

The Economy of **Communion**

a new culture

31

ECONOMY OF COMMUNION •

A NEW CULTURE

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The Economy of Giving



Buddhism and the
EoC in Dialogue



The EoC in Eastern
Europe



Proximity and
Development

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Many are touched by the fact that EoC businesses allocate profits for those in need and also for the spreading of a new humanism; others object because they say that this practice is not new. Another person, reading the EoC report about profits was astonished because if the shared profits are divided by the number of businesses, the average result of each one's contribution is meager.

An inclined plane

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And yet, the cultural impact of the commitment, passion and witness of the EoC entrepreneurs, businesses and scholars on today's society cannot be denied. It is this impact that led Benedict XVI to mention the economy of communion in his encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*. Evidently, the simple sum of shared profits does not completely describe the development of the project and just how precious this way towards fraternal economy is for humanity.

In fact, in 1991, Chiara Lubich's proposal to share profits was not launched in a generic way to all people but to those people who already shared the culture of giving.

These were people who were trying to become saints where life's circumstances and their work had brought them. They were already practicing agape: loving first with hope, without expecting the other to love in return.

They were people who were behaving this way to attract the presence of God promised when reciprocal love is a reality.

Chiara wanted businesses to arise near the movement's small towns. The businesses would be entrusted to those more expert and who could give work to the town's inhabitants, as well as produce profits to help their neighbors in need get out of poverty. This would

be made possible with the contribution of everyone; we may be poor but we are many.

The responsibility to live communion among workers, suppliers, clients and competitors was implicit in her invitation, as was the respect of personal rights, state laws and the environment.

Therefore, Lubich proposed a way of doing business that, in the countries where such behavior is not usual, just breaking even is a problem. However, she believed that these businesses would turn a profit because she had experienced that Providence intervenes when one lives the culture of giving, and she did not see why this would not also happen for businesses and nations.

Businesses that operate in the midst of the world, far from the movement's small towns, also adhered to the project, and today these businesses are in the majority. They are businesses "in-progress", that try to increasingly live communion within the business and with its surrounding territory. These businesses are connected with all the others and with the business parks in the small towns through a shared ideal. Even with all their li-

mits, these businesses are very precious, because they work in this style as much as they can while being in the midst of the world. They are like an inclined plane that joins today's economy with a fraternal economy. Their witness in society, in some way, already reaches the goals of the project: contaminating those around them with the culture of giving, influencing them in some way. Then, when these businesses offer a job to someone who is out of work or to someone with different abilities, they are already helping the needy. Talking to these entrepreneurs and workers, one realizes that the businesses often feel that they cannot forget those around them, and therefore they support initiatives aimed towards the culture of giving. Then, sometimes these people run into situations of social hardships in other countries and they directly get involved in helping in very important ways.

To respond to all this, these businesses use wealth that will not be distributed to their associates. This is also, in some way, profit that is used for the goals of the project. It is not always easy to quantify, but we must find a way to do so in

order to more accurately represent the shared profits. In one case, where a business tried to make this calculation, it was clear that the wealth distributed by the business towards these goals was seven times higher than the monetary profits given to the EoC project.

Therefore the profits given to the EoC project are just the tip of the iceberg of this new economy. We hope that this tip which will continue to emerge because the profits given in accord with Chiara's invitation are particularly precious.

Certainly, Chiara had intuited that the EoC was more than profit sharing, but perhaps in these early years we have not been capable of showing this. Maybe, we still had to experience that although it was easy to send profits to those near to us who are in need, risking that they remain in that condition because of the assistance received, it was much more of a challenge to experience that the persons receiving those profits were truly our brothers, truly our neighbors, truly our equals who need help to overcome their difficulties so that they, too, with equal commitment, can live the culture of giving.

The Economy of Giving

CHIARA
LUBICH



"Unlike the consumer economy based on a culture of having, the Economy of Communion is the economy of giving.

This could seem difficult, arduous, heroic. But it is not, because the human person, made in the image of God who is love, finds fulfillment precisely in loving, in giving.

This need to love lies in the deepest core of our being, whether we are believers or not.

And in this affirmation, supported by our experience, is where lies the hope of the universal spread of the economy of communion".

Rocca di papa, November 10, 1991





Buddhism *and the EoC in dialogue*

**BENEDETTO
GUI**

"We're in danger of longing for the past," Teresa Ganzon whispered to me. She is also one of the guest speakers invited to give voice to the Economy of Communion at the 4th Buddhist-Christian Symposium, held in February near Chang Mai, in northern Thailand.

After a first day of rich dialogue centered on the current collapse in values, the second day, dedicated to the topic of contemporary humanity's suffering, brought a vein of pessimism that started to seep into the hall about the future. An American speaker, from a Protestant church, was able to reverse the situation. He invited everyone to look ahead, "The past is behind us. Now, together, we need to understand how to face the new problems that have arisen." It was the turning point. Nissho Takeuchi, a spiritual leader who is followed by many Japanese business managers, took the microphone to thank him. "You are right," Mr. Takeuchi said. "Our role as carriers of spiritual values is not to defend our religion from new cultural tendencies, attempting to knock down the others. We need to attentively analyze our responsibilities and collaborate together, to help humanity, which will continue to go ahead."

This attitude acted as the basis for the rest of the symposium that focused on "Economic crises and disparity in wealth."

Four presentations given by Buddhist speakers highlighted how Buddhism would be able to bring a specific message to economy - expressed by the key word, "happiness." (This word, happiness, has become the object of new interest in the last few years on the part of Western economists).

In fact, Buddhism aims to help human beings be happy. But the way to reach this happiness is much different from the norm; it is not centered on the search for money and success. Buddhism teaches people to free themselves from worry over passions and self-absorption, and helps people to open themselves up to compassion towards others.

"It's not by chance," observed Muhehiro Niwano of the Rissho Kosei Kai, "that the only nation in the world to have adopted, as a measure of success, the "Gross National Happiness" index (instead of Gross National Product) is Bhutan, where Buddhist influence is very strong."

"We're not talking about erecting a barrier against modernization," underlined Niwano, "but only about allowing human beings to keep or win back their own

spiritual wealth while benefiting from material wealth." The case of a modern Japanese marine community, Minamata, is very significant in this sense. Tragically, the town gained publicity for its mental illness that was caused, unknowingly, by the ingestion of mercury dumped into the water by industrial plants and absorbed by fish in the bay. The inhabitants of this city were shunned and even discriminated against by others out of the fear and disgust that the name, "Minamata," evoked. The need to get out of this extremely uncomfortable situation opened the way to an original social experiment aimed at having the community regain its quality of life. The experiment was based on the collaboration among citizen and, the reconstruction of its social fabric by underlining spiritual values rather than consumeristic values.

Another significant experience is that presented by Phra-khru Piphitsutatorn, representing Thailand's Buddhism, in which the monastic life plays an important role. Faced with the economic and social difficulties of the rural population of the Trad Province, impoverished by the emigration of the youth to the cities, Buddhist monk, Phra Subin, gave life to a network of initiatives of communitarian economy that involved more than 100 villages. The first step was to gather savings that were then given as loans at competitive tax rates. Additional types of collaboration such as "rice banks", joint acquisitions that reduced costs, and the production of biological fertilizers (less expensive and polluting than chemical ones) began to evolve.

It is interesting to note how Phra Subin went beyond the traditional role of a monk being a spiritual witness and into working on the affairs of material life.

Finally, a word on our presentation of the Economy of Communion: the general ideas of the project were very positively received as was the experience of the rural Filipino bank, Banco Kabayan. During this meeting, more than at other times, I realized how the ideal of unity that inspires the EoC highlights the very encouraging experiences of economy at the service of humanity that are blooming from men and women of good will all over the world. This ideal can help these initiatives unite with one another in transforming praxis and current economic culture from within.

Once more, I felt that the Economy of Communion is a piece of that inundation of hope that is needed by the billions of citizens of the world.



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"Blessed are the poor" is one of the phrases of the Gospel that is addressed to everyone, as are all phrases of the Gospel. There is beatitude, blessedness, in poverty. But what type of blessedness, and why?

