

Economy

of Communion

a new culture

Nothing is
more valuable
than an act of
gratuitousness



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Excerpts of letters received from people who participate in the EoC project by accepting to be assisted in some of their material necessities utilizing the profits from the EoC firms and the personal contributions of the members of the Focolare Movement.



A caress from the hand of God

This short letter an excuse to thank you for the great help that reaches me like a "nicely wrapped-up gift". For me it's like the hand of God that caresses me and my family.

(Brazil)

I have received employment

The experience of receiving aid in all these years has taught me how to manage this gift of God. After an initial period of probation I have now been confirmed in a job and hence I am no longer in need of this money. I have the joy of knowing that another person in need will be able to receive the same and perhaps be able to realize his or her dream.

(Brazil)

Sharing goods and necessities

I want to share with all the joy of realizing how important the sum that I receive regularly is. Not only does it help me to cover the expenses for the electricity, the water, and medicines but it is also a gift of immense value because it is a fruit of sharing goods and necessities.

(Brazil)

We always had everything

My family had lacked nothing from an economic point of view. But last year due to a financial failure we lost everything and there came a point when we even lacked food. The extraordinary help has always reached me like a gift from God that enables me to eat.

(Brazil)

I can share my poverty

The aid arrived in a very difficult moment and I was able to buy a pair of shoes for my mother who was using broken slippers, a sweater for me against the cold, and to settle debts with the grocery store. Earlier I used to think that in order to share it was necessary to have money to give, but now I have learned that I can share my poverty. And I am happy because I feel that not only has an economic aid entered into my life, but also an additional joy, a new peace and serenity.

(Argentina)

We wish to form an EoC company

Even we did not have to wait for concrete help and for several months we received the extraordinary aid. With my family we have now started a small company with the intention of becoming part of the EoC project. Even though the economic situation in our country still does not consent us to make profits, we know deep down that we are one family in which everyone has the necessities of the others at heart.

(Uruguay)

My husband found a job

My husband has found a job at least for a few months, and now we are happy to leave the money that we used to

receive for others in need of the same.

(Argentina)

The most beautiful thing is to think of the others

I had thought of suspending my studies as there was no more money at home. But when I started receiving the aid I was really struck thinking of the many people all over the world who were helping someone like me who lived in another part of the world. There were families who perhaps deprived their own children of something in order to make this contribution, young people who travelled on foot in order to save the ticket money of the bus, and many other things. I have understood that the most beautiful thing is not to think of ourselves but of the others.

(Argentina)

Back home after 10 years

After 10 years of wandering in various countries we finally returned to the house we had before the war. We found that it had been invaded and devastated by shrubs, but thanks to the help we received it is now restored, modestly but livable. Everything around us still speaks of hatred, but we have the light and the joy in our hearts from feeling part of this great family.

(Bosnia)

The aid always arrived punctually

Each time when we did not have any more money to pay the electricity bill or we needed to buy trousers for our children, the aid always arrived punctually. Now we have also been able to buy some chicks to breed in order to ensure a minimum of survival during winter.

(Serbia)

We can continue studying

One day at school we were informed that if we did not pay the overdue term fees then we would not be allowed to give the examinations. We would have had to leave the English medium school to go to another one where the medium of instruction was in the Urdu language and where the fees were lower. The timely extraordinary help arrived as a gift from the heavens enabling me as well as my brothers and sisters to continue our studies.

(Pakistan)

The disease after the earthquake

Just as we were recovering from the damages of the earthquake we were overcome with a serious disease that needed very expensive medicines to be cured. We would not have been able to make it if not for the aid that allows us to bear the expenses.

(Peru)

I would have never got off from bed

Having been laid-off from work it was difficult for me to enable my children to continue studying and to take care of my old and sick parents. One morning, when I found it difficult to will myself out of bed due to this unbearable situation, I received an envelope with the extraordinary aid, which now covers the essential needs for the seven of us.

(Argentina)

a cura di Carla Bozzani

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Ten years of experiences and reflections

Editorial



With this issue our newsletter completes ten years of existence. It was launched to serve as a means of communion between those who shared the profits of their companies and those who shared the experience of the love of God in moments of economic necessities, with young people who spread an awareness of the project in various universities, and with scholars who reflected on an economy that was more human.

Many have preserved the first eleven issues that were printed non-professionally, and the successive issues which had more pages and which were compiled in a professional manner. In these years they were sent to all those who

contribute in some way to the project. There were 15,000 copies in Italian; the Brazilian edition too came out from the very first issue; various issues have been published in Argentina, in Belgium and in Germany; starting with issue n. 19 we now have the English edition too, thanks to a Maltese translator and an Indian printing office.

Thinking back over all that has been gathered in these ten years from the experiences of those around the world who have adhered to the EoC, I tried to understand if indeed something new had already emerged from these firms.

In fact there is something new: for one they contain a new reason for existence. They have not come into existence to increase the assets or the profits of the shareholders but in order to create jobs, to relieve members of the "people of unity" from economic difficulties, and to show that it is possible to have an economy based on communion and fraternity.

A reason to exist that also induces new motivations for economic development. This is shown by the entrepreneurs of established companies who were freed from the greed of goods and success by the spirituality of unity. However they were now realizing that the profits from their companies that were shared by them were no longer sufficient and thus they felt spurred to expand their activities in order to share more profits.

But here too lies something 'new' because the urge to increase the profit was not all of the novelty: some of them were taking decisions of moving their firms to the business parks situated besides the little towns even when sheer economic considerations would have suggested to invest elsewhere.

They made these decisions because they were also considering another kind of profit: intangible, but still more important since it is able to render the little towns as visible examples of the life of communion applied also in economic activities.

Then in 1997 the first protagonists of the EoC project had intended to outline the identity of their enterprises: thus the "Guidelines for managing an EoC firm" came into existence and the same were often cited in our newsletters. These guidelines not only established the destinations of the profits but also the manner of operating in the various sectors of the company: how to conceive and take care of work, commercial rapports, business ethics, the internal relationships, the health of the workers, the work atmosphere, training of the staff, the sharing of information. All these are areas in companies that are usually taken into consideration solely with the view of maximizing the profits. The novelty of the EoC firms is that all these areas are given equal consideration to be at the service of the human person and to serve each other, and therefore also, but not only, to achieve economic results.

The "guidelines for managing an EoC firm" clearly define a new kind of company: a "company of communion", a very noble objective that is particularly hard to achieve. In fact, if the entrepreneur can share the profits of his own accord he cannot realize this kind of company. The "communion" in the company cannot be imposed; it needs the free adhesion and reciprocity of everyone. This can be obtained a little at a time but it will be always be subject to the freedom of each individual. It's a real challenge.

Something particularly new is found in the business parks along the little towns. These are companies with a special "flavour", perhaps because they came into existence from a total adhesion to the values of the EoC project, and because they are above all aimed at showing its significance for the culture of the third millennium.

A novelty that comes into being between these companies: the novelty of the fruitfulness of their coexistence that comes from the ability "to love the other person's company as one's own" and that comes about almost naturally in these business parks.

In this world in which scandals have surfaced precisely in those companies that were proposed as examples for their modernity, even multinational enterprises are seriously considering of orienting themselves towards a sustainable development in order to survive. Thus one speaks more often of a social enterprise.

In the future, perhaps after many years, maybe a new kind of enterprise could also emerge from the EoC project, whose structure is able to facilitate the realization of communion among persons while respecting the role of each individual, wherein all are in a position to act with equal dignity and freedom in the company. When that happens I hope that our newsletter is there ready to report once more the novelty of the EoC project.

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A new interpretation

Chiara Lubich at the ACLI*
convention
Orvieto, 7 September 2003

* Italian Christian Workers Association

As far as the economy in the Movement is concerned I would say that the love which circulates among its members, as a consequence of the inherent principle of communion, has naturally brought about since the very beginning the sharing of both spiritual and material goods. And this has always been an effective and visible witness to a love that unites, a true love, a Trinitarian love.

In 1991 a new project was launched: the **Economy of Communion**. It aims to form companies entrusted to competent persons who are capable of running them efficiently and of earning profits. These profits are then shared, partly to help the poor by providing them with the essentials for living until they have found a job; partly to develop structures of formation for persons animated by love and therefore capable of bringing about an economy based on communion; and lastly a part to take ahead the companies themselves.

In the "Trinitarian" vision of interpersonal and social relationships, which derives from the spirituality of unity and that forms the basis of the Economy of Communion, some economists foresee a new understanding of the theory and praxis of economics; an understanding that could also enrich the understanding of economic interactions, and thus contribute to overcome the individualistic formulation still prevalent today in the economic science (...)

Photo: H. Conde / CSC



Chiara Lubich

Our experience teaches us that an atmosphere of mutual loves benefits from a light that guides us more and more towards a fuller truth, brings about innovation, and gives a direction to a dialogue with everyone, respectful of the diversities.

And all this is ordained to become the patrimony of the human family.

Fraternity in economics

Excerpts from the discourse of Prof. Stefano Zamagni on the occasion of the conferral of the honorary citizenship of the city of Milan to Chiara Lubich, on the 20th March 2004.

(...) What has been and is the great contribution made by Chiara and the Focolare Movement founded by her towards the moral and civil progress of our society? It's that of having succeeded of putting into practice the principle of fraternity in two important spheres of human relationships, which cannot be taken for granted: the sphere of the politician on one side and that of the economist on the other.

The principle of fraternity is certainly not a new one. This term also appears on the flag of the French Revolution united with two other key words - freedom and equality, even if it was then promptly cancelled and removed immediately following the revolution. In fact the revolutionary French very soon realized the "peril" of a principle like that of fraternity from the point of view of the institutional set-up.

The characteristic of Chiara's contribution lies in having succeeded in applying the principle of fraternity in two areas, which have always been considered by public opinion and in everyday praxis as powerful concentrations of conflict: the political sphere wherein the conflict mostly assumes the forms of economic identity conflicts, and the economic sphere wherein today the conflict is assuming more and more the characteristics of positional competition.

In the interpretation given by Chiara the principle of fraternity facilitates dealing with these kinds of conflicts and in transforming them usefully. It's apt to quote Terenzio who said that the seed and the earth are but rather in conflict with each other, but it is from this conflict that the plant is born.

