necessary to build a house of health and bring in some “traditional obstetricians” to help women in labour.

All these ideas were born in the moments of communion amongst us, during our meetings. After a reading [of the Bible] and sharing we ask ourselves: what will the fruits be? Everyone of us offers an idea that may help move forward, because it is useless to just wait and stand there



with crossed arms.

We wanted to build the house of health with cement bricks. But where to find the money for them?

We have the institution of tenant farming: the proprietor of a piece of land can give it to someone else to cultivate it for one season. In the end, the harvest is divided in two equal parts and shared among them. Our community took a coffee plantation: the men pulled the weed out from among the plants, the women harvested the coffee. When the coffee was sold, half of the sum gained was given to the group. With this money we could buy the cement and build the house of health. "Providence" has helped us get the money for the roof and the two special beds for childbirth. We also made some other beds from bamboo, complete with matting. A public official sent us a solar panel to provide light because there is no electricity in our village.

Later there arrived a tractor to help with the needs of the village, but also with complicated pregnancies, so those mothers did not have to be transported in a wheelbarrow any more. There are obstetricians in the house of health, who are not paid for their work. They work in shifts. In the evening, when we get back from the fields, we bring them some food. Those who have money, give them some.

Children suffering from malnutrition

There were children dying in the village and we did not know that we could actually save them. In the Little Town Victoria of the Movement, there's a Centre taking care of them. We explained the problem to them and started bringing the children in. We were surprised to see that the children were getting healed in that place without any medications. They taught us how to feed them. One day the head of the centre told us: «If you want we can go to your place». We agreed. Together we pondered the question: to whom do the children belong? In our culture a child belongs to the entire village! They explained to us how to prevent and how to

cure this illness. We started to change our food related habits, we learned that it is necessary to eat beans, peanuts, mushrooms... and we learned how to conserve food so we could give our children to eat even in times of famine.

Rice bank

We store the rice in smaller granaries, but they are frequently "visited" by thieves and mice. So we asked ourselves: couldn't we build a house to keep our rice in? We built a rammed earth house where everyone sent what they had. In the beginning we were only 30 people. Nowadays, some farmers who are not members of our group have joined us too, and 110 people are bringing their sacks of rice to keep them in our bank.

In the months of March and April, during the sowing season they come to take what they need for ploughing and they set apart what they need for feeding their children. At the right time, when the prices are good, they take away their rice and sell it. Everyone donates a part of their harvest according to their conscience and deposits it in the bank as a contribution to compensate for the needs of the community and for those who guard the rice bank.

One village is not enough

As they saw what we were doing, the people of the neighbouring villages said to us: «Couldn't you come to us with your business?». They actually called it "your business". We explained to them how the spirit of the Focolare Movement lead us in our concrete actions. They were moved and they said: «We would like to join your group, too». Today, there are 13 villages that live like us.

Unity is our richness. One day there came an outsider who wanted to help us make a well for the village. But we could not agree about the location of it. Had we insisted on having a well, it would have brought division to the village. So we preferred not to accept this gift but to keep the unity amongst us.

Excerpts from the message sent to the conference in Nairobi

For an African Economy *Faithful to Its Vocation*

MARIA
VOCE



«I am deeply happy that the Economy of Communion is having its fifth World Congress in Africa... the many African cultures have their own, special take at economy and employment, which is deeply connected to the vocation of Africa, to community and sharing. I invite you to explore your and our community vocation together so that an African economy may develop that is truly faithful to its ancient and deep vocation, meaning that it is able to combine entrepreneurial spirit and sharing, that is, economy and communion.

Since the EoC is an expression of the charisma of the Focolare Movement, it is enriched by moving along the entire Movement also today. There are some principles of action for the coming years emerging from our recent General Assembly that are particularly valid for the EoC.

