

**Do EoC companies adhere to the principles and values
proposed by the EoC ideal?**

by

George Calleja Gera

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GLOSSARY

EoC	<i>Economy of Communion</i>
NACE	<i>Nomenclature Generale des Activites Economiques dans l'Union Europeenne</i>
SME	<i>Small and Medium Enterprises</i>

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The author wishes to dedicate this work to Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, who died on the 14th March 2008, and who was the person that proposed the Economy of Communion.

Executive Summary

The main objective of this dissertation is to answer to the question: ‘Do EoC companies adhere to the principles and values proposed by the EoC ideal?’ Such a question attempts to discover if companies adhering to the Economy of Communion (EoC) do actually follow the principles proposed by its ideal. To reach the above objective, three values and principles central to the EoC are being chosen for such an analysis. These are reflected in the following three sub-questions drawn up after having gone through the literature review.

- Is the EoC goal of helping the poor through distribution of profits being achieved?
- Does practicing the EoC ideal positively influence employee relationships and their attitude to work?
- Do EoC managers recognise the value of formal management qualifications as proposed by the EoC ideal?

The main tool for obtaining the findings for my dissertation was a questionnaire distributed to 102 EoC companies in Brazil as at end year 2006, which resulted in a response rate of 12.75%. In my personal opinion, the conclusion of this dissertation based on such findings is that the three values and principles analysed are generally being followed by EoC companies.

However, it was also felt that there is room for improvement within the EoC. For this reason, I am putting forward three recommendations directly aimed at the thirteen EoC businesses analysed in the questionnaire, and another directed to the Secretariat of the EoC. The first recommendation suggests that a study be undertaken by qualified accountants and business people to evaluate why a number of these thirteen EoC businesses are not succeeding in contributing their due share of profits to the needy and poor. The second recommendation suggests that employees be offered opportunities to become more aware and knowledgeable of the EoC ideal, principles,

and values. The third recommendation suggests having more management personnel qualified in a Masters level of Business Administration, by having the EoC businesses training their management staff. The final recommendation suggests that the Secretariat of the EoC in Italy undertake a similar study addressing the main question of this dissertation, but this time not only with the EoC companies in Brazil, but worldwide.

Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1 Dissertation Objective

The EoC ideal is today being proposed and also considered as an alternative to the way of operating and doing business such that it could contribute to the world's needs for a just and equitable economic structure. The three basic purposes of the EoC are to help people in need, to spread the 'culture of giving', and to ensure the business grows.

The EoC project embraces various important values and principles amongst which is that part of the profits be distributed to the poor. Another value is that to cultivate and maintain healthy employee relationships within the EOC businesses, while another important value is that the business needs to be managed professionally.

The objective of this study is to analyse whether the above three mentioned values and principles are in fact being adhered to by EoC businesses.

1.2 Research Question

The dissertation aims to answer the overall question:- 'Do EoC companies adhere to the principles and values proposed by the EoC ideal? It is to be answered through the following three sub-questions which through the literature review undertaken were found to be important factors within the EoC concept. These are whether:

- the EoC goal of helping the poor through distribution of profits is being achieved,
- practicing the EoC ideal positively influences employee relationships and their attitude to work, and
- EoC managers recognise the value of formal management qualifications as proposed by the EoC ideal.

1.3 Basic information about the Focolare Movement

In the 1940s a new ecclesial community, called 'The Focolare Movement', and founded by Chiara Lubich, was born. It has since been present in the Catholic Church, and since the 1950s has spread in other Christian traditions. One of the aims of the movement is to contribute towards the fulfilment of Christ's prayer 'May they all be one' (John 17:21) through working for more social and spiritual integration, or in better words for 'communion'. This is to be achieved through personal and communal witness (Gold, L. 2003a). In other words, through universal brother and sisterhood based on solidarity and mutual respect (Gold, L. 2004b). This aim was perceived by Chiara Lubich and her first companions through the rediscovery of the gospel's new commandment, 'love one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34). This rediscovery of the communion of goods has since become standard practice in 'The Focolare Movement' which follows the example of the first Christian Communities (EOC, 2008h).

Another aspect of 'The Focolare Movement' is to work for unity within the Catholic Church and among Christians of different churches. It also works to build relationships of peace and understanding between people of different religions, cultures, and social backgrounds. Through the years the movement has spread throughout the globe, and the members pertaining to this movement continue with their efforts to love one another and especially to help the poor (Bruni, L. and Uelmen, J. A. 2006).

Throughout the years, 'The Focolare Movement' has initiated various projects which all share one basic principal aim and objective. That is of promoting greater unity within the human family, calling for social integration between races, between rich and poor, and so on (Gold, L. 2004b).

1.4 A brief history of the Economy of Communion (EoC)

Since 1991, 'The Focolare Movement', has given rise to an economic project called 'The Economy of Communion (EoC)'. This global project gets businesses involved

in a radical renewal of Christian values within the workplace. The project's view is to bring a more socially and environmentally sustainable economic system which whilst helping people move away from their poverty, will at the same time sustain and promote small business initiatives (Gold, L. 2003a) for better financing of the same business.

The project of the EoC finds its beginning after Chiara Lubich, foundress of 'The Focolare Movement', was on her way visiting the little town of Araceli and had to travel through the city of Sao Paolo in Brazil. Here she was struck by what she saw. This was a place of one of the highest concentrations of skyscrapers in the world which, however, was surrounded by an endless expanse of favelas. In such ramshackle dwellings also lived people who were members of the Movement and practised her ideal of unity (Ferrucci, A. 2002).

This contrasting picture prompted Chiara Lubich to experience an urgency to provide for these people's basic needs, such as food, shelter, healthcare, and the possibility of work. Upon reaching Araceli she launched the idea of the EoC. It was an invitation she proposed to the two hundred thousand members of the Movement in Brazil to work together, and to initiate near the little town profitable productive activities that would create jobs (Ferrucci, A. 2002).

Analysing the history and the development of the EoC, one can notice the fact that this project emerged not so much from a desire to find solutions or sources of orientation for the problems of business life, but rather from the practical experience of a particular community which intuited the capacity for business endeavours to further nourish the life of the same community and to express its religious values. With this respect the EoC project effectively illustrates an organic and authentic connection between the religious and business dimensions. Hence, in the day-to-day decision-making of their business, whilst implementing conventional management principles, businesses within the EoC commit themselves to also put into practice the gospel values which they believe in (Bruni, L. and Uelmen, J. A. 2006).

As a response to Chiara's proposal, many such businesses were launched in many countries around the world. Other existing businesses made the project their own by modifying their style of management and the distribution of their profits. As at end year 2006 there were 754 such businesses distributed in the five continents, out of which 132 pertained to Brazil. Table 1.1 illustrates the distribution of such businesses by continent, for the years 1992 to 2006.

Table 1.1 : Distribution of the EoC Companies by Continent for the years 1992 to 2006

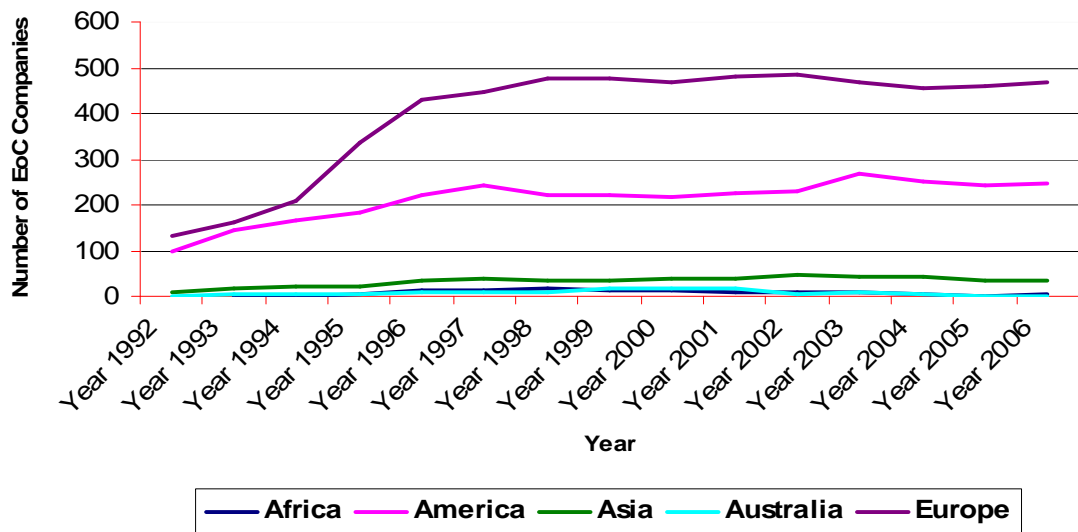
Continent	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Europe	132	161	208	336	430	448	477	478	469	481	486	469	455	458	468
Asia	10	19	23	23	32	37	35	36	38	40	47	42	42	32	34
Africa	0	1	2	6	14	11	15	11	13	9	9	9	4	2	3
America	99	144	166	184	220	244	220	221	217	224	230	269	250	241	247
Australia	1	3	3	5	7	7	7	15	15	15	6	8	5	2	2
Totals	242	328	402	554	703	747	754	761	752	769	778	797	756	735	754

Source: Secretariat of the Economy of Communion.

It is to be noted that this data, as illustrated in table 1.1, is a rough estimate, the reason for this being that along the years the criteria used for defining an EoC business have changed. Whereas the initial years' statistics gathered from around the world included even a small productive but barely structured activity as being part of the EoC project, over the recent years the EoC centre has defined more restricted criteria. Such criteria hold that businesses whose activities are not operational on a continuous basis, or businesses who operate without a well defined structure are now being excluded and not counted as an EoC project. Such businesses have thus been excluded by the Secretariat of the EoC.

This change in criteria has resulted in a decrease in the number of the EoC businesses over the years. Chart 1.1 further illustrates the total of such businesses as per year and also shows this decrease as mentioned above.