In the politician's sphere the thought of Chiara and above all her work cause to avert

a serious twofold risk: on one hand we have the 'fundamentalist' trend who in their desire to abolish conflict believe that it can be obtained by eliminating the opponent's very existence. On the other hand we have the so-called "immune" trend: fortified niches are created to protect oneself from the other's invasion, i.e. we protect ourselves by excluding a confrontation with the others. It's not difficult to realize why both these attitudes cannot work in the long run nor can they become acceptable.

(...) What can we say with regards to the sphere of economics? Here fraternity as intended by Chiara has simply brought about an unimaginable result even to the eyes of the experts. I allude to that new model of economic organization called the Economy of Communion. This is an unexpected accomplishment that can be viewed as the last link of a long chain that began with civil humanism during the first half of the fifteenth century.

It's good to recall these roots so that the Economy of Communion project would not be considered as something eccentric, which is bound to a particular type of spirituality and therefore cannot be generalized. Instead it is true that the EoC is the last stage of a long journey that began with the civil economics model, as it was to be called by the illuminists from Naples and Milan around mid-eighteenth century.

The basic idea launched by the civil humanist line of thought was that of considering the market fundamentally as a civilizing institution, i.e. an institution that finds its *raison d'être* in the opportunity of bringing men into an interaction with each other in pacific way.

Whereas conflict in a non-market society was resolved either by resorting to the hierarchical way of taking recourse in the power of an absolute authority, or by means of violence by resorting to a duel or to war, the market society succeeded in defusing the destructive potential that always accompanies conflict.



Stefano Zamagni

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Photo: H. Conde / CSC

By market we mean competition. And we all know that competition implies tension, which always assumes the presence of another person and the relation with another. In fact there cannot be competition without the other. There is no movement without tension, but the movement, and this is the point, generated by tension can also be deadly, i.e. a generator of death. It is a new kind of competition that is known today as positional competition. We are dealing with a new kind of competition that hardly existed in the previous ages, and it is particularly dangerous because it tends to destroy the bond with the other person. In this kind of competition, the ultimate aim of economic activity is not the tension towards a common objective – as the Latin etymon "competere" (to strive together) clearly intends – but Hobbesian "mors tua, vita mea" (your death, my life). And here lies the foolishness of positional competition that while it assures the victory of "the best", it eliminates or humiliates the one who arrives "second" in the market contest. In this way the social tie is reduced to the "cash nexus" and the economy activity risks to become inhuman and thus ultimately inefficient or in any case unsupportable. Well then, the secret of the Economy of Communion lies in this: it helps us to go beyond the traditional (and let's say often comforting) ethics of gifting, by making us reflect upon the essentiality of the dimension of gratuitousness in every moment of the human experience, and therefore also within the economic sphere, which is certainly not the only one but neither of lesser importance.

If we can consider gratuitousness as the hallmark of the human condition, then it must also determine economic behaviour. And here in a nutshell lies the central intuition of the Economy of Communion experience. Whereas other models of economic organization tend to dichotomize human behaviour by assigning a particular ethical code to economic activity and another ethical code to non-economic activity such as altruism or philanthropy, the strength of Chiara's idea is unity: the human being cannot live well for a long time supporting two different codes of behaviour. In a literal sense one risks suffering from schizophrenia, i.e. from dissociation.

Uniting various moments of the human existence and explaining how economics can be done, obtaining significant results and 'staying in the market' without cutting off the relationship with the other person – this is the great discovery made by Chiara and the Focolare Movement after some centuries during which the civil

economic tradition like a Karst river had run underground. "Economy of Communion" – the expression itself seems to be an oxymoron. We are so much accustomed of associating the term economy with words like competition, contest, fight, deception, fraud that it never came to anyone's mind to couple together the words "economy" and "communion".

We must admit that the economic reason by itself would never have succeeded in reaching this far. Chiara who is not an economist was able to achieve this using other means: that of wisdom... because wisdom is related to prophecy: this is the way beaten by Chiara.

If the EoC proposal was launched as an alternative way of seeing things, it is also an intellectual challenge to the official economic science because it reveals the inconsistency and the sterility of the "homo oeconomicus" (economic man) image, which today is still so much at the centre of the prevailing economic thought.

The EoC is not satisfied to stay within the boundaries offered by solidarity economics but demands the horizon of a 'fraternity' economics for itself. And we can all see that the latter includes the former without denying it, while the contrary is not true because if solidarity is the principle of social organization, which aspires to equalize that which is different, the principle of fraternity consents those who are equal to be different, i.e. to affirm fully their own identity. It is for this reason that the life lived in fraternity is the life that leads to happiness.

I would like to conclude with the following reflection. In Canto XV of "Purgatory" Dante inquires: "How can it be that a shared good makes a greater number of possessors richer by it than if it is owned by a few?" We can say that the EoC constitutes an easily accessible way and a convincing answer to the question that daunted Dante. It is the logic of gratuitousness that once placed at the start of every interpersonal rapport including that of an economic nature, succeeds in bringing together efficiency, fairness and reciprocity, and in their influencing each other reciprocally.

If it is true that one considers as authentic a culture that knows how to generate catchy ideas that are able to spread and to repeat themselves even outside the environment that generated them, then one must admit that the culture proposed by Chiara is truly authentic.

"I would give an inheritance for a moment of gratuitousness"



Towards a new humanism

Nothing is worth more than an act of gratuitousness. And it is for this reason too that economics should not ignore it as it usually does.

We can appreciate the importance of gratuitousness simply by considering the fact that the element which makes friendship, love, prayer, beauty as the most precious goods in our lives, lies fundamentally in their being affairs of gratuitousness. In fact if we reflect for a moment, we'll realize that it is precisely gratuitousness that distinguishes a true friend from an opportunist, a family from a structure exchanging goods and services, a work of art from a commodity, and a heartfelt prayer from magic or superstition.

Thus we all know the worth of gratuitousness from our everyday experience, we all seek it, and above all we suffer when we realize that it is lacking in us, in others, or when it is betrayed. However the minute we attempt to reflect on it in order to give it a definition, its significance seems to escape us and it either becomes too complicated or even trivial. And perhaps it's better to leave it undefined or, if we must satisfy ourselves, to define it in the negative by indicating that what it is not.

Gratuitousness is also one of the words of the Economy of Communion. I would go a bit further to add that the Economy of Communion can be considered fully as an experience of gratuitousness. Why? As Chiara often reminds us, it was launched from "an act of love", from an inner obedience to the voice of the spirit, from an answer to a prayer for justice and freedom raised to heaven for decades by the Brazilian focolarini, and that united itself to the prayers of the many "poor of the world". It echoed the numerous prayers that were being cried out, danced or sung for centuries in that moraine country as well as and in many other lands of the earth.

Thus the EoC was not launched to achieve an economic plan, or to combat something or someone, or in order to fulfil the dream of a reformer. And precisely since it was launched out of a vocation (vocatio, Latin for 'calling') that it typically possesses the specific mark of gratuitousness; because perhaps it is only that which is born from an inner calling and which is answered to with one's yes, that can indeed be

gratuitous since it is truly free. In fact, gratuitousness exists only there where there is freedom and only gratuitousness is truly free.

Gratuitousness is therefore a concept that could express on its own the entire reality of the Economy of Communion¹. The communion, in fact, can be called as "a gratuitous encounter". And in this lies its being prophesy that has the taste of heaven as well as all its fragility: there can be no communion without an encounter, but without gratuitousness it is no longer an encounter but a contract.

But in what sense is gratuitousness so central to the EoC so much so that it represents, as asserted by me in this article, its typical features? Have we perhaps not used many words, all of which are coessential, in all these years to speak about the EoC? For example, are not sharing and reciprocity also words of the EoC and don't they mean things others than gratuitousness?

Therefore, can gratuitousness enclose all these other words? I would say both yes and no. Gratuitousness is in fact one of those 'profound' words, like beauty, love, truth, freedom, that are both particular and universal at the same time. The common feature of these words is precisely that each of them also includes the others within itself: a good life is not just beauty, or truth, or freedom alone. But it is also true that freedom, truth, and beauty by themselves portray the essence of a good life. Thus the word gratuitousness in the EoC signifies a particular aspect, but if well understood it could also signify the nature of this experience, and most certainly of other experiences too no one can possess gratuitousness, otherwise it would cease to be.

As things stand, these past thirteen years of the Economy of Communion can be considered as a history of gratuitousness. In reply to the often asked question, "What do you offer to one who participates in the EoC?" we answer, "The joy of communion and the celebration in giving".

Also the logic of dividing the profits into the three parts is based on gratuitousness: the enterprise must develop because that is love for the one who works in it and for the one who makes a livelihood on its yields, as well as to be able to continue to donate; the culture which informs us is the "culture of giving", the profits donated to those in need are always the principal sacrament of the gratuitousness of an EoC firm. This is the good thing about the EoC: even amidst invoices, ledgers, calculations, contracts, accruals and interests,



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there emanates more powerfully the fragrance of gratuitousness from the life of these enterprises, as in a game of children, as in a wedding banquet.

Modern culture has tried to relegate gratuitousness in the private sphere, while decidedly expelling it from the public sphere. In particular it has expelled it from the economic sphere: the economy can content itself with contracts, incentives, good rules and interests.

Gratuitousness is not an economic term, so much so that economics has confused it with other beautiful words, like altruism or philanthropy. These words are however different from gratuitousness, which has nothing to do with the 'doing' but with the 'being' of persons. Gratuitous giving draws no stimulus from one's own generosity or for that matter from the self-satisfaction in giving. Economics has also tried to replace gratuitousness with merchandise: do we not perhaps fill ourselves with things, with goods, especially when we perceive the lack of gratuitousness (i.e. of genuine interpersonal relationships) in our lives?

If instead the economy too is considered and lived by making room for gratuitousness, then when we produce, work, toil and suffer in our EoC firms, we are not only producing, toiling and suffering: we are giving life to a new humanism.

This is an operation that has an immense cultural and practical value because if the economic activity loses complete contact with the aspect of gratuitousness, it places the conditions for its own implosion - and our observation of the present economic realities confirms the same evermore strongly and clearly.

Perhaps the greatest gift that the EoC can make to today's society is to restore gratuitousness back to the economy. In fact gratuitousness is increasingly asked for in the day to day transactions of the market. But its demand does not receive the supply simply because a "gratuitous market" does not and will never exist.

Instead the EoC, precisely because it was launched from a vocation, can offer it gratuitously, thereby contributing to the humanisation of the economy and of the society.