The entrepreneur and poverty

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It's clear that not all conditions of life which we call poverty, either yesterday or today, are blessed or happy. In fact, the poverty of exclusion, of both present and future radical insecurity, the absence of rights and of freedom, are certainly not happy states. So then, what kind of poverty is or can become a beatitude?

I believe that there is a condition, mostly spiritual, that impedes us from feeling secure and self-sufficient without having to depend on anyone and anything. When we no longer feel fragile and in need of help, when a bank account and secure job give us (or promise us) self-sufficiency and independence from others, then we are no longer those poor that the Gospel calls "blessed". This dimension of poverty depends on and is linked to all the other beatitudes (either we live the all the beatitudes or we do not live any of them). Only he who is pure, meek, a builder of peace, persecuted for justice, can first understand and then live life with this poverty and desire the Kingdom. When, instead, goods give us the illusion of not having to depend on anyone, of being free from ever stronger relationships with others, then the rich man merits the "troubles" that follow in the discourse on the beatitudes.

Goods, not only economic ones, bring happiness only when they are ways of meeting with others, when they are lived with chastity and not used to immunize us from true and profound relationships. This immunization is the rich man that does not enter into the Kingdom. He does not enter because he does not see it and does not understand it (it is impossible to not want to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven if we see it and understand!). The Kingdom of Heaven belongs only to these poor.

The entrepreneur, too, is called to live this kind of poverty, if he wants to be an EoC entrepreneur. This poverty is not only spiritual detachment but much more. There is detachment from his role, from power, and perhaps from certain comforts, even when all of his colleagues consider them normal. Then, there is concrete detachment from money, when, at the end of the year, he gives part of his profits to further the goals of the EoC. These donated profits, which are not put in the bank, make him more vulnerable (therefore, these choices are always delicate in a business - not finding oneself a burden for others is a form of love and of responsibility). These donated profits put him in conditions of greater dependence and vulnerability, especially in difficult moments and in crises. Economic life, especially that found in a business, is made of uncertainty and risk, and the success and profit of entrepreneurs depend on clients, suppliers, employees, and more. Today, if we look at the world's millionaires, they are rarely entrepreneurs. More often, they are speculators, managers, or heirs.

The entrepreneur by vocation, at least as seen in civil tradition and according to the Church's Social Doctrine, is a builder and an innovator. He is not a seeker of income and position and a consumer of luxury goods, and if and when he becomes so he betrays his social function. From this perspective, one can understand why, in the Middle Ages, merchants were numbered among the poor because, unlike property owners, their wealth was always fragile and subject to the protection of contracts and chance.

This fragility and uncertainty alone, however, are not enough to put the EoC entrepreneur in the beatitude of poverty; something else is needed. For example, giving profits for use outside of the business is an act of great poverty on behalf of the entrepreneur. It almost seems to go against nature, as the entrepreneur has the instinct to build his business. But this giving has great ethical and spiritual value, similar to the situation in a world where when you can buy almost anything with money, money tends to become everything. Instead, underlining with action that money can be given, reminds oneself and everyone that the most precious goods are those other people, that a "beyond" exists outside the gates of the business - a Beyond for which it is worth to spend not only money but all of one's life.





Providence, which is often evoked in the EoC, and with reason, also means seeing that surprising dynamic where a person gives everything and then, with the same poverty with which he gave, can ask everything. It is "the love that asks everything and gives everything", as a song from the early times of the Focolare Movement says. I can ask everything from the others, from myself, without expecting anything, with the same pureness and detachment from which I gave everything, if I have first given everything with Evangelical poverty. Only the entrepreneur-poor person knows Providence.

Today, this type of entrepreneur is emerging from the EoC; a merchant that Jesus does not send away from the temple, because he is a poor person who can, and should, feel himself "blessed".

"Only now that I, an entrepreneur, find myself living in poverty, do I truly understand the condition of those who I tried to help with my profits for so many years", an entrepreneur told me a few days ago, during one of the deepest and most true moments of communion I have experienced in these last few years. Sometimes the circumstances of a serious economic crisis leaves an entrepreneur poor. In other moments, it can be a natural disaster or an instance of slander, or an illness or a moment of exhaustion. But if an entrepreneur and any actor of the EoC does not experience this poverty in his own life, in his own flesh and intelligence, his "help" will inevitably be immature (even in good faith), paternalistic, not very Evangelical, as only a poor person can help another poor person with dignity and respect.



Love the other's business as your own

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UNIBEN Fomento Mercantil Ltda is an invoice factoring business that began in 1998 to provide financial services specifically to EoC businesses. Located in the Spartaco Business Park (Cotia, Brazil), Uniben has three employees and regularly serves 15 businesses.



"This type of service," says Maria Conceição Francischinelli, director of Uniben, "gives us the chance to share the difficulties of the individual businesses. Our experience is based on the proposal to love the other's business as our own."

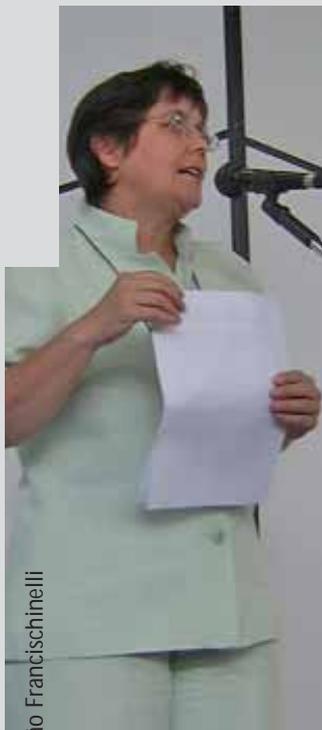
This premise, which can appear to be almost unrelated to a business that provides financial services, can be considered the essence of the EoC project and its identity. The EoC is a project that arises from love and makes love become, little by little, an economic category.

A new understanding of profits

According to the rationality of communion, profits, although an important goal, are not the ultimate scope of entrepreneurial activity. Rather, they are a means for establishing communion. In this way, what matters most is not the maximization of financial profits but their optimization. For Uniben, the fact that an EoC business can continue to work thanks to its services is considered a profit.

Trust as an economic factor

Another fundamental factor is trust. In contracts drawn up with EoC businesses, trust gives Uniben the chance to ask for lower interest rates. The more trust there is, the less the risk. In this way, it is possible to work with lower interests and trust becomes an economic factor. Going beyond the norm, Uniben commits itself to building relationships that expand past respect and business cordiality, giving priority to the "person". "The greatest experience," commented Maria Conceição, "is realizing that the best business practice always finds an agreement that allows the entrepreneur to honor his commitments and allows Uniben to be repaid. In this difficult economic period, many businesses have been hit by the crisis and find themselves with serious problems. Uniben buys credit securities, that is, it advances the amount to be invoiced to the business. When the clients of some EoC businesses are not able to honor their commitments and are late in their payments, this does not impede the business from being granted new credit. Rather, the new credit is also deducted from new invoices."



Maria Conceição Francischinelli



Celia, who works at Uniben, says, "In Uniben, a small business, I realize this difference. The relationship among us is much different from that lived in other businesses outside of the EoC. Sometimes we still lose our patience, but we can always begin again, apologizing, seeing each other with new eyes."

Meetings of the entrepreneurs of Spartaco Business Park

The entrepreneurs of Spartaco Business Park decided to meet once a month with the goal of increasing communion among everyone: opening one's own business to the others. In these meetings, Uniben is represented by Maria Conceição: "I feel that (these meetings) are a step ahead in maturity. When everything goes well, it is easy to talk, otherwise... This moment is very important. You need more love to be able to say everything and listen to everything. In these meetings, we also discuss the future of the businesses. Once, we spoke about Uniben, and together we saw the need to open the business's horizon of action in order to continue and be competitive in the market. I also listened to strong critiques; everything seemed difficult. But in the following days, I understood how much wisdom those entrepreneurs had shared with me. I was able to put into practice many things, and so widen the horizons of the business."