Step outside. Along with Pope Francis, we also feel that the new life is born from the outskirts of existence, where you meet the people of our time, waiting for a proposal of communion. (...) There's a whole world thirsty for communion, a whole economy suffering from loneliness, individualism, lack of hope and perspective. We should announce the charisma of unity... it is at the service of the world and is meant to love, nurture, comfort the many who are waiting for it. Chiara always said to us in a very powerful way and today I say it to you. Hers and our charisma is *that all may be one*, and our fellowship will not be complete until it embraces the whole world. The EoC's horizon is the horizon of the world.

Together. To step outside effectively we must do it together. Together with whom? First of all with all those people already in the Focolare Movement who are committed to the same EoC objectives. But *together* must also be understood as together with the many people who want to join us to build an economy and a world of communion. We have to look for them and invite them to join our project. By stepping outside and cooperating with other experiences, we shall not only not lose our identity, but our truest characteristic will emerge: being instruments of communion and unity.



Well prepared. To step outside effectively, and to do it together it is important to prepare well, especially if we want to be effective in a complex and specific world as that of the economy. I invite you to potentiate the schools, to launch and sustain the already existing courses of EoC and to organise more of them, make them multiply... they function as credible witnesses of a new economy. But "average" well prepared citizens are also needed.

My last thought goes to young people. In 1991, Chiara entrusted the new culture of communion to them: many have taken up her proposal, studied and helped to give the EoC scientific dignity in all these years. Today you are there in Nairobi to continue the dream. Today we need a new generation to pick up the baton to take over after those who were young people in 1991 and to continue their cause.

Many years of life, work, and fruits are ahead of us: we must be aware of this and prepared to meet the new challenges. It is a question of responsibility, loyalty, and love.»



There are more innovations than what we can see around us. We have to accompany them to bloom

Let's Learn to See the Tree Growing

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For this meeting in Nairobi we have chosen the word 'generativity'. Generating is related to an important word in economics: innovation. Not everyone knows that *innovation* is a word from the science of botany. It is used for buds and new branches. Innovations need roots, good soil and a living plant. They are life in bloom, generativity in action. And the innovations that become food, gardens and parks also require the work and patience of the farmer or gardener who accompanies them and takes care of them. And so the bud grows into a flower, the vineyard produces good wine and the fig tree starts to generate fruit after years of infertility and does not die.

To understand what is happening to our economy and society, we need to get back to the botanical meaning of the term innovation. A first message that comes to us from the logic of innovation-bud is called *subsidiarity*: our hands and technology can only subsidize innovation, that is, they can *help* the bud bloom; but they cannot invent it. The most important part of the innovation process doesn't really depend on artificial interventions of various hands: it blooms, first of all, because of its inherent strength. For this reason it is only an illusion to think of increasing innovation in our economy without first dealing with the health of the humus, the earth, the trees and the plants. Economic and social innovations in Africa

will be born first of all from its humus, from its own land and not by hands coming from the outside, not even by the hands of the global EoC, which can only intervene at a later stage, to help the buds grow.

In our time there are more innovations than we can see, even in Africa, because we look for them in the wrong pieces of land. The EoC is the gift of eyes capable of seeing buds where others see only deserts. It is the impoverishment of vision, the collective sense of sight, which shortens the horizons and imprisons us in problems, which are also always plentiful. This is what prevents us, even in Africa, to see so much of the new economy that is already there, often among the poor, among those hungry for food and living in the suburbs of big cities. The peoples get healed when inside the suffering and aridity of the "already" they know how to see a "not yet" that is possible and better. Hope is alive and at work if together we are able to see the tree growing in the forest of falling trees, and dream and see the forest of tomorrow around this new shoot. The growing tree is already there, we just have to learn collectively to see it and bring it to bloom by accompanying it. There are many of these trees here in the African lands. There are already some EoC businesses, many young people have set off, often together: it is from these shoots that we must learn to see the forest.

