

The Economy of **Communion**

a new culture

30

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A NEW CULTURE

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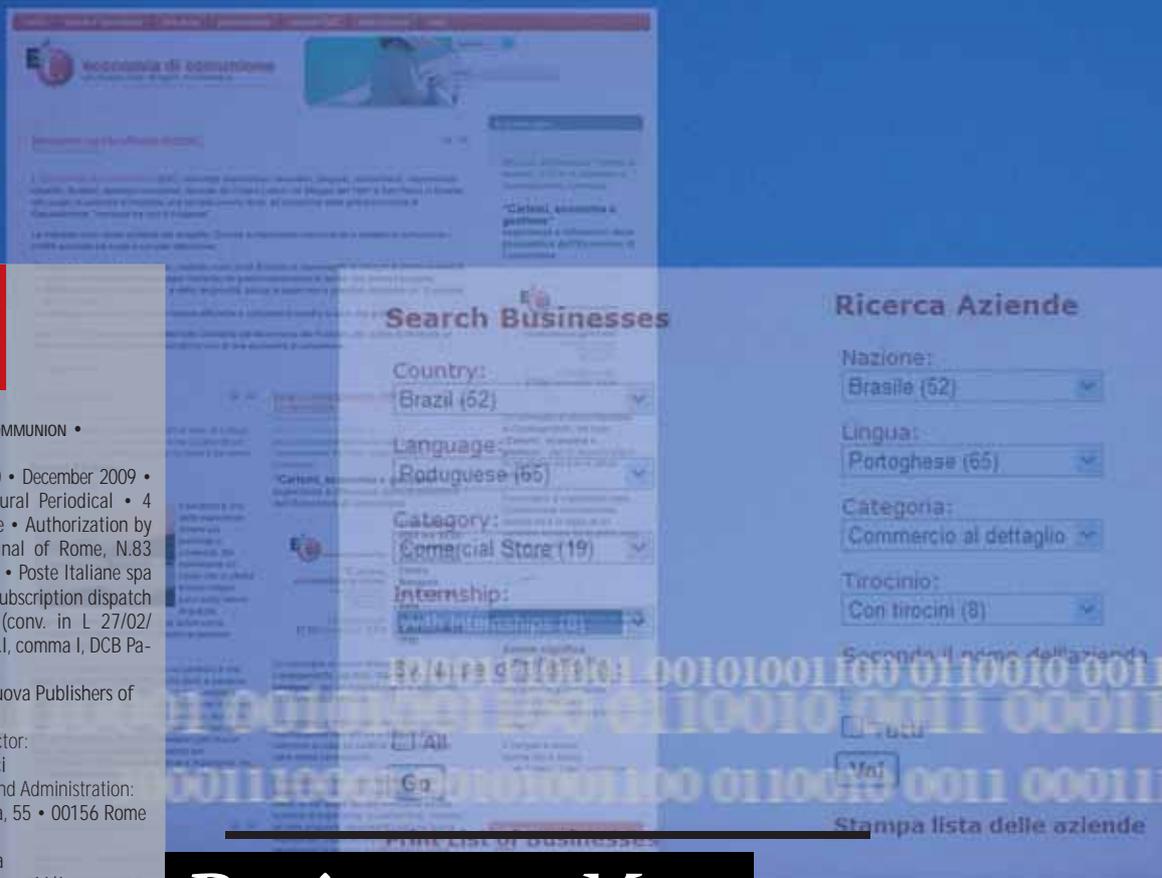
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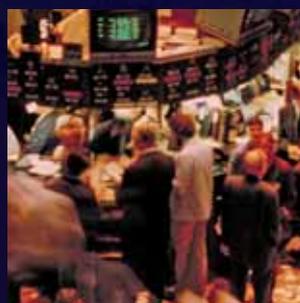
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Businesses Meet *One Another on the Web*



A Crisis in the
Meaning of Economy



The Relationships
of the EoC



Summer School

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In 2000, the United Nations made a list of objectives for the third millennium: fight against hunger and the number of women who die giving birth, fight against AIDS and other pandemics, schools for all the children in the world that sustainable development becomes a ubiquitous paradigm, free commerce and non-discriminatory finance systems.

It would seem that only the last two objectives are linked to economy, but in reality all of them depend on the lack of social structures and work - many face travel to other countries in hope to bring their children to places where food, health and instruction are guaranteed to all...

The EoC and the challenges of the millennium

To be able to extend this guarantee to the whole world is a difficult objective to carry out without the spreading of a new culture. We believe that the culture inherent in the Charism of Unity would help scholars and politicians formulate concrete proposals on how to do so. The challenge is to identify the strategy to make this culture reach the whole of humanity.

However, when concrete proposals are formulated, we cannot deceive ourselves into thinking that they will be easily carried out. The financial crisis has left us in inheritance an economy with growing purses, thanks to money at zero cost, in which the good proposals for developing an economy and finance that has more respect for man seem to fade.

When the economy truly recovers, the price of petroleum will again skyrocket and with this the cost of money, creating new debtors unable to payback their debt. And so, we're back where we started. Are the "structures of sin" which John Paul II spoke out against truly unable to be removed?

History goes ahead. Barack Obama's election as President of the United States demonstrates so. Thanks to the social networks of Facebook and Twitter, he was

capable of a continuous dialogue with many Americans, a great part of them young voters. And thanks to the slogan, "Yes we can", he gave them the strength to believe that it would be possible to concretize his fascinating platform, together. Now that his programs for health, the environment, finance and disarmament in the world are struggling to pull through, he could still draw strength from the grassroots, through social networks. Congressmen and senators taken up by local interests would be more convincing if he already has the force of consensus of their voters.

Since Benedict XVI, in his most recent encyclical, underlined the economy of communion as one of the ways towards the economy of the future, we cannot consider it as only an activity of the Focolare Movement, but of the Church and of everyone. Ours is the commitment to apply it always more faithfully according to the original announcement, to develop the industrial parks and the EoC businesses, and form one worldwide network capable of connecting them in an always more vital way.

We must put the theoretical

elaboration, originating from the life of the project, at the disposition of the Church and the world. That is why it's right that the profits from EoC businesses dedicated to formation help support the Sophia University Institute in Loppiano, its future satellites in Latin America and the spread of this culture through the press and the Internet.

This is why we are investing on our magazine, now with a new layout in color, and in our website. In the world, the examples of opportunities that data communications offers through "social networks" are multiplying. We also live in this millennium and can utilize these means to help the gifts of the Charism reach the world.

What can be invented to help this culture spread? One slogan, "Yes we can", changed history. Perhaps we can think of others, perhaps something more than a slogan, capable of being applied to concrete problems, proposing solutions that are more appropriate to human nature's sociality. The spread of these cultural products could be entrusted to the youth, who are capable of using the new means of communication in a creative way. We can

help them elaborate, simply and intuitively, messages and proposals of action capable of "treading water together" to mobilize the consciences throughout the world on specific problems and press their political representatives to humanize the economy.

In this issue, we have reported the reflections that various scholars who collaborate with the EoC shared during the Summer School in Rocca di Papa, the new graduate theses, the developments of our website, now available in five languages thanks to voluntary translators, and the announcement of the new B2B website that is being made available to EoC businesses to bring to life a worldwide network.

Naturally, this commitment on the part of scholars and students, and the strategies of communication that we can invent have meaning and importance if they are continually sustained (as we also report in this issue) by the life lived - sometimes going against the current and often heroically, but always with joy - of entrepreneurs and workers to who deserve the theoretical dignity that describes the new way in which they are living economy.

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Giving dignity to a vocation

CHIARA
LUBICH



"It's necessary that the economy of communion not limit itself to giving examples of creating new businesses inspired by it, with a few comments by who is more expert or less, but rather, what is needed is that it become a science with the participation of economists who are prepared and who know how to lay out the theory and the practice, comparing it with other current economic scientists, provoking not only graduate theses, but schools from which many can draw upon."

Therefore, a true science that would give dignity to who must show it with facts, and it means a true vocation for who commits himself to it in any way".

Mariapolis Araceli, 7 May 1998





The Summer School

BENEDETTO
GUI

The proposal of a summer course on the Economy of Communion was launched thinking of a small group of young people, most likely scholars of various economic professions (students in doctorate programs, research fellows, university professors at the beginning of their career). In this way, it would be possible to present and systematically discuss the theoretical reflections developed over the years around the economy of communion project.

Evidently, many other people also shared the desire to spend four days studying and dialoging about the EOC project: upper-level university students, workers, directors, entrepreneurs and teachers - and not only people under 35. Not wanting to say no to whoever was very interested in this reflection between science and culture, we found ourselves amidst a group of 90. There were 13 from Brazil, 8 Argentinians, 2 Filipinos (some were already in Italy, like students of Sophia, but others came just for the occasion). There were also 8 people from Slovakia, other Europeans, one from Palestine and many Italians. Their relationships with the Focolare Movement were also very diverse (ranging from those who are very active to less active, and for some it was their first contact with the movement).

The program was intense. Many of the reflections presented were part of a preview of articles that will make up a special edition of the magazine "Impresa Sociale" (Social Enterprise), a cultural magazine geared particularly towards Italian social cooperatives. After each presentation, there was time for questions and answers, although it was never enough. The time allowed for group work was also too little (two sessions of little more than an hour each).

One evening, changing the scheduled program, we met with a film producer. He is someone who works in the field of art (and art always has a place in any convention), and additionally he is also committed to "translating" the culture of unity into understandable terms for his speakers. What clearly and fascinatingly emerged from his words and the two short films he showed was the theme of vocation. At various moments in his career, this vocation had led him to make countercurrent choices, many times thanks to the encouragement of other people.