Chart 1.1 : Distribution of the EoC Companies by Continent for the years 1992 to 2006



1.5 An overview of the general principles and culture of the EoC

The EoC project is built upon particular principles and cultures which the producers, entrepreneurs, workers, and their business associates adhere to. These principles are rooted in a culture different to what normally prevails in today's practice and theory of economics. A culture is usually defined as key values, beliefs, understanding, and norms shared by members of an organisation (Daft, L. 2003). This 'culture' promoted by the EoC can be defined as a 'culture of giving' which really is the antithesis of a 'culture of having', so typical of the conventional business culture. Offering economic assistance can express a self-giving rooted in our very being. In other words, it can reveal an anthropological view that is neither individualistic nor collective but rather is communion (EOC, 2008a). This 'culture of giving', which is the culture of the EoC project, is mirrored in the character of its work environment, which underlines how the EoC company tries to conduct its business, which are held in high esteem (Thompson, A.A. Strickland, A.J. and Gamble, J.E. 2007).

In this giving, the giver opens up to the other person and yet remains respectful of his or her dignity. It generates an experience of the words in the gospel 'give and it will be given to you', even for the managers of a business. For example: a business manager who by living the EoC ideal 'gives...' part of the business profits in favour

of the needy, will then experience the words from the gospel ‘...it will be given to you’. These words might then manifest themselves to the business person in the form of a providential financial windfall, or in the unexpected discovery of an innovative technical solution, or as an idea for a new winning product (EOC, 2008a). This ‘culture of giving’ also translates itself in the capacity of giving ‘oneself’ to others, which ultimately creates greater solidarity: the ‘...it will be given to you...’, amongst the members of the EoC businesses (Gold, L. 2004b). One could say that this is very much in contrast to the conventional way of thinking where one tends to believe that a business’s success depends solely on material, human, tangible factors.

With this in view, the EoC is intended to foster an operational concept of economic behaviour that reaches beyond an utilitarian purpose. This is achieved by promoting the integral, unified advancement of the human person and society. This is a fundamental principal for the EoC, that is, to work to stimulate the passage of the economy and the whole society from a ‘culture of having’ to a ‘culture of giving’ (EOC, 2008b).

Other EoC project’s general principles and cultures are further discussed in the literature review.

1.6 Personal interest

This dissertation is of interest to me because such an ideal as presented by the EoC is still in its infancy, but seems to be having a positive effect wherever it is practised around the world. The interesting part of this dissertation is to see if businesses embracing such an ideal are actually adhering to its main values and principles and if they are actually contributing to meet the world’s needs for a just and equitable economic structure. Another interesting point is that not much has been written regarding this fact, although much has been written regarding the spiritual side of it, and so for me it is more challenging to establish and make the conclusions and recommendations.

1.7 Dissertation structure

The next Chapter will discuss various literatures concerning the EoC ideal. It will mainly focus upon its philosophy, values and principles. It will also cover literature about the situation of the poor and needy in today's world. There is also an overview of various ideas and experimentations carried out along the years by different Christian or other organizations and groups, with regards to their impact in promoting a just and equitable economic structure in the world.

In Chapter three I will discuss the methodology used to establish conclusions and recommendations in view of the main question to the dissertation.

Following this, in Chapter four, I will refer to the results obtained and analysed through the answered questionnaire received by the EoC companies in Brazil.

Finally, Chapter five and six will present the conclusions and recommendations for this dissertation in view of the main question as illustrated in Chapter 1.2. This will be followed by my reflections together with the limitations of this dissertation in Chapter seven entitled 'Reflections and Limitations'.

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

2.1 *The aim of the literature review*

The aim of the literature review is to present further knowledge regarding the values and principles of the EoC project. This is to condense the existing literature in this subject and to identify areas in which the following research would be beneficial (Rowley, J. and Slack, F. 2004). The way the literature review is presented is to direct this study to establish the research findings to the dissertation's main question. Firstly, it will present the poor and needy in the world, followed by various ideas and experimentations undertaken along the years so as to come up with and practice a just and equitable economic structure. Furthermore, the literature review is to present the EoC ideal as a potential answer for a just and economic structure.

Following this, a review concerning helping the poor through the EoC profits, the relationships ideal within the EoC culture, and professional management for the EoC businesses is presented. Finally the literature review presents other values and principles adhered to by the EoC businesses, as well as a conclusion.

2.2 *The poor and needy*

In the media a lot is reported about the wealth of the world and its unjust distribution. Much is said about the need to help the poor, and of the importance of providing decent work where one is able to achieve a sense of belonging and not be mistreated unjustly. During the sixtieth session of the United Nations' General Assembly held on the 13th July 2005 it was emphasised that income inequality has risen in many developing countries and in a surprisingly large number of industrialized countries (United Nations, 2005). Anup Shah (2008) reports that nearly three billion people, that is half of the world's population, live on less than two dollars a day. Furthermore, more than 80 per cent of the world's population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. In fact the poorest 40 per cent of the world's population accounts for five per cent of global income, and the richest 20 per cent accounts for three-quarters of world income. With all this reality around us, what can be done in today's world to tackle these issues?

2.3 Ideas and experimentation for a just and equitable economic structure through history

One might comment that to tackle such issues, the world needs a just and equitable economic structure. Over the years, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of different Christian or other organizations and groups attempted to develop ideas and experiments aimed at cultivating such a just and equitable economic structure. One can mention the Fabian Society and the Distributivists (Linard, T.K. 2003).

In fact the Fabian Society which was founded in 1884, believed that social reform could be achieved by a new political approach of gradual and patient argument, ‘permeating’ their ideas into the circles of those with power (Anonymous, 2000). This was the result of their belief that capitalism had created an unjust and inefficient society, and so they agreed that the group should aim to reconstruct ‘society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities’ (Anonymous, 2008b).

On the other hand the Distributivists who started in 1892 saw economic development only in terms of the cultural dangers of industrialization. The Distributivists did not see that economic growth would generate wealth that would raise living conditions and be ‘redistributed’ by market mechanisms and through charitable organizations. Their ideas about economics blinded them from the market realities and the basic laws of economics. Distributism hindered the emergence of an adequate understanding of human capital and productivity. The Distributivists started to wane in the 1920s (Gronbacher, G.M.A. 1998).

There were other such ideas and experiments that took place. For example one finds the Cooperative Movement, the Quaker businesses, and the Friendly Societies, which established businesses based around their ideals (Linard, T.K. 2003).

For instance the Cooperative Movement which emerged in Europe as a reaction to the early 19th century industrialization process is a social and economic movement. The Cooperative Movement enterprises follow a set of principles best defined in 1844, which include that members in a co-operative each have one vote regardless

of the investments made, the surpluses or profits are distributed to members according to their levels of participation, and co-operatives undertake educational activities for their members (Anonymous, 2008d).

On the other hand, the Quakers, which is the popular name for members of the religious Society of Friends, have contributed to many important aspects of the modern welfare capitalist and social democratic enterprises that were formed and prospered between 1650 and 1920 in Britain (Richard, P. 1980). The Quakers inspired businesses and trust funds and are a clear example of how religious principles can have a reforming role in the economy (Gold, L. 2004b). After 1910, the Quakers lost much of their influence (Richard, P. 1980).

Regarding the Friendly Societies, it is known that these have existed for hundreds of years, possibly even going back to the time of the Romans. By time, they grew through the simple premise that if a group of people contributed to a mutual fund, then they could receive benefits at a time of need (Anonymous, 2008c). Up to a few generations ago, most of the people in the United Kingdom were members of or at least knew members of this society. Presently, most of these societies have disappeared and little is known of their importance for providing welfare today (Anonymous, 2008a).

It is important to understand that the above ideas and experimentation have been successful on national or international scales. They offer a 'Third Way' falling between Capitalism and Socialism. Generally, in their own success over the years they have merged with the prevailing business ethos to the extent that their outward face to the world is indistinguishable from that of their Capitalist competitors. Such an apparent failure has left a quest for this elusive ideal of a 'Third Way' (Linard, T.K. 2003). This search for a just and equitable economic structure could be found through alternatives that are emerging within certain sectors of the business community (Gold, L. 2004b).

2.4 The EoC ideal as an answer for a just and economic structure

This search for a just and economic structure and of finding this ‘Third Way’ could be realized in the alternative presented by the EoC ideal which comes out from ‘The Focolare Movement’. The EoC ‘ideal’ is not an economic theory searching for people to support it. Rather, the ‘ideal’ searches for people who are willing to ‘live’ it and in so doing ‘create’ an economic theory (Linard, T.K. 2003) which eventually could result in an alternative to existent economic structures, that is, to become the ‘Third Way’.

In fact, Lorna Gold (2003b) also emphasizes the view that the EoC project demonstrates the real possibility of a response to the current neo-liberal globalization. She considers the EoC as a living witness and a success story, and lays bare the falsehood of the idea that ‘there is no alternative’ to the world we have today.

In her article, ‘Small enterprises at the service of the poor – The economy of sharing network’, Lorna Gold (2003c) explains that traditional development theory has regarded the role of the private sector as one contributing to human development mainly through generating growth and redistributing wealth through taxation, affording the state revenue to fund welfare for the poor. She further continues that in recent years, however, one can see that the role of the modern state and international institutions has shifted to one of enabling the best macro-economic environment to generate savings and employment through attracting and fostering private enterprise.

Gold (2003c) is of the opinion that through the growing evidence that market-based enterprises have begun to address the relationship between business and the reduction of poverty, this situation points to a change in attitudes towards social concerns being addressed through the growth of alternative models of enterprise. In fact, one such alternative which is being studied by different scholars in the world is the EoC. Luigini Bruni (2004) explains how the EoC originated through the experience of Chiara Lubich when she realised that there were persons who were

living in inhumane conditions. She felt the need to do her part to build a more just world, where there would be fewer people forced to live in inhumane conditions. Bruni further explains that for this reason the EoC cannot and should not become a corporate social responsibility project. According to Bruni the EoC did not come about to renew businesses by how they perform their corporate social responsibility regarding economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities, but to renew social relations within a business by going beyond their corporate social responsibility, that is for a more just and fraternal humanism.

In fact, the EoC project has shown that the businesses that follow this ideal are an alternative to the prevailing methods of doing business in a market economy. Dr Hansjoerg Biener (2001) explains that EoC businesses do not imagine themselves to be a new form of business but through their way of conducting their business, they renew the customary types of businesses from within. He further explains that one of the most important practices known by the EoC businesses is that the profits have to be produced through strict adherence to the law and through respecting the rights of the workers, of the consumers, of competitive industries, of the community and of the environment. Such a practice, which is not easy to accomplish and to adhere to, produces extremely positive interpersonal relationships both internally between employers and employees and externally between the business and its customers. All this is the result of their actions being built primarily on respect for human dignity. Hence, the EoC business, through the experience of 'giving', is not the form of philanthropy or a way of distributing benefits, or of seeking individual rewards. Furthermore, Bruni and Uelmen (2006), express that such a principle of 'giving' of self can never be fully expressed or transformed through corporate social responsibility.