Looking at all the different trees full of buds you learn a lot, and almost always during the crisis of existence, when the glint of tears makes you see otherwise and more - including the tears for the young people killed by terrorists here in Kenya, still present and painful in our eyes: tears we should not dry completely to keep the memory alive.

170 young people from 25 countries attended the first pan-African school
(Nairobi 22-26 May 2015)

Together We Can Make Dreams Come True

ANOUK
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There were many signs that it would be a very special school: we had seen the increase in enrolment, feeling unable to control either the maximum number of participants («no one should miss such an opportunity», they said), or the age of those who got enrolled («in Africa age does not matter»). Some had to travel up to four days by bus to attend. We have seen young people thirsty for hope for their land and eager to take up serious training to become "apostles of the EoC".

Notwithstanding the large number of participants, we immediately felt like a single family. The school has become a laboratory, a space for dialogue and working on the projects of the young people as well as the challenges of Africa.

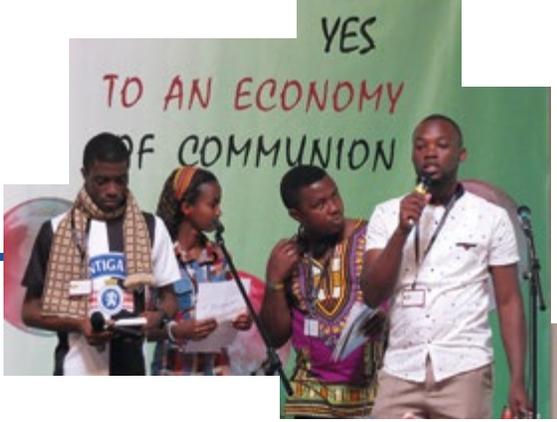
On the first day, a panel with 7 young Africans made us get into the problems of the continent, highlighting the potential and wealth of African cultures. Three questions accompanied our days: «What is my dream, inside the big dream of the EoC?», «What does it mean to run an enterprise and live the EoC in a serious way?» and «How to overcome the difficulties?». In a succession of experiences, reflections in small groups, contributions from teachers, always with much time dedicated to dialogue, together we walked a path of personal and collective growth, exceeding initial expectations,

preparing to become the protagonists of the society that we wish for.

In the afternoon workshops we elaborated on the dreams that each of us carried in their heart. 7 groups worked on projects of creating small business activities, 3 studied initiatives for their communities, while 4 groups of entrepreneurs or managers shared their experiences on the different aspects of business life, others yet conversed about the prospects in the field of education or research.

When we proposed to the young people to write down their dreams and hang them on the wall of the conference room, so that the EoC entrepreneurs could get to know them, there flourished 45 new projects, one after the other, *all inspired by a specific need in their community*. Sale and production of clothes, cosmetics and handicrafts, oil, wine, bananas, dried fruit and spices, farms for cattle and poultry as well as training centres for children and women, homes for students, music schools and even some projects oriented at environmental protection, with waste recycling, decontamination of hospitals and energy optimization.

There were even projects aimed at helping others to venture into income generating activities, such as the incubators of business projects, counselling, vocational training, micro-finance. Often projects



were accompanied by beautiful "dreams". Michel writes, «It is obvious to me that the EoC is a response to the economic problems of this century, a solution that I wish to be at the forefront of the current and the future economy, because of its humanism and dynamism. I dream of a world economy where the only reason for entrepreneurship is the service of humanity. I dream of an economy where all performance indicators are measured with the human dimension.

I dream of an economic revolution brought by those who are "left out", of a rising economy, a transformative economy, forming new people. I dream that the EoC is listed as the number one excellence in the world for every business acting according to these principles. I dream of an economy that offers the joy of sharing, living together, an economy that serves man. I dream that... I dream that... I dream that... I believe it is possible, I trust that my dream will come true».