To mark this four-day school with a particular characteristic, all were proposed with the idea of putting reciprocal love into practice. This proposal was received and taken seriously, and it created a fraternal and joyful atmosphere throughout the day, whether in the lecture hall, during meals or in other free moments. It was an atmosphere that cannot but characterize the memory of those days when one thinks about them and tries to put them into words.

During the exchange of final impressions and greetings, a common idea kept coming up: encouragement. Each one had received encouragement for their personal commitment to study or work in view of an "economy of communion".

What also kept returning to the discussion was the invitation to continue this initiative, making it an annual appointment aimed towards youth. "Because within a few years," said one of the youth participants, "the generation that has brought the EOC ahead until now will have to pass on the witnessing to today's 20 and 30-year-olds, and we have to be prepared for that moment, not only to prevent that what has already been done falls, but also in order to take those further steps ahead which we young people feel are necessary".



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Without a doubt, one of the EoC's key words is "relationships". Relational goods, reciprocity, gratuitousness, communion – these are all words that describe different ways to understand human relationships. In fact, the EoC can also be seen as a different culture of relationships.

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The relationships of the EoC¹



But what stands out about the relationships lived within the EoC in comparison with normal economic relationships?

From a certain point of view, all economic life is a network of relationships - one that is always more thick, global and complex. Drinking coffee in the café below your apartment, making a telephone call, buying a book online, sending a letter to a friend – all are possible through the *cooperation* of hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, and sometimes millions of people. In fact, the cooperative is the most typical kind of economic relationship, especially in the market economy. So our question soon becomes this: *what* kind of cooperation and, therefore, *what* kind of relationships?

First of all, we must remember that modern man has fulfilled the most vast and widespread cooperation known to the history of the planet during the evolutionary course of Homo sapiens. From a certain point of view, it is undeniable that the market society has exponentially multiplied relationships between people, widening and enriching networks of cooperation.

A Medieval man, who might have lived in the country, would have cooperated with just twenty to one-hundred people in his lifetime – not much more or much less. If he was a serf or a farmer, he would have cooperated within his family (with wife and children), with his master, and in certain times of the year (to slaughter pigs, gather the harvest or the grapes) he would have helped other nearby farmers. If he enjoyed some freedom of movement, he may have been able to hop over to a fair every once in awhile, to buy a piece of furniture from a carpenter, or pair of shoes from the shoemaker for special occasions. Important moments of cooperation were religious processions, feasts, weddings or funerals, and, in certain cases and in a certain sense, wars. But in that world, the number of "coope-

rators" was more or less within the range that I indicated, little less or little more.

Besides, pre-modern cooperation was very rarely cooperation *between equals*. Basic relational structures were, in fact, profoundly hierarchical and asymmetric. Then, if we think of the experience of cooperation of a pre-modern woman, the asymmetry radically grows (less voluntary cooperation, less freedom and more hierarchy).

The modern market has certainly multiplied relationships, human contacts and cooperation with respect to the pre-modern world, but it has also *changed the nature* of them. The market is a large Mediator that always more immunizes interpersonal relationships and common life – a change whose ethical judgment is complex and ambivalent.

Perhaps ambivalence is the dimension which most characterizes relationships today in the market. Why? On one hand, the market is a social mechanism that, when it functions correctly, can be read as compensation of useful but scarce human activities to the collectivity. We can also interpret the market as a system for compensating those human activities which are socially virtuous but offered in insufficient quantities, caused by low or inexistent motivations and intrinsic compensation associated with them.

In a hypothetical world without markets, where each person carries out the activities he loves or feels are his vocation and which give him intrinsic joy, we would have an excess (with respect to the social demand) of intrinsically compensating activity (art, literature, games, prayer, sport...) and an insufficient offering of activities which provide little compensation in themselves (garbage men, doormen, miners...). The market, then, offers "extrinsic" compensation (money, for example) for activities which we would not do, at least in quantities considered enough for the society, if we only followed the intrinsic joy of the action. The market,



through the mechanism of prices, makes it so that the activities compensated are not only those which we do because *we like them*, but those which are seen as useful *by others* with whom we interact (and who compensate us for them).

This is why the market is also a mechanism of signals that indicate if the things we like to do also interest - above all - someone else. For the same reason, the market exchange can be understood as *a form of reciprocity and social links*. In summary, this allows activities useful to the common good to be carried out freely and with dignity.

For example, if we think about older societies (still present today in some parts of the world) where some activities are assigned to women, who must carry them out because of "vocation" to serve others (normally men) who expect that the vocation of others is to "freely" satisfy their needs.

We can also think of today: who complains because his works (scientific or artistic, for example) are not recognized, and do not have a market. In some cases we certainly are dealing with misunderstood artists or artists who live in areas where the "art market" functions perversely. But many times, we simply find ourselves in front of people who do not accept the idea that normally we are not the ones to judge the beauty and quality of what we create and produce - others do, also by buying our works.

This would be why there is not necessarily an opposition between market, civil virtue, free human cooperation and the common good, as the tradition of civil economy well knew.

But market is not only this. In order to allow market relationships to become universal, no longer linking them to a certain community, the market logic weakened human relationships from every identifying dimension - from that of the body, to every element that speaks true diversity.

In today's anonymous markets, I don't need to be in a personal relationship with anyone in order to potentially exchange with everyone. Community relationships, face-to-face, personal, always bring with them the chance of a "wound" caused by human diversity. When I truly meet with the other, I can never completely separate his or her hand which caresses me from that which strikes me.

The market is, instead, a great promise of new relationships without wounds, since by paying a price we can meet without suffering. If, for example, I ask a friend to watch my baby for a weekend, I enter into a relationship of gift with him which makes me vulnerable. The friend could ask me for another gift in exchange, and above all could one day hold it against me. If, instead, I resort to the market and pay a baby-sitter, the price I pay makes me feel free from any form of vulnerability, of gratitude, of wound. But - and here is the big problem of the market today - not risking the wound of the other, I also lose the chance to receive his "blessing"².

Market relationships today free us from dependence on the other. They free us from others as masters or bosses (and this is beautiful and human), but they also free us from every "other". We find ourselves in a world that is always more filled with goods and things, but always poorer of relationships of gratuitousness and gift.

This is why today, as Benedict XVI remembered in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* (ch. 3), the experience of the Economy of Communion is very significant.

The typical relationship lived and spread by the EoC represents a great challenge. On one side, the EoC moves within regular market relationships and values their being a form of reciprocity and "mutual assistance", in the words of Antonio Genovesi. On the other hand, the EoC does not exhibit the idea that, neither outside or inside the business, relationship among people are reduced to mutual indifference out of fear of the wounds that every true human encounter brings with it.

It is in the attempt to remain *economy* (market) by living the entire human relationship (*communion*) that the EoC wagers fidelity to its vocation and to its mission in today's society.

¹ To know more, see my book, *The Ethics of Market* (B. Mondadori, Milano).

² The Biblical reference here is to the "battle of Jacob with the angel" (Gen 32), when the Other wounds and blesses Jacob, who then becomes Israel. Every encounter-battle with the true other profoundly changes us.

There are two types of crises that can be identified in the history of our society: one is the “dialectic” crisis, and the other is the “entropic” crisis.



A crisis in the meaning of economy

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A dialectic crisis arises from a fundamental conflict that takes shape within a determined society and that contains, within itself, the seeds or the forces to overcome itself. Historical and well-known examples of dialectic crises include the American Revolution, the French Revolution and the Revolution of October in Russia, in 1917.

Instead, an entropic crisis is one that tends to make the system collapse, through implosion, without changing it. This type of crisis develops whenever a society loses the sense (literally, the direction) of its own walk.

Why is such a distinction important? Because the strategies for overcoming these two types of crisis are different. An entropic crisis is not overcome with technical adjustments, or only with legislative or regulatory provisions (which are necessary), but by facing the question of meaning straight on, by resolving it.

That is why prophetic minorities are indispensable. Through a supplement of thought, and above all through the testimony of works, this minority knows how to indicate the new direction towards which the society can move. That is what happened when Saint Benedict, launching his famous “work and pray”, inaugurated the new era of cathedrals.

And so, the great economic-financial crisis still underway is an entropic one. Therefore, it is incorrect to compare it to that of 1929 which was, mostly, of dialectic nature. That historical crisis was attributed to human error, especially by those authorities that controlled economic and financial transactions. Certainly, there were human errors in the current crisis, but these were the consequence not so much of cognitive deficit as much as the crisis of meaning which has invested western society in the wake of globalization.



A spontaneous question arises then: in what has this crisis of meaning expressed itself, and where has it shown itself? My answer is this: in a triple separation, and specifically, in the separation between the economic sphere and the social one, between work and the creation of wealth, and between market and democracy. I think I can clarify myself, even if briefly, starting with the first example.

One of the many inheritances (not positive) left by modern society is the conviction that an entrepreneur is not a proper one if he does not exclusively seek the maximization of profit. If otherwise, he must resign himself to be part of the social environment, where social businesses, social cooperatives, foundations of various types, etc., are at work.

This absurd conceptualization resulted in identifying economy as the place of wealth production, and instead thinking of the societal sphere as the place of redistribution, where solidarity and/or compassion (whether be public or private) are the fundamental standards. The consequences of such a separation have already been seen, and we're still seeing them. In the last thirty years, we have seen scandalous growth in social inequality. Pope Benedict XVI's recent encyclical letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, skillfully indicates that the way out of the problem raised here is in recomposing that which was separated. The encyclical suggests that the experience of human society can be lived within normal economic life - and not only when one is already outside the economic realm, as the dicotomic model of social order would like.