¹ Confer "Quattro parole sull'economia di comunione", L. Bruni e B. Gui, Newsletter no. 13

For an economy of communion

Environmental crisis, increasing relative poverty, difficulties of the economic theory in describing and understanding actual behaviours of people, as well as the diffusion of new experiences of economic behaviour such as voluntary service, non-profit enterprises, ethical saving, fair and solidal trade: today's world economy appears as an extremely complex and dynamic reality even to the inexperienced eye.

Within this cultural and social scene we also find the Economy of Communion: the scope of this new volume, which gathers the contributions of 20 authors, is a further deepening of the knowledge of the "Economy of Communion" phenomenon, through a multi-disciplinary understanding that is capable of uniting anthropological, business, politico-institutional and politico-economical perspectives.

It is in fact a sign of the times: after giving rise to individual scientific disciplines and rendering them independent, modern culture once more turn its attention to multi-discipline and seeks out learning capable of appreciating the conquests and the understandings offered by the individual disciplines. At the same time this learning is able to offer a complete picture of the problems, a culture that is able to recognize and safeguard the unity of man.


Besides the dialogue between various disciplines, to which a good amount of space is provided in the book, there is a second and perhaps more important dialogue alongside: the reciprocal relationship between theoretical reflection and life; the direct verification with the life experiences of those tens of thousands of people (workers, entrepreneurs, poor, and scholars), who in all these years have believed in the prophecy of an economy that becomes a place of encounter and of communion.

Luigino Bruni
Luca Crivelli (edd.)

**per una
economia di
comunione**

un approccio multidisciplinare



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Lionello Business Park: Annual General Meeting 2004



On the 25 April 2004, the Meeting of the E.di C. Spa was held at the S. Benedetto Hall in Loppiano. This company was launched to manage the entrepreneurial Lionello Business Park.

It was only recently that its social capital successfully reached the increased target of 5 million Euros. With this the shareholders are now 5.615 in number from 1.800 different communes. Also present at the meeting in the capacity of shareholders were the Etical Bank, the Tuscany Bank, and the Credit Cooperative of Pontassieve.

This meeting of the shareholders, at which 48 % of the shares quota was represented, after having followed the exhaustive report of the president, examined and approved of the financial statement for the accounting year 2003 that showed a profit of 142 Euros.

The proposals of the board of directors was then presented, which were suitable for adapting the Articles of Association in accordance with the new rules of Italian Company Law that came into force from 1st January 2004.

They had been formulated with the objective of adapting the articles of association to the new regulations without losing sight of the spirit that links and supports the shareholders who had subscribed to the capital of the EdiC Spa for the sake of a very strong idealism and of the aims it proposed. The proposals for modification of the articles of association were formulated in the council in an atmosphere of great moral tension, reliving similar moments in the very incorporation of the company. These proposals were unanimously approved by the assembly of the shareholders in an atmosphere similar to that of a new foundation.

Let us examine the main elements: the corporate purpose - it emphasizes the adhesion to the economy of communion project, which naturally remained unchanged, just as unchanged is the spirit that permeates the entire articles of association.

Article 32, which provided for the allocation of 30% of the financial statement profits to a special fund for those in need, after the deducting the lawful reserves also remained unchanged. It was only modified in numeration, now becoming article 36.

Moreover, in accordance with the suggestions of some shareholders and making use of the new regulation, article 24.2 was introduced which establishes that the shareholders with a shareholding above 5% of the capital can exercise the right of voting only up to 5% of the same capital. This modification does not violate acquired rights since none of the shareholders at

present possesses shares exceeding 5%.

Always with the view of maintaining the maximum of transparency and respect towards all the shareholders, time was allocated at the onset of the meeting for the declaration, though not obligatory, of the existence of any extra-company pacts, i.e. of voting agreements subscribed to by a group of shareholders. It seemed a decision that was coherent with the aims of the EdiC Spa.

Having then to choose between the three systems of company management provided for by the reform, the ordinary system was chosen. In this system the aims and the control of the company remain the prerogative of the shareholders meeting. In contrast with the other systems it foresees a greater involvement of the shareholders together with the enterprises that adhere to the EoC project. This was more in line with the desire of the shareholders to be the protagonists and the builders of the Lionello Business Park in person.

Afterwards, during the assembly, the video entitled "Small is beautiful. Micro-credit put to the test" was projected. It carried the experience of the Bangko Kabayan, a rural Philippine bank, which adheres to the EoC project. This was followed by a lively dialogue on the life of the company, on the construction plan, on the companies that would establish themselves there, the future developments (also cultural) of the Business Park, and the rapports with young people.

In this regard the president communicated that meetings had begun with the companies who had asked to establish themselves at the Business Park., and that at present 30% of the available surface area had been engaged. At the end of the meeting a visit to the Business Park terrain was organized for all the participants, where they would begin the construction work starting from the month of June.

The next meeting was fixed for the 30th October together with Chiara during which the foundation stone would be laid.



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The experience of the TD Tecnodoor



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Interview given by Pietro and Maria Pia Comper

To love one's enemy in the economy

Peter Comper manages the firm TD belonging to his family, together with his wife Maria Pia and his sons. The firm builds main gates and doors for industrial and civilian sheds, garages, and door frames in general. The TD operates in the north of Italy with an annual turnover exceeding 2 million Euros, with 16 direct collaborators, three external assembly teams, and a commercial network of agents in several regions.

Peter, can you tell us something about your company and the encounter with the EoC?

All my life I have been an entrepreneur and when I got to know the EoC I was struck by this different way in which a company could be managed. A strong desire to adhere to the same took its roots in me. The TD had been started by my son Damiano together with a partner who withdrew in 1996. At that time I left my previous company and so I took the place of the outgoing partner.

Maria Pia, what is your function in the firm?

I look after the administrative part. When Pietro asked to me to work with them in the company I had to radically reorganize the running of the family and my social life. But I understood the importance of my presence in our firm: working with my husband and my sons for a common project helps us to be more united, especially with Pietro, and it gives us courage and constant new energies.

At times the differences of vision on the manner in which to go ahead and in planning out the work create moments of tension. In those times my task is to reconcile, to re-establish, to cheer up, accustoming ourselves to this kind of attitude also with collaborators, suppliers, and consultants.

Pietro, how did the adherence to the EoC influence on the reality in the firm?

It increased the attention on the centrality of the person, which had its repercussions on the relationships with the employees, the customers, the suppliers, the competitors: mutual respect, loyalty and transparency, without reducing efficiency.

There are also positive implications: some time back we competed with a public corporation from Tuscany for a large supply of door frames, even though the chances of obtaining the contract appeared rather slim, owing both due to our prices as well as to the insufficient acquaintance with that market. At the time of presenting the



offer I felt motivated as well as detached, knowing that I had done all I could, and I thought that it would all end up as a formal meeting. Instead the talks lasted for nearly three hours and as time passed by one could perceive the increase of esteem and confidence in the rapport.

In the end we obtained the order, in spite of having offered a less favourable price than the others, which according to the client was owing to the feeling of correctness and confidence that I had transmitted during the discussion.

Once I found myself having to compete with the sales director, whom I knew, of a company that was more important than ours. The considerations of him, above all, as a person, led me to furnish him with technical suggestions that would resolve problems in the functioning of his machinery.

This led to the building of mutual trust that brought us to supply each other with products that we found more advantageous to buy from one another.

Maria Pia, what is your rapport with your employees?

Among our workmen, which also include my son, there are also immigrants who at times have needs that go beyond the work rapport. Once one of them asked us if we could guarantee the loan that the bank would have granted him to repair the roof of his house in Albania that had been destroyed due to a falling tree.

Thinking about his family who were without a house we consented, and after some time another employee sought our assistance as he was about to get married and there were many expenses...we said yes again...

We also consented to a third request, though this time with a bit of apprehension: what if they don't repay? If we want to build relationships based on confidence and mutual responsibility, we had to be the first to give that confidence.

And the returns come in, perhaps through other means - like when we asked for an increase in the company overdraft facility the bank granted the same precisely because it took into consideration our style of management.

Besides we try as much as possible to make our employees participate in the life of the firm by promoting joint meetings during which we listen to each other, we discuss problems, solutions, various ideas concerning the production and other matters.

When I realized that the workers were not maintaining well the toilets, instead of reproaching them I preferred to explain to them one evening that the new shed was a wealth for everyone, the toilets were new, one could take a shower before going home. We understood each other and a new rapport was established with the workers.

When a series of accidents that befell our workers while they were not on the job created serious difficulties for

the production, we were able to ascertain how each one shouldered the situation of emergency by accepting to work overtime without creating problems, and also by renouncing or postponing the period of holidays that were due to them.

With regard to safety at work, besides respecting the stipulated norms, we equipped the workshop with equipment that facilitated the work to be safer and less tiring, while insisting a lot on carrying out the production in an orderly manner.

Does not this way of functioning, of giving attention to the person and to solidarity, compromise in some way the financial result?

To go against the trend calls for a greater determination; however we feel that if we are able to look upwards while making these choices we are never alone. It's as if up there we have a hidden partner who gives us courage in the face of difficult situations and who often helps us to find ways out that we would never have imagined through an idea, a suggestion from the outside, an apparently fortuitous event.

At the end of a particular month I prepared the accounts in order to programme the payments, but the liquidity was not sufficient due to many outstanding receipts. I wanted to remain faithful to all the commitments, but in order to do so we would need a miracle. Some days later I found in the mail the advice of a credit transfer amounting to several thousands of Euros that was totally unexpected as its due date was still a month away: it was the amount we needed to pay everyone.

Pietro, how are you able to always maintain firm your determination?

It's been years now since we meet up regularly with other entrepreneurs to share experiences and difficulties, to support one another: every time we come back with new energy and enthusiasm.

First of all we always tried to be faithful to the sharing of a part of the profits with persons in necessity, even when the company situation suggested the maximum of self-financing.

The determination to share was all the more reason to improve the products and services, a stimulus towards business innovation. We acquired a new shed through a loan, wherein the wider spaces facilitate a more efficient and sure production process, with management criteria that are more industrial, improving the acquisition of raw materials and care of the product.

The quality of our supplies is often our best letter of introduction; since more and more often new customers turn towards us because they were induced by others who were satisfied with our services.

Finally we have received and continue to receive various students in our firms who have chosen to conclude their university studies with a thesis of graduation on the EoC, and to dedicate time for their interviews. Many years ago when I undertook the task of an entrepreneur I could never have imagined that someday I would have also become a case study.