Chiara Lubich (2002) herself explains that the businesses that participate in the EoC project operate within the market and to all intents and purposes are commercial firms or societies like any other. It is to be highlighted that Chiara Lubich's proposal for such businesses is that they are, however, to be 'different'. In this sense, being 'different' means that the substance of all their economic activities lies not in the

economic transaction, but being 'different' by making the business a 'meeting place' in the deepest sense of the word, that is to be a place of communion.

Dr. Raymond Kinsella, Professor of International Banking and Finance at the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin, Ireland, comments that what emerges within today's particular economic model is 'divergence'. This manifests itself in a continuous tension between what we feel called to live in terms of family life and its ethical demands; and on the other hand, what we are forced to live and do in the particular economic model that we are constrained to operate within. He further comments that presently there is a great need for 'convergence' within our economic thinking and ways of operating. He is of the opinion that the EoC, as launched by Chiara Lubich, offers our world a consistent and articulate alternative model for the present time (Focolare, 2008).

2.5 *Helping the poor through the EoC profits*

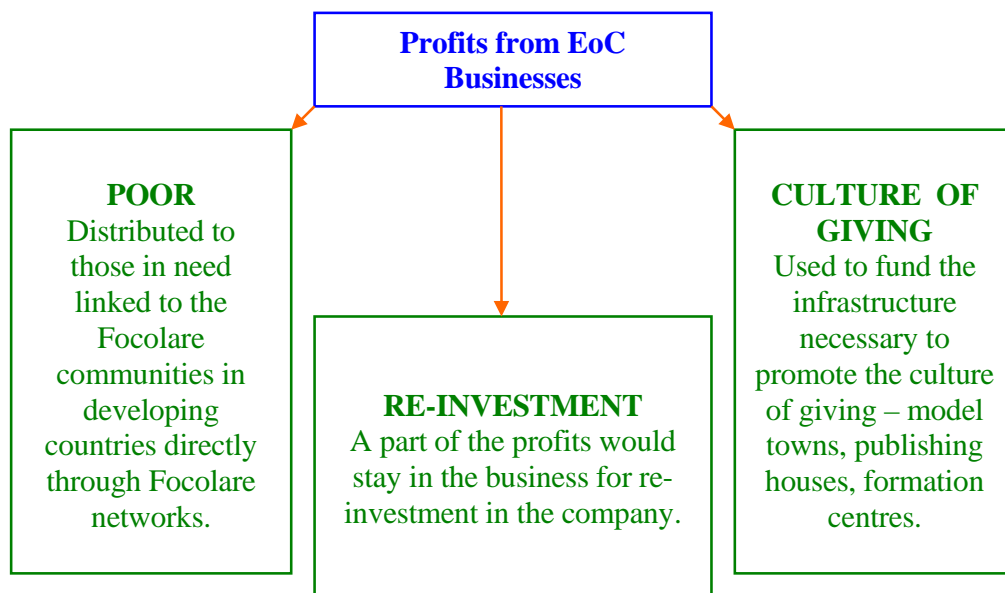
One of the principles incorporated within the EoC ideal is that of helping the poor. Kobia (2006) explains that responding to their primary mission of helping the poor, the EoC businesses each year share their profits to help with the people's need, provide employment, as well as help the poor rediscover their dignity.

The profits which are distributed to the poor are managed by a central commission that compiles the requests of needs. Through the help of the directors of 'The Focolare Movement', such a commission then distributes the profits to those poor people throughout the world (Kobia, S. 2006). This concept was brought forward by Chiara Lubich and since then has been one of the most important pillars within the EoC project.

In fact when Chiara launched this project her basic idea was that of increasing contributions through the creation of businesses, which would be run by people who shared 'The Focolare Movement's' ideal. Chiara's idea of sharing the business's profits in three parts was based upon social and environmental principles (Gold, L. 2004a).

Lorna Gold (2004a) explains that the three parts of the profits, as illustrated in chart 2.1 are to be distributed firstly to reinvest in the business, secondly to support the poor, and the third part to help sustain projects for the creation of a new ethos of sharing (the ‘culture of giving’). The three parts of the profits are considered of equal importance. This distribution will help to ensure that the businesses grows, creates new jobs and meet the immediate needs of people, beginning with those who share in the spirit that animates the EoC. It also spreads the ‘culture of giving’ and of loving (EOC, 2008c).

Chart 2.1 : The three parts of the distribution of profits by the EoC businesses



Source: Gold, L., (2004b).

This kind of sharing the profits of a company is described by Kobia (2006) as a new way of giving that is not a matter of philanthropy or social benefits, but of living in communion with the poor through the shared brotherhood experiences among the business members and those who are disadvantaged.

This type of redistribution of the profits, which the EoC practices, is a dimension which the social entrepreneurial model disregards and fails to appreciate. For the EoC project, this type of redistribution based on a sharing dimension is considered as a high priority as a means of addressing existing inequalities within the market

system (Gold, L. 2004a). Such redistribution of profits amongst other things makes it possible to help the poor in a more concrete way.

However, one must point out that this kind of sharing of the profits could bring a strain on such businesses, in view of the fact that only one third of the profits are re-invested in the EoC companies themselves. As Gold (2004a) comments, this was the first important lesson that the EoC learnt as being the difficulty, but not the impossibility of managing and using the profits in such a way. Furthermore, Gold (2004a) says that a business can make a profit when being motivated by ‘good intentions’, as in the case of the EoC distribution of profits, but which alone are not enough.

Gold expresses her concern that the EoC businesses have much to learn through their experience especially about how to make profits which would be substantial for both the business itself as well as for distribution to others. Gold explains that such difficulties started to be dealt with through the EoC project’s own schools for business formation. These schools present the ideal of the Focolare which the EoC embraces and practices as well as the basic principles for business administration and management (Gold, L. 2004a). In view of this ‘making substantial profits’ issue, Bob De Wit and Ron Meyer (2004) emphasize that business organisations must be profitable to survive, and not just have a higher income than costs, and that profitability is a source of competitive power. This can be possible if business management makes use of financial analysis to identify the factors that affect the company’s rate of return on net worth (Kotler, P. 2003) and also to analyse how to produce the desired profits.

Commenting about this subject, Bruni emphasizes that it is not enough for the EoC to produce profits and share them so that one can declare that there is an EoC. This communion of sharing of profits which the EoC businesses practice, according to Bruni needs to become the style of business management in ordinary economic activity. This then clarifies the desire felt by the businesses of this project from the beginning, that is, to give life to ‘organizational structures of communion’, which render visible, also in the managerial dynamics of governance, a culture of

communion and of brotherhood (Bruni, L. 2006). This way, such businesses can, not only survive, but can thrive in the market while operating their Christian ideal approach to their businesses (Johnson, A. 2006).

2.6 *The relationships ideal within the EoC culture*

Work relationships and attitudes to work are known to highly influence the success or otherwise of any organization. Within business enterprises this can also be considered as a key factor influencing the business administration of the said enterprise. In fact, it is emphasised that success in a workplace depends on the strength and quality of collaborative 'relationships' (Daft, L. 2003). Daft's opinion seems to be one of the key features within the EoC businesses success.

Infact, Kamran Mofid (2002) has expressed his opinion that the EoC has succeeded where other businesses have not. He explains that the EoC type of business has developed a new model of the human person. In this model, one finds fulfilment in relationships rather than in individual egoism and self-promotion. For this reason, the EoC businesses are true examples of the social function of businesses according to Catholic social teaching, where love, justice, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good are the main driving forces for the business and the people associated with it. According to Mofid there is a common good in all religions and there must be a serious attempt to bring all the examples of the EoC in all other religions together for the global common good. Such an important ideal in the EoC project, that is, employee spirituality in the workplace could be considered as part of today's important trend in business (Shellenbarger, S. 2000).

The relationships ideal within the EoC culture is further emphasized by Bruni and Uelmen (2006). For them the principle of 'brotherhood' or of reciprocity as the foundation of the business management structure is fundamental. They emphasize that all members within such a business are equal in dignity, but then all have different functions, tasks and responsibilities within the business, and respond to the principle of hierarchy within such a business. Gold (2004b) further explains that putting into practice these principles by treating those within the business as

brothers and sisters with equal dignity, results in the tasks required to be undertaken within such a business as becoming secondary to this equality.

This fulfilment in relationships and the principle of 'brotherhood' enriches the EoC businesses with an intangible capital which is extended to and further developed with suppliers, customers, and public administrators. This produces a result of economic growth less subject to the variability of the market situations (EOC, 2008d). This intangible capital is also observed by the business leaders. They encourage their members to develop an atmosphere of mutual support, respect, and trust. It becomes natural for the members to freely put their talents, ideas, and know-how at each other's disposition for the professional growth of their colleagues and the progress of the business (EOC, 2008e).

This healthy relationship amongst the employees of the EoC businesses might be a result of the way their respective business leaders react to them. This is because another value which is proposed by the EoC ideal to be followed within EoC businesses is that business leaders are to behave legally and ethically in dealings with their own employees. In establishing the quality standards of its own products and services, the enterprise feels bound not only by its contractual obligations but also by an assessment of the objective impact that the quality of its products and services has on the well-being and quality of life of its members (EOC, 2008g). Hence, employees feel valued and respected and this generates inside them the motivation and desire so that they themselves behave in the same way with others.

2.7 Professional management for the EoC businesses

When Chiara Lubich initiated the EoC project, she had at heart the desire to establish profitable productive activities that entailed to be entrusted to well-qualified people (Ferrucci, A. 2002). This was a very important ideal to put into practice. Her inspiration was that by giving life to such businesses and entrusting their management to competent people, these businesses would be run efficiently and would be able to render profits, and ultimately would help the needy and poor (Araujo, V. 2006). For such a reason EoC businesses are not to be managed in an amateurish way, but by

professional people who are competent in managing the particular business they endeavour to work in.