Moving on to the second case of separation: for centuries, humanity has been fond of the idea that human work is at the origin of wealth creation - so much so that even Adam Smith opened his most important work, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), precisely with this consideration. What is the novelty that the financialization of the economy, begun around thirty years ago, has ended up determining? It determines the idea that, according to such, speculative finance creates much more wealth - and much, much more quickly - than a job. The consequences of such a pseudo-cultural revolution are before everyone's eyes.

Western civilization is based on a key idea, that of the "good life", from which comes the right-responsibility of each person to project his or her own life towards civil happiness. But where can one begin to reach such an

objective if not from the intense work which is home of good existence?

Human flowering - that is, *eudainomia* as Aristotle meant it (true knowledge, true happiness) - is not to be searched for after work, as what happened in the yesterday, because the human being finds his humanity while working. Clearly, the welcoming of the eudemonic paradigm implicates that a business is not aligned with its goals only by reaching the maximum profit, even though it does not exclude this. This means that it's possible for businesses with a civil vocation to arise and develop - businesses that are capable of going beyond their own self-reference, widening the possibilities of people's job choices.

Finally, the third kind of separation which I would like to talk to you about is this: economic theory has always retained that one of the market's fundamental merits is that of spreading knowledge. In fact, through the mechanism of prices, every producer and consumer "involuntarily" contributes to the optimal distribution of resources.

This way of seeing things, which is very common among economists, still neglects a very relevant element: the fact that this mechanism only works if there is a common language, the "market language". But what remains true is that in almost any society, many different languages coexist, the market language being only one of these. But this would be the reason that it is widely believed that the market is a morally neutral area which has no need of ethical principles to function efficiently.

The economical-financial crisis which is underway - a entropic crisis and not a dialectic one - is the best and most evident empirical falsification of such a proposition.

I would like to close by recalling the historical statement, still true today, of Blaise Pascal. The French philosopher wrote that there are three orders of things: the order of bodies, which corresponds to the spirit of geometry (*l'esprit de geometrie*, or "On the Geometrical Mind"); the order of hearts, which corresponds to the spirit of finesse (*l'esprit de finesse*); and the order of charity which corresponds to the spirit of prophecy. And what if that the poverty of prophetic voices - and consequently, of prophetic minorities - which we see going around, would depend on the weakening of the order of charity?

The Economy of Communion's International Website www.edc-online.org Grows!

Communion *through the Net*

ANTONELLA
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Last August 13, our website completed one year from when the renovated version went online. It was a small goal that we celebrated with those who have concretely collaborated and made the site a powerful instrument to spread the Economy of Communion.

Yes, because in this year, many relationships have been built, and results have been reached together. We began timidly, having a renovated site but one that basically proposed the same content as the previous site. Then, a little at a time, the first pieces of news began arriving from the USA, from Slovakia, from Sicily... The event postings followed one after another, as did the first registrations on the site. Also, it has to be said that registering did not give any particular benefits. It was more like a sign of affection and appreciation for these pages that were "blossoming".

Right away, we were faced with the problem of the translations. The base site is in Italian, but it was set up to be translated into many languages (today, there are five); each piece of content inserted needs to be translated into every language. If this scared us at the beginning, and we held back in publishing new content, little by little, we tried to involve people who are passionate about the EoC who felt that inner push to contribute to the EoC firsthand.

The content management system that acts as a base for the site is called Joomla!. It allows various people to contemporaneously work on the site's pages, posting new content and translating it directly on the site by following a few simple instructions. The potential of this system is evident. Thanks to this set-up, over time (but was already like this!), news arriving from all over the world could be inserted directly from the country of origin with the help of local correspondents.

One of the beautiful things about the EoC is its internationality. Taking advantage of the benefits of the web today, it's really possible to provide the world with news about the "life" of the EoC and its fruits, almost in real time. This brings joy and hope, and helps everyone's commitment grow. It was beautiful to see how the translators that were proposed made themselves available to update the site in their own languages.

The relationships began simply and have become true and proper experiences of "communion". Considering that each translator already has another main job and that translations are done in scraps of free time, the idea came about to involve more people, starting groups of collaborators according to language. For example, the "Spanish"

language group's experience is very beautiful: the EoC has strong roots in Latin America but is also very active in Spain. The group of translators created includes Argentines, Peruvians and Spanish. A "trans-Atlantic" group is also beginning for the Portuguese language, with similar workings. Translated texts are revised together to find that translation which has greater possibility to sound natural to all.

What drives these people to deepen their commitment towards the EoC, freely, giving up hours of sleep or relaxation? Above all, the awareness of participating in a large-scale, prophetic project. There's also the enrichment that comes from reading many texts and news items about the EoC from all over the world. One of them said, "Translating texts that have been written in far-away places, from the Philippines to the United States, from Brazil to Belgium – you see the same life everywhere. There might be particular nuances, but there is always the golden thread that allows you to find yourself in the experience of the other.

The EoC translators even have a "patron": St. Joseph. Actually, our translators are a little like him. Their work is humble and hidden. Someone who reads a translated article thinks about the ideas, the author. No one asks themselves who did the translation, but without this... they wouldn't be able to understand.

The site has also become an instrument for "finding EoC", the people of the EoC and starting to make the experience. One Peruvian economist who wanted to know more about the EoC made contact through the site, and he immediately participated in the Latin American EoC Congress last April, in O'Higgins. He wrote us about the effect that the congress had on him: "I want to thank you with all of my heart for having been able to participate in this marvelous experience of communion lived in Argentina" – an experience that, without the site, would not have been possible to make.

The latest from www.edc-online.org is the newsletter begun in mid-September. Every two weeks, on Thursdays, the newsletter is sent to everyone who has registered on the site. All that is necessary is to complete the registration process on the homepage. There are now nearly 500 people signed up. The newsletter contains all the new items, appointments and updates, and it's like an invitation to visit the site.

Therefore... whoever has not yet registered, please do, and... happy navigating on www.edc-online.org!



Tomás
Lanzillotta



Sarah
Mundell



Francisco
Herrera



Isaias
Hernandez



Ramon
Cervino



Agostinho
Rosario



Joao
Cambao



Maria Julia
Pinto



Businesses Meet One Another on the Web

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Recently, a new website, www.edc-info.org, which goes alongside the international EoC website, www.edc-online.org, has begun in the United States in order to meet the needs of various countries and to allow EoC businesses to dialogue among each other. It is also aimed towards youth who wish to know more about the EoC and experience this new way of working. There are already 156 businesses from Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Luxemburg, Portugal, Serbia and the United States that have joined.

The site is managed by Ed and Eileen Johnston and allows B2B (Business to Business) communication, helping the EoC network to increase the exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as foster business and production relationships among EoC businesses. Recently, the site has been placed at the service of the entire international EoC project.

Naturally, this means a shift between an experimental phase to a much more rigorous admissions procedure, in order to safeguard participants as much as possible from unwanted meddling, which unfortunately is not unheard on the web today.

This procedure entrusts the decision of admissions on the site to the local EoC commissions. Therefore, each business that has adhered to the project and wants to be posted on the B2B website must contact the EoC commission of his or her region or country, providing it with the information necessary for admissions and agreeing to update such information at least once a year to maintain their membership.

The local commissions will then inform the central EoC commission about new admissions or suggested exclusions. The international commission will then contact the website manager, requesting that the business be assigned

a user name and password with which that business can insert both the information it wants to share with everyone and that to share only with other EoC businesses. In fact, the site is structured so that whoever accesses the homepage can view a world map showing the geographic location of all the businesses on the site. By clicking on the business, the viewer can see all the information which that business has decided to make public.

Access to "EoC businesses only" information is limited to those with a username and password, in other words, the businesses on the site, the local EoC commissions and the central EoC commission, who holds the final say on approvals or exclusions.

For youth who are interested in doing a work experience with an EoC business, the local commissions can assign a special password that gives access to the information that businesses have decided to publish on their sector, availability to host youth for internships/stages, and any other requirements (studies, language, etc.).

Whoever has access to the private area of the site can consult the list of businesses in alphabetical order, or by searching for businesses by country, language, sector, or name.

In the future, it will also be possible to submit Curriculum Vitae to the entrepreneurs through the site. In order for the site to be functional in the future, timely translations will be necessary to make the information submitted by businesses available in the sites five languages (Italian, English, Spanish, Portuguese and French). Therefore, it will be very useful to receive information about entrepreneurs or friends of the project (approved by the commission and given a special password) who are willing to give their contribution to help translate the information published by the businesses on the site.



To be an EoC entrepreneur means becoming responsible for a dream: that of relieving situations of poverty near and far.

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Trust *and* participation *in EoC Business*

The desire to build or “convert” coherent businesses with the EoC project have notable repercussions within a business’s governance, in which the role of manager leaves space to a choral figure, in which everyone has his “active” role and is involved in the management of the business. In fact, the manager of an EoC business is he who involves and incentivates people, who manages through listening and sharing of human and business experiences. This helps creativity and self-control spring to its best.

Moreover, the EoC business acquires the capacity to share, with coherence and trust, its own business experience with other businesses, within or beyond the project, which allows it to survive and develop. In fact, this type of governance of a business, which is founded on the value of communion, not only allows the business to transmit trust and therefore create relational capital at all levels of business, but above all permits the diffusion of trust outside of the business, even in moments in which the business finds itself making choices that shape the future.

In regards to more difficult and broadening choices, the decision-making process is in some way complicated by meetings necessary in clarifying various points of view that each one involved is ready to give. And yet, these meetings are considered very useful in underlining that the decisions are taken together, respecting each person, whether associate, employee or collaborator.

Consequently, the decision-making process which was initially complex tends to become simpler over time, with greater possibility that decisions taken are put into action, with full respect of human values. Therefore, initial “irrationality” later becomes economic convenience through slimming down procedure and having more conscious responsibility by those who work in the company.