(NDR: see Giorgio Canale's graduation thesis, page 23)

The EoC in Austria

On the 17th April a seminar entitled 'Discover and develop the Economy of Communion' was held at the Mariapoli Centre of Vienna.

Besides 38 entrepreneurs there were students and other persons interested in the project coming from different backgrounds and convictions. Among the participants there were also members of the Austrian Communist party.

There was a varied programme: one of the talks presented the vision and the development of the project, another presented the fundamental ideas and the developments of the business parks alongside the little towns of the Focolare Movement, and finally there was a scientific contribution that presented the concept of man in the EoC.

Among the experiences on the commitments for a culture of giving there was also that of an Austrian entrepreneur, and of Italian entrepreneurs Pietro and Maria Pia Comper of the Tecnodoor company.

Later on a game was organised on the theme of the culture of giving, after which the participants split up into different workshop that were based on the interests of those present: to be an entrepreneur, the scientific considerations induced by the EoC experience, the progress of the idea of the nascent business park in Austria, and the gathering and the elaboration of ideas for new firms.

Those present at the seminar were enthusiastic about the project. Some of them heard about it for the first time. A lady entrepreneur who manages a firm with her husband since a number of years said: "Since the last two years we have been considering closing down the firm for various reasons other than financial. Now I know why we did not succeed in doing so". She then expressed the desire to meet up with other entrepreneurs.

Another person said: "I have finally found people who do not limit themselves to criticizing the injustices present in the current economic system, but who do something in order to change this situation by means of a concrete project."

The next seminar has already been programmed to be held later this year in November. Even though the

EoC in Austria is still in its initial stages, we know that great and wonderful things await us in the future.



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The Solidaridad business park



The main road that leads me to the Mariapoli O'Higgins is deserted. Its early afternoon on a wonderful summer day; the sun shines in a clear and intense blue sky while the breeze blowing from the south makes the weather truly enjoyable.

While I cover the final 3 km of dirt road after the junction, I am inevitably overcome by memories of my last visit to the Solidaridad business park. It was at the end of 2001, the year of the Argentine odyssey, which had its toll on 36 million protagonists and brought the inhabitants of a country on the edge of the abyss. Then came along 2002 and a long period of uncertainty, with the International Monetary Fund seemingly playing a game of cat-and-mouse with the Argentinean government, while the Gross Domestic Product went down by 20%, the production and the consumptions by 30%, and the wages endured cuts from 20-40%. The hospitals lacked syringes, gauzes, medicines - being diabetic in some cases could prove to be fatal - while ten million impoverished people begged for a morsel of bread. At times by night entire families belonging to the middle class could be found on the streets of big cities rummaging through garbage for paper, glass, and metals. These new poor without wanting it caught those who had always lived off the garbage on the wrong-foot.

Then in 2003 one began to notice an arrest in the downslide. There was a new government and the first signs of recovery with the economic indicators that showed how the country had begun laboriously, with much hope and humility, the climb upwards.

Now in 2004 all of us are involved in the reconstruction, and I am returning back to the Mariapoli of O' Higgins to visit the Solidaridad (solidarity) Business Park. Around me fields of Soya follow one another. They are immense and occupying tens of thousands of hectares. It's like a sea of little plants measuring a few centimetres in height and of an intense green colour against the backdrop of a blue sky. A combination that would have been the envy of Giorgio Armani. It's the boom of the Soya bean cultivation. The price per tonne increased by more than 10% in two months and the cultivators are making good business by exporting it.

Instead in the Mariapoli the fields that surround it cultivate maize. The ears of corn are ready and one can see the golden coloured cobs sparkle in the sun. Later on they explained to me that they preferred the practise of

crop rotation to monocultivation, and they had reason.

I stopped the car at the Solidaridad Business Park, which is one of the three "neighbourhoods" that constitute the little town of the Focolare Movement, together with the Campo Verde and the Villa Blanca. By now several families live here some of whom work for the business park.

The first sensation one gets is of wonder. It seems that everything is flourishing, the plants as well as the houses and the constructions. After these three years of crisis I would have sworn that the people in the Business Park would be 'licking their wounds'. Instead there are a couple of sheds and three new houses under construction. Meanwhile the waters of the cyclical flooding have withdrawn after two years in which extensive areas of the business park had been completely flooded. Here life goes ahead. It does not stop easily.

Those who sow in tears...

Pepe Marin shows his tomatoes with unconcealed pride. They are so big and fleshy that it seems as if they would explode any moment. The plants in his greenhouses, which are arranged in rows in front of the entrance of the Mariapoli, are overloaded with tomatoes. "The season was ideal, the heat was not excessive and there was a good continuity of sunny days that favoured the quality and the quantity of the harvest. We are gathering almost seven quintals a week", he tells me very happily. He seems to be rejoicing more on account of the success of the harvest rather than on the financial gains. The visit of his firm 'Primicias' (first fruits) continues. Some greenhouses are dedicated to capsicums. I entered into one of them. The transparent plastic that wraps up the roof and the walls increases the inner temperature and facilitates a higher level of humidity. The stay would not have been pleasant if it weren't for the fragrance of the capsicums, whose sweetish smell overwhelms you in spurts. One could say that for Primicias the hard times of the earlier years seem to have been overcome. For Pepe, who is the direct cultivator and owner of Primicias, it is the flavour of the present joy. "Ah yes - he confirms - it was not easy in these years. Not only was the firm at stake but also the desire to do something new with the EoC."

Brave words indeed from Pepe, the father of a swarm of children who were needed to be provided for, either with or without the EoC. "We reduced the structure of our small business to the bare minimum" he explains to me. "I engage labourers who come here from right up to Salta (1500 km distant), with whom we have a good work relationship. We risk only a little to avoid surprises in the market. We produce only that which can be sold with certainty".

Alberto Barlocchi

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One can notice that this strategy is rewarded from the results. "It is true" he adds. "But you know what? I believe that the EoC is not only made up of successes but also of failures, mistakes. Like any other business activity. Sometimes things go badly, on other occasions one could have calculated badly. But you can learn from that mistake, it will serve in order not to repeat it. And then you know something? The mistake makes you more careful, it helps you to come down to earth. Now I feel more responsible on the work front".

However I understand that being "more responsible" does not mean being less of a dreamer. In the most difficult moments of these years Pepe was there, sweating and clenching his teeth, putting up with uncertainties and doubts, often in silence because he is a man of few words. In fact, it's enough to look into his eyes to read his present joy. One goes ahead also with perseverance.

Fuel oil from Soya

Juan José Balatti launched the ONTAI Hermano Sol s.a. company (O' Higgins New Agro-Industrial Technologies, Brother Sun Ltd.). He is keen on explaining to me that the corporate name hints to the Brother Sun, "because Francis (of Assisi) is a model of humble respect for the environment". And this initiative aims to be developed taking ecological criteria into consideration.

An accountant by profession Juan José Balatti is risking a lot in the Solidaridad Business Park: not only is he investing all his savings into the ONTAI project, but he is also shifting his firm into the business park.

I cannot contain my curiosity: what has fuel oil got to do with soya? "Biodiesel can be obtained from soya oil. This fuel is similar to diesel oil and can be used for diesel motors, such as agricultural machines. It is ideal to produce this fuel here because it can be sold to the immediate cultivators in the region who need the same, and at a price similar to the diesel oil derived from petroleum but without the problems of pollution".

Balatti learnt about this process almost by chance. His firm is trying to obtain the governmental support allocated for the small and medium enterprises sector. ONTAI will not only devote itself to biodiesel but also to soya flour that is used in various sectors, among which cattle breeding. He has already finished constructing the shed and they will soon begin production.

Incubator for firms

A few tens of meters from the ONTAI shed I met Horacio Pirota, a big and friendly man always with a smile on his face, and he embraced me with affection. He has been a widower since a year and his wife rests in

the small cemetery of the Mariapoli. He has the little town at heart and he came to supervise the construction work of his small house. He works at the parliament of the province of Buenos Aires and he is the director of a cooperative for the distribution of electric power. Moreover he has a mind vivid with ideas and he is keen on the EoC. He understood that often one of the problems of new companies is that of "learning to fly". For this reason he started an "incubator" of firms.

"It's simple", he explains to me. "If you begin a business and you need to bear the fixed costs of the office, the light, the telephone, the administration, it's probable that you will have series difficulties. Besides, you could have little experience in matters of business management. And who will teach you certain things? For this purpose I formed a business incubator that offers office premises, electricity, telephone, etc. for a limited time period, sharing with other firms in formation a few fixed expenses, secretarial staff, accounting and entrepreneurial formation. "We want to do it for the EoC; our incubator is connected with the Solidaridad Business Park".

Jams and formation

Among the various enterprises in the little town of O' Higgins, there also figures the "Dolci e marmellate Mariapoli" (Mariapoli Sweets and Jams). It developed such a high quality homemade production that it began to export part of the production. I spoke with Maria Rosa Onesti who has been following its development since quite some time.

"This company was launched to provide financial support to the young people that come to the little town to form themselves in the spirituality of unity. There have been thirty youth since we began and our production has acquired a segment of the market: that of homemade jams produced without any added colouring or preservatives."

"In this moment we produce five flavours of jams: strawberry, raspberry, orange, pumpkin (appreciated a lot in Argentina), and lemon. The lemon flavour is one of our novelties. We carefully select the fruits that we use both for the jams as well as for the (fruit) syrup production. Since we do not use preservatives we pay special attention to the stock in the warehouse. It's a bit of the old recipe used by our grandmothers".

"The production is around 40,000 kg. a year - over 80,000 jars of 450 gm. each - but it could easily reach the 60,000 kg. mark. Therefore it is a production limited to relatively small quantities, tied up to the fact that the product is more expensive than that manufactured industrial and commonly used. However it is economically productive if one is careful to balance costs and revenues. As far as these last factors are



concerned it was decided to control the prices so as to reach a greater possible number of families".

A majority of the customers are several chains of supermarkets that are attracted by the Mariapoli brand of products. Then there are the direct sales to the 25,000 persons who visit the little town each year and to many members of the Focolare movement who expressly choose to buy the products of the little town. Lately nearly two tonnes of the product is being export to Italy to a customer who was won over by its quality; a quality that won the firm the "Prize" at the 1994 Gourman Dise Expo that is conferred on homemade jams.