Like any other businesses, the EoC businesses are to formulate strategies, objectives, and business plans considering all the usual criteria for managing a business appropriately. Furthermore, they are to make investment decisions prudently, paying particular attention to those criteria intended to encourage new initiatives and create new job opportunities. Besides this, they are to manage their business to promote increased profits and expand their business, and to act upon their ideal of helping people in need and of spreading this culture (EOC, 2008f). The importance of adequate professionalism to undertake such tasks is an essential pre-requisite to any business (Gold, L. 2003a), and especially to the EoC businesses.

Appleby Robert (1994) emphasises the fact that whatever type of enterprise one is managing, the progress of management is fundamentally to plan, direct and control. This will only function through effective organisation. Effective management is most possibly achieved through professional people. Furthermore, Thompson, Strickland, and Gamble (2007) do emphasize the fact that a strong management team is required for implementing and executing challenging strategic initiatives, which are to be handled by people who have the required skills. This shows the right direction of the EoC project which entails of being entrusted to well-qualified people, as people skills are probably the most important foundation for a company because this has an impact on every aspect of corporate process and profits (Homer, M. 2001).

Raymond J. Tarleton (2008) explains that special skills are needed for most organizations to implement intermediate and long-term plans. Such skills will help to keep the organization growing and remain responsive to the increasing needs. He emphasizes the fact that the effective management of these skills is the responsibility of the professional manager. Furthermore, professional management within an organization has the responsibility to see that everything is running efficiently and to take the necessary action when things are not going well.

Chiara Lubich desired and believed that such businesses were to be entrusted to well-qualified people. In the article '*Qualifications for Managers*' it is stated that at all levels of a business, managers who gain a qualification demonstrate and prove to themselves, and others, their management expertise. This expertise of management and leadership skills of such qualified managers significantly provides benefits to any organisation as a whole (Anonymous, 2008e). This will ultimately help managers to be competent in knowing what to do and why, and also to apply that knowledge in various areas in their work (Anonymous, 2008f).

2.8 Other values and principles adhered to by the EoC businesses

Another value of the EoC project is that these businesses are to practice 'communion'. Bruni (2005) explains that the word 'communion' puts the emphasis on 'reciprocity', or mutual love, which makes this different from what other businesses practice. According to Bruni, the difference between a simple charity-based economics or economy or a business that undertakes charity, and a communion-based one such as the EoC project, is that a Christian entrepreneur who gives part of his profit to the poor, pays all taxes. Furthermore, he does not pollute the environment, can be perfectly animated by the virtue of charity, and also by communion, but these through 'external people' with respect to his or her business.

On the other-hand, an EoC business is such if it transforms the governance of its firm into a communion-based governance, based on reciprocity. In other words, a firm can be an EoC business only if at least two people try to live charity in reciprocity not only toward people at large or 'external people', but within the business itself too (Bruni, L. 2005). In other words, Bruni explains that the EoC businesses try to live charity in reciprocity, that is mutual love, with the people within their business as well as with those outside.

With this view, it is also important to point out another principle that finds its roots by living charity in reciprocity. The EoC model requires that those companies that are involved with it act without a scheme of incentive, in other words that their employees and management do not require to be motivated by incentives payment to achieve good results for their companies. Conventional businesses know that this

practice of incentives is always expensive to implement, but EoC companies choose to act in this way not as a means of avoiding such expenses, but because in their attitude towards work their employees and management staff are deeply motivated and persuaded by the ideal itself which they practice, and hence require no incentives as such (Geneva WCC seminar, 2003). This is in contrast to what happens in other companies, as the most powerful management tool to keep people focused on strategy execution and the achievement of performance targets is to 'generously' reward and recognize individuals and groups who meet or beat performance targets (Thompson, A.A. Stickland, A.J. and Gamble, J.E. 2007). Zamagni (2007) contradicts incentives by emphasizing the fact that this is a mistake because monetary incentives make no difference, and only bring results in the short term. What is needed according to Zamagni is to aim for motivations, that whoever works in the business shares with the management the ultimate goals that drive the business, which shows why the EoC businesses are successful, because the efficient and effective way to obtain results is by giving value to humans in all their dimensions.

Furthermore to the above values and principles, EoC businesses strive not to participate in the conventional business culture of non-compliance and tax evasion. Consequently this requires such businesses to fully comply with legislation and risk being non-competitive. To participate in the EoC project entails that all profits are clean (Gold, L. 2004b).

As has been seen, the EoC project is a real challenge for any business to adhere to its ideal. In fact Zamagni, a Professor of Politics and Economics at the University of Bologna, Italy, expressed that the EoC experience is a challenge both at the purely intellectual level and at the practical foundation of its theory. He explains that compared to other types of economic experiences, two major differences emerge. The first difference is that those who freely accept the EoC model are implicitly embracing the concept that wealth production cannot be separated from the 'distribution' of wealth. The second characteristic of the EoC is that it runs counter to the conviction that ethics is subservient to the demands of the economy.

Furthermore, the EoC experience proves that business people either believe in values such as the dignity of the human person, respect for autonomy, justice etc, irrespective of the results that these values produce, or else they run the risk of producing effects that run contrary to these. Because of these two reasons, Dr. Stefano Zamangi maintains that the EoC model has all the essential elements to grow and develop (Focolare, 2008).

2.9 *Conclusion to Literature Review*

As can be seen, the EoC ideal is not straightforward to accomplish, but for sure not impossible either. The above literature review forms the basis of the questions put forward in my questionnaire. After studying such literature I was able to come up with potentially various areas for investigation, but I had to cut this down to three areas which would provide an answer to the main objective of the dissertation. The three areas include whether the EoC goal of helping the poor through distribution of profits is being achieved, whether practicing the EoC ideal positively influences employee relationships and their attitude to work, and also whether EoC managers recognise the value of formal management qualifications as proposed by the EoC ideal.

The literature review showed that the EoC ideal gives a lot of importance to fully live ethical values. In managerial terms, ethics is the code of moral principles and values that govern the behaviours of a person or group with respect to what is right or wrong, and deals with internal values that are a part of corporate culture, and shapes decisions concerning social responsibility with respect to the external environment (Daft, L. 2003). In fact, as will be seen in the research findings, this issue emerges as a central factor that has an impact upon the main values which the EoC businesses adhere to.

The above literature review made it possible for me to establish the most important three sub-questions for answering to the main question of the dissertation. The first sub-question was formulated following my understanding of the way the EoC businesses each year share their profits to help with the people's need by providing

employment, as well as helping the poor rediscover their dignity (Kobia, S. 2006). This type of redistribution of the profits is a dimension which the social entrepreneurial model disregards and fails to appreciate (Gold, L. 2004a). The second sub-question emerged after considering Daft's interesting comments that work relationships and attitudes to work are known to highly influence the success or otherwise of any organisations (Daft, L. 2003). This comment was found to be further strengthened by Bruni and Uelmen (2006) specifically regarding the EoC culture as for such companies forming part of the EoC ideal, the principle of 'brotherhood' or of reciprocity amongst the employees, is considered as fundamental for the foundation of the business management structure. The third sub-question emerged following another part of the literature review which viewed that the EoC companies are to be entrusted to competent management people, so as to run efficiently. One positive effect would be to render better profits, and ultimately be in a better position to help the needy and poor (Araujo, V. 2006). This principle of the EoC ideal is in line with what Raymond J. Tarleton (2008) explains, that is, that effective management is the responsibility of the professional manager, which professional management within an organization has the responsibility to see that everything is running efficiently.

Upon formulating such sub-questions emerging from the literature review, it was then possible for me to prepare the questions for the questionnaire. Such a questionnaire, which is the main tool for answering the objective of this dissertation, tries to find out the outcome of the three sub-questions by investigating the opinions of those practising this ideal in Brazil. Such a reflection is the intention of this research, which will be analysed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 : Methodology

To obtain answers to the question being investigated and the supporting three sub-questions, the research methodology for this dissertation was based on the following sources of information.

The EoC Secretariat in Italy provided me with contact details of the EoC Centre in Brazil so that this would supply me with details necessary for me to be able to carry out this dissertation. In fact the EoC Centre in Brazil provided me with a list of the total population of 132 EoC companies in this country as at end year 2006. Such a list was necessary so I would be able to send a questionnaire to these companies. This list mostly consisted of the name of company, name of contact person, e-mail and/or postal address, fax and/or telephone numbers, type of business, and number of employees.

The mentioned questionnaire was the most practical tool available to me to collect first-hand data, in view of the fact that the language difference and geographical distance would have made other means of data collection, such as interviews by phone etc., difficult logistically as well as financially.

The questionnaire also proved important to me to be able to come up with information I was interested to know, but which I had never come across during my literature review research. This was done by placing in the questionnaire certain open-ended questions to be answered by such companies.

From the provided list of 132 EoC companies in Brazil as indicated in Chart 3.1, 102 were established as the population for such a questionnaire. The 102 companies were identified as the established population, as up to the date of distribution of the questionnaire three companies' e-mail or postal address had not been provided in full, while no information was provided for another 20 companies. Furthermore, five companies had a questionnaire sent to them but these were returned to sender because the address obtained was not correct. A further two companies informed me that during the year 2007 they had not continued to form part of the EoC and so were not eligible to be part of the population.

This questionnaire entailed to be translated into the Portuguese language for the benefit of the respondents in Brazil. The translation was carried out by a Maltese citizen who is proficient in the Portuguese language and who wrote a number of books in Portuguese, and lived in Brazil as a missionary for over twenty years. Such a translation made it possible and easier for the businesses to answer to such a questionnaire. An English version of the questionnaire is included as Appendix A. For analysis purposes, upon receipt of the answered questionnaire, certain parts, namely the open-ended questions, entailed to be translated into English.