You can call this “ethical relationality”, which does not greatly change a business’s organization but rather influences the quality of the decisions made on all levels. The trust that spreads in the business even has external effects, facilitating relationships with other actors of the market.

This is how ethics spreads in inter-business relationships, national and international, and in business networks. When, as in the cases of the EoC industrial parks, a common ethics is shared by all, the very network becomes a carrier of values, with dignity and centrality to the person as its strongholds.

In the end, the active presence of people whose survival and development “depend” on that third part of profits shared by businesses in the project, triggers a cohesive mechanism, which reciprocally involves all players within the business in a multi-directional way, from associates to administrators, directors and team managers to personnel, etc.

There spreads a culture of attention towards working with the other in mind, to improve together the performance of the entire working group. And when needs arise that need to be addressed, there also arises benevolent control “at a distance”.

In this way, a new virtuous circuit which acts as a base for creation and spreading of knowledge which, together with the active participation in management, progressively transforms businesses “from within” and allows them to reach notable economic and social advantage.

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Love your Enemy

I received a telephone call from the head of the cement-production business which is our largest competitor in the area, and he asked me if we could sell him a certain amount of cement because their other suppliers weren't giving them any more credit.

It was obvious that they were going through a tough time, from a financial point of view, due to the break-up of a family business and the consequences this was creating.

I knew that the situation was serious, and I felt inside that the long-awaited moment had arrived: I had the chance to change history. This competitor played heavily against me in the market, and he'd even told other colleagues that his mistake had been to let me raise my head.

The conversation went more or less like this:

"Don't worry; the cement will arrive on Monday."

"But I don't know if the checks will be ready Monday. It's been two months since I haven't paid myself."

"It's not a problem. Call me when they'll be ready."

"How much will I have to pay you?"

"You pay now what I paid. That's it."

"But then you won't earn anything."

"It doesn't make sense that I earn anything from this. You'll never be my client, and right now you need a hand." He thanked me and the conversation finished there.

I can assure you that the fullness and happiness I felt in that moment are worth much more than the cement. I felt completely fulfilled, humanly speaking. This act surprised my employees, who didn't understand at first, and I had to explain to them that the most important thing wasn't the exchange itself but what it could build within and outside of our business.

That month, we reached record sales, and right now in the middle of the crisis, we're able to sell nearly 30% more compared to the same time-period last year.

This way of relating to others, putting ourselves at the service of others, led to a chain of recommendations that reinforces our reputation and offers us new business opportunities every day, almost without having to look for them. If businesses discovered the usefulness, even economically speaking, that the EoC generates when lived radically, they wouldn't hesitate to put it into practice.

Germán M. Jorge

Raising Snails

GERMÁN
M JORGE

In Africa, the Economy of Communion isn't expressed through having many businesses, but the spirit that it has brought about is spreading a new culture, even thanks to youngest of the community. During the war in the Ivory Coast, an 8-year-old girl at her Gen 4 meeting shared this experience: her uncle had given her a 100-Franc bill (CFA), which is about 20 Euro cents, which she was thinking of using to buy something good to eat. When she arrived home, however, she saw that her mother was very sad: she didn't have anything to put on the table, which made the whole family very nervous.

She thought to go buy herself something to eat, but remembering how the Gen 4 had learned to "give always" and make our neighbor happy, too, she said to herself, "Why don't I try?" So she decided to bring her small amount of money to her mother, who immediately ran happily to buy something at the market to make a meal for the whole family. That way, everyone was able to eat something and peace returned.

Thanks to her experience, everyone realized that this family was in need, and they helped them. And the experience made the Gen 4 want to do something more for these extreme situations of need. When there is love, there is light, and so they decided to go into the gardens to gather snails, which are very prized here. They gathered them to raise and sell them, when they reach the right size.

While going through the neighborhoods to sell their snails, the Gen 4 discovered people who are very much in need: a mother who didn't have clothes in which to dress herself, houses without fire and, therefore, in which there was nothing to eat. They (the Gen 4) felt that this was not right, and they got their mothers involved in accompanying them to visit these neighborhoods. Faced with these needs, a communion of goods has begun among everyone and, with it, a new culture: children were the ones to start a new way to change the situation.

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Towards Management of Communion

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"...We're convinced that every moment of our social living, including all that is economic, must be "educated" by the values in which we believe. That way, even the economy becomes a place for human and spiritual growth.

The Economy of Communion, therefore, does not present itself as a new way of doing business, alternative to those which already exist. Rather, it intends to transform regular business structures from within, whether being a shareholding-business, cooperative or other, placing all relationships within and outside of the business in the light of a lifestyle of communion - and all in full respect of authentic business and market values".

Chiara Lubich - Honorary Degree in Economy - Piacenza 1999

The EoC brings a culture – the “culture of giving” – which is being always more enriched in economic theory and in the lives of the people and businesses that make it their own. From the launch of the project in 1991, this culture has driven scholars to devise a new way of thinking about the economy and about business management. At the same time, the business ventures involved have experienced those typical categories of the project in their business life. Words like gratuitousness, reciprocity and fraternity have begun to become real experiences that show seeds of a management of communion.

Still, the EoC does not offer universal recipes. The EoC's culture encounters the cultures of different countries (and not only the economic culture of those countries) and also of single businesses and entrepreneurs. An Asian entrepreneur, trying to live the EoC will have different results than a European entrepreneur. But even within the same nation, entrepreneurial experiences can have very different paths. Therefore, the choice to adhere to the EoC may remain at the level of the entrepreneur or be shared by his or her collaborators. In any case, there's the risk that different cultures create groups and contrasts or that new values are declared but difficult to put into practice.

Where the experience of the EoC culture is more solid and mature, the businesses may tackle the subject of transforming organizational structure. At a certain point, the structures thought to manage typical businesses of the traditional economic culture can be obstacles to the culture and management of communion, reducing its positive effects. This shows the need for “new wine” to have

“new wine skins” in the challenge to explore new models of management which are coherent to the new culture. This path was deeply analyzed by an Australian scholar, Judith Ann Chapman, among others. Chapman explains how the change in organizational structure can come about as an effect of a change in culture. Changing values changes behaviors, and this causes the need to review the roles of people and systems of management.

The life of the EoC businesses also tells of how the new culture born from the project influences business structures, in two areas in particular. The first area is the sharing among the people responsible for decision-making. Many times, they feel the need to make decisions together – especially when there are many associates. This comes from an intimate hope that He who is present in the poor is also at work in the business – the “hidden shareholder” that promised to be present where people are united among one another.

In this way, meetings become more intense, often from the effort to decide things unanimously. Even though this is more tiring in the beginning, it guarantees that all involved go ahead together towards shared goals.

For the same reasons, there are numerous experiences of businesses who have involved collaborators and others in the decision-making process. Many organizations include periodic meetings with their personnel in their management plan. These meetings are aimed at listening, in order to perceive difficulties and problems, as well as giving information, updating everyone on decisions, development, and the conditions of the organization.

Another area showing the new culture that comes from the EoC is that of formation, a key idea of the project. Formation is an instrument to experiencing and spreading the experience of reciprocity. It can also lead to the renovation of an organization, changing it from deep within through the people who are part of it, drawing from their culture and experience.

It is possible to experience communion, although at the same time it can never be fully experienced, as it is the aim and method of the organizing life of those who challenge themselves to the EoC project. It means giving space to different forms and contributions – an organizational “polyphony” – which are developed by the project, giving value to roles and professionalism in an authentic encounter between people.

The Art of Managing Crises in Organizations with Ideal Motives

ALESSANDRA
SMERILLI

Intrinsic motivations are very important in civil life as well as in economic life and organizations. However, if a place exists in which gratuitousness plays a special role, it's that of "organizations with ideal motives" (OMIs), an expression used today to indicate organizations – associations, NGOs, charitable organizations, businesses of the economy of communion, etc. – in which the inspiring motive (or what has inspired their constitutions) is neither primarily profit nor exclusively instrumental elements. Rather, these organizations have an ideal motive, a mission or a "vocation" that, in various ways, arises from the intrinsic motivations of their promoters.

The businesses of the Economy of Communion (EoC) can also be defined as OMIs. In fact, they represent an ideal-type, given the key role that an ideal plays in their identity.

The main objective of every OMI is that of self-evolving and growing without losing the identity linked to the survival of the very OMI over the long-run.

If, on one hand, an organization "cannot survive if it does not tend to develop, which is always qualitative, but also very often dimensional...without straining towards norm development, there is not stability but regression" (Molteni 2009, pg. 72). On the other hand, development must be reconciled with fidelity to the ideal mission.

Whoever operates in the field of social economy or works in organizations characterized by a mission that goes beyond profits, knows perfectly that, in such organizations, success and harmonious growth mainly depend on a limited number of key people who are intrinsically motivated – often some of the organization's founders.

These people influence the culture of the organization directly and indirectly through their behavior, but their influence is limited by other less-motivated members. If some of these key figures leave the organization (for example, because new management does not reflect the founding ideals), accumulative effects often show up and, at the same time, a process of deterioration within the organization may begin.

What happens in an OMI when conflicts arise between the intrinsically or ideally motivated members and other members interested more in market incentives? In these crucial moments, the intrinsically motivated people, that is, those who are more interested in the

mission of the organization, may begin to abandon the organization when they perceive that their protests (voices) are ignored. This is an abandonment that can cause the OMI to plummet into a fatal trap.

Attentive management knows how to recognize who is making the protest - and therefore distinguish between protests that are potentially constructive to the organization from those which do not have the same potential – and manage these two types in essentially different ways. A crisis can come about just by not being able to understand which type of protest is emerging within an OMI – not listening to "good" protests and dedicating time and energy to listening to "bad" and destructive ones.