Micaela Ottonello, of Italian origin from Rapallo, joins the conversation. "You see", she comments, "this development too cannot be explained except in the light of 'the culture of the giving', which lies at the basis and which is the inspiration of our activity. There are 14 of us who work in this small business and it is a continuous giving from the part of the one who coordinates the work as well as from the part of the young people who come to work for not-so-long periods. Every time that they change we have to begun anew, but we know that for the moment we have transmitted a way to work in which one becomes aware that one's product will reach a customer who is first of all a person. It is a giving but also a receiving in which we all grow".

"Once a gentleman came to visit us", she tells me. "We showed him our work environment, our way of working, the premises, and the machines. And he silently watched and scrutinized everything - the roof and the flooring marked by time, the machines, etc. At the end he informed us that he was an engineer for the inspection of foodstuff production, and he added: "Here there is a philosophy of life and it's visible. You do not wash the raw materials because you have to do it but for deep-rooted reasons, and this explains the quality of the product. Keep up the good work!"

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In community like the bees

Norma Maliandi is a very simple and likeable person. "I still have much to learn before becoming an entrepreneur of the EoC. And it takes a lot to be transformed into new people", the owner of this cosmetic firm tells me with humility.

In fact then when she speaks of the relationship with the workers in her firm, one can perceive the impact of the radical change marked on the firm, the effort to render all as participants in the running of the firm. "We meet each Friday", she explains to me, "and we see how things stand. This is very important for me because

the relationship among us, the sense of family that is created, the contribution of everyone, is vital. On several occasion the listening to each one helped us understand together that some work duties needed to be reassigned in such a way that each person could work comfortably. I would never have imagined that someone could have performed a particular task, and instead there he was happily carrying out his new duties. Thus we improved also in the takings precisely because everyone works more comfortably."

Listening to Norma speaking about her people brings more to mind the image of a community, of a family, rather than that of a firm. "But it is also true that we a bit of both", she adds. "You should have seen them during the crisis of 2001 and 2002. They were as courageous as lions. We all worked together in the same direction with a lot of grit. And we were able to make it through the crisis. I have learned a lot from the bees. They are a community wherein everyone has its role and every bee has a value, and all work together for the good of all. This awareness has also helped me in adhering to the EoC. And today I am enthusiastic about it".

From honey to cosmetic... To the EoC

The cosmetic laboratory of Norma Maliandi and its present distribution chain, with hundreds of sale points and thousands of collaborators, is spread all over Argentina. Its origins go back to 1886 when Nicholas Maliandi, an emigrating Italian, began to work as a beekeeper. It was a trade and a passion that was transmitted from father to son until we reach Norma, the great-granddaughter, the 43 years old initiator of this well-known and respected firm. "We have always tried to give a direction to our work based on honesty and transparency", continues Norm. "With the EoC, which we joined in 2000 thanks above all to the impetus from my daughter who grew up and matured in an atmosphere of 'the culture of giving', we understood that this step would have opened for us even wider horizons".

For Norma the relationship with her employees is vital, and as one can note, it goes much beyond the call of duty. The construction of her new house at the Solidaridad business park is nearly completed and Norma will place it at the disposal of her workers. "They cannot have lunch in the laboratory", she explains to me. "Out here they can eat their lunch in peace, faraway from the fragrances of the products."

The range of cosmetic products derived from honey and propolis (bee glue) are ecological and natural, without taking recourse to chemical agents that could be harmful to health. The laboratory is located at Junin,

which is 40 km from the Solidaridad Business Park. But it opened a branch at the business park since a year now, which has already launched a range of shampoos that are among the first products developed in the Mariapoli

Producing in the little city

"According to me the fact that goods are being produced in the little town is not of secondary importance", explains Norma with enthusiasm, "because even the atmosphere existing among the persons here is formative and my employees perceive it. For the moment we work here only a few days in the week with an hour's travel to and fro. Well it's not exactly comfortable under certain aspects to come out here. Nevertheless when its time to quit working you notice that nobody feels like leaving right away because they are happy to be out here. We are part of something marvellous and they perceive it".

I asked her if all approved of the EoC project. "Not all" she replied. "For instance not all participate at the meetings of formation in the EoC because they are free to attend or not to. However, when they explain our work activity to some of the visitors, they do not hesitate to affirm that we are an EoC enterprise and they are proud of it. One of the workers told me: 'I know that a part of this product will help the poor, and this gives me joy'".

Products and culture

Even the labels on the "Norma Miliandi" products show that we are dealing with an EoC firm. Besides this the firm has also included the products of the other small firms in the Mariapoli in its brochures: jams, or handicrafts, or the new releases of the Ciudad Nueva publishing house. I am astonished: books and creams together? "Sure", says Norma, "because they both express a part of the culture that we want to spread through our products. Therefore it's not out of place to advertise it to my clients. And they are many who later on come into contact with the Mariapoli thanks to the creams. One reality supports the other".



An "Association of EoC entrepreneurs and firms" is launched in Argentina.

The 12th national meeting of Argentinean entrepreneurs, which also included four entrepreneurs from Uruguay, ended on the 30th November 2003. There were a total of 78 participants comprising entrepreneurs, scholars, collaborators and interested parties.

During this meeting the annual meeting of the company UNIDESA, now in its 11th year of existence and which manages the Solidaridad Business Park, was held. A report was given on the work carried out and the programmes for the following year, which consisted in the raising of the land levels of the Business Park that had been flooded in the past due to the rains, the completion of a factory shed and the construction of an additional one that were both needed for the firms already established in the Business Park, the completion of a natural gas distribution network, and the construction of three new houses besides the eleven already existing.

The Expo organised in the business park for the EoC firms in Argentina continues to draw many visitors and contributes towards the diffusion of the EoC project, which is an answer to the present difficulties the country is passing through; while the managers of the ONTAI were invited to present the EoC and their new economic activity in the Business Park at the meeting of researchers and teachers of social economics organised by the Ministry of Social Development, at which ministers, officials, and prominent academicians were present.

On the occasion of this meeting the launching date of the 'Asociación de Empresas y Empresarios que Adhieren a la Economía de Comunción' (Association of EoC entrepreneurs and firms) comprising 18 entrepreneurs from the regions of Buenos Aires, Bahia Blanca, Rosario, Cordoba, and the Solidaridad Business Park was decided for the 24th April 2004.



The board of directors of the association is formed by Ramon Cervino (President), Virginia Gonzales (Vice President), Raúl Di Lascio, (Secretary) and Mario Breccia, (Treasurer).

Ramon Cervino

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Washington

On the 24th February 2004, an evening dedicated to the topic 'The relationship between economy, happiness and reciprocity' was organized at the Italian Embassy in Washington, a gem of contemporary architecture located in the heart of the political-diplomatic and cultural life of the United States.

A highly qualified and unusually large audience for such kind of events, listened and welcomed with great attention and participation the theme presented by Luigino Bruni on the importance and significance of reciprocity in economics, asking many questions and making observations.

The meeting was opened by Pasquale Ferrara, the cultural attaché of the Italian Embassy, and introduced by Stefano Stefanini, the Vice-Ambassador of Italy to Washington, who welcomed the participants stressing the importance of cultural events that facilitate an open dialogue between Italian scholars and Americans on issues that are new and of wide perspective, such as the one proposed by Luigino Bruni.

The 120 odd participants came from international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Bank of Development, the Organization of the States Americans, influential centres of study, and universities.

An American scholar, Carol Graham, renowned worldwide precisely for her studies on the rapport between economics and happiness, having well-prepared herself by reading all the preparatory papers, commented on Luigino Bruni's presentation with great doctrinal competence, affirming that the theme which was presented had opened up new horizons of research for her.

The dialogue that was initiated in the hall later continued in the form of personal chats and further clarifications. It revealed how the communion of competencies and relationships interwoven in the different spheres of politics, economy and international relations, can create a privileged way for the "Dialogue with Modern Culture" in the United States.

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UN / New York

On the occasion of the "12th Session of United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development", New Humanity, the NGO that represents the Focolare Movement and the AVSI that represents the Communion and Liberation at the UN, organized together a Workshop on the topic "The development of deteriorated city areas and new housing for the poorest".

New Humanity had invited Edna Villaraza to present the Bukas Palad project of Manila, which she has been following from its initial stages [Editor's Note: refer to newsletter n.13], while Ezio Castelli of the AVSI presented the Ribeira Azul programme for the development of the deteriorated areas of the city of Salvador di Bahia, in Brazil.

The experience of cohabitation, fraternity and communion with the poorest in the Philippines, through the formation, feeding, healthcare, and the construction of decent housing of the Bukas Palad project was brought right into the UN halls.

The seventy experts present followed the presentation with great interest and the ambassador of Brazil thanked more than once both the AVSI and New Humanity for their work in his country.

The US Vice-Ambassador, who was the moderator of the workshop, said that he would have wished for the US Secretary for the development of Urban Housing to have been present in order to realize how much had been achieved in the Bukas Palad project. He acknowledged that the main reasons for the success of actions promoted by similar organizations came from the fact that they are based on faith and a great respect for the dignity of every human person.

A US expert and a Swede diplomat asked how projects similar to those presented could be launched and multiplied, and a Japanese diplomat expressed his satisfaction with the presentation.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, who represents the Holy See at the UN, thanked both the organizations not only for the projects presented but also for their work in today's society.

The joint presentation strengthened ties with the Communion and Liberation movement at the UN, from whom Bukas Palad can learn how to obtain funds from the World Bank at lower interest rates in order to improve its schools and formation centres.



The EoC in North Europe

Ireland

On occasion of Chiara Lubich's visit to Ireland, there was a presentation of the EoC at the prestigious Michael Smurfit Graded School of Business on the 24th February 2004.

Laurence Crowley, the Governor of the Bank of Ireland, opened the meeting at which 200 important personalities of the Irish entrepreneurial, academic, press, and political world were present.

Lorna Gold presented a theme entitled "We need an Economy of Communion". This was followed by Chiara Lubich's "Humanizing the global economy: towards an Economy of Communion". This theme was read out by Eli Folonari, one of Chiara Lubich's first companions, as Chiara was meeting with the President of the Irish Republic in that very moment.

This was followed by Benedict Gui's report on "the EOC and the challenges of the economic theory". Later experiences were shared by several entrepreneurs - Andrew Basquille from Ireland, Armando Tortelli from Brazil, and Elisa Golin from Italy - which were coordinated by Prof. Ray Kinsella and Prof. John McNerney from the Smurfit School, with the contribution of Leo Andringa who is part of the international EoC commission.