Employee association of Spartaco Business Park

Another structure that increases the relationship of reciprocal love among the businesses at the business park is the Employee Association. There are 92 members coming from different businesses. Even if not all the employees participate directly in the EoC project, the values that sustain the Economy of Communion motivate the relationships among associates.

With the financial contribution of each member and each business, a common microcredit fund has been established, and it has become one of the main services offered by the Association. One of the suggestions of the new management team in helping those who ask for microcredit is to avoid becoming slaves to consumerism. In order to orient those who use this microcredit service, a consulting program is being created with a qualified professional who can help the families establish their family budget.

As the Association does not have its own headquarters, Uniben places one of its offices at the Association's service.

Prospects for future developments

Increasing the capital available for the invoice factoring would be very important, for both Uniben and the EoC businesses. However, in Brazil, only associates can increase a business's capital. Therefore, Uniben is investing in the insurance sector where it has been operating as partner of an intermediary business since 2001.



The EoC in Eastern Europe

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Listening to a piece of music, one can understand the beauty of the music, which depends not only on the melody played by the various instruments, but also by the pauses that they take. The pauses are not "heard", but they temper the melody. Without these pauses, the music would not have its color and feel. The tempo of a pause is important. It is a silent passage. In the same way, the countries in Eastern Europe are in concert with the worldwide EoC. In their history, there is a passage.

The beginnings

In 1991, when the EoC was born, the countries of Eastern Europe were just re-emerging from a political regime where freedom did not exist. Josef Veselý¹ from the Czech Republic writes, "But the basis for the idea of the EoC existed. Chiara gave us a very important orientation in the world of economy that began to develop. There was a thirst for information, for experiences. We studied the *Encyclical, Centesimus Annus*, and it was like seeing the EoC in a mirror."

The new governments made reforms in all areas of civil life. Structures were modified, new institutions were born. Everything was done with the same people as there were "yesterday". These same people who did not know how the market functions but were tasked with creating the rules to govern it.

Peter, a Slovakian entrepreneur, tells the history of the first EoC business (a financial fund) which began in August of 1991 in Slovakia. "On one hand, nothing was clear. There was no information, and there was a great need to change mentality. On the other hand, there was a great desire to follow Chiara's intuition and to make business a vehicle of 'redistribution'." Listening to Peter today, after these years, after the wounds and the falls, one point stands out:

time is necessary for change: time to live, suffer, work, experience and put down roots. In our countries, after Chiara's announcement, a good number of businesses began in the Czech Republic (10), in Hungary (5), in Slovakia (4), and in Croatia the "Faro" Business Park was begun. The businesses and productive activities connected to "Faro" Business Park ("faro" translates as "beacon") include 12 from Croatia, 6 from Serbia, 2 from Bulgaria and 4 from Romania².

Twenty years have passed since the revolution in Eastern Europe, and these countries are still said to have "transitional economies." Some of these countries are already part of the European Union, other members are associates, and others are in the process of becoming members.

What is today's situation in southeastern Europe? Minka Fabjan³ of Croatia says, "...a transitional economy, with a lack of entrepreneurial experience, contending with corruption and with high unemployment (from 20%-40% - average salary between \$200 and \$500 a month) are facing prices almost equivalent to those in the West. Among the 1000 families we have who are in need, 220 of them live on the edge of poverty."

Across Eastern Europe

The first initiative in our countries was the EoC Congress for Eastern Europe at Faro (Croatia) in March of 2009. There were entrepreneurs, economists, students, scholars and many others interested in the EoC, coming from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Russia, Hungary and Croatia. We found that each country, each region discovers its own design when it loves. Love opens itself up to the needs of the others; it sees and embraces the poverty beside it; it makes itself one with today's people



Meetings at the small town of Faro



and thinks of those who are to come. For twenty years, we were on the receiving end of international aid, both financial aid and expert know-how, and we experienced this especially in the gratuitous love of our true brothers from the West. Now it's our turn to take the initiative, to put ourselves at the service of others, to give, even if we still continue to need help.

We must do our part and continue to experience even more deeply that whoever gives, receives. There are already many entrepreneurial experiences, initiatives and activities from which one discovers the importance and the beauty of the EoC in our countries.

One of the ideas that is being explored is that of creating communion among all who are interested in the EoC and starting an organization that can facilitate this sharing. Everything comes from life, from the unity among generations, among countries.

There is the need to dream, to believe and to want to "sweat" for big things. Eastern Europe wants to give its contribution so that "all may be one".

By discovering the vocation in our hearts, we are making our countries blossom.

¹ Josef Vesely, Mariapoli Faro - International Convention of the EoC of Eastern Europe, 28.2-1.3.2009

¹ <http://edc-online.org/index.php/it/idee-forza/poli-produttivi/polo-mariapoli-faro/460-polo-mariapoli-faro.html>

³ Minka Fabjan, meeting of EoC Commissions, 9-11 April 2010



Leo Andringa con giovane



John Mundell from the United States, Teresa Ganzon from the Philippines, and Armando Tortelli from Brazil tell how they live "communion" in their businesses.

MONIA
UNALI

Communion *in the business*



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John Mundell of Indianapolis runs a consulting firm in the field of environmental reclamation. How do you live communion in your business?

"My" experience is really the fruit of the collective commitment of North American EoC entrepreneurs trying to figure out how to articulate this communion where we are, within the business but also with many groups outside of it, with those in need, with youth, with our suppliers and customers, but also with the local community, in the geographic area around the business.

When I was a business of one person, fifteen years ago, communion was easy, because I was alone. But as we added collaborators and employees each year, the style of how we lived communion adapted. At the beginning, when the company was small, that communion was one-on-one. It was loving the person God puts next to me in the present moment.

As the business and the number of employees grew, it became more difficult to have that daily, personal interaction with each employee, and it then became important to create a structure that would encourage and stimulate communion especially when we began to hire people who did not know anything about the inspiration of the EoC project and who had very different backgrounds and ethnic and religious characteristics. What were the values of our business? It was important to live to make them clear.

Can you give an example?

When we have to review our employees or hire new ones, the first thing we verify is his or her capacity to work with others not only in the relationship between employer and employee. We also have colleagues review one another and their directors.

The life of our business tends to spread a style of relationship, and we want to award that style. That is why raises and bonuses are linked to an evaluation on teamwork and interest in the other. This is how we find ourselves with a group of people who perhaps are not the best scientists or engineers, but they are certainly champions of "unity".

And regarding communion outside of the business?

I want to touch on a few experiences with the local community. Our business is an environmental consulting company. We help other businesses reduce their impact on the environment and clean up pollution in water and in the soil. We purposely located our business in the poorest part of the city because we wanted to be close to those who are most in need. We began to build relationships with those around us, hiring local people to fix the roof and cut the grass. We try to build privileged relationships with restaurants in the area, and we send our employees to them to eat lunch. Our local Catholic school was in financial difficulty so we financed a workshop on protecting wildlife, entrusting it to a business located next door to ours that was going through a hard time.

One day, all of our employees went to fix a house in a poor part of the neighborhood. It was a run-down house; there was much to do. The husbands and wives of our employees also came. By "accident", a television crew came by that day. They saw what we were doing and covered us on the evening news. Three years later, because of that coverage, we obtained a fifty-thousand dollar contract. So, providence strikes again!



John Mundell



Teresa Ganzon



Armando Tortelli

Teresa Ganzon directs the Rural Bank in the Philippines. What is your experience regarding business and communion?

We also have many experiences similar to those John shared: experiences of having everyone in the enterprise involved in activities aimed at helping the community: building houses, feeding programs for who have less... little by little we have inserted these activities as part of our life as a rural bank.

The culture of giving slowly entered the life of our employees, and they began to realize that they were in a company that is a little different from the others. So we began to formalize things and include them in our vision and mission statement. For example, it states that we are enabled by Divine Providence and that we want to be a leading financial institution at the service of everyone.

Among other things, we promise our stakeholders something that has no value: a chance to discover how important they are in the lives of others. We look for every opportunity to reinforce these values.