Participative governance that makes room for "good" protests in the people who are intrinsically motivated gives them hope in reviving the ideal quality that is diminishing or is being lost. In fact, if a protester foresees real possibility for improvement in quality, he may decide to stay, and when he does this, his protest is transformed into "loyalty". Loyalty, however, is very demanding on the organization, because it implies the hope that petitions will be heard. If this hope lacks, then leaving the organization may be his only alternative, with the consequences of which we've already spoken.

The remarks which this writing has tried to address regard human motivations as a type of wealth, as a measure of the civility of every human organization and of every community.

Crises of all types tend to reduce this wealth and cause a degree of liberty to be lost. Crises become unsustainable when they destroy the symbolic and identifying capital of organizations – capital which, especially in OMIs, cannot be offered through facilitated loans or state subsidies. Hopefully, these considerations at least offer some good reasons and arguments for not losing this wealth and this liberty.

This article is based on an article written by Luigino Bruni, soon to be published in the magazine *Impresa Sociale*.

Also, even though a shared definition of OMIs does not exist in literature, they are generally identified as religious organizations and organizations with strong spiritual identities.



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The EoC Culture *in Brazil*

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How can this article attempt to talk about the EoC culture in Brazil? Broadly speaking, everything is culture, whether it is the real life of the project (the businesses with an entire network of relationships that surge from the life of the organizations); the communion with those in economic need; and, naturally, cultural production, or the studies that look at the manifold theoretical approaches developed by classic and contemporary thinkers in various disciplines and then dialogue with them.

In this brief article, I'll try to talk about this last kind of culture.

First of all, an important note: you cannot talk about only one Brazil, because Brazil contains many "Brazils" in itself.

What this article will focus on is that Brazil seen through the eyes of the "Filadélfia" Center of Studies, Research and Documentation, which is located in Mariapolis Ginetta, in Vargem Grande Paulista, State of Sao Paulo. One of this center's functions is supporting researchers interested in the EoC and giving them all the information they need. From 1992-2008, 139 academic works in 25 disciplines began there. They include research in Business Administration, Economy, Law, Sociology, Theology, Psychology, Philosophy, and many others.

What do all these fields of knowledge have to do with the EoC?

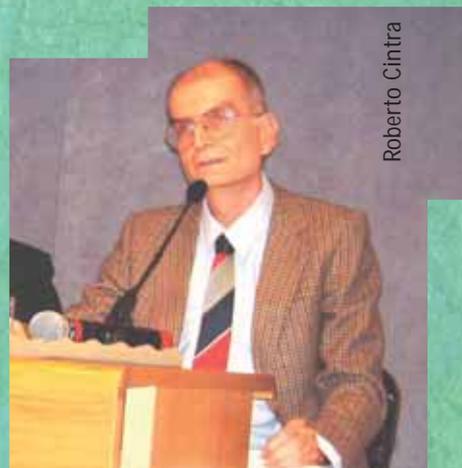
It's the fact that the EoC is based on a culture, a way of understanding, perceiving and behaving in the world. It has its own particular relationships, interpersonal and with the environment, in all the dimensions of human and social living.

What, then, are the expectations and challenges of the EoC in Brazil today? Well, already for a few years, a group of professors has been formed and has taken interest in bringing ahead a more systematic and continuous study on the EoC. This is a result of the work already done all over Brazil. They try to build relationships of collaboration within the group, and their hope is to establish dialogue with the academic community and with other groups that have the goal of "humanizing the economy".

This is also why an electronic scientific journal on the EoC is being launched. It's called REDEC and is now in the phase of collecting articles for the first issue. REDEC will be published twice a year and is open to the participation and contribution of scholars from all over the world.

The journal is enriched by its multi-disciplinary editorial board. The editor is Prof. Roberto Cintra Martins (Production Engineering and Human Sciences) and the vice-editor is Prof. Maurício Serafim (Administration); the other members of the board are professors Luiz Antonio Brandalise (Accounting), Cláudia Herrero (Economy), Heloisa Borges Quaresma (Production Engineering), Graça Rocha (Economist), Marcos Mucheroni (Electrical Engineering with a masters in Computer Science), Kelen Leite (Sociology), Andréa Cruz (Journalist and coordinator of the Filadélfia Center) and Benedetto Gui (Economist).

A group of collaborators also supports the advisory board and includes: Carlos Aurélio Mota de Souza (Law), Licia Paglione (Sociology) and Sandra Ferreira Ribeiro (Sociology). Articles can be sent to: rcintramar-tins@yahoo.com.br, addressed to Prof. Roberto Cintra, and written in Portuguese, Italian or English.



Roberto Cintra

Working in Communion in Times of Crisis

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The businesses of the Eastern Riviera haven't avoided the crisis which haunts the world economy. In the Tigullio district alone, there are almost 700 workshops belonging to fourteen businesses of various sectors, including seaman-ship, who are receiving the benefits of unemployment insurance.

The recent proposal of a territorial pact has been backed by the President of the Genovese Province and by the Councilor of Economic Development in the course of the "general state of things" with local companies, institutions and equivalent social groups promoted by the very same Province and Economic Society. During the meeting, the administrators proposed "a concrete method for building a platform of shared initiatives, starting from the analysis of the situation, in order to respond to Tigullio's crisis. Of course, all this is a consequence of the global crisis, owed to erroneous economical politics which are far from the real economy founded on work."

It's precisely in Tigullio, in Casarza Ligure, that the Tassano Group has its headquarters. It's among the first businesses that put the economy of communion into practice. The company employs nearly 1500 people in its seventy cooperatives. In the Casarza branch, where workers carry out assembly, wrapping and packing of various articles for piece-work, an experience of a "social-oriented factory" is going ahead and includes 130 workers in vulnerable or disadvantaged situations.

"Over the years, the consortium has been able to well-root itself in the territory, to the point of becoming patrimony of the whole community. What Tassano is doing has become part of local development", said the Mayor of Sestri Levante. Meanwhile, during this time, Tassano has realized that it can count on a group of workers and educators who believe in the challenge that the Consortium has taken on.

Every day, they try to put together the needs of individuals and those of production, notwithstanding the limits imposed by various inconveniences that the situation presents. Contracts with clients have to be respected, without compromising the quality of the manufactured goods and especially without forgetting that the person is always at the center of work being done.

"This is how we gain the strength to go ahead," said Klemens Ries, administrator of the Group. "It comes from this group experience, from being a team that has learned, over time, to work together and mutually support each other. It's the only way we're able to keep motivated every day." And amid the boom of occupational crisis,

work proposals keep arriving at Tassano.

Klemens recounts: "Recently, various happenings have taken place which give us hope: we received a call from the administrator of a business that we've been working with for years, to control, finish and pack car and motorcycle filters. They told us that within a week, the amount of work they needed done would take nine less people to complete."

"That evening, I wasn't able to sleep," continues Klemens. "The night seemed eternal. I had in mind the faces of each of those people whom I would have to send home. I know all their stories, pieced together day after day while talking on the work benches of Casarza. The next day, I went to talk to the administrator, suffering painfully inside and yet with the hope of finding some solution. To my surprise, I discovered that he wanted to save those jobs, too! Considering the employees before the profit, we were both ready to reorganize production lines, moving jobs around in other ways. At the end of the morning, no one was left without work."

Another significant offer received during the same period was one from a business who needed to package Bluetooth chips for motorcycle and ski helmets. They had made the same proposal to various businesses in the area. "When we met with the administrator, we told him why we work, our desire to always place the person at the center and not the profit. After a week, they called us to say that they were giving the work to us: 10,000 pieces per month. And they specified that they hadn't made their choice because we had the best prices but because we work in a motivated and positive environment."

In these weeks, a business in Geneva is starting rubber gasket production. Because the administrator knew about the laboratory, he went directly to Casarza to give them this work. "Thinking of all the success of the recent days related to the other two jobs," said Klemens, "I told the administrator that there were other laboratories near us whose jobs were at risk, and suggested that if he wouldn't want to try asking other businesses, we would be equally happy." "No," he said, "people around talk about the way you work at Tassano Group. I'm looking for this type of work and especially these people."

These are all recent facts that show how the Economy of Communion, beyond distributing profits, participates in making new men and women that give testimony, through their actions, of how a new way of working, that puts the person at the center, can be winning.

Klemens Ries



News from Polo Lionello

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One-hundred days since her nomination, we interviewed the President of the Polo's Administrative Council, Eva Gullo. *"We're at the beginning of this adventure," said Gullo, "and it's a challenge to meet, as each one has to travel to get here and has numerous commitments. But we're very happy when we see each other. There's a sense of responsibility towards the post received and commitment in doing all our small part for a project that transcends us. It's necessary to invest time in generating true relationships of communion among us and to value the contribution each one has to make. This way, we can be one reality in our relationship with the Polo's inhabitants.*

From there, it will be possible to develop an always deeper communion among the entrepreneurs present at the Polo, between the shareholders and businesses, also in the businesses throughout Italy and their institutions. What we must always keep in mind is what Chiara Lubich told us: 'The EoC was born so that one day it would be able to give this example: a people where there is no one in need, no poor'."

What is currently the Polo's strong point?

We are already seeing positive signs of the possibility to create dialogue with institutions and businesses in the surrounding area and throughout the country. For example, starting October 1, an agreement with our area's ASL Births Center will go into action. They will use the convention halls of the Polo to hold informative medical-assistance workshops on birth-preparation, which will involve new moms and dads from four nearby towns.