New projects born in Nairobi: the Siobhan Incubator and the François Neveux Project

We did have some ideas upon arrival, but we could not yet perceive what form these projects would take, we presumed they would be born during the days spent together. During the school and the congress that followed it, we saw them emerge before our eyes, quite unexpectedly. First the Siobhan Incubator. In addition to a temporary incubator for businesses thought up in Lopiano, operative from the summer of 2016 to serve the whole of Europe, it became clear that a specific project for Africa was to be born, too, here at the Mariapolis Piero, to support and accompany the projects of new companies. We wanted to name it after Siobhan, the young Scottish woman who

died in 1999 in the Philippines in a plane crash with other employees of the EdC Ancilla company, just when she was getting ready to start a network project to connect all EoC companies of the world with her friend Lorna Gold. It will begin in a temporary form with a session of 15 days for young people working on a project of creating a company, in January 2017. But we could not wait for 2017. In Africa, when a child is born, it is the whole community that cares for it to grow. So it had to be for the projects created in this school. On the last day, reviewing the projects, we saw an entrepreneur stand up: he offered to accompany two young ones, then another one, and another one. The sheets on the wall

were flourishing with business cards and comments like "I want to be your brother", or "I would like to support your beautiful project as a friend". This is how what we had dreamed of naming François Neveux (the French entrepreneur who created an EoC company with his technology in Brazil) one day was all of a sudden born: a project connecting entrepreneurs from around the world, in a relationship of mutual help, like brothers. It will aim to recruit entrepreneurs from around the world to accompany new projects, in particular those proposed by young people supported by the EoC incubators. And there's more to come...



The EoC entrepreneurs widen their horizons. The words of the vice president of AIPEC

One Company *is not Enough*

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"I promise to dedicate my life as an apostle of the Economy of Communion and so make my contribution in the most just and fraternal way possible so that the greatest dream of Chiara (Lubich) may come true: That all may be one". This is the text of the pact signed by those present at the end of the 5th International EoC Congress at the Mariapolis Piero (Nairobi, Kenya). I was overcome by an unexpected emotion when Luigino Bruni read the text first in English, then in Italian: surrounded by the whole world I felt that the decision to sign it moved in the deepest chords of my being.

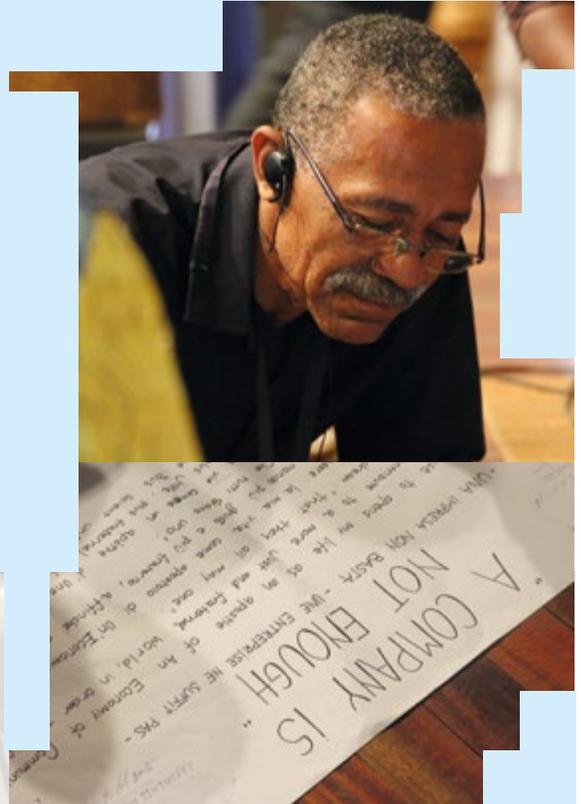
Looking around at the close of these meaningful and beautiful days of this adventure in the Economy of Communion I saw faces of all colours, but all of them had the same look and the same smile. I saw myself reflected in them, and I was also like them, our only common factor being our happiness, the type that has its origin in the heart.