It was a special seminar in which a true dialogue was successfully established. This put into doubt the old ways of thinking and brought into focus new ways based on the charism of unity. A new language was employed to communicate the language of communion which was simple, relaxed, and natural. It was as if someone had opened the eyes of the participants, enabling them to catch a glimpse of the true reality of the economy and of the possibility of building an economy for the human person.

Prof. Maura Leen, recalling the words of J. M. Keynes: "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose times have matured", asserted "These are the times of the Economy of Communion".

It was truly a launching of the EoC project in the English speaking world: the persons understood the message in a profound manner so much so as to make it their own. The experiences of the entrepreneurs from all over the world showed the dimension and the seriousness of the project.

At present the various speeches made at the seminar are being gathered into a book for which the Governor of the Bank of Ireland has offered to write the preface.

Poland

A conference of religious movements from Poland was held at Gniezno from the 12th 14th March 2004. Chiara Lubich was present at this meeting and she spoke on more than one occasion.

Leo Andringa was also invited to intervene on the economic front. He presented the experience of the EoC against the backdrop of the current

macroeconomic scene. He related the experiences of entrepreneurs who wanted to live the Gospel by placing the human person at the centre; entrepreneurs who experienced the presence of the divine in economic realities too as a fruit of the mutual love among everyone, including those in need.

Furthermore he spoke of the social function of enterprises. This function appears more and more necessary in today's world in its various existing notions: as philanthropy, productive collaboration, and the one desired by the UN, i.e. the ability, especially of multinationals, to influence the markets so that human rights are respected everywhere.

The EoC proposes something more than the Social Responsibility of enterprises; something that it is born from within the culture of love - like the determination to generate jobs and to eradicate poverty. The former president of the International Monetary Fund was also present for Leo's presentation.

Germany

A preliminary meeting of 40 entrepreneurs from different "Länder" (regions) was held at Ottmaring from the 19th to 21st March 2004. Leo Andringa and Luigino Bruni participated at the meeting on behalf of the EoC International commission.

As a country Germany is subdivided in Länder for administrative purposes and they enjoy a remarkable autonomy. The relationships among the EoC firms also reflect a similar structure. However keeping in mind the necessity of collaboration among EoC firms and the importance of creating a vision and a common action with regard to the problems of the country, an EoC commission is being formed on the invitation of Chiara for the whole of Germany. This commission will be located near the little town of the movement at Ottmaring in Bavaria. Dagmar and Thomas Hamm have been entrusted with the function of coordinating the same. (Wir.Hamms@t-online.de).

Then on the 7th May, in preparation for the great ecumenical meeting of European Christian movements on the theme "To give a soul to Europe" to be held the following day (8th May), Leo Andringa presented the EoC at the "Liederhalle" (Lieder hall) in Stuttgart. It was coordinated by Dr Herman Sottong. Later the Huttli entrepreneurs, whose company manages a condominium of 1500 apartments, presented their experience on the theme of 'love for the competitor'.

The reactions of the persons in charge of other movements have been very positive. They requested for more contacts in order to carry the spirit of the EoC in their own economic activities.

All the members of the International EoC commission were present at the 8th May Stuttgart convention. They were to hold their annual meeting at Ottmaring the following day.



Leo Andringa

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When money impoverishes

In these last ten years the Economy of Communion has succeeded in drawing the attention of scholars and especially of young university students. This is testified to by the numerous graduation theses written on the topic. These young students are open and enthusiastic about something new, especially when they perceive great and prophetic visions in it. In particular if we carefully consider the relationship between the economic theory and the EoC, it decidedly holds many and rich prospects.

At the heart of the EoC project there are entrepreneurial persons present who freely decide to give a part of their profits, which in a way we could say are taken away from the firm, towards "pro-social" aims that will obtain neither an immediate nor a direct return for the enterprise itself. A choice of this nature usually goes together with a style of company management that is characterized by a respect for the natural habitat, but above all for the workers, the suppliers, as well as for the competitors and the laws in force in every country.

This fact offers elements of great interest for the economist, insofar as it poses a serious challenge to the theories prevalent in that discipline. Therefore one perceives that a profound understanding of its significance and the behavior of the various persons involved necessitates new conceptual tools that have begun to assert themselves only recently.

One notices here the fruitfulness of the relationship between "this" reality and the theory that would like to describe it, in the sense that the first is not fully understood if the most advanced theory is not used, and that the later can get legitimacy and empirical importance from phenomena such as the EoC.

Thus we need categories of thought that are 'different' from those exemplified by the anthropological assumptions of the neoclassical theory such as the self-interested behavior of people, the purpose of the maximization of the profits and the minimization of the costs, and that of methodological individualism. Even if these help us to comprise in a first consideration many of the important economical behaviors, they reveal themselves as inadequate or at best as crude simplifications in the case of the EoC firms. But then where can we find the necessary set of tools? It is the same economic theory that provides it in its frontline areas. In particular in those branches of the more recent economic theory that were developed as a reaction to the over-simplification of the neoclassical view.

We would like to conduct an in-depth study through a series of articles on three important lines of research in particular. These provide useful indications towards a more profound understanding of the meaning and the dynamics of the EoC: the intrinsic motivations, the social preferences, and the role of culture in economic development.

With this first article I would like to take into particular consideration the role of motivations, their different typologies and the implications that such a consideration has on the understanding of the EoC.

This stream of research emerges from the ascertainment that the study of economic behavior has concentrated exclusively on that class of motivations to action that we usually define as "extrinsic". I do something because that something will produce a result that is pleasing to me. In this case the result produced represents the "extrinsic" motivation of my action. In this logic the desire to take home a salary at the end of the month is my extrinsic motivation to go to work.

This mechanism helps explain many significant behaviors within the economic sphere, but rethinking it over it does not explain them all. In fact we can think of many other kinds of activity in which the "doing" of the activity is at least as important in motivating the person as the extrinsic results that it produces. When I play a game of tennis I do not do it simply to win but because the very fact of playing tennis is by itself a useful activity.

These kinds of actions that are not directed to an extrinsic reward are defined as "intrinsically" motivated actions. The recognition of the existence of this second kind of motivations puts a powerful instrument at the disposal of the economic theory in order to comprise phenomena otherwise paradoxical and inexplicable.

Some years ago two ingenious economists carried out some experiments. One of them had 180 students as "experimental subjects". At the place in which the experiment was carried out it was a practice to dedicate an hour at the end of lessons to fund raising activities for several associations. The boys went from door to door on a voluntary basis collecting donations in the name of these associations. Our two economists thought of dividing the 180 students into three different groups with the idea of verifying the working of the extrinsic motivations.

A "control" group would have continued doing the usual activity in the usual way. The members of the second group would have collected the donations and would have received 1 cent as a reward for every dollar collected, and finally the members of the third group

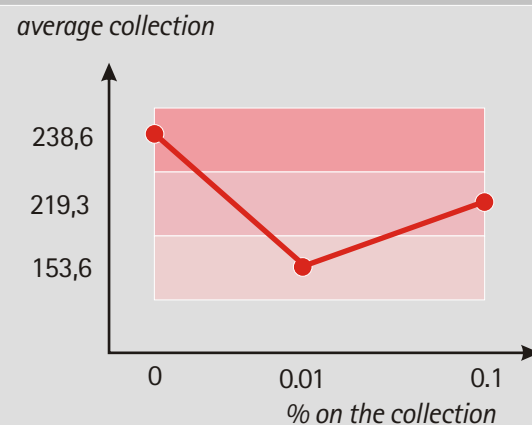


Vittorio Pelligra

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would have received 10 cents as reward for every dollar collected. The basic idea behind this experiment was that the greater the reward (the extrinsic motivation) that you obtain from an activity the greater will be the commitment lavished on that particular activity. The increase in the reward from 0 to 1 cent and then up to 10 cents should have brought about an observation of a greater commitment from the boys, which would then be reflected on the amount of donations collected. However once we compare the behaviour of all the three groups, we realize that the results decidedly contradict this

Graph 1:
"Average collection amount
vs. change in the reward"



hypothesis.

Graph 1 reveals that that the highest average amount collected (\$ 238.60) is that of group 1, which carried out the activity on a voluntary base. The introduction of a reward equal to 1 % of the amount collected produces a lessening in the commitment and therefore of the amount collected to an average of \$ 153.60. A further increase in the reward, this time to 10%, brings about an increase in the collection (\$ 219.30) that nevertheless is inferior with respect to that obtained by the first group comprising of volunteers.

These results seem paradoxical if they are analysed in terms of extrinsic motivations. We are able to understand and explain the data of the experiment only if we accept the idea that not all of our actions are directed towards obtaining an extrinsic reward. It is plausible that a fund raising activity for a charitable association is considered as a praiseworthy action with a high social impact. The very idea of being able to contribute to such an activity constitutes the reward for the action itself. Through my hour dedicated to the collection of funds I make you understand, and particularly I bring myself to realize, that I have the well-being of the society at heart and that it's worth dedicating myself for it. And this is already my reward. Instead the moment in which you offer to me a material reward (1 cent for every collected dollar), it prevents me from expressing this willingness to

help to myself and to the others. And even when the reward increases it certainly increases my commitment, but it will never match the initial levels.

The explanation of such a phenomenon is based on several elements. E.g. the *reduction of the self-determination* that the practice of monetary incentives can bring about. Similarly a reduction in the *feeling of self-esteem* that it felt when a person receives a monetary reward for an action that he would have carried out all the same.

And finally a third element concerns the *reduction in the possibilities of expression* with regard to the impossibility experienced by an intrinsically motivated person on the receipt of a monetary compensation, to express behaviors coherent with his system of values and beliefs.

The inclusion of these considerations within economic models that explain behavior is fundamental. It is not only because the models would otherwise result as incomplete, but even more because when these models become the basis and the guide of *management* practices and of human resources management, to neglect the complexity of the motivational structure of the economic agents can lead to inner conflicts between extrinsic motivations and intrinsic motivations. This brings about a reduction in performances and above all an impoverishment of the sense of meaning of the same person who no longer knows who he is because he is denied the possibility to prove it to himself and to the others with concrete actions.

In this regard the organizations of the EoC also have a great chance in improving the quality of life of the workers. The ability to contribute concretely to the project helps in the formation of such a sense of meaning as well as to experience mutual and authentic relationships.

The Ancilla at the service of firms



The firm Ancilla was started in 1991 at Manila in the Philippines in immediate response to the Economy of Communion project. At that time I was working as a bank official. The job was secure and the pay was excellent. However in agreement with my husband I had decided to adhere to Chiara's invitation by leaving my job in order to set up a consulting firm, as well as to take up a teaching post at the university.