Eva Gullo



Paolo Maroncelli



One recent event that shows how this communion is built is the meeting which took place last September 19 between the Administrative Council, the EoC Commissions of Italy and a plentiful group of entrepreneurs. We gathered impressions of some members of the commissions who participated in this meeting.

Giuseppe Pintus from Sicily wanted to underline the characterizing mark of the meeting: the sharing. He said, *"I was touched by the choral response in facing items on the meeting's agenda. I have to recognize that there is a greater group spirit in collaborating with the programs of the new Administrative Council. From all over Italy, we look at the reality of the Polo together, with many expectations, but mostly by putting ourselves at its service."*

Apostolo Gianfranco, from Basilicata, said, *"In these last few years, the Polo's identity has evolved from industrial to commercial. And so, the initiatives that attract people have become fundamental: providing a meeting place for youth, formational courses, and artistic events. The Polo must always continue to become more of a place where the EoC can be communicated through simple gestures."*

Other participants of the meeting included some of the Polo's inhabitants, like the Poly-ambulatory RISANA, represented by its president Maria Teresa Maffoni. *"This meeting marked the beginning of a second phase," she said. "While these first years served to lay the foundations, now you see the need to go ahead together with greater awareness of the fact that the Polo, with the businesses there, is an expression of a much greater reality: the EoC in Italy."*

Right now, the Polo Lionello is going through further developments. We asked the delegated administrator, Paolo Maroncelli, to explain to us the main changes in store: *"Among the first needs that we want to respond to is a communications project that would give visibility to the Polo, both through new brochures and by equipping the gallery with an audio-visual system that can show images of EoC life. Besides this, a new website is in the works, with a blog for dialogue with users. Italian EoC businesses who want to can publish their links and contact information there. A calendar of events and programs at the Polo will also be on the site, and there will be a reserved area for associates."*

We know that the Polo is also a place for formation. Can you tell us something about this?

"The Polo not only hosts businesses, but it welcomes the world which revolves around it. For example, there are three different sized meeting halls available for use, which can host diverse formative events in the area, on various topics. For example, the Comunità Solidali of the CGM Group Consortium has held some academic formation courses there in our halls."



In these days, the reception and gallery of the Polo hosted numerous painted works. You could say that the doors have been opened to art. What are the prospects in this regard?

"Our desire is to enrich the presence of art at the Polo, with the beauty and creativity that this brings. A local artist, Celeste Di Luca, came to ask if she could exhibit her work here as she felt that the Polo is particularly suitable for the values it expresses."

We asked Celeste Di Luca why she chose the Polo for her personal exhibit, which was inaugurated recently. *"I was looking for a place to exhibit my works that wasn't a typical art gallery. I found out about the Polo Lionello casually, when I was invited here for a cup of coffee, and I was immediately touched by its harmonious and luminous architecture. Then, I was certain that this was the place for my paintings when I got to know the people that work at the Polo. They welcomed me, and that was the beginning of a relationship of communion, which is what my works intend to express."*

The inauguration of my exhibit was a formative occasion for me and for many friends and others (nearly seventy guests, among whom professionals and such in the art world) who didn't know about the Polo or the Economy of Communion, but they felt at ease and had a way to get closer to this new economic reality."



Celeste Di Luca



The Poly-ambulatory RISANA

Begins its activity on October 24. Founded by 9 associates in February of 2008, and awaiting to establish itself in its offices at the Polo (420 sq.m. of the upper level), the cooperative RISANA began working in a provisional headquarters on July 1, 2008.

Some history: since 1998, a dentist office in Incisa Valdarno brought professionals linked to the small town of Loppiano in more direct contact with the local area. Over time, a network of specialists in a variety of medical backgrounds began to consolidate itself and the project of a poly-ambulatory blossomed.

Currently, RISANA offers dentistry and welcomes individual professionals from various disciplines in the surrounding offices. In particular, since July of 2009, medical specialists in cardiology, neurology and neurophysiology, gynecology, internal medicine, and adult psychology are at work there. Complementary medicine is represented as well with specialists in osteopathy, acupuncture and homeopathy.

There are also two physical therapists with different specializations: global postural re-education according to Mezieres, Manual Medicine, cranial sacral therapy and profound osteopathy. Soon, there will also be a CUP (central ultrasound processing) center open for appointments of prescribed medical exams.

Finally, in the afternoon of October 24, the headquarters of the Poly-ambulatory will be inaugurated at the Polo. The event will be a chance for dialogue about the conviction held by RISANA professionals: that entering into relationship with the other – whether colleague, health worker, patient or family member – is fundamental to carrying out these professions in a way that responds to today's expectations.

The associates hold tight to the need to recuperate a medical vision based on the respect of values of the dignity of human life and combine this with technological and scientific progress for a professional that aims at excellence and brings the person back to the center of interest in the art of medicine.

The Polo seems like a privileged place to spread these ideas, almost like a "shop window" that multiplies the effects of the individual efforts of many health workers who are searching to live out their profession in the light of fraternity.



The EoC project represents a novelty in the economic field but also in politics and philosophy. In fact, it affronts crucial topics which are at the center of contemporary political philosophy.

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The Economy of Communion and Social Justice

The most important work in political philosophy during the 1900's is definitely *A Theory of Justice* (1971), by American philosopher John Rawls. As a point of reference for all who deal with political philosophy matters, even indirectly, the Rawlsian theory has naturally attracted a certain amount of criticism as well. It seems to me that two of these are worth addressing. I would like to discuss them here, above all because they relate problems of great theoretical and practical relevance to the *Theory of Justice*. Such a discussion will also allow us to begin to define a wide backdrop on which to consider what are, in my opinion, some of the more interesting characteristics of the Economy of Communion project.

The first point regards the position originating initially in the area of feminist philosophy and which centers on the problem of "outcasts". Rawls' theory of justice strives to define two key principles: "liberty" and difference. The first affirms that "Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all," while the second establishes that "Social and economic inequalities are to be...to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society." According to Rawls, these principles are attainable through the stipulation of a social contract, which forms the foundation of a "well-ordered" society. Such a vision centered upon the concept of contract is based on the idea according to which men find themselves as part of society to reciprocally exchange benefits, and the social contract is none other than the seal of such an agreement. But here is the first problem: it is easy to understand that not all citizens are in the condition to be able to give something within an exchange, if you think of a seriously ill patient, a newborn, a psychologically disabled person, or even a person in extreme poverty.

As such subjects only have needs and have nothing to give (apparently), then they are not called to sign a social contract; they are the so-called "outcasts". Such a conclusion, according to some, transforms Rawls' approach into "a question of charity and not of justice."

Instead, the second point pertains to the critique initially supported by Peter Singer and which flowed into the so-called *Global Justice* line of thought, principally supported by Charles Beitz and by one of Rawls' students, Thomas Pogge¹. The main idea of "global justice" regards international justice with all the problems connected to moral relations between individual and institutional subjects, which result as separated among themselves by national boundaries. According to Rawls, the social contract is a national contract. This creates a bond exclusively among citizens of a nation-state and therefore does not create any moral debt between citizens of rich countries and those in countries of delayed development. Even here, justice becomes an exclusively internal fact and not an international one.

The question of exclusions and that of global justice, in contrast, puts into evidence both the choice that is at work within the EoC project to consider "the outcasts", the poor, as active subjects and not objects of charity, as well as that of concretely carrying out a global distribution of wealth which is independent from considerations of national or border-line character. We certainly do not want to affirm that it is possible, in this way, to overcome the limits of the Rawlsian approach, but rather than an outright confrontation with such a theory, we can use it to help us to fully catch the novelty and that prophetic drive inherent in the EoC project.

¹ Cfr. Beitz, C., (1979). *Political Theory and International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press e Pogge, T., (ed.), (2001b), *Global Justice*, Oxford: Blackwell

The Loppiano Prima Cooperative at the International Conference on “Catholic Social Thought and Management Education”

Loppiano Prima *Becomes a Case Study*

CATERINA
FERRONE



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On the occasion of the convention “The Good Company”, organized in Rome in 2006 by the Pontifical University of San Tommaso in Rome, in collaboration with Saint Thomas Catholic University of Minnesota, USA, a few professors decided to elaborate a “Business Ethics” handbook for American university students. The book would present useful cases for studying the link between religious faith and business management.

Two EoC businesses were proposed among them: Mundell and Associates, an American businesses that works in the environmental sector, and the Italian cooperative of Loppiano Prima. The latter arose twenty years before the EoC project began, and Chiara herself defined it as “a foreshadow of the EoC businesses”. It grew together with the international small town of Loppiano, which strives to be a living example of the charism of unity and the Gospel message. Since the moment that the cooperative began, it searched for many who shared its principles, way of working and producing, and began with 100 shareholders. Today the cooperative has more than 4000 shareholders.

One of the Administrating Council’s meeting minutes reads: “The Council recommends, then, that in all actions carried out by the Cooperative, either dealing with agriculture or other matters, it must be remembered that its goal is not limited to the economic field. The economic aspect must always be present in every action in order to guarantee the financial stability of the Cooperative, but it must never be the only determining element.”

When the Cooperative was constituted in 1973, it bought an already existing winery called “Tracolle”, complete with cellars, store rooms and sufficient structures for beginning an agricultural initiative. It then decided to hire on farmers (ex share croppers), whose families had already been living on these lands for more than 100 years, and in doing so acquired the tote of generations of experience already present on the land. True relationships were created with these farmers despite the diversity of political and religious ideas – a special co-habitation among believers and non-believers.

In ‘74, the shareholders strongly desired to make the business more economical. Although their means were scarce, they decided to recuperate fields that had been abandoned for a number of years. They had to decide if in taking on more land it was okay to use less herbicides. They decided against the herbicides and hired three laborers to do this job, even though it was costly.