It was not only a signature among the many, but a brick that together with the other bricks was building hope, joy and the confidence that together we can change our economy that is so ill now.

It was obvious that the Economy of Communion is a spirit that is moving forward in the world; the talent of many can be expressed through it and in this way it affects, influences and infects many more wherever it is present: in the Congo, Kenya, Burundi or Italy...

As a flashback the happenings of the previous days dashed through my mind and I felt the words of Piero Pasolini¹ resonate in me, as I heard them in one of his videos: "According to the logic of the Gospel - he affirmed - our actions must seek the implementation of the 'civilization of the hundredfold,' the basis of our social revolution." The civilization of the hundredfold that is realised here, in this corner of the world where each of us was listening to the presentation of projects, dreams and studies of the others, creating a dynamic in which you could not see any more who was giving and who was receiving, because everything was love.

It is a dynamic in which everyone has come to the hundredfold stated in the Gospel. I can claim to have found that when this kind of civilisation is at work, the boldest intentions come true through



the love for each and every brother.

This is how the certainty emerged that we entrepreneurs, committed to an Economy of Communion, at any latitude of the Earth find that "one company is not enough". Now I understand even better why I feel a burning desire to bring forth a new economic reality in my professional sector: it may not be as I imagined it, but it will certainly have the DNA of our EoC.

Some young people threw themselves at the large sheet of the pact immediately, and they were followed by others, one after the other in a burst of colour, African clothes and others, white heads and others... Acting with solemnity and a strong conviction, I myself have also added my signature.

¹Piero Pasolini, a theoretical physicist and an intellectual of great culture, was one of the first companions of Chiara Lubich. He particularly liked the African continent and its cultures and he was among the first builders of the Little Town of Fontem in Cameroon.

What tools are necessary to create the right lifestyle inside the company?

The Style of an EoC Company

GIUSEPPE
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view, is shared by all the EoC companies lies in combining two seemingly antithetical words: economy and communion. The first one calls the company to carry out its activities with a view of economy, that is, giving a solution to the problems of clients and receiving a satisfactory profit; the second means building on dialogue, trust and reciprocity in every relationship it weaves inside and outside itself. If economy highlights the importance of “making ends meet”, communion is a reminder that not all ways to do it are equal, and highlights the central role to be given to the quality of relationships.

Therefore it is necessary to have the **tools** to ensure that communion becomes the *lifestyle* of the company. These are the tools I propose in my book entitled *Il valore dei valori (The Value of Values)*. *Governance in the socially oriented business* (Città Nuova Editing House) and there are five of them: the Pact on the mission of the company; the sharing of oneself; the sharing of knowledge and experience; recurring dialogue; verification.

Businesses of communion, therefore, pass it on to their structures and business processes, too; they value diversity, ensure the freedom of expression and direct every action for the common good; they ask questions to themselves using creativity to identify opportunities for improvement and development (of the economy and communion), applying these practices not only inside the company itself, but also towards their external environment at local and international levels of which the company feels to be part of.

Therefore these companies prove **sensitive** to perceive and take up the search for meaning of the various internal and external representatives; they feel **responsible** for the coherence between what they perceive, what they say they do and what they actually do in everyday life; they are **generative** as regards the ability to create and recreate spaces for sharing in which everyone can make their own contribution to the building up, strengthening and improving of the quality of social relations.

The fact that the company is made up of people and is placed in a specific context gives it a fundamental characteristic: uniqueness. So every enterprise of communion is like a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister to the Economy of Communion. Although children and siblings may resemble their parents or each other, they are never exactly alike, even if they are twins. So when we come to a company, any company, but especially a company of communion, we must do it with the same care, respect, awe - I would even say the same sacredness - with which one approaches a “rarity”.

The most important innovation which, in my



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Misery, the mirror of unhealthy relationships. The five essential "capitals" of life.