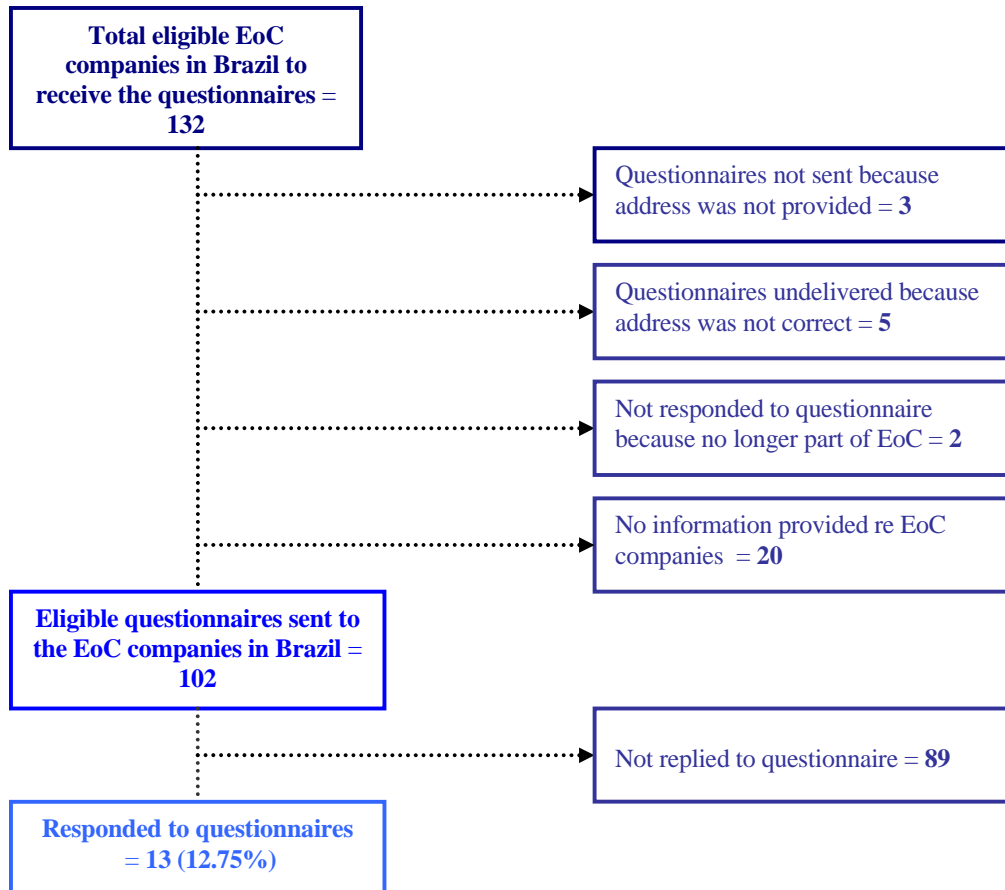
Prior to its distribution, the questionnaire was pre-piloted and reviewed by a member of 'The Focolare Movement' who is familiar with the EoC practice. This was essential so as to identify any ambiguities in the questions and to identify the range of possible responses for each question (Williams, A. 2003). In fact, during the pre-pilot session some amendments to the questionnaire were necessary, especially with regards to its layout, so as to ensure that prospective respondents would be able to navigate their way easily through the questionnaire and for it to be better understood (Williams, A. 2003). One important amendment was to include the question to rate the financial confidence of an EoC business in relation to the financial goals for the year 2007. Including such a question after the pre-pilot session proved very important for a better analysis of the first sub-question relating to the EoC profits.

Chart 3.1 provides a clear breakdown of the response rate to the questionnaire, which ultimately was of 12.75%, that is, thirteen responses. Such a response rate was achieved after each EoC company in Brazil eligible to respond to such a questionnaire had also received a reminder to participate in the questionnaire, as during the first few weeks of its distribution the response rate was very low. My analysis of the questionnaire, and subsequent conclusions and recommendations are based only on the thirteen mentioned responded questionnaires.

The questionnaire mainly used close-ended questions that specified all the possible answers and provided answers that would be easier to interpret and tabulate. Some open-ended questions that allowed respondents to answer in their own words and reveal more about what they think were also included. The open-ended questions

were especially useful for the exploratory research, so as to gain an insight into what people think rather than measure how many people think in a certain way (Kotler, P. and Keller, K. L. 2006). This way, this part of the research result was based entirely on what the management of such companies replied.

Chart 3.1 : Response rate to questionnaire



The questionnaire was distributed on the 16th October 2007, by post or through e-mail. This communication consisted of a covering letter regarding my dissertation, a letter from the EoC Centre in Brazil encouraging the EoC companies to respond to the questionnaire, and the questionnaire itself. A four week period was established as the time for the questionnaires to be returned after being received by the EoC companies. Eventually, this four week period was extended by a further eight weeks in view of the low response rate up to the deadline.

All the questionnaires that were returned up to the 21st January 2008 are included in the analysis which forms part of Chapter four. Throughout the analyses of the EoC companies which responded to the questionnaire, full confidentiality regarding their identity has been kept, as promised to the respondents of such companies.

The gathered results and information through the above mentioned source made it possible for me to come up with a general conclusion to the main question of the dissertation. This was possible after analyzing the different results obtained and subsequently forming an opinion upon the findings.

Chapter 4 : Research Findings

4.1 *The questionnaire intended for the EoC companies in Brazil*

The main objective of this research is to evaluate whether the EoC companies' values are in fact being followed. The results refer only to the EoC companies which responded to the questionnaire. I chose Brazil as the country to evaluate these companies because this was the nation in which the EoC ideal was firstly introduced. In fact Chiara Lubich had indicated that 'The Focolare Movement' in Brazil was called to start to live the communion of goods, which later was called the EoC (Gold, L. 2004b). For this reason the companies in Brazil are the most experienced with the EoC practice within the EoC, and they have gained a lot of knowledge and experience since its inception in 1991. Furthermore, the 'Spartaco Park' in Brazil which comprises around nine businesses, is considered as a model park pertaining to the EoC business style. Most other companies within the EoC around the world refer to this park to gain experience and knowledge regarding how to run a business on the EoC model. In view of this, a questionnaire was sent to 102 such companies. Out of these, thirteen questionnaires were filled in and returned.



Photo - Polo Spartaco in Brazil. Source 'Economy of Communion – A New Culture', Year XI, number 23, November 2005, page 4.

4.2 *Companies' profile from the responded questionnaire*

Before analysing the answered questionnaire to establish the findings to this research, it is of utmost importance to understand the profile, nature and background of the thirteen companies¹ which responded to the questionnaire. Hence this part of the chapter will reflect on the profiles of the thirteen responded questionnaires. Ultimately, any conclusions and recommendations will be based upon results obtained from these particular thirteen companies.

Throughout the forthcoming tables illustrating the analysis of the questionnaire, for confidentiality purposes names of companies have been changed to and are being represented by numbers from 1 to 13. Results obtained are presented in the chronological order in which such questionnaires were received.

4.2.1 *Employees and management employed with the companies*

Questions one and two of the questionnaire dealt with the number of employees within each company, including the management staff. Seven (53.8%) of the companies are regarded as a small enterprise consisting of 10 to 49 employees, the other six (46.2%) companies as a micro enterprise consisting of 1 to 9 employees. Table 4.1 illustrates the size of each of the analysed companies. The size of the enterprises is being quoted according to the 'Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises : A Collection of Published Data' which presents data of the world's SME's (Kozak, M. 2007).

Table 4.1 : Size of EoC companies by number of employees

	Questionnaire Number													Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Micro Enterprise : 1 to 9 employees		√		√				√	√	√	√	√		7	53.8%
Small Enterprise : 10 to 49 employees	√		√		√	√	√						√	6	46.2%
Medium Enterprise : 50 to 99 employees														0	0.0%

¹ Throughout Chapter 4 the words '*companies*' or '*company*' refer to the EoC companies in Brazil which responded to the questionnaire, unless otherwise stated. Furthermore, EoC companies refers to same EoC businesses.

4.2.2 *The type of the companies' business and their major products*

Questions three and four of the questionnaire dealt with the area of business undertaken by the company as well as its major products. The area of business of such companies seems to be quite diverse and represents eight different types of business according to the NACE code.² The major products or services of such companies include internet and road radio service, diagnoses of illness in birds, selling of pizzas and desserts, organization of events, business accounting and financial services, consultancy and translation services, garments, renting of premises for meetings and conferences and automation systems for industry. Table 4.2 illustrates the area of business for such companies.

Table 4.2 : Area of business of the EoC companies

	Questionnaire Number													Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Manufacturing						√	√					√		3	23.1%
Hotels and restaurants												√		1	7.7%
Transport, storage and communication		√												1	7.7%
Health and social work			√											1	7.7%
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods				√										1	7.7%
Financial intermediation					√			√						2	15.3%
Real estate, renting and business activities				√										1	7.7%
Extra-territorial organizations and bodies									√	√		√		3	23.1%

4.2.3 *Organisations with whom the companies make business*

Another important aspect of these companies' profile is to understand with whom they make their business, that is, from whom they buy raw material and services or to whom they sell their products and services. This information shows if such companies do business with other companies within the EoC or not. This is referred

² NACE code represents the European standard for industry classifications and was introduced in 1970. For this dissertation any mentioned classification of businesses or companies belonging to the EoC in Brazil have been adjusted to this European standard.

to in question 30. Table 4.3 illustrates with whom each of the 13 EoC companies makes business.

Table 4.3 : The EoC business dealings

	Questionnaire Number													Overall Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Companies embracing the EoC ideal	0%	1%	5%	0%	4%	1%	0%	70%	0%	0%	5%	0%	1%	6.7%
Companies not embracing the EoC ideal	100%	99%	95%	100%	96%	99%	100%	30%	100%	100%	95%	100%	99%	93.3%
Not aware if companies embrace the EoC ideal	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100.0%

It was found that these companies' major overall business is done with other companies not embracing the EoC ideal. Table 4.3 indicates that only 6.7% of the business is done with companies embracing the EoC ideal, while 93.3% of the business is done with other companies not embracing the EoC ideal. Six (46.1%) of the EoC companies make all their business dealings with companies not embracing the EoC ideal.

4.2.4 Legal status, year of establishment and time of commencement of adopting the EoC ideal

Twelve (92.3%) companies declared being a private limited enterprise as according to question number six. One (7.7%) company (questionnaire number thirteen) declared being a partnership company. Questions number seven and eight, revealed that, on average, as at end year 2006, the average age since these companies were established is of around 11 years. On the other hand the average age since these same companies have been practicing the EoC ideal is of around seven years. Nine (69.2%) companies started practicing the EoC ideal since their establishment, while the other four (30.8%) had already been established as a company prior to practicing the EoC ideal. Table 4.4 provides such information as per company.