Precisely ten years ago the Economy of Communion newsletter narrated in its first issue the story of our firm whose full name is Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting.

In all these years of operation Ancilla has shared the ups and downs of the Philippine and the Asian economies. It has been nourished by its culture based on the gospel and it has been consistent in maintaining that mutual love which draws the presence of the divine into the firm.

Ancilla is now entering the fourteenth year of activity and it continues to supply formation, advice, and tertiary services to commercial firms as well as to governmental and non-governmental associations.

Thanks to its professional commitments and to Providence, we have grown in ten years from a staff of 22 persons to now being in 48 professionals servicing 270 customers.

In these years Ancilla has also obtained assignments from important public and private organizations, which goes to show the confidence that it inspires. The Drug and Sanitary Association of the Philippines has assigned it the task of professionally accrediting medical representatives, while the Well Family Clinic Association has entrusted it with the managing of its Annual Prize for the Best Obstetrician.

Moreover the Association of Rural Banks of the Philippines, and the Philippine Organization for Social Progress have entrusted them the sensitive sector of controlling the Microcredit activities of rural banks.

Ancilla has also become a consultant for important projects in the energy sector. It is cooperating in the transformation of an oil refinery into a coastal warehouse for oil products, and also in improving the management of a geothermal firm.

We have always felt it important to act more and more as a mediator among everyone, thereby building positive relationships. And this led us to set up an organization for the Development of a Network of Professionals with the aim of better defining and improving the productive standards of the industry, which puts us into close contacts with firms and competitors.

Ancilla has always felt it was important to create strong and strategic alliances with firms in its own sector of operation, such as the Tack in Great Britain, the Eagles Flight International in Canada, the Enterprise

Development International and the Symlog in the United States, and the Pivotal Technologies and the EZ Business Solutions in the Philippines.

In our country the situation of the poor who are particularly close to us as we share with them the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, is very much felt and present. This helps us not only to be faithful to the Economy of Communion project but also to collaborate with a project for the construction of houses for the poor launched by the Couples for Christ Movement. In order to celebrate Ancilla's thirteenth anniversary its employees financed the construction of a house for one poor family through the firm.

Ancilla also offers young people who are preparing themselves for the priesthood and for young graduates the opportunity for a formation to life. Out here they learn to work in contact with the real world but in an atmosphere of love and unity.

After a year the future priests return to the seminary to be ordained as deacons, while the young graduates find jobs in other companies after having worked for two or three years with Ancilla.

Ancilla also continues to promote the "rainbow lifestyle at work" through a weekly column published in the Sunday edition of the Philippines Daily Inquirer, a newspaper that publishes over a million copies.

The column is entitled "Advise for persons anxious at work". It is often affixed to the notice boards of firms and it is also used as back up reading by students. Recently the best of these articles have been collected into a book.

For the future Ancilla has plans, God-willing, to expand its activity thanks to an agreement reached with an IT school that has 120 centres all over the country.

Besides it has plans to begin together with partners a business activity, initially in Vietnam and later extending to other countries of the ASEAN, the economic organization of Asian countries.



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Degree in Business
Economics
*University of Studies,
Venezia Ca' Foscari*
16 July 2001

Thesis:

Production and the "culture of giving": the project and the firms of the "Economy of Communion"

Tutor

Prof. Vittorio Filippi

The aim of the thesis was to ascertain whether the notion of enterprise as proposed by the EoC project could be defined as "sustainable" with regards to the ability to promote "human development".

The first part links the challenge launched by the paradigm of sustainable development with the "culture of giving" and the concept of a "new man". The second part deepens the theoretical principles underlying the EoC and of its implications on social life. It then presents some experiences, both on a national and an international level, of entrepreneurs and workers operating for and with companies of the project. In the third part the aim that lies at the basis of the aforesaid research is verified by analyzing the experiences and the testimonies gathered in a period of two years in conformity with the concept of "sustainability", as developed by the UN International Commission for the Environment and Development.

It emerged that the aim of the EoC enterprise is not only profit making but first and foremost it is a community of persons who despite pursuing the satisfaction of their necessities at the same time constitute a particular group at the service of the common good. This group proposes to integrate those persons who are excluded and marginalized within the economic development circle, by reducing poverty, increasing the possibility of choices for the person, protecting the environment and assuring its sustainability.

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Degree in Administrative Sciences
Faculty of Law
Maria Santissima Assunta
Open University of Rome
28 October 2002

Thesis in the psychology of organisations:

The Economy of Communion at the service of work psychology

Tutor

Prof. Arrigo Pedon

The aim of the thesis is if it is possible to promote personal self-fulfilment in the world of work, considering as a specific case the Economy of Communion. The study employed the method of interviewing entrepreneurs as well as participating at their periodic meetings. The views of the persons interviewed reveal a general attention to the fact that each worker is positively motivated and to a favouring of cooperation among them according to the adage "more willingness to help for lesser conflict".

The respect for the individual is revealed in the importance given to the transparency of the administrative procedures, which can also be considered as an adhesion to the rules of collectivity that cannot be done without.

In the EoC experience, which is open to all, one can understand how organizations of work are open systems because they are tied to the exchange with external subjects.

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MBA (Master in Business Administration)
Fwarwick University Coventry, UK
11 July 2003

Thesis in Small Business and Enterprise Development:

The Economy of Communion project: perspectives of growth. A responsible approach in managing small businesses in the global market.

Language: English

Tutor

Prof. Nigel Sykes

The study of the EoC project was carried out by reviewing the literature available on the same and the business growth models, and taking into consideration three firms that adhere to the project, which are operating in different sectors and in different stages of growth. The entrepreneurs of these firms were interviewed by means of a designed questionnaire that was based on the classical OLC (Organisational Life Cycle) theories and the Sykes' model.

The study shows that the people-centred approach plays a key role in the development of EoC firms, and the relational factors form a 'social capital' that makes an organization something more than a collection of individuals intent on achieving their personal goals. The persons who share the spirit of the EoC work with a different commitment because they feel part of a project that has a social impact. The entrepreneurs are more proactive and resistant in the face of crisis situations and more prepared to take on risks.

The cohesion of the group is an intangible resource that strengthens the organizational culture and EoC values. This is not easy to achieve and it requires the attention and the commitment of the entrepreneurs and managers. It is not easy to put the EoC into practise and it calls for participation and a greater will in sharing values and strategies.

In conclusion, the case studies demonstrate that the EoC has an important role in the development and growth of the firm.

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Degree in Foreign Language and Literature

Sacred Heart Catholic University, Brescia

30 April 2003

Thesis in Tourism Management:

The Balance Sheet and the social statement in the Economy of Communion firms*Tutor**Prof. Giacomo Bailetti*

The aim of the study was to verify how the characteristic feature of the EoC firms is revealed by the budgetary files and if it can be used together with its enclosures (Management report, Auditors report, Certification report, and the Social statement) to describe the firm choices, and to account for their economic behaviour.

The first few chapters of the work carry out a study on the Economy of Communion and the firms that adhere to the project. Thus the Balance sheet and the Social statement were examined in the capacity of documents capable of furnishing information regarding the financial status and the social commitment of the firms, and finally some balance sheets drawn up by EoC firms were analyzed.

It turned out that the Social Statement is the document in which it is easier to formulate the company mission and vision, and to make explicit the strategic course of the EoC firm. It was also to be considered as an important means of internal verification of the firm. As a documentation of the company's organization and management it also becomes a valuable instrument for other firms that intend to adhere or that already adhere to the EoC project.

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Degree in Economics

University of Studies, Verona

22 September 2003

Thesis in Industrial and Commercial Technique:

The Economy of Communion, a new culture, a new way of running a business*Tutor**Prof. Claudio Baccarani – Dr. (Mrs) Paola Castellani*

The study deepens the knowledge on the EoC project and even goes beyond the perspective of economic science. It succeeds in providing cues for a broader reflection on man and his life.

After a brief presentation of the EoC project, an attempt is made to demonstrate the added value of the firms that adhere to the project as compared with the traditional formulation of the capitalistic economy.

Confirmation regarding the "excellence" of the project was had from the case study carried out on the TD-Tecnodoor, an EoC firm that operates in the field of the designing and production of locking systems (doors and main gates).

It was concluded that even if the EoC still provokes many perplexities in those who have to deal with the current economic behaviour on a daily basis, it is necessary to acknowledge nevertheless that it is difficult to remain indifferent in the face of a project capable of at least opening the eyes of people, thanks to the messages of love and hope launched all over the world.

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Degree in Industrial Economics

"Federico II" University of Studies, Naples

12 February 2004

Thesis in Economic History

From the Reduccion to the Economy of Communion: solidal economy in time.*Tutor**Prof. Francesco Dandolo*

The aim of the thesis was to retrace the civil economy history, taking into consideration some particular and extraordinary experiences made over several centuries: the Reduccion (reductions or townships) of Paraguay in the eighteenth century, the birth of the Cooperation in the nineteenth century, and finally the Economy of Communion launched in 1991.

An attempt was made to establish the reason for which today people try to go back to civil economy styles. In particular it was discovered that our age of globalization is really in need of finding true happiness again, the happiness that gushes forth from reciprocal relationships, precisely those that characterized other societies and organizations in past ages.

It begins with the study of the Reduccion experience in Paraguay when the Spanish government entrusted the Jesuits with the "civilization" of the Guarani Indian tribes between the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. A study was then conducted of the cooperative movement, which was the first successful endeavour of the civil economy.

Lastly the Economy of Communion is discussed as a form of civil economy that comes closest to the requirements of our age of globalization. It can offer a better future for humanity by its suggestion of an alternative to the present model of business management, which is capable of making everyone more self-fulfilment from the entrepreneur right up to the destitute.

World Archives of Theses on the EoC:

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Three-year degree course in
Business Economics
Ca' Foscari University
22 March 2004

Thesis in Economic Ethics:
**Between ethics and economy.
The social responsibility of the
firm**

Tutor:

Prof. Danilo Bano

Paolo Favero



The aim of the thesis was to consider the social responsibility of the firm beginning with the analysis of the historical evolution of the rapport between moral science and economic science up to the more recent theories on the social responsibility of the firms.

The first chapter highlights how the deterioration of the rapport between economy and moral has contributed in creating the theory dominant today according to which the sole aim of the firm is the maximization of the profit and that the firm is accountable only to the shareholders.