I'll share an example from Christmas a few years back. Usually, in the Philippines, Christmas is celebrated lavishly in the business and not much gets done at work during that time. We decided to give our time and use a great part of our Christmas party budget to rebuild a few houses that had been destroyed by a typhoon.

Also last year, we promoted a feeding program for poor children. Each group took care of the children in their local community, and then we got together the next day and each group shared their experiences.

We saw how these practices spill over into other areas. When some receive bonuses for productivity or a good evaluation, they do not keep it for themselves but share it with all their colleagues who helped them reach their target.

What, for you, is the most challenging aspect of the life of communion in your business?

That is a difficult question. This way of sharing the culture of giving is something that has grown over time. We continued to give, but we needed a lot of time before our employees began to understand what we were doing and why. But now, twenty years later, they have also begun to live like this.

We'll now ask Armando Tortelli the same question. He and his four children manage a number of pharmaceutical businesses in Brazil.

It might seem strange, but my biggest difficulty in living communion in the business is that of living it with those who are closest to me - the group of directors who manage the business with me. In ten years, we have gone from 10 to 300 employees, and so the number of managers also grew. Naturally, I cannot expect that all of them share my same values and ideals. That is why I have to communicate these things mainly with my life and not with my words.

We often see each other to plan strategies and future programs, but in the end we discover that if these do not consider our commitment to the EoC, they have no value. It is not always something simple, even for my closest collaborators to understand. It is not easy for them to understand what is behind my decisions and have these decisions be shared by all.

Can you give us an example?

Once, all of my collaborators wanted to fire someone. In a very frank conversation, I told him that everyone wanted me to fire him because they were convinced that his defects were an obstacle to the business and that he could no longer change or improve. After having said, with decision but with great respect, all that wasn't going well with his behavior - not to judge him but to love him - I asked him if he was willing to change. He told me that he felt loved by me as he never felt before and from that day on, he has written me a daily email outlining the steps he has taken and the changes he has tried to make. With the younger employees, the newly hired, we periodically organize moments to know one another better. We don't talk about work but about our lives, about our experiences. And they feel welcomed, that the distance between them and the veterans, little by little, disappears. A few times, someone questions our decision to put profits in common. Once, when we were suffering from past due accounts, I had to explain to our financial director why I took out another loan to give our contribution to the Economy of Communion. For me, these moments have not been obstacles but, rather, important occasions to tell my story and the story of the business, my convictions and our deepest inspiration. This has brought about a change not only in personal relationships but also in the relationship between these people and the business.

Proximity *and* development

ANDRÉA
CRUZ



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From January 30 to February 6, 2010, 125 people from across Brazil met in Belém, located along the mouth of the Amazon River, at the Formation Seminar on Cooperation Projects for Development, promoted by the International Commission of the Economy of Communion (EoC). Participants included experts from Action for a United World (AMU), Action for New Families (AFN) and Youth for a United World (YFUW).



The program included topics on globalization, the logic of the market, cooperation for development, the encyclical, "Caritas in Veritate", the concept of poverty, and the profiles and roles of the associations promoting the seminar. There were also workshops on cooperation for development, including talks on the paradigms of communion, those who are involved in it and the methods for its application.

It was an important event that is part of a wider context of experiences lived in the field of solidarity since the beginning of the Focolare Movement. In fact, since the beginning of the first Focolare community in Trent, in the 1940s, one of the first imperatives was resolving the social problems of the city, exhausted by the war.

It is important to underline that this imperative arose and was brought about as a social expression of the love that was made concrete through actions and structures according to the requests received, as an answer to the needs of the people. These actions were oriented towards the promotion and emancipation of the person, who, feeling accompanied and helped, was stimulated to reciprocate¹.

Kelen Leite, in a 2007 study titled, "Economy of Communion: the construction of reciprocity in the relationships between work capital and state" (University of Sao Paulo, Annablume FAPESP), commented:

"The objective of the social works of the movement is to favor a process of social organization that involves the populations in reaching personal and collective self-determination in the direction of sustainable development. This is done keeping in mind the cultural and economic realities of an area".

It was the first time in Brazil that these social expressions of the charism of the Focolare Movement were joined together in common reflection. The seminar created communion among these realities - Action for a United World, the Association for New Families, Youth for a United World and the Economy of Communion - and an openness on each group's part to cooperate in promoting new development projects.

Maria Clezia Pinto de Santana, director of the EoC in northeast Brazil, said,

"The seminar in Belém was a moment where we truly could live an experience of fraternity, of unity among generations, among diverse professions and work experiences - from the formation of youth, adolescents and children, to health - among those who have more experience and those who are just at the beginning of their experiences. None of these differences was an obstacle to



building deep relationships, to exchanging experiences, to reciprocally helping one another. It was a collective look at what is being done in Brazil, and a chance to get indications on new steps to take".

It was a step ahead toward the concretization of the EoC's goals. Since 1991, the EoC has given help to those most in need as a result of an international network of a specific type of communion: the pooling of profits from the businesses that adhere to the project.

Recently, an increasing awareness has arisen that this communion must generate true communion at all levels, in relationships of reciprocity.

On the part of the businesses, beyond their commitment to share profits, there is also the commitment to bring communion into their operative structures. On the part of those helped, there is the commitment to return the gift with other gifts, not directly to the business that helped them, and not even in an equivalent amount, but to little by little help build a network of communion in the whole world, involving new people.

What is new about the experience being lived in Belém is that of creating, through the EoC and social works, a culture of reciprocity which is close to "not doing something for someone, but with someone". A greater understanding and applications of this practice will lead to the communion that is the goal of the EoC: one in which who gives and who receives are equals, all protagonists of a fraternal society. They are equals because everyone gives and everyone receives. Everyone has something to give and to receive. Sometimes, there will be someone who returns the aid directly to the giver. Sometimes, the return will be given to a third person. And what must always be encouraged, not as a requirement but as a response of love, is the commitment to do something concrete, right away, to reciprocate the help received.

Ângela M. Bezzerra Silva. On the 2010 AMU Newsletter, says, *"More quality in cooperation", "In fact, that 'something more' that characterizes our actions and projects is reciprocity. This is shown essentially in the fact that those helped discover or rediscover their own dignity and commit themselves to change their lives and their environments, feeling called to give society their best. It is 'something more' that is not limited to the improvement of their economic situation. Fundamentally, it is 'being more'".*

This is a road to take in the search to reinvigorate the network already activated, intensifying the fire of love that burns on its own and calls forth an answer and a commitment, generating gratuitousness, another vital element of the Economy of Communion.

All are protagonists in building a society in which, as Ângela continues, "the structures of sin may be transformed into areas of communion and social inclusion."

¹ CRUZ, Iracema Andréa Arantes da. 2009. *In the kingdom of complexity: "The Economy of Communion in the Civil and Religious Environment, according to Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems".* (Masters in Religious Sciences. Pontifical University of Sao Paulo).



There were various events that took place during the spring months at Lionello Bonfanti Business Park and which welcomed hundreds of people in getting to know the Economy of Communion project.

From Lionello Business Park

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Sunday, April 18, while visiting the small town of Loppiano, 350 visitors from all over Italy went to the Polo to know more about the Economy of Communion project. "Communion and Fraternity in Work" was the title of the day. In four different areas of the building, guests were able to get a better understanding of the working experience there through the accounts entrepreneurs and employees.

On April 26, there was a conference to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Adriano Olivetti's death. Proposed by the Vita Eudaimonica Associations and its president, Alberto Peretti, scholar of Olivettian thought, the conference was titled "The Idea of Community in Business Behavior".

Olivetti was an illuminated entrepreneur, and his key concepts were illustrated during the meeting. Prof. Peretti highlighted how the businesses at the Polo, depending on the Economy of Communion, are leading the economy of the future. He said that this future is one capable of founding itself on the idea of life worth being lived, where work is not just a chance for economic growth but also a motor of a more worthy world. He commented on the need to introduce new energy onto the market, possible by grafting in the logic of gift, of gratuitousness. "Doing business means being moved by what one does," said Peretti to the audience at the meeting. "In other words, with our businesses, we can change the world."

Authenticity is asked of both the entrepreneur and his business idea, in which spiritual strength must also have a place.