Real Wealth and Poverty

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Tolstoy said, «All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way». According to the great philosopher there are many types of poverty but only one kind of wealth. I disagree: wealth and poverty are two sides of the same coin. There are many types of poverty, but the same is true for wealth. The western world, with its quantitative approach, is only able to see one indicator of wealth now: GDP. But in Africa, next to the many faces of poverty, I could contemplate the more varied forms of wealth.

As highlighted by the Kenyan playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o, to decolonize our minds and learn again to call poverty by name, it is essential to re-acquire the language of the ancestors. In the ancient world a person could be rich and poor at the same time: very wealthy in material terms and poor because of narrow-mindedness and lack of magnanimity. Therefore those who live for an economy of communion seek to understand what the lacking "capital assets" are in order to find a remedy. Among the most important patrimonial values in life we find the following types:

- 1) human (background knowledge, training, skills and experience)
- 2) psycho-physical (physical and mental health, self-esteem, control over one's own life)
- 3) relational (social networks that provide identity, protection and social support and are essential for human flourishing)
- 4) social (norms, trust, shared rules of conduct)
- 5) spiritual (inner life, resilience, horizons)

In conclusion, if there is a great absence in the contemporary discourse on welfare, even in the most advanced variant of the "science of happiness", that is Communion then, which has three



preconditions: it is a matter of freedom, therefore it cannot be imposed; it presupposes justice, namely the recognition of the equality of all men and women and the dignity of every person, regardless of individual merit; it is embodied in fraternity, meaning the ability to make room for the other and get room in the other one. Fraternity allows people who are equal to each other to be different among themselves and considers this diversity a source of wealth.

Therefore, if it wants to be "of communion", fraternity must be cosmopolitan, it must reach to the suburbs and avoid staying within the boundaries of certain communities that are closer to it in social, cultural, political or religious aspects. As in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we can become the "neighbours" of people who seem to be far from us if we are able to recognize the opportunity that is given to us to make an impact on their lives. Because it is true that you can only leave poverty on your own feet; but since poverty is not a mainly individual condition but rather a reflection of unhealthy relationships, it is also true that there is no escape from it alone - only together.

Poverty, with its material deprivations, can also be interpreted as isolation, social exclusion. Fighting it therefore means bringing the person to participation.

The Richness of Communion

LORNA GOLD

Each culture proposes its own definition of wealth and poverty, including the culture of communion. If 'wealth' is taken as shorthand for the aspiration for progress of individuals and nations, and poverty the lesser state they want to leave behind, communion offers a unique interpretative key. Despite owning little, in fact, those who live in communion have a great patrimony of wealth both in terms of



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material and non-tangible goods.

It is a Gospel paradox which reveals an economic logic – spiritual detachment, if lived out of love, sparks a circulation of goods, talents, ideas, good will, which generates abundance. In the culture of communion, in fact, there is phenomenal capacity to generate shared wealth. It exists within the EoC institutions, including businesses, which become the creative means to bring people into this relationship of communion through creating work, technology transfers, profit sharing and so on. This communion becomes like an electrical network, with many transmitters sending out currents of generosity in every direction. These currents are capable of generating a tsunami of generosity, with surprising, unexpected effects.

It is the mysterious, yet *verifiable* dynamic of communion: providence. Seen from this vantage point, poverty, with all its material deprivations, can be interpreted as total isolation, being totally outside communion: the anguish of dying of hunger in a world of plenty, believing nobody cares enough to help. At the deepest level, addressing poverty is about bringing the person into commun-



ion. This idea gives added weight to the idea of poverty as social exclusion. In fact, studies show that if you ask people living in deprivation to describe their experience, they invariably express it as exclusion, loneliness, a sense of abandonment. Our approach to addressing poverty, therefore, has to be centred on the premise of building fraternity as equals, enabling participation and empowerment to take root.



FORM, FOR ME, FOR YOU

by Vittorio Sadini

33