In this way, however, they were able to respect the principle that still guides the cooperative today: “think of the health of man”, even when economy is very important.

In 1984, a serious frost hit Tuscany. It was one of the most difficult years because the pruning work to be done after the frost carried enormous costs. At first, they thought it was possible to save the plants by only cutting the “head” of the olives, but after fifteen days, seeing the seriousness of the frost, they realized that the only way to save them was to “cut the plant at its foot.” It meant a loss of nearly 5,000 olive trees, and many other agricultural businesses in similar situations had to close that year.

On that occasion, like others, the cooperative turned to Providence, always came through in the past. The administrating council made a proposal to its associates: reintegrating the loss with new contributions and, above all, it asked each associate to buy at least a box of wine from the cooperative (already at top quality). Thanks to the large number of associates, the cooperative sold many boxes of wine and was able to survive.



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Regularly visit the website, www.edc-online.org, available in 5 languages, to have the "latest news" on everything relative to the EoC. Also search through the site's other pages to find articles, papers, videos, experiences of the businesses and much more.

ANTONELLA
FERRUCCI

There are 11 new theses which we want to present in this issue. Among these, five are undergraduate theses, one is an old-order four-year thesis, four are specializations and one is a doctorate thesis. The last is also the first thesis on the EoC to come from Russia. It is also the first time we have a Polish thesis. All the theses presented seem to have a similar main idea: that of relational goods and a new type of governance that becomes explicit for who lives the EoC in a radical way. Two theses analyze the very particular business case-study of the Tassano Consortium. One faces the original approach of the EoC towards poverty with respect to other economic models.



Eleven *New Dissertations on the EoC*



Paola Salari

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Undergraduate Degree in Economy
"L. Bocconi" University (Milano)

October 7, 2006

Language: Italian

Thesis: Relational Goods in Economic Theory

Thesis Chair: Luigino Bruni

This thesis aims at deepening the concept of "relational goods", from the moment that it first appeared in economic debate until its most recent uses, as well as understanding the main novelties that such a concept brings to economic theory.

The fundamental importance that relational goods hold in the society, both at a micro and macro level, is evident. In fact, even while such "intangible goods", created in the interaction between agents, are undoubtedly difficult to analyze in a rigorous and quantifiable way. This effort is necessary given that the relational aspect has taken on greater weight in today's economy, where person-person relationships have gained importance. What clearly emerges from the theories discussed in this work is that, despite the fact that relational goods are not calculated in the GNP, they play a fundamental role in production of both individual and collective well-being.



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Undergraduate Degree in
Economic Science
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December 3, 2007

Language: Italian

Thesis: Business: from "Past" Experience to an Economy of Communion Project for the Future

Thesis Chair: Prof. Nunzio Casalino

This thesis aims at presenting the Economy of Communion (EoC) project, which begun in Brazil, in 1991, and proposes new economic behavior marked by the "culture of giving." It deals with a new economic style expressed by the desire to join respect of rules and business values with motivational and objective values that can be summarized as the culture of communion in freedom. The goals of this study can be identified in how it elaborates the EoC proposal and verifies the effective assumption of social responsibility, studying the instruments used to communicate such to the stakeholders involved.



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Masters in European Studies
University of Studies of Palermo

March 13, 2008

Language: Italian

Thesis: Local Development and Reciprocity: the case of the Lionello Bonfanti Industrial Park

Thesis Chair: Prof. Alberto Tulumello

A particular category of good in the economic system, the "relational good", is placed at the center of this thesis's reflection. Relational goods are those that arise from disinterested attitudes and which, despite being immeasurable, often bear upon determining the success of an economic system. With this basis, the thesis continues its analysis of local development and in particular on industrial districts and industrial parks as a type of development that places relationship at the center. The EoC project is founded on this intuition, but it also goes another step: it identifies communion as the way to reducing social inequalities.

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Doctorate in Economics and
National Economy Management
Moscow State Forest University

September 2, 2008

Language: Russian

Thesis: Development Strategy of Small and Medium Socially-Oriented Businesses

Thesis Chair: Prof. Dr. N. Medvedev

One of the main objectives of this research is to develop the essential theoretical points and practical recommendations that ensure the strategic development of socially oriented businesses. Following the study, the author proposes and validates a development strategy for small and medium-sized, socially-oriented, forestry and wood businesses. Methods to improve the formation system of personnel in the forestry sector are also proposed, considering the different qualitative parameters and the incrementing social impact of small and medium-sized businesses. The theoretical studies, practical recommendations and methodological instruments are developed with particular reference to the Ostashkov territory, in the Tver region (Russian Federation).



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Masters in Formational Science
Sacred Heart University of Milan
at Piacenza

October 7, 2008

Language: Italian

Thesis: Business Communication: a Relational Good. Experience of the EoC Businesses

Thesis Chair: Prof. Giuseppe Braga

As things stand today, we usually, incorrectly interchange the following words as synonyms: communicate and inform, listen and hear. Information is the simple passage of information, while in communication what counts is not only the message but also the will of who speaks to transmit something of him. Today, communicating is difficult in every environment, especially at the workplace, as it is thought of as something superfluous, something extra that does not apparently profit anyone. Instead, if one "loses" time in attentively communicating, it would be possible to reduce situations of tension and those misunderstandings that create true "wastes" of time.

To verify my research hypothesis, that communication can influence the business atmosphere, I decided to examine a few businesses of the Economy of Communion. The analysis of the data collected made it possible to clearly single out the importance attributed to communication activities and, in general, to so-called relational goods on the part of the same businesses. In fact, the management style of the businesses dealing with the Economy of Communion resulted in being characterized by particular attention towards the working climate and the "human factor", with consequent specific and important attributions to the care of personnel and communication.



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Undergraduate Degree in
Business Economy
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November 4, 2008

Language: Italian

Thesis: EoC Businesses: Seeds of Fraternity in the Management of the Market in the Third Millennium

Thesis Chair: Prof. Federico Fontana

A new idea of economy has been presented that is different from those known until now (for example: the state economy, the market economy, communism, capitalism, etc.). This economy privileges relationships between interested parties (first of all, the needy), aiming at collaboration, fraternity, sharing and communion. In other words, man again becomes protagonist and works in the optic of the common good, striving to reach the objectives just stated. In particular, this thesis analyzes a business of the EoC, the "Tasano Consortium", and shows how it would be possible to put this new economic model into practice and at the same time obtain concrete results in Gospel terms (respect of legality, the environment, competitors, personnel, mutual assistance among associates, insertion and personal growth of differently-abled persons, etc.) without penalizing the functioning of the business and its attaining economic results.



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Master in Economics
The Poznan University of Economics

December 19, 2008

Language: Polish

Thesis: The Competitive Strategy of the Complex Project Ltd, which adheres to the EoC

Thesis Chair: Prof. dr. hab. Józef Orczyk

This thesis aimed at verifying the possibility to apply traditional analysis methods of competitive strategy to businesses that belong to the EoC project. I concentrated on the case study of the Complex Project Ltd, whose analysis according to the five strengths highlighted by Porter, traditionally used in this type of analysis, provide a completely different vision compared to that of the EoC. The same could call itself the evaluation of attractiveness. At the same time, the typical instruments of SWOT/TOWS analysis can be interesting and provide useful information about the functional changes of the business and its strategies.



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Masters in Business
University of Leicester

January 2009
Language: English

Thesis: Do EoC Businesses Adhere in Praxis to the Principles and Values of the Project?

Thesis Chair: Dr. Warren Smith

This thesis's goal was to verify whether or not the EoC businesses effectively adhere to their principles and values. In particular, three fundamental principles were individualized among those proposed by the EoC: the distribution of profits to the poor, the improvement of relationships with employees and the adjustment of management practices to the interpretive framework of the EoC.

Following the analysis of thirteen enterprises of the EoC, I elaborated three recommendations in their regards. The first: an analysis by qualified and accountable experts would be necessary to evaluate the reasons that these businesses contribute less than expected to the project. The second: greater involvement of employees with respect to the values and goals of the project would be desired. Third: the qualification of operational managers in these businesses should be improved.



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Bachelors in Business Economy
"Federico II" University of Studies
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March 24, 2009
Language: Italian

Thesis: Development and Solidarity: the case of the Economy of Communion

Thesis Chair: Prof. Raffaele Sibilio

The general goal of this study was to expand on the aspects that characterize the life of the businesses that are part of the Italian Industrial Park and which draw their inspiration from the principles of the Economy of Communion. Specifically, the author wanted to understand organization under the aspect of communion; point out emerging behaviors among employees, suppliers, clients and institutions; and analyze the principle values.

The conclusion lays out the strengths and weaknesses, the luminous and the dark points of the EoC and the project's industrial parks, and instruments to adopt and actions to take so that workers are involved.



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Undergraduate Degree
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April 27, 2009
Language: Italian

Thesis: Management and Organizational Profiles of the Economy of Communion: the Case of Tassano Consortium

Thesis Chair: Prof. Federico Alvino

This work is structured in three sections: the first illustrates the origins, founding ideas, objectives and guidelines to respect in order to reach the project's foreseen objectives; the second analyzes the internal workings of such businesses and how these are different from others present and competing on the market. In particular, it mentions the industrial parks, communities of businesses which are different than industrial districts. In addition, it presents the Rainbow Score method used to quantify and give importance to the value produced by the unique management style of these businesses and which is not always taken into consideration. The third part analyzes the business case of the "Robert Tassano" Consortium, a consortium of social cooperatives, and testimonies to full fulfillment in adhering to the EoC Project.