Economist Luigino Bruni highlighted both the attitude of making a community on which to base the Economy of Communion, as well as the importance of a few fundamental values: love for beauty, vocation to be an entrepreneur, the capacity to formulate a business plan where seeking happiness plays a very important role, and feeling part of a greater community that can change one's own city.

Arcobaleno bookstore, a business located in the business park, shared its story and underlined how even sharing needs during moments of crisis is important. The entrepreneur is like an "artist" who builds his business every day, certain that it is always possible to "give". He just has to open his heart.

At the end of the meeting, Luigino Bruni presented Isaline Bourgenot Dutru's book on François Neveux, "Utopia in Action", edited by Città Nuova. François had an extraordinary inventive ability, and thirty-five patents are now in his name. He paid attention to interpersonal working relationships from the beginning. Having known about the Economy of Communion project, he moved to Brazil to put his talent, professional experience and money at the disposal of those there to help develop it. Through the accounts of those who knew him, the author traces his professional and human journey. A Brazilian economics student, Carlos Henrique Iazzetti Santos, spoke of François, whom he had known and taken his inspiration.

On May 1st, the Lionello Business Park was also alive with hundreds of visitors for the 40th annual Youth Gathering in Loppiano. "Youth at Work, building a dream" was the title of the day, which begun by journeying through possible "ways" towards peace. There were 8 thematic areas: from peace to arms reduction, the environment, sports, culture and economy.

Workshops, debates, concerts, labs - the youth were working towards a shared present and future. Those involved in the preparation of the economic forum chose the business park as a natural venue for their presentation. It would be an efficient witness of a pro-person economy. There were two days, May 1 and 2, in which the youth took part in the program with active interest. The heart of the program was the presentations by experts: Alberto Frassinetti traced a framework of the current crisis, identifying the deep causes of this cultural vacuum, able to be filled by recuperating the relational dimension in people's personal and community lives, bringing economy back to its authentic, civil nature.





Eva Gullo, president of the E. di C. Spa, presented the Lionello Business Park, highlighting the charismatic nature and the extreme timeliness of the EoC project. The experiences of a few youth place in relief the importance that the new generations have in the project.

The crowning part of the program was a visit to the businesses, with a chance to talk to entrepreneurs. Their counter-current experiences from daily life made a strong impression on all who passed by.

One 28-year-old woman wrote, "I'm leaving happy about something I felt at Lionello Business Park: the need to love my neighbor and doing everything out of love in the work environment. I could have already known this...that "something more" which I understood was that you do everything out of love and with love, yes, to change things, but especially because it is in loving that we find fulfillment."

Meeting with shareholders

The Lionello Business Park met with its shareholders from Liguria, Piemonte and Valle d'Aosta. In Bra, in the beautiful Mariapolis Center at Villa Moffa, more than 80 shareholders were present. It was a moment of awareness, deepening and exchange between some of the administrative council members and shareholders on the current situation of the business park and its future projects.

Among other things, shareholders were made aware of the renovated websites that are now operative, that of the Lionello Business Park (www.pololionellobonfanti.it) which also contains a YellowPages service for EoC businesses, and that of the E. di C. Spa (www.edicspa.it) with information on this society. In these sites, all the information on the formational and cultural activities and the conventions of the park are available. They were indicated to participants as useful instruments for networking among shareholders, entrepreneurs, etc.

It was evident that E. di C. Spa shareholders wish it to assist in the development of new entrepreneurial activities and support for those that already exist at the business park. Some shareholders took advantage of the capital campaign to buy more shares and contribute to the development of the business park.

Upcoming appointments

From September 16-19, the business park will host the 2010 Expo. It is a laboratory of dialogue and creativity, a chance to meet with one another. EoC entrepreneurs from all of Italy will be present for their meeting, as will be the protagonists of the Expo.

Forums, round tables, and presentations of products and services are interwoven throughout the program. Participants will be able to compare notes, gain awareness, exchange with entrepreneurs, managers, economic, social and cultural workers on an economy at the service of the person and society.

On the backdrop of the small town of Loppiano, and sharing the same project, the Expo will include cultural moments in collaboration with Sophia University Institute and Città Nuova magazine (which will also be holding its annual meeting).

One of the most significant moments in the program will be on September 18, with a convention focused on "A City, A Culture, An Economy of Communion."



Years that have been anything but comfortable, but yes, happy, in this "multicultural" business

Ten Years of Tergon

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Waldemar Silfest, previously a bank director, and Georg Endler, with experience in the office furniture business, are among the founders of TERGON, which began around the year 2000. Initially, they had 200,000 Swiss francs from about 100 shareholders, residents of Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt and Romania.

The founders chose to begin a financial institution, Tergon Spa, which would place the necessary capital at the disposal of an operative company, Tergon Srl, which would then carry out the production of high-standard ergonomic chairs.

Right away, they decided that the business would adhere to the Economy of Communion project. Georg Endler remembered, *"In Tergon Srl's statutes, we decided that profits would not only serve for business development and earnings for Tergon Spa shareholders but also help those in need and support the school of formation at Montet"*.

Montet is the international small town of the Focolare Movement located in Switzerland, begun with the special purpose of forming young and old to a culture of communion. The business is located in Montet to provide paying jobs to the youth who stay there for around a year.

In 2000, the prototype of the Tergon chair was made, and with it, an entire range of high-quality ergonomic office chairs (www.tergon.ch). Commercialization began in 2001.

It was not an easy moment. The events of September 11, 2001, triggered an economic crisis that paralyzed various sectors. Clients were more prudent, and sales struggled to take off. *"It was the most difficult moment"*, said Waldemar Silfest. *"One night, I woke up with a question: 'what if we had to admit defeat in front of our shareholders, telling them that they had lost everything?' We had started this to do something for God...and now, full adhesion to love in these truly unexpected circum-*

stances was needed. For me, that moment was the true birth of Tergon".

The turning point came, then, when continuing to believe was a heroic act. They were able to go ahead thanks to new shareholders, to a new sales strategy that increased orders and with the sacrifice of leaders that worked on symbolic stipends in order to allow the business to survive without cash assets.

More efficient production and an increase in sales gave breath back to their hopes. In 2005, the business produced 3,573 office chairs, invoicing a total of 1,415,000 Euro. That year, the budget balanced for the first time and, with satisfaction, Tergon gave 5% on the capital invested to its shareholders, who had supported the project with faith and patience. Today, the social capital of Tergon Spa is one million Swiss francs, nearly 700,000 Euro.

For a few years now, the business is able to regularly share profits according to the goals of the EoC project, but *"the biggest challenge – explains Christoph Hohl – realize that we have much to improve, but at the same time, when we're able to do it, this is our biggest joy"*.

And Waldemar Silfest underlines that, *"Economy of Communion, before putting profits in common, means cultivating fraternal relationships, working responsibly together to produce profits, practicing a management style that places the person at the center and involves all persons who take part in the business"*.

For Georg Endler, the biggest challenge is not judging others. *"It seemed like I could only see the others' mistakes, and these thoughts were turning into prejudices. I tried to dialogue with my colleagues and with God, ...the result was finding solutions at the right moments"*. To promote communitarian management of the business, leaders meet every month in a "workshop" with EoC entrepreneurs, who act as external consultants





who gratuitously place their time and capabilities at the disposal of TERGON. They face questions, and they make important decisions together to start again with new inner freedom and renewed courage.

Right now, in the Montet establishment, there are three managers, seven employees and ten part-time students. Outside the headquarters, there are seven sales representatives and four telemarketers that sell in Switzerland and Germany.

Edi Rieder, responsible for production, plays that challenging role of transmitting technical training and integrating the students that work in the various sectors. *"Every year is a challenge because the youth change, and we have to start from the beginning. I feel that my main role is that of welcoming each one of them, attentively, keeping their cultures and personalities in mind, as they come from all over the world. At the same time, I try to aim at more efficient production and real customer service."*

Personally, I can say that I've received more than what I gave! The experience in these years shows me that each one of them, and all of them together, are the true wealth of Tergon".