The second chapter exposes several theses on the theme of the responsibility of the firm and analyzes the initiatives of the European Commission and the Italian Parliament that are apt to stimulate ethical and responsible behaviors from the firms.

The ideas of Sen, Zamagni and Manzone are presented. They criticize the vision of the economy as a neutral science with regards to moral values. Some institutionalization norms of ethics in the firm (like SA 8000, the green book, and the Italian Law n. 231/2001) are then analyzed, and finally we have the personal experience of the author himself who attended a training programme at the Tassano EoC Consortium.

It was concluded that the assertion of the latest perspectives, according to which the firm has a moral responsibility towards all its interlocutors, depends on the setting of up new structures of management and reporting capable of institutionalizing ethics in the firms.

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Degree in the Social Teachings
of the Church
*Pontificia Universidad Comillas,
Spain*
31 March 2004

Tutor

Prof. Dias Sánchez, Juan Manuel

Juan Miguel Anaya Torres



The Church's stance regarding the right use of goods is examined, starting with the sacred scriptures and the experience of the first Christian community of Jerusalem. It then continues with the written contributions of the Fathers of the Church, the Salamanca school, and the present Social Teachings of the Church. Lastly the EoC experience is examined.

The biblical texts do not deal with the destination of material goods but they promote justice and charity. The universal destination of goods is a corollary of the human calling to universal charity. The Church in its two millennium years of history does not propose specific economic models, and the market and the firm are considered as positive entities insofar as they work for the common good.

The EoC experience can contribute towards the development of the theoretical reflection with regards to the "human capital", and to the market as a means for the redistribution of wealth. The EoC can give a contribution towards the development of new models of consumption and a spirituality of work besides that of the social economy and cooperativism. And finally it can also bring about a reflection on an up-to-date trade union action.

It was concluded that a greater diffusion of the EoC project beyond the ambit of the Foculare Movement would be desirable. This coupled with an in-depth study conducted within the movement of the significance of the sharing of the profits with those in need, and regarding the possibility of collaborating with NGOs for the distribution of the profits. These NGOs must be capable of generating self-financed projects in order to obtain a multiplying effect of the profits shared for them. The movement could also study how many of the assisted persons were able to come out of their state of great poverty.

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Degree in Economics and Commerce
Tor Vergata University, Rome
17 July 2003

Thesis in Business Economics

**The Management of personnel and
the Economy of Communion**

Tutor

Prof. Roberto Cafferata

The aim of the study was to observe and to give a critical opinion on the various phases of personnel management in the Economy of Communion firms.

A historical research was carried out on the personnel management, an analysis of the phases of personnel management in the EoC firms, by doing an in-depth case study of a firm that adheres to the project.

It was pointed out that more than satisfactory performances are obtained in the EoC firms thanks to the style of personnel management employed by them. It is precisely the manner in which an activity is carried out that permits the attainment of goals that are even more significant than those expected.

Propositive yet critical, serious yet humble

Today's economy is like a current generator, which at times turns well but at a rate that is excessive with respect to the actual electrical energy needs of the users thereby causing a waste of diesel oil and an excess of smoke and noise. Instead at other times it misfires and works in jerks, spitting out incombustible hydrocarbon fumes as the technicians who are supposed to attend to it are either unwilling or they are quarrelling among themselves.

We have all been able to ascertain that often the first ones to be dissatisfied with this state of affairs are precisely the protagonists of the economic life themselves. In fact one of the most important effects of all that which has been put underway since 1991 under the EoC banner is precisely that of having proposed new significances and new avenues to these protagonists.

One of the main merits of the over 115 graduation theses written on the "EoC and related issues" is that of having been propositive. They were not the umpteenth re-examination of issues delved into too often, or a reflection though valid but set within too narrow a horizon, but a passionate re-orientation of attention - of the undergraduate students, and as a result also of the professors entrusted to guide them as well as of many other interlocutors - towards a perspective that is innovative and imbued with ideals.

However the scientific test - because a graduation thesis must be a scientific work - necessitates the placing of a critical eye alongside the enthusiasm and the passion. This means to take nothing for granted, not even the goodness of the proposal that fascinated us or the forms tried till now to translate the proposal into action, but to subject everything to a careful study.

This can lead to a confirmation of what was foreseen, but by its nature it can also be a demolisher above all of hasty conclusions or consequences hoped for but not well-founded. However in this way it can open for us new ways of realizing the spirit of the proposal. Also because once we take up such an attitude, many inspirations for the thesis can be found by observing and studying all that

has been elaborated and tried out by the others.

This second adjective - critical - can be justly ascribed to some of the theses in question. For example, I know that some students, who were very curious and who were armed with endless questionnaires, even posed unexpected questions to the interviewed entrepreneurs, which compelled them to deal with unusual and therefore stimulating points of view.

Instead in other cases the attention of those doing their theses has been taken up by the presentation of the project, with its history and its characteristics, or by the desire to make known the promises, to the detriment of the analyses which on the contrary is the specific as well as the most useful ingredient of a dissertation. In fact the ways to encounter the problem of poverty or those to involve and motivate the employees of organizations with ideal objectives, form two important blocks of the EoC project, even if they are not specific. For this reason their study, especially if it is carried out with a certain amount of sensitivity, is precious for the project even if the expression "Economy of communion" would have never appeared.

Instead the requisite of seriousness is related to other important values of intellectual activity: the rigour, first of all in the study of the written work of those who spent years or decades before us in reflection and through analysis; the patience in following the courses of thought of others, which at first glance could seem unacceptable to us because they are far away from our vision of the world, but in which we often find useful elements in order to build our own courses; also the obstinacy with which an intuition, a 'thesis' is taken ahead.

From all that I have just mentioned it is understood that seriousness is intertwined with the humility required of the one carrying out a research work. For seriousness to be true it cannot coexist with the conviction to have found before even having searched. It's worth reminding this above all to one who has found an interpretative key to reality in a great spiritual intuition. This is not because a spiritual vision does not have a value in a scientific activity; on the contrary it is often a precious source of inspirations, but because for these latter works to be profitable they must be also pursued, improved, discussed, and confronted with those who have different starting points.

In all this it is crucial to keep alive within oneself a dialogue between two extremities: one's own convictions on one hand, and the topics and the method of the appropriate scientific discipline employed, on the other.

This inner dialogue, which obviously does not exclude at all the entering into a dialogue with others, is perhaps that which can contribute more towards the final outcome of the thesis: the maturation of the ideas of the student. This is a maturation that certainly does not end with the degree but instead it can and it must continue precisely through the continuation of this maturing dialogue as new professional experiences (and not only) are dealt with.

To this end those graduates who have written their theses on the EoC, and who have made a precious experience with this dialogue, constitute today a precious human capital at the service of the project and moreover of the society in general. The responsibility of maintaining operational and of appreciating this capital rests with these graduates themselves as well as with all of us.



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In dialogue with the readers

Thanks to all

I was much depressed: the government of my country buys more and more arms from Spain for use in the domestic warfare, and they have closed hospitals and schools. We had a few savings in dollars and the heads of the world caused the dollar to collapse. The Columbian Institute of Logotherapy where I work is on the verge of closing down, the "desplazados", the refugees who were forced to flee to Caquetá on account of the war continue to ask us for assistance and our Club of the 500 cannot ensure a plate of rice to everyone.

At a certain point I doubted my faith, it was a temptation: Does God exist? I was sure that there existed the historical Jesus who was a true man, but I was no longer sure if he was truly God. He left us the Gospel in which I could believe in. But where's God?

While I was leaving the house nursing these thoughts I found the EoC newsletter in the mailbox. When I boarded the bus I opened it and I started to read.

On page 3 I found the following "The difficulties of each day at times bring on anxiety and lead us to believe that perhaps we are chasing an unattainable utopia, and it is only the confidence in our partner, having seen his concrete actions".

I continued to read with great attention the entire EoC newsletter: Marcelle from the Ivory Coast, Margi from San Paulo, the graduation theses, Benedetto, Giacomo Linaro and all of you who make up an endless lot.

I start believing once more, not only in the historical Jesus as true man but also in Jesus as God.

The "hidden partner" exists, the Eternal Father, the Trinity. I am not alone.

Thank to all, with a hug.

Arturo Luna (Bogotá)

Thank you Arthur for your front line work together with the others for the EoC project and for New Humanity in your country.

I received your letter some months ago, but a few days back I received another one from you saying that your government had proposed to use your Club of the 500, small as it may be, and your professional engagement for an important Microcredit activity.

I know that all of you at the Club of the 500 have not held back from accepting this commitment, despite considering yourselves not sufficiently expert and sound enough to carry out an activity of this magnitude in a field in which you have been operating since years. Instead you have sought the help of another reliable firm, who are experts in the field, and to whom you feel close in spite of their operating thousands of kilometres away, since they too adhere to the EoC project.

It seems to me that your "hidden partner" is truly working by bringing into evidence the richness of your ideal motivation rather than the limits of your organization before your government. It's almost as if

they had also perceived the feasibility of the communion that can be reached with EoC firms all over the world.

Scholarships for the Institute of Higher Learning

Issue n.19 of your newsletter had published a letter of mine regarding the summer course of our Institute of Higher Learning that will be held at the little town of Ottmaring in Germany. The course is entitled "A humanism for the third millennium". It is a comprehensive and interdisciplinary formation course inspired by the spiritual and social experience of the Focolare Movement. It is dedicated to young students coming from the five continents.

The aim of the course is to offer to a propitious key to interpreting the epochal transition taking place, taking into account the fundamental challenges exhibit by it, such as that of the very meaning of being man, the understanding and the management of pluralism and of differences at all levels, and globalization understood in a wider and deeper sense than as a mere economic consideration, like the inevitable entrance of history into a new era precisely that of the that note of the mondialisation of the destiny of humanity.

In my letter I had inquired if the Economy of Communion firms and the persons who pursue this project at various levels could contribute in some way towards the participation of particularly deserving students from developing nations at the Summer School who otherwise would have had considerable financial difficulties in attending the same.

And now I would like to say thank you for the four scholarships, each amounting to 1500 Euro, received from three Italian entrepreneurs and a Dutch entrepreneur, which will facilitate four students from the south of the world to participate at the course.

Prof. Piero Coda
The Rector, Institute of Higher Learning

We wish to thank the four friends of the EoC for their decisions. I would like to bring to your attention the fact that there is still time for giving other young people the chance to participate at the Course.

Those who are interested can indicate the same to this newsletter.

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