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Business Economy
University Cà Foscari (Venice)

June 30, 2009
Language: Italian

Thesis: Economy of Communion: an Innovative Proposal of Governance

Thesis Chair: Prof. Marco Vedovato

The thesis focuses on the description of the Economy of Communion, trying to help the reader understand how such a project can influence changes in business governance; such can become means for resolving problems in the globalized world. The study offers a wide panorama on the EoC program, allowing the reader to take in the main points of the Economy of Communion phenomenon. Such a project is capable of launching interesting challenges, at the level of business governance, to all who intend to adhere to it, facing a path of transition or starting a new business oriented to EoC values. It also highlights how such a project can be a useful instrument in resolving problems resulting from globalization.

The North Star of an EoC Business

GIUSEPPE
ARGIOLAS

If we take into consideration the evolution of management theories, what clearly emerges is how much their theoretical construction and operative practice were and are influenced by a very precise cultural perspective. If a dominant “managerial model” has emerged in every historical period, there have also been exceptions which proposed innovative and in some ways alternative solutions.

The historical context in which we live, precisely because it is characterized by a profoundly critical situation, can be a privileged moment to question the current dominating model, or more specifically, it can be a moment for authentic research of that which the business can and should be in its relationships with all persons and organizations which are in some way linked to it.

In fact, the crisis our economy is going through is deeper than those seen in the past because it is cultural, social and relational in nature. The difficulty in finding adequate answers to it originates in the very crisis of Western culture, which contains deep questions of *meaning*.

This is why, today more than ever, management must know how to take into consideration the basic question of how people work in organizations. It is necessary to find concrete procedures to reaching this objective, projecting ourselves towards success on various levels, and in which the person and his relationships are placed at the center of a business's behavior, internalizing a management style that places relationships at the vertex of how one works.

From the operational practices typical of businesses and organizations animated by the culture of communion, which characterizes the EoC, there emerge various elements (aspects, pillars and instruments) that, correlated in a systematic way, make up a *management model for businesses of communion*.

In fact, if communion can be lived on all levels and in all aspects and expressions of a business's being¹, it becomes evident that in order to fully reach this it would be necessary to base relationships on dialogue, trust and reciprocity, those out-and-out pillars of the EoC managerial construction.

However, this is not built once and for all. The importance of activating instruments like the Pact on the Business Mission, communion of experiences, the truth and the colloquial, are considered full-fledged facilitating processes that make communion the “North Star” that directs and manages the business.

A business of communion shows itself to be coherent as such if it is able to put person-centeredness and the common good at the heart of its actions, of its way of being. This choice, which can take form through a number of meanings and expressions, should aim at the quality of the relationships that the business develops internally and externally, with the environment in which it is situated and in the wider, more global environment, of which it feels a part.

In this way, the business will give its actions a role that goes well beyond that of simply being a business. It will take on a wider *meaning, mission*, or better, it will answer fully to the communitarian vocation that directly originates from its very nature and offers a concrete and visible contribution to the spreading of the culture of communion on the planetary scale, and with this a new way of being a business.

¹ Cfr. The new guidelines for running an Economy of Communion business, from Economy of Communion, a new culture, n. 28/December 2008, Città Nuova, Rome.



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In recent years, interest in the topic of “social entrepreneurship” has grown. The 2006 Nobel Peace Prize identified one of its charismatic leaders, Muhammad Yunus (in his last book, Yunus substitutes the term “micro credit” with “social business”).

What do social businesses suggest to the EoC?

LUCA
CRIVELLI



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While conscious of the difference between the North American and European visions of social entrepreneurship (embodied in particular in the European Research Network, EMES), what is happening on the two shores of the Atlantic cannot but suggest a few interesting paths for reflections, even to us who, on various fronts, are committed to making an economy of communion come to life (in this text, the Latin American experience is explicitly not mentioned, not because it is not significant but because of the author’s little knowledge of the characteristics of this experience there).

In both contexts, the starting point is represented by a shortage of resources, which was shown beginning in the 1980s. In the United States, philanthropic donations were no longer sufficient to guarantee the success of the non-profit sector. In Europe, it was the State-Province crisis that mostly brought about a reduction in available funds to supply social services.

In both contexts, the answer to this crisis was an appeal to business, seen as a subject capable of generating, through continual productive activity and sales of goods and services on the market, the financial resources necessary to satisfy some needs of the community and its most fragile members.

Both in the United States as in Europe, the first season of these social businesses was strongly marked by the imperative to generate new financial resources. In America, non-profit organizations started real commercial businesses. These were often unlinked to the NGO’s original mission if not to that of producing profits that would serve, in a second phase, towards reaching the goal for which the various organizations started.

In Europe, social businesses, in a phase of development, dealt mainly with integrating disadvantaged workers, and their impact was often measured in a limited way, focusing only on their ability to finance themselves.

It’s good to remember that the EoC, too, arose from a lack of resources. The communion of goods, lived on the individual level, was no longer enough to help the needy members of the Focolare community (some of whom lived in the favelas of Sao Paulo) get out of their situation of need. Chiara suggested this solution in May of 1991, beginning businesses that would put their profits in common.

Still today, in the EoC project, we live a separation bet-

ween the world of EoC businesses (which deals with producing profits, then donated to the project) and the act of distributing the aid, made possible thanks to the widely diffused presence of the Movement in every part of the world. For a few years now, in order to manage the projects, we’ve made use of the experience in development material from our NGO, Action for a United World (AMU).

The important fact is that both in Europe and the United States, reflection and related praxis of social business went ahead. In particular, people recognized that the initial separation between production of profits and social activity bring two disadvantages: (1) it does not fully take advantage of the quality of entrepreneurs, who have a potential not yet made the most of by social innovation - that is, they have a particular capacity to take on risks and develop innovative solutions to help the needy get out of poverty’s trap; (2) one does not get out of poverty only through donations; work integration and social integration of the person into the community are essential.

Today, American *social enterprises* strive to value the creativity of their own entrepreneurs, above all in resolving social questions, while European social businesses have evolved strongly from the viewpoint of governance: the most innovative ones favor the participation of various parties (workers, volunteers, users, the local community) in controlling and governing the business, and they try to improve the way they include the more fragile with the same dignity as the others.

These paths cannot but stimulate our reflection on the future of the project. Maybe it is important to find a way to also look after the poor who live around us and are in some way in contact with the communities where our industrial parks or businesses are located. In our hearts, we still have the first ideas that Chiara launched in Brazil when she herself envisioned “a third way for the economy”: the communitarian ownership and start-up of these businesses (“we’re poor but many”); the first way of helping is giving work to the unemployed; our gaze must embrace the crown of thorns, and so the EoC’s work will not be considered completed only when there are no more poor in the Movement, but it remains as an open playing field as long as there is a place in the world where the various forms of need – material, spiritual, relational, of horizons and of meaning – still exist.

Avevo ricevuto il centuplo, i rapporti tra tutti, così hanno riunito i dipendenti
La mia famiglia ha avuto diverse crisi finanziarie



Dialogue *with* Our Readers

ALBERTO
FERRUCCI

The Gift of a Job

My family has had various financial problems, and it was only thanks to the contribution received by the EoC to help with college payment that I was able to study at the university. But now I needed a job...

In June 2008, despite difficulties, I applied for a federal post in Salto, my city. The application required exams to be taken in the capital. I had also applied for other jobs, and their exams had been set for the same day. So I had to take a test in Salto in the morning, and then in the afternoon take another in the capital, which was 110 km. away.

I would have finished the morning tired, and by the afternoon I wouldn't be able to render much, but I had studied a lot. The big day arrived, and I went to the first exam with trust. When it finished, I "flew" to the capital, where I arrived a half-hour early. At the end of the day, I was calm and ready to accept what Jesus would send me. However, in my heart, I told him, "Who knows, if I pass at least one of the two... You know what I need!"

After months, the answer finally arrived. In Salto, I had finished fifth, while in the federal offer I had been admitted as first

contender in the second phase, which consisted in presenting titles and a curriculum. Having few points, in the end, I finished third.

On the feast of the Nativity of Mary, September 8, I asked her: "I ask you the impossible, Mother... I would like to start the year with a new job! You know what I need to help my family!" On December 23, I received a telephone call from Sao Paulo, which told me that I was first on the list for a placement as administrative assistant.

I had received the hundredfold, my Christmas gift! As soon as I started to work, I asked that the help I had been receiving from the EoC be sent to another person who was now needier than I, certain that she, too, would experience the hundredfold!

Renata Maciel

Salto, State of Sao Paulo, Brazil

The Friday Barbecue

In 2004, Mario made a proposal to Milton, his then employee, to create a construction company together, in which they would adopt a way of working, respecting rules and a conception of hierarchy that followed the guidelines of the Economy of Communion. That was when "Domus Aurea" began, which today has 13 employees.

"We started by making a pact," said Mario and Milton, "putting into practice the EoC and living in such a way that our Hidden Shareholder, Jesus, would always be among us.

"Over time, the business grew. We saved to buy new machines and created an environment around us that was always serene and cordial, putting the "person" at the center. Our workers realized that there was something different about our business, and when they asked us about this, we explained what was behind it all.

"In "Domus Aurea", the working groups are lead by Carlos and Rodolfo. Rodolfo had been dreaming to have a motorcycle for some time, because he

had a long bike ride to get to work. As soon as the opportunity arose, we gave him a loan with the profits of the business. He was able to buy the motorcycle, and he paid back the loan over time."

Mario and Milton felt the need to check on how the relationships among everyone were going, so they called a meeting with all the employees so that each one could himself calmly. After that meeting, the need arose to continue this dialogue more constantly. So it has become almost like a rite that on Fridays during lunch, they eat barbecue together. "We're all aware that we have to continue working in the afternoon, so when we go to buy the drink, we buy a maximum of two beers for eight people!"

From "Domus Aurea"

Montevideo – Uruguay



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