In 2009, 4,882 chairs were produced, invoicing a total of 3,132,435 Swiss francs, nearly 2.2 million Euro. This year, Tergon celebrates 10 years of activity and we asked Waldemar Silfest about the secret behind the company's success. He answered with certainty, *"It is the fact that we believed in a plan of God, and we worked with faithfulness to help it come about".*



J. NICOLAS
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The small country of Singapore could be defined as the Switzerland of Asia. In spite of the crisis in the last few years, noticeable in the hundreds of boats of all sizes stopped in their paths in the harbor, waiting for maritime traffic to resume, the city continues to grow with always more modern and bold buildings, and with tourism facilities that adjust to the tumultuous economic development of surrounding cities.

The EoC in Singapore

The Economy of Communion has also arrived here. Gelato Sole is a business specialized in ice cream, begun by an Italian EoC entrepreneur, Luigi Nodari, and his children. In Italy, the Nodaris run their business, the Baia Azzurra Hotel and an ice cream shop, on the edge of Garda Lake.

Another business is Focus Pte Ltd, which is four years in running in the import-export sector. Now, it is orienting itself as a Business of Equity and Solidarity to help the areas of Indonesia that were hit by the tsunami. It commercializes very beautiful batik hand paintings, produced in the village of Yogyakarta by the "Hasta Kancana" cooperative, which began thanks to a project developed by Action for a United World.

Finally, there is Consulus (www.consulusgroup.com), a company specialized in business strategy with clients in the USA, China, India and Australia, and offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan.

"We're a company that helps businesses define their identity," says Lawrence Chong, its chief executive. "We decided to create a different kind of business, to offer a new kind of consultation. If individualism is the rule in other businesses, we have decided to become a community, despite the diversity that distinguishes us. We have age differences: one of us is nearly sixty years old, three are around fifty, and one is in his thirties. One of us is Muslim, one is Buddhist, one is Methodist and two are Catholic. But all together, and by God's grace, we bring ahead a new way of working, inspired by Chiara's vision. We started in 2004, and now we work on the international level with 35 collaborators.

Last year, after six years of experience, we wanted to write down the foundations of our business identity in a document that begins like this:

"As members of Consulus, we declare our priorities to be unity based on reciprocal love, sharing of property, justice

and equal opportunity. We propose to be humble towards one another and open to Providence. These principles should continue to have value for the future as well".

As the only member of the Focolare Movement in the business, I am marveled that people outside of (the Movement) embrace the value it has in the economic field and make the experience. Every Friday, from the Singapore office, we connect with the other offices through Skype to share experiences. Once a year, we ask each person to write his experience regarding our values. One employee wrote, *"In Consulus, we try to be open to others, postponing our work to help a colleague, updating each other and in small things, like taking turns buying food for everyone. Someone offered to mail my letters, a simple act, but one that gave me joy".*

The spirit of unity helps a lot because each one of our projects requires the collaboration of everyone. Tensions are reduced and synergies improve - things that are necessary in a very competitive environment.

This spirit also helps us to make the right decisions. Recently, the government has been offering funds to improve businesses' capacity. We had been following a certain business project for awhile, but the people in this business wanted to plan it so that the business itself did not have to carry any of its own financial burdens, which we considered unjust. So, although we needed the work, we refused to bring the project ahead. A few days later, we were assigned another project worth the same value. God keeps his promises.

It is impressive how people notice our lifestyle, even if we do not speak about it. In a seminar on building a business identity, one participant said, *"The workshop and the Consulus team helped me to understand how, in order to build a solid business image, an internal culture is important".*

I think that this way of working explains our fast growth and how, despite being small and without financial resources, we have been able to attract many talented people and partners. I know that this is due to our unity and the Providence that knocks on our door in many ways. It is up to us to be attentive to welcome the new phases of the business plan that God has in store for us.



World Archives for EoC Theses:
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The theses that have been made available by their authors can be consulted on www.ecodicom.net. Consult the "events and formation" menu on the five-language website, www.edc-online.org, to always be updated on EoC-related events, in Italy and beyond, and consult all the other sections to obtain bibliographies, data, statistics, audio and video clips, articles, papers and much more.

There are 12 new graduate theses that we want to present in this issue. Among them are 5 undergraduate degrees, 1 old-order four-year degree, 5 specializations and 1 doctorate thesis. The areas of study are various as always, even including sociology and languages among the predominantly economic and business-economy related fields. A few concentrated on analyses of bookkeeping in EoC businesses, daring to read between the lines of the profit and loss accounts. A few theses concentrated on the importance of relationships in the EoC experience, on the humanization of economy and on the realization of the person who accomplishes real experiences of humanizing business activity. And finally, there are some interesting analyses - done through questionnaires given to the businesses - of the coherence between Mission and Governance in EoC businesses, a study of EoC businesses in times of crisis and the analysis of a nexus between theoretical suppositions of Civil Economy and practical realization of EoC businesses.

ANTONELLA FERRUCCI



Twelve new EoC Theses

Carolina Carbonell

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Masters in Economics
 National University of Rosario
 (Argentina)

September 10, 2008

Language: Spanish

Thesis: Humanizing the economy: the experience of the businesses of the Economy of Communion

Thesis chair: Prof. Walter Castro

This thesis faces the problem of poverty, describes the way in which different economic models have tried to overcome it and underlines the proposal regarding the new paradigm of the EoC. The EoC results as being a sustainable model to fight against poverty. In fact, differently than other models, this kind of wealth distribution has a fundamental characteristic: the poor becomes protagonist of the project and is encouraged to get out of his own poverty, going towards a more sustainable future. The true challenge is centering this objective with respect to the dignity and the integrity of every person.



Adelmo Cordeiro Galindo

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Masters in Linguistics
 Federal University of Pernambuco
 (UFPE)

February 10, 2009

Language: Portuguese

Thesis: Economy of Communion: a social-colloquial study of interaction between superior and subordinate

Thesis chair: Prof. Judith Chambliss Hofnagel

The study analyzes the relationships between persons that play different functions in the hierarchical pyramid in two EoC businesses located in the state of Sao Paulo, starting from the perspective of international studies of social linguistics. It deals with one qualitative-interpretive study carried out in an ethnographic perspective of participative observations. The study shows that the two businesses analyzed have similar and distinguishing characteristics that facilitate the process of openness in the interaction between superior and subordinate, allowing those who are hierarchically subordinate to influence the decisions that contend to superior officials.



Francesca Lombardi

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Undergraduate degree
 in Social Services Science
 "Federico II"
 University of Studies, Naples

February 18, 2009

Language: Italian

Thesis: The Economy of Communion in the Thought of Chiara Lubich

Thesis chair: Prof. Ciro Felice Papparo

Does the EoC experience allow for reconciliation between ethics and the economy? This is the interrogative at the basis of this thesis. The analysis of this project shows that it is possible to overcome the "dichotomizing" logic between the moment of production of wealth and the moment of distribution of the same, all the while remaining competitive on the market. In fact, the EoC allows the joining of a business's logic and culture together with solidarity. Plus, the EoC permits the living of economic activity as a way to search for meaning, where values play a crucial role, transforming economic life into a place of human and spiritual growth.





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Masters in Development Economy
ISCTE – IUL Superior Institute of
Work and Business Sciences -
University Institute of Lisbon

June 19, 2009

Language: Portuguese

Thesis: Economy of Communion: one proposal's contributions for envisioning economy, reflecting on economic behavior and rethinking development

Thesis chair: Rogério Roque Amaro

This piece of work is oriented towards a deepening of the EoC project and, particularly, its philosophy, through a revisitation of fundamental economics concepts questioned by the project, and it makes particular reference to the topic of development.

It was carried out through a comparative review from various perspectives: through literature, philosophy, economy and that specifically linked to the EoC. In addition, it includes interviews with entrepreneurs and collaborators of five EoC businesses in Brazil.