Table 4.4 : Comparison between the age of the initial establishment of the EoC companies and when started practicing the EoC ideal³

Questionnaire Number	Year when companies were initially established	Total years of existence since companies were established till end year 2006	Year when companies started practising the EoC ideal	Total years since companies started practicing the EoC till end year 2006	Started practicing the EoC ideal after the initial establishment of the company
1	2000	6	2000	6	√
2	1997	9	2000	6	√
3	1994	12	1994	12	
4	2001	5	2001	5	
5	1974	32	2000	6	√
6	2002	4	2002	4	
7	1994	12	1994	12	
8	1999	7	1999	7	
9	1998	8	1998	8	
10	2001	5	2001	5	
11	2002	4	2002	4	
12	2000	6	2000	6	
13	1968	38	1992	14	√
<i>average</i>		<i>11.4</i>	<i>average</i>	<i>7.3</i>	

4.2.5 How the companies got to know about the EoC and why they practise its ideal

Question nine indicated that all these companies got to know about the EoC ideal through ‘The Focolare Movement’. In question ten, the companies were asked to give one main reason why the company decided to practise the EoC ideal. One (7.7%) company chose all of the reasons provided, as illustrated in table 4.5, and for this reason the response to this question from this company is not taken into consideration for analysis purposes. Yet, this particular case could indicate that all reasons suggested were of utmost importance to this particular company.

The results indicated that:-

- nine (75.0%) companies declared that the main reason why they had decided to practise the EoC ideal was to adhere to the spirituality of ‘The Focolare Movement’;

³ With reference to questionnaire number one, this company started practicing the EoC ideal later on during the same year of being initially established.

- two (16.7%) companies declared the reason as being to share some of the profits with the poor; and
- one (8.3%) company had another particular reason, which was to administer the company with Christian values.

Table 4.5 : The main reason why the EoC businesses decided to practise the ‘Economy of Communion’ ideal⁴

	Questionnaire Number													Total	%
	1	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
To follow the spirituality of the Focolare Movement	√			√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	9	75.0%	
To make more profits for the company													0	0.0%	
To share some of the profits with the poor				√							√		2	16.7%	
To have a more effective business administration of the company													0	0.0%	
To motivate the workers													0	0.0%	
To strengthen communication between management and employees													0	0.0%	
Other				√									1	8.3%	

4.2.6 Employees’ and management’s awareness of the EoC and their involvement with the Focolare Movement

Finally, questions eleven to fourteen dealt with finding out how many of the employees or management staff are aware that their company practises the EoC ideal. Also, these questions established how many of the employees or management personnel of such companies are in some way directly involved with ‘The Focolare Movement’ and practise its spirituality.

The number of employees employed with such companies, excluding the management, totals 115. Eighty-Seven (75.7%) employees are aware that the company they work with practises the EoC ideal. On the other hand only 26 (22.6%) of the total employees are in some way involved with ‘The Focolare Movement’ and live its spirituality.

The total management staff employed with such companies is 29, of which 26 (89.7%) are aware that their company practises the EoC ideal. Out of these 29, 17

⁴ With reference to company number five, the respondent to this question chose all the reasons indicated.

(58.6%) also are in some way involved with ‘The Focolare Movement’ and live its spirituality.

Hence the total amount of employees including management personnel working with these companies is 144, of which 113 (78.5%) are aware that the company they work with practises the EoC ideal, and 43 (29.9%) are in some way also involved with ‘The Focolare Movement’ and live its spirituality.

Table 4.6 further gives a clear picture of this situation per company responding to the questionnaire. Of particular interest is the fact that there are eleven (84.6%) companies whose employees and management are all aware that their company they work with follows the EoC ideal.

Table 4.6 : Employees and Management employed with the ‘Economy of Communion’ companies

Questionnaire Number	Number of employees, excluding management, employed with the company	Employees aware that the company practices the ‘Economy of Communion’		Employees who are in some way involved with the Focolare Movement and practice its spirituality		Management personnel employed with the company	Management personnel aware that the company practices the ‘Economy of Communion’		Management personnel who are in some way involved with the Focolare Movement and practice its spirituality		Total employees and management personnel employed with the company	Total employees and management personnel aware that the company practices the ‘Economy of Communion’		Total employees and management personnel who are in some way involved with the Focolare Movement and practice its spirituality	
	Totals	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	Totals	%	Totals	%
1	9	9	100%	1	11%	2	2	100%	2	100%	11	11	100%	3	27%
2	6	6	100%	0	0%	2	2	100%	0	0%	8	8	100%	0	0%
3	28	15	54%	4	14%	4	2	50%	0	0%	32	17	53%	4	13%
4	4	4	100%	0	0%	2	2	100%	1	50%	6	6	100%	1	17%
5	25	10	40%	10	40%	3	2	67%	2	67%	28	12	43%	12	43%
6	8	8	100%	1	13%	3	3	100%	2	67%	11	11	100%	3	27%
7	16	16	100%	1	6%	2	2	100%	2	100%	18	18	100%	3	17%
8	2	2	100%	2	100%	1	1	100%	1	100%	3	3	100%	3	100%
9	2	2	100%	2	100%	2	2	100%	2	100%	4	4	100%	4	100%
10	2	2	100%	2	100%	2	2	100%	2	100%	4	4	100%	4	100%
11	2	2	100%	2	100%	2	2	100%	2	100%	4	4	100%	4	100%
12	0	0	n/a	0	n/a	1	1	100%	0	0%	1	1	100%	0	0%
13	11	11	100%	1	9%	3	3	100%	1	33%	14	14	100%	2	14%
Totals	115	87	75.7%	26	22.6%	29	26	89.7%	17	58.6%	144	113	78.5%	43	29.9%

The above profile gives a good picture about the nature and structure of the analysed companies and provides an important background when analysing and reporting results for the rest of the questions put forward to these companies with regards to establish results to the three sub-questions of this study.

4.3 *Research results to the three sub-questions of this study*

The following results will answer the three sub-questions of this study highlighted in chapter 1.2.

4.3.1 *Is the EoC goal of helping the poor through distribution of profits being achieved?*

Financial performance of any company is important and has a direct impact upon its profits. Questions twenty-three, twenty-four and twenty-five dealt with the companies' gross income, gross profits, and the donations to the EoC in respect to the years between 2004 and 2006.

The aim of such questions was to obtain an indication of the percentage increase or decrease for the gross income, gross profits, and the donations to the EoC for year 2005 over year 2004, and year 2006 over year 2005. It also aimed to find out if such overall results indicated whether the EoC goal of helping the poor through distribution of profits is being achieved. For confidentiality purposes the financial amounts quoted by the companies are not being mentioned but presented only as a percentage increase or decrease of their financial amounts over the previous years.

It is to be observed that one⁵ (7.7%) company did not respond to these questions and so it is not part of the analysis. The other twelve (92.3%) responded fully or partly to the questions, an analyses of which is presented below. Table 4.7 illustrates the percentage results of the said twelve companies.

When one studies such results, one can notice that the financial aspect of these companies could be of concern. The results in table 4.7 are only an overview and an indication. In no way do they interpret the financial accounts of the said companies.

⁵ Result for questionnaire number one is not included as it did not respond to questions twenty-three, twenty-four and twenty-five of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire distributed to the companies did not ask for reasons for the results relating to the income, profit and donations, and as such the percentage results are being interpreted as given.

Table 4.7 : The EoC companies gross income, gross profit and donations to the EoC

Questionnaire Number	Percentage gross income increase / decrease for year 2005 over year 2004	Percentage gross income increase / decrease for year 2006 over year 2005	Percentage gross profit increase / decrease for year 2005 over year 2004	Percentage gross profit increase / decrease for year 2006 over year 2005	Percentage increase / decrease for year 2005 over year 2004 of the companies' donations to the EoC	Percentage increase / decrease for year 2006 over year 2005 of the companies' donations to the EoC
2	-20.0%	25.0%	<i>no gross profit</i>	<i>no gross profit</i>	<i>no donations</i>	<i>no donations</i>
3	1.0%	-5.8%	1.0%	-5.8%	<i>no donations</i>	100.0%
4	50.0%	100.0%	<i>no gross profit</i>	<i>no gross profit</i>	<i>no donations</i>	<i>no donations</i>
5	5.6%	0.7%	38.7%	0.7%	<i>no donations</i>	<i>no donations</i>
6	75.8%	53.0%	-114.7%	930.7%	<i>no donations</i>	100.0%
7	22.3%	2.3%	95.6%	-51.2%	33.3%	<i>no donations due to company investment</i>
8	-5.3%	12.8%	-55.9%	153.1%	-47.0%	121.0%
9	32.7%	20.0%	25.0%	20.0%	<i>same donation</i>	<i>same donation</i>
10	50.0%	33.3%	50.0%	33.3%	400.0%	20.0%
11	20.0%	-5.0%	20.0%	-5.0%	40.0%	43.0%
12	10.2%	-16.1%	9.6%	-16.2%	<i>same donation</i>	<i>same donation</i>
13	89.1%	73.8%	58.2%	101.9%	<i>no response</i>	<i>no response</i>

Analysis of the gross income of the twelve companies that responded to the said questions, resulted as follows:-

- three (25.0%) companies⁶ seemed to have done well for the periods 2005 over 2004, and 2006 over 2005, as their gross income for both periods increased by over 50.0%;
- two (16.7%) companies⁷ also did well, as their gross income for both periods increased between 20% and 50%; and

⁶ Referring to questionnaire number four, six and thirteen as in table 4.7.

⁷ Referring to questionnaire number nine and ten as in table 4.7.

- the other seven (58.3%) companies⁸ seemed to have experienced difficulties of either having had a decrease in gross income, or else the increase was only slight for such periods, with percentages falling between -20.0% and +25.0%.

When analysing the gross profits of the same companies the results seemed to be consistent with what resulted in the gross income as per company, but with some other observations as follows:-

- two (16.7%) companies⁹ did not register a gross profit for both of the stated periods;
- six (50.0%) companies¹⁰ registered a decrease in gross profit in at least one of these periods; and
- four (33.3%) companies¹¹ seemed to have done better by having increased their gross profits over both of the stated periods.

The analyses of the gross profit seemed to reflect the donations which such companies imparted to the EoC. As commented in the literature review the profits made by the businesses within the EoC are divided into three parts (Gold, L. 2004a).

This sharing of the profits seems to have been difficult to achieve for the analysed companies. In fact, due to the difficulties registered in the analysed gross profits five (41.7%) companies¹² did not donate anything to the EoC for the years 2005 over year 2004. Six (50.0%) companies¹³ did actually donate for the years 2005 over 2004, while one (8.3%) company¹⁴ did not respond to this question.

For the years 2006 over year 2005, the situation seemed to be slightly better as seven (58.4%) of the companies¹⁵ donated to the EoC as part of their gross profit

⁸ Referring to questionnaire number two, three, five, seven, eight, eleven and twelve as in table 4.7.

⁹ Referring to questionnaire number two and four as in table 4.7.

¹⁰ Referring to questionnaire number three, six, seven, eight, eleven and twelve as in table 4.7.

¹¹ Referring to questionnaire number five, nine, ten and thirteen as in table 4.7.

¹² Referring to questionnaire number two, three, four, five and six as in table 4.7.

¹³ Referring to questionnaire number seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve as in table 4.7.

¹⁴ Referring to questionnaire number thirteen as in table 4.7.

¹⁵ Referring to questionnaire number three, six, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve as in table 4.7.

contribution for helping various people etc. Four (33.3%) companies¹⁶ did not donate to the EoC for the years 2006 over year 2005, while one (8.3%) company¹⁷ did not respond to this question.

Furthermore to the above results concerning profits, reviewing the financial confidence of such businesses was also important. This is because the financial confidence of a company can indicate whether certain financial goals are to be achieved or not, and what profits are being forecasted. Question twenty-eight related to this aspect by asking the companies to rate their financial confidence in relation to its financial goals for the year 2007.

It resulted that seven (53.8%) companies feel very confident, while six (46.2%) feel confident of their financial goals. These results are illustrated in table 4.8.

Table 4.8 : The EoC companies financial confidence in relation to there financial goals for the year 2007

	Questionnaire Number													Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Very confident	√	√	√	√		√		√			√			7	53.8%
Confident					√		√		√	√		√	√	6	46.2%
Not confident														0	0.0%

The indication of these businesses' financial confidence is very promising. As a general observation one also needs to take into consideration that the financial goals of an EoC company might be more difficult to forecast, due to the way such companies share their profits as has already been explained in Chapter 2.5. Taking this into consideration, these businesses seem to be fully confident regarding their financial situation.

The above analysis shows that although one of the EoC principles is to generate profits in such a way so as to be in a position to provide a share for the needy, this is not always being achieved. However, the situation seems to have improved for the

¹⁶ Referring to questionnaire number two, four, five and seven as in table 4.7.

¹⁷ Referring to questionnaire number thirteen as in table 4.7.

year 2006 over year 2005. Furthermore, the EoC companies' high financial confidence for the year 2007 can be an indication that their profits should increase, and hence be in a better position to share their profits with the needy.

4.3.2 Does practicing the EoC ideal positively influence employee relationships and their attitude to work?

To answer to the sub-question whether practicing the EoC ideal positively influences employee relationships and their attitude to work, question seventeen studied the views of the questionnaires' respondents about what kind of relationships exist within their company. This question aimed to study the effect of living the 'relationships' value upon different attitudes such as behaviour, motivation towards work and such others, of EoC employees since joining the EoC. Each company had to give a rating of between 1 and 5, where 1 was equal to 'very bad' while a rating of 5 as 'very good'. Such a rating for the nine provided different statements, had to be rated for the time prior to practicing the EoC ideal (if such a company was established before), as well as since/after practicing the EoC ideal. In this way I would get an overall indication whether certain attitudes and behaviours of the employees had become better or worse since the company started practicing the EoC ideal. Table 4.9 illustrates the nine statements presented to the companies about their employees. The detailed results as per company relating to each statement as presented in table 4.9 are provided in Appendix B.

Table 4.9 : Statement relating to the employees

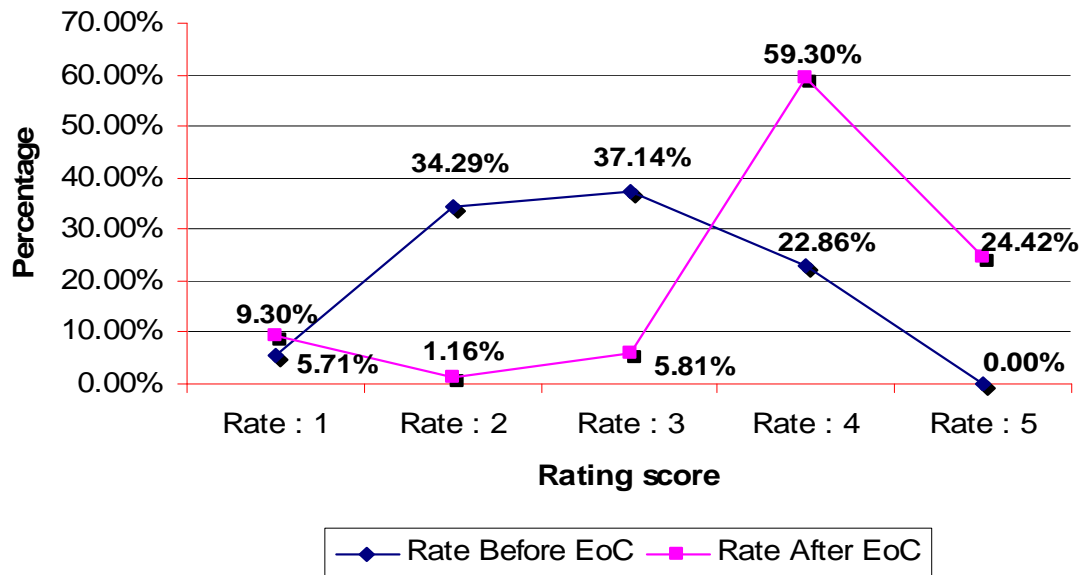
Employees' motivation to work
Work disagreements amongst the employees
Employees' cooperation to management decision making
Employees' collaboration for implementing a company strategy change
Employees being sacked by the management
The relationship of the employees towards the management
The employees have adopted the general skills required for work
Work performance of employees
Employees' overall performance at your company when compared to other similar companies in your region which do not practise the ' <i>Economy of Communion</i> '

It is to be observed that three¹⁸ (23.1%) companies did not respond to question 17, whilst four (30.8%) of the companies responded for both periods, that is, prior to and

¹⁸ Results for questionnaire number nine, ten and twelve are not included as they did not respond to question seventeen of the questionnaire.

after joining the EoC. Six (46.1%) companies only responded for the period after forming part of the EoC, as such companies did not exist before. Chart 4.1 illustrates the overall percentage results with regards to all the statements relating to the employees.

Chart 4.1 : Overall rating regarding the employees



It resulted that the overall percentage ratings of the total responses received, were on the higher side after such companies started practicing the EoC. This strongly indicates that the EoC ideal do positively influence employee relationships and their attitude to work.

Chart 4.1 clearly shows that the overall total percentage of rate 4 and rate 5 after the company started practicing the EoC amounted to 83.72% of the total responses. This compares much better than the percentage rating, which amounted to 22.86%, given for the time before such companies practised the EoC. This is a clear indication that since these companies started practicing the EoC ideal, the employees' attitudes, behaviour, and such others as described in table 4.9, were much better than when not practicing the EoC ideal.

On the other hand, the overall total percentage of rate 1 and rate 2 after the company started practicing the EoC amounted to only 10.46% of the total responses, which, when comparing ratings regarding before joining the EoC, amounts to 40.00%. Here, it is indicated that such practices as indicated in the nine statements had been worse for the companies prior to practicing the EoC ideal.

4.3.3 Do EoC managers recognise the value of formal management qualifications as proposed by the EoC ideal?

Ideally businesses are to be managed by professional people. This should result in a more successful outcome and performance of the business. To measure whether the EoC managers recognise the value of formal management qualifications which would enrich the EoC businesses, question thirty-one dealt with the Business Administration qualifications of the management personnel, as illustrated in table 4.10. A qualification in Business Administration was chosen as a criterion because Business Administration is considered a very important aspect of the successful running of a business. Besides, through the literature review it was pointed out that it was Chiara Lubich's own inspiration and desire to entrust the management to competent people for running the EoC businesses (Araujo, V. 2006).

Table 4.10 : The management personnel qualified in Business Administration

	Questionnaire Number													Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Diploma	0	1	2	2	3	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	15	41.7%
Degree	0	1	3	0	3	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	14	38.9%
Masters	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2.8%
Other :	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	8.3%
Still studying one of the above	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	8.3%
Total Qualifications / still studying	1	3	6	3	6	0	3	2	4	2	2	1	3	36	100.0%
Total Management Personnel	2	2	4	2	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	1	3	29	
Management Personal not qualified in Business Administration	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	

Table 4.10 indicates that only one (7.7 %) company¹⁹ does not have any of its three management personnel not qualified at some level in Business Administration. The other twelve (92.3%) companies whose total management personnel amounts to 26, have 25 management personnel qualified in Business Administration to some degree.

¹⁹ Referring to questionnaire number six as in table 4.10.

It is also interesting to note that three of these management personnel are presently pursuing further studies in this field. It is interesting to point out that of the 26 qualified management personnel, some²⁰ are qualified in Business Administration with more than one qualification.

It can however be observed that only one of all the management personnel has a Masters qualification in Business Administration. The other qualifications are of a lower degree. In fact, out of the total 36 qualifications achieved or in the process of being achieved, 15 (41.7%) of such qualifications refer to a Diploma level. This could be an aspect to be improved within EoC companies. Such companies ought to invest more to obtain higher standards of qualification for their management personnel, besides of helping those without a qualification to try and achieve one.

This is being encouraged as certain general skills are needed for effective managerial performance, regardless of the level of the manager in the hierarchy of the organizations. These skills will improve the ability to see the overall organization and to integrate all parts of the system, to work with and understand other people, and to use specific knowledge in performing work (Donnelly, J.H. Gibson, J.L. and Ivancevich, J.M. 1995).

²⁰ This amount has not been quantified through the questionnaire.

Chapter 5 : Conclusions

As the main objective of this dissertation was to discover whether the Economy of Communion's main values and principles are being followed by the companies that adhere to it, this dissertation has focused on three areas, namely of helping the poor through the profits, the relationships ideal, and professional management. Through the literature review and the research findings it was possible to answer the three sub-questions:

- Is the EoC goal of helping the poor through distribution of profits being achieved?
- Does practicing the EoC ideal positively influence employee relationships and their attitude to work?
- Do EoC managers recognise the value of formal management qualifications as proposed by the EoC ideal?