Iracema Andréa Arantes da Cruz
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Masters in Religious Sciences
Religion and Society
Pontifical University of Sao Paulo -
PUC

October 23, 2009

Language: Portuguese

Thesis: In the Kingdom of Complexity: the EoC lies between the civil and religious sphere according to the approach of Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems

Thesis chair: Prof. Frank Usarski

What is the relationship between the religious and civil sphere in the EoC? In what way can the EoC impact a functionally differentiated society? These are the questions posed by this thesis. Regarding the future of the EoC, there are three possible scenarios: the EoC remains an economic subsystem, without general transformations in the economy; the innovations arisen within it go beyond its frontiers, both in the social system and in the conscience; and, finally, the dissolution of the EoC due to loss of ties with the Focolare Movement. This last possibility is considered as improbable, as the Focolare Movement and the EoC are considered interpenetrating systems, tightly bound in a relationship that produces constant reinforcement of generalized means of communication on the symbolic level.



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Undergraduate Degree (old-order)
in Business Economy
"G. D'Annunzio"
University of Studies - Pescara

December 3, 2009

Language: Italian

Thesis: Cost Reporting in Businesses of the Economy of Communion. A Business Case-Study

Thesis chair: Prof.ssa Tiziana De Cristofaro

This thesis analyzes the procedures of traditional and integrative cost reporting of some businesses that adhere to the EoC project. The principle issues dealt with in the thesis are the concepts tightly inherent to the EoC through an analysis of its origins, goals, and guidelines for running an EoC business and of the experience of the business parks. Then, there is an analysis of cost reporting activities in conformity to the civil code and accounting principles. This step concluded with an analysis of the business evaluation according to the RainbowScore method. Finally, it considers the budgets closing on 31/12/2008 of two businesses. Fondiaria SAI of Ornella Seca, in Lanciano (Chieti, Italy), is examined not only as a business but also in the affinity among members of the Fondiaria SAI Group and the EoC. The other business studied is the E. di C. S.p.A., in Incisa Valdarno (Florence, Italy), a society that runs the Lionello Bonfanti Business Park. The two business case-studies confirm the considerations made in the preceding chapters.



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Undergraduate Degree in Economy-
Management of Businesses and
Financial Intermediaries
University of Studies - Ferrara

December 16, 2009

Language: Italian

Thesis: Budget Analysis applied to businesses in the "Economy of Communion"

Thesis chair: Prof. Enrico Deidda Gagliardo

The goal of this thesis was to define the model of economic behavior of the businesses that adhere to the EoC project and understand how for-profit businesses can put the "culture of giving" into practice. After having synthesized the origins and development of the EoC, the thesis concentrates on a case study of Ridix SpA. In light of the results of the analysis and the general literature on the topic, it can be concluded that the EoC is an economic reality informed by a lifestyle oriented towards sharing of needs among different persons, peoples and cultures. Through this lifestyle, even for-profit businesses can live according to the teachings of solidarity and communion.

Graziana Vella
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Undergraduate Degree in Economy of Development
Sacred Heart Catholic University of Milan
February 10, 2010
Language: Italian

Thesis: The Economy of Communion: economic behavior centered on the person
Thesis chair: Prof.ssa Pellizzari Fausta
Starting from the concept of Human Development and studies conducted thanks to Amartya Sen, the thesis aims at understanding with which approach the Economy of Communion experience faces human development, giving particular attention to its anthropological and cultural ethical presuppositions. The EoC experience is then presented, tracing back through the initial idea, developments, the cultural humus and the anthropological vision centered on man in relationship. The testimonies of various EoC actors are placed in particular relief, in an attempt to restore real and concrete visions of this economic and human experience.



Maria Licia Paglione
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Doctorate (PhD) in Social Sciences and Sociology
"G. D'Annunzio" University of Studies - Chieti-Pescara
February 25, 2010
Language: Italian

Thesis: "Systems of gift-reciprocity and models of happiness. The Economy of Communion in freedom and its proposal of human fulfillment"
Thesis chair: Prof. Leonardo Benvenuti
This research is done within a wide debate on happiness and development, in the attempt to single out *economic phenomenon attentive to the more ample and complete fulfillment of persons*. The hypotheses guiding the research with the specific aim of studying the EoC were: Can a system of gift-reciprocity be one of these phenomenon of ample and complete human fulfillment? As the research highlighted that one of the more delicate points of the EoC is the distribution of businesses' profits to the poor carried out by the EoC Commissions, the research concluded with the elaboration of a proposal of interventions to reinforce this aspect.



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Undergraduate Degree in Tourism Economy
University of studies - Bologna, Rimini Campus
March 15, 2010
Language: Italian

Thesis: Research and evaluation of the coherence between Mission and governance in EoC businesses
Thesis chair: Prof.ssa Maria Gabriella Baldarelli
This work tried to quantitatively and qualitatively define the degree of correlation between the Mission objectives and the instruments of Governance used by EoC businesses in Italy. The research highlighted a prevalence of small entrepreneurial realities pushed by a strong entrepreneurial charge based on strong values and, on the majority, shared by those persons who are part of the business. The project stimulates a redefinition of "healthy" and "ethically oriented" business management, but it is necessary to give EoC businesses the opportunity to show their true nature, valuing the efforts with public recognitions, with the goal of placing them as true and concrete entrepreneurial models to all other economic realities.



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March 16, 2010
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Thesis: Business in Crisis: the case of the Economy of Communion
Thesis chair: Prof. Piercarlo Frigero
This work foresaw the objective of studying businesses during times of crisis, with a particular reference to EoC businesses. While many businesses are failing, the main factor that allows EoC businesses to get out of the crisis is the way in which they face them - not as individuals or as single business entities but as a body. This body is the fruit of years and relationships cultivated, even at the loss of profit. In this way, it was possible to ascertain that building a healthy environment within a business is an investment on the future. The EoC is an economic activity carried out by subjects that choose to base their behavior on principles other than pure profit, without giving up the production of economic values.





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March 31, 2010
Language: Italian

Thesis: The challenges overcome by civil economy: for-profit businesses of the Economy of Communion, real experiences of humanizing economic activity. The case-study of the E. di C. Spa at Lionello Business Park.

Thesis chair: Prof. Pasquale Persico

This thesis was an attempt to analyze the nexus between the theoretical approach, typical of the perspective of civil economy, and the practical solutions implemented by the businesses of the EoC. The experience of the EoC project is a visible sign of the possibility to join economic activity, efficiency and profit with activity that is civil, of solidarity, and ethically oriented. In this sense, the EoC project represents a victory with respect to the challenge launched by civil economy. A possible critique that could be made is that the EoC experience is limited in reach, destined to remain an experience of few, lived, among other things, within the confines of business parks spread in a few areas of the world. Its feasibility and sustainability therefore become relevant, and they allow us to consider the EoC as an interesting and valid comparison.

What's New on www.edc-online.org

ANTONELLA FERRUCCI

The EoC website continues to grow and play the part of a "business card" for the Economy of Communion in the world

The number of visits to the site (more than 115,000 in one year) and the requests on how to adhere to the project have risen. Many people write to share their thanks for rediscovering hope in a better world. This is why the site intends to always be "worthy" of the project it wants to present, giving space and voice to all its facets. Translations continue with teamwork in order to keep the site up-to-date, and the relationships with the various zones are truly beginning to work as they send news about events, local initiatives and reports on how these went.

info@edc-online.org



In the last few months, two new categories have been created in the publications menu – *videos and podcasts* - and are becoming some of the most visited pages of the site. Among the submenus in the video menu, one can find "Convention Presentations" and the very recent "Portraits of Entrepreneurs", where it is possible to listen to the experience of being an EoC entrepreneur directly through the voices of the protagonists.

Instead, the podcast menu contains audio files of conferences and conventions, which can be listened to online or downloaded as MP3 files. These functions are well appreciated by our visitors and allow the number of possible conference listeners to be infinitely multiplied.

The last video to reach the site is the report that Tita Puangco gave to the first Conference on Business's Social Responsibility, held in Taichung, Taiwan, last March 26. The video is in English, with simultaneous translation in Chinese... What a potential audience!



Ascolta la parte
Ascolta la parte
Aggiungi commento

Podcast - Convegno Caritas, 17-18/11/2009
Convegno "Carismi economia e gestione"



In Dealing with Communion in Business, here is how to go against "management-itis"

Trust *and* Dialogue

ANOUK
GREVIN

I'm doing a doctorate in Management at the University of Nantes and am part of an interdisciplinary research team that studies the impact of the multiplication of new managing instruments on the suffering or well-being of workers. We carry out research with a "action-research" qualitative approach, that is, consulting, requested by the directors of the businesses studied.

We carry out interviews with all employees, of every type and level. Initially, we observe their work. Then, after having analyzed the gathered data, we present a picture of the situation to a group of managers and selected employees in order to look for suitable solutions together. Right now, my job is to study organizations in the health sector: clinics, treatment centers, etc.

After studying two organizations, what emerged was the cry of workers highlighting the lack of communication. Everyone underlined a lack of listening. Employees tell us that managers are so busy that they no longer see the work their employees carry out, the problems they meet.

And yet, leaders do everything to communicate, to develop participative management, with many meetings and group work. But, in the end, there is no dialogue. An abundance of information has taken the place of communication, of relationship.

In this way, management and all its instruments has excluded another vital dimension: the attention to encourage and support efforts. What prevails are feelings like discouragement, mistrust, and as a consequence, the adhesion of many workers to unions that are very vengeful and inclined to strike.

The health sector is characterized by many norms and strong pressure by public entities to reduce costs. This means that the only ones able to negotiate new resources are those who can produce very precise numbers for their activities.

However, the multiplication of norms, control system procedures and book-keeping has a very negative impact on workers who, in this sector, are often moved by a vocational logic, inspiring them to give of themselves without measure. There is no longer space for gratuitousness, for gift.

One of the proposals made by our research team was that of valuing "spaces of sharing and comparing" within businesses. That is, there should be more places and moments where problems, proposals and needs can be discussed in order to find solutions together. We noted that there where these "areas" are lacking, or even worse, where this interaction is hindered, teams have difficulty, with noticeable consequences on the quality of employees' lives.

For us, maximum trust seems to be an essential condition for dialogue, and at the same time, it is a product of it. In the businesses we studied, it seems like managers do not know what to do when faced with deep mistrust being created on all levels and that was destroying relationships.

Trust and dialogue are true goods with inestimable value for businesses, and managers realize when there are lacking because the consequences are very costly. Maybe because they are relational goods, those who have lost sight of relationships or lets them die no longer knows how to rebuild them.

It's not for lack of will, but it is like managers are "vacuumed" up and outwards. Since stakeholders have increasingly stronger demands and require always more account reports, the main occupation of a business's leaders becomes producing numbers that express the work carried out and the value created. But in this frantic race, one loses site of those who complete the work, of the relationship.

Managers are all interested in the higher-ups of the business and lose sight of management within and lower down, forcing workers to use more complex instrumentation that, however, often makes work more difficult. We've given this "disease" a name - "management-itis", and it is a disease of the loss of relationship, of gratuitousness.



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A look at
"The Ethos of the Market"
by Luigino Bruni

The many Characteristics of the Market

GIAMPIETRO
PAROLIN



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Luigino Bruno has been researching the nature of human relationships for some time. He has done this as economist, looking at the different forms of reciprocity that touch on economic happenings and amplifying the gaze of the social scientist onto the relationship between economy and happiness. He has even launched himself forward in that dark but also luminous territory of fully involving relationships that touch on all sectors of life, trampled on by wounds and blessings.

The reader that has not followed the intellectual journey of our author through *some of his more notable texts* - *The Economy of Happiness and the Others* (2004), *Reciprocity* (2006), *The Wound of the Other* (2007), to name a few - will find a sort of compendium of his production in this selection.

Starting from the title, one may guess that "ethos" and "ethics" share the same Greek root, but while "ethos" means "basic moral attitude of people", "ethics" instead means the theory regarding moral attitudes. Therefore, speaking of market ethos means employing oneself in the characteristics and temperament of the market.

The journey offered to the reader is one which touches upon different characteristics of the market and, naturally, of people. Within an historical perspective that recognizes the wealth of theories and past human experiences, this book offers a wide vision and perspective on the workings of the market as an institution and as a meeting ground for people and institutions.

While, in preceding texts, the author's attention was mostly turned towards single relationships, it has been focused on institutions in this text, using interpretive keys that he has perfected over time as a scholar and attentive observer of reality.



May the perspective of various forms of reciprocity in this work - eros, philia, agape - become the imprint of as many institutional forms, of as many characteristics of the market. This investigation interweaves some of the most optimistic perspectives with more pessimistic ones regarding human behavior, and all contribute to forge the civil and economic institutions that we know: states, markets and the different organizations of which these are composed, including businesses.

In recent history, the ideas of Hobbes' "uomo lupo" and Smith's "self-interested" *homo economicus* have prevailed. They are ideas that have generated Leviathanian institutions. Don't be startled by the term. It deals with institutions where a third acts - either a contract, the state, the hierarchy - so that our relationships do not become conflicts or that such conflicts be healed. The crisis of political, social and economic modernity give the author the cue to explore different forms of institutions, including the market, and different attitudes of persons.

The recuperation of fraternity as a "characteristic" of institutions and of persons seems to me to be the most intriguing and innovative part of the volume. This is also because the author does not limit himself to good wishes, but rather looks to old and new experiences to find support in this arduous exploration.

What is convincing is the fact that fraternity is not seen as a characteristic that excludes the others. Rather, it is viewed as a possibility for development, starting from the forms of relating and from current institutions.

As Bruni did for interpersonal relationships, where he showed and suggested that fullness of humanity is reached by living different forms of reciprocity, from contract to agape (disinterested love) through friendship, he now supports the need to do the same for institutions.

Utopia *in action*

ALBERTO
FERRUCCI

In the early 90s, I was coordinator of international relations for the Economy of Communion project. Hundreds of businesses in the world had immediately adhered to it, and the Spartaco Business Park near Sao Paulo was already beginning to take shape as the project's first grouping of businesses.

I then received a letter from François Neveux, a French entrepreneur. With his typically direct style, he expressed his wish to freely share the technology and patents he had developed over the years with the Economy of Communion project. Various clients from Europe and the Middle East who had bought his projects could already attribute their success to them. Now, François was saying that if an entrepreneur wanted to start a new business in the Spartaco Business Park, he would offer his technology for free.

He turned to me because it seemed like the Brazilian entrepreneurs had not recognized the possibilities of his offer, and as there would soon be a congress of EoC entrepreneurs there, I invited him to join me so that he could present them with his technology and their industrial possibilities.

During the congress, we participated in the inauguration of a new, still unclaimed shed in the business park. Ginetta Calliari, one of Chiara's first companions, affirmed with inspired certainty that surely this construction would exist in the "new heavens" and "new earth" because it had been created out of love.

At that point, François announced that he would use that shed. It was his hurried, entrepreneurial way: deciding from an intuition and then knowing how to balance the budget of the business he imagined. He soon began a plastics manufacturing company using his technology of rotomolding (rotational molding), calling the business *Rotogine* in honor of Ginetta.

I therefore met François in the highest moment of his social commitment. It is only years later, after having read the fascinating account of his life by Isaline Bourgenot Dutru, that I understand the journey that had led to his "craziness".



This brilliant and anti-conformist styled book was first translated from French into Portuguese, and now it has been translated very well into Italian by Prof. Alberto Golin, whom I want to thank.

It is an account that draws the reader in by showing François' easy-going way of never stopping in front of any obstacle and his love for his neighbors in need, which ultimately led to the important business decisions he made to serve the same.

The need to serve was deep within this inspiring French entrepreneur, and he saw the chance to fully concretize it through the Economy of Communion, so much so that he dedicated all of his economic and inventive resources to the EoC in the last fifteen years of his life.

How did he do so?
Through the *Art of Getting By*, which had fascinated

him as a boy while reading Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. His various industrial patents show that he applied this art throughout his life. It is an art that, as he wrote in his high school graduation exams, he did not see so much as a talent but rather as a gift from on high, given to overcome everyday challenges, given to every man and woman who works out of love: "*You give, and you are given to*".



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