The findings and analysis for these three questions made it possible to answer the main question of this dissertation:

- 'Do EoC companies adhere to the principles and values proposed by the EoC ideal?'

The following will present the general conclusions to the above questions for the thirteen analysed companies that answered the questionnaire. This is followed by my personal conclusion whether the EoC could truly be an answer for a just and economic world structure.

5.1 *General conclusions to the three sub-questions and the main dissertation question*

Regarding whether the EoC businesses are distributing profits to help the poor, one notices that this has not always been the case. There could have been different reasonable answers for this, which the questionnaire did not take into consideration.

In fact, here it can be mentioned, that Lorna Gold (2004b) in her book 'The Sharing Economy – Solidarity Networks Transforming Globalisation', does mention the lack of profit donations, which however, resulted from the concerns some of the EoC business people had due to lack of information about how the profits are spent, although Gold further comments that this factor has improved. However, from the dissertation questionnaire, it was observed that for the year 2006 over year 2005 the distribution of profits had improved over the years 2005 over 2004, as during the latter period it was more difficult for the EoC companies to register profits. Furthermore, one must take into consideration the positive fact of their high financial confidence for the year 2007. In fact 53.8% of such businesses declared they felt 'very confident' that their financial goals were to be achieved, while the rest felt 'confident'. This can be an indication that their profits have the potential to increase, consequently being in a better position to share more profits to the needy, and hence to adhere more to this value.

Regarding whether practicing the EoC ideal positively influences employee relationships and their attitude to work as proposed by the EoC ideal, the indication is that it does. The interesting part of this finding is that it was especially noted that those businesses that had already been established prior to practicing the EoC ideal, had registered better results regarding relationships when such businesses started practicing this ideal. In fact the overall total percentage relating to the employees' attitudes, behaviour, and such others rated highly at 83.72% after the company started practicing the EoC, when compared with the time before such companies started practicing the EoC ideal which amounted to 22.86%. This can be attributed to the ideal which they practice, and as Mitroff and Denton (1999) had commented it shows that workplace spirituality (which in the case of the EoC is their ideal put into practice) involves the effort to find one's ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to co-workers and other people associated with work.

Another conclusion was regarding whether the EoC managers recognise the value of formal management qualifications, which would enrich the EoC businesses being managed by professional people as the EoC ideal itself proposes. Here one finds that

there is room for further improvement. This finding was measured through researching the management who are qualified at least in Business Administration. It was observed that only one management personnel is qualified with higher qualifications such as a Masters in Business Administration, and that four management personnel are not qualified. This does not imply that management is not doing their work effectively and properly, but a better qualified management staff would potentially result in better management of the EoC companies. This in turn could have an overall positive impact on various aspects for running a business. Still, it was positive to note that at least most of the management have a diploma or degree standard of qualification.

Concluding to the main question of the dissertation of whether the main values and principles of the EoC are being adhered to, the above analyses and conclusions to the three sub-questions makes me confident to conclude that yes, they are. This does not imply that everything is in order. Indeed, the EoC project would surely benefit by further improving its performance and be more effective. This is to be discussed in the recommendations part of Chapter 6.

5.2 *The EoC: is it the answer for a just and economic world structure?*

From my research I have found that practising the EoC ideal could offer a possible answer for a just and economic structure for today's business world. It seems to offer richness to what already exists in the world, especially for helping the poor.

Since those companies adhering to the values and principles analysed in the research findings seem to be reaping the desired results, they can be an indication that after all the EoC project is reaching its aim of helping the poor. The future challenge might be to make the EoC ideal and practice more known, but even more challenging would be to introduce its ideal in companies outside the EoC with a hope that more companies take up this challenge and practise it effectively. This would bring about a whole new experience to the business world!

Chiara Lubich (2007), the founder of 'The Focolare Movement' who initiated the EoC, had this to say to various people involved in the EoC during the third

international convention²¹ of the EoC and which took place on the 30th November 2007 ‘...that mutual love (which) would lead those active in the Economy of Communion to find together new models of organization, participation and management, has found fertile ground in you. The communion lived within a firm enables business roles and functions to become forms of service, responsible management of activities entrusted to each one, without any hierarchical attitudes. The culture of communion not only changes the individual’s disposition towards work but it also gives life to structures of communion which facilitates relationships of mutual love in the firm’.

²¹ The third international convention was held between the 30th November and 2nd December 2007 at Castel Gandolfo in Rome, Italy. The title of the convention was ‘Working in communion: Many Challenges, One Proposal’.

Chapter 6 : Recommendations

Through the analysis undertaken and the concluding comments stated in the previous chapters, I have come up with four recommendations as proposed below. Three of these are directed at the analysed EoC companies. It is to be noted, that the first three recommendations are being addressed only to the thirteen companies which responded to the questionnaire. Due to the relatively low response rate, conclusions and recommendations are not to be generalised and extended to the whole EoC project as such, although they could be considered as a way forward. The analysed EoC companies in Brazil would benefit mostly through these recommendations because they would enable them to be more effective in living the main values and principles that contribute to the EoC ideal. However, I feel that other EoC companies in different parts of the world could also benefit through such recommendations as they can easily be used as a guide for their operations. Also, certain recommendations can offer a new light to other businesses not practicing the EoC ideal. If one considers such recommendations for implementation, such businesses might also be in a position to benefit from them, when putting the EoC ideal fully in perspective. The fourth recommendation is directly aimed at the central Secretariat of the EoC. The following are the four proposed recommendations.

6.1 More profits to distribute to the needy and poor

The first recommendation suggests that these businesses undertake a specific study regarding what is keeping them from distributing more of their share of the profits for the needy and poor. For such a study to be fruitful and come up with effective findings, it should be undertaken by professional accountants and business people. One aim of this study would be to identify different areas within the businesses that might be hindering them from producing the required profits. This way a strategic plan can then be drawn and implemented to overcome this hindrance and which ultimately can result in the EoC companies being in a better position to distribute more profits to the poor.

6.2 *Employee relationships*

The second recommendation suggests continuing to better the employees' relationships, by exposing the employees to the way the EoC proposes that relationships be practised within their companies. This could be done through seminars, live-ins and such other opportunities. The employees should be encouraged to attend these seminars, to become more knowledgeable of the EoC spirit regarding relationships, and to share their experiences regarding the relationships at work. Such seminars should prove to be fruitful to motivate such employees to continue to strengthen their relationships at work and hence result in more positive and healthy relationships and attitudes to work.

6.3 *Better qualified personal*

The third recommendation suggests having more management personnel qualified in a Masters level of Business Administration, and to help the unqualified management personnel to obtain at least a Diploma level qualification in Business Administration. The EoC companies are encouraged to invest more in the training of their management staff so that these would be qualified with higher qualifications. It does require an extra cost to train the presently employed management staff, or when required to employ new management staff with such a qualification as it might mean spending more on higher wages. Such a constraint should not hold back the EoC companies from adopting such an improvement. It is recommended that a strategic plan be in place to cater for this required asset for improved management, so that the businesses are more professional.

6.4 *Undertaking of a similar study by the Secretariat of the EoC*

The final recommendation concerns a suggestion I am making to the Secretariat of the EoC. It is being recommended that this study be undertaken by the central Secretariat in Rome, Italy. Research findings are not only to be based upon the EoC companies in Brazil, but worldwide. This might encourage more EoC companies to participate in responding to the questionnaire and so obtain a clearer picture of the main values and principles contributing to the ideal. This would involve a huge cost to be undertaken, especially in view of providing such a questionnaire in different languages. Besides

this, the Secretariat of the EoC would entail to provide personnel to undertake and oversee such a project. However, I do believe that it would pay to undertake such a study in view of the many findings that one can obtain and then use them for the growth and development of such a worthy project.

Chapter 7 : Reflections and Limitations

My general feeling is that the project ran smoothly and more or less as I had anticipated. Compiling the dissertation proposal was in itself a good ground work for what was to follow.

I was very enthusiastic to take up my investigation, as while reviewing literature, I found the EoC ideal to be a tangible challenge to theories encountered through my course of studies. I was very keen to learn the outcome of my findings, and this kept me motivated throughout the project.

The main limitations of this study need to be considered. The primary concern was the response rate to the distributed questionnaire which was of only 12.75%. For this reason the analysis and results refer only to the responded questionnaires obtained from the EoC companies and in no way are they to be extended to all the EoC companies in Brazil or in other countries practicing such an ideal.

However, the results obtained may still be indicative as a way forward for the whole project, as mentioned in Chapter 5. As such one might put the question: had the response rate been higher, such as 80%, what would the outcome of the responded questionnaire have been like? Would such results have been more indicative, giving a clearer picture?

The questionnaire was the most practical means of first-hand data collection available, given that I chose to base my research findings on EoC companies in Brazil. Ideally, I should have run a more extensive and reliable pre-test with the EoC companies in Brazil, but this was difficult to implement by meeting them in person. Furthermore, doing a pre-test with some other EoC companies such as in Europe would have been costly and time consuming.

One weakness with my questionnaire is that it was quite extensive, and maybe this was one factor in the relatively low response rate to my questionnaire. A proper pre-test would have highlighted such a point, and I would have been able to revise my questions more appropriately.

One is to observe that not all of the questions in the questionnaire were selected for Chapter four which deals with the research findings. This is because initially certain questions were intended to establish further results concerning the EoC companies which did not feature in the three sub-questions of this dissertation. Through further literature reading, I decided to focus more on the values and principles of such businesses and so I only made use of certain parts of the questionnaire. Another limitation of this study is that I had to decide to focus my research findings on just three values and principles adhered to by the EoC projects. It was impossible to focus on other aspects as the EoC is a very vast subject to study and analyse.

Up to now my research analysis and findings seem to be new in this subject, and could be considered by other scholars to be taken up for further study.

Basing my research findings in Brazil did create some difficulties for my project. During my planning stage I had been assured by the EoC Secretariat in Italy that I would find co-operation from the EoC companies in Brazil. When it transpired that this was not so in my case, I enquired and found out that due to the increased interest in the EoC project, the EoC companies in Brazil are receiving so many requests to fill in questionnaires for students undertaking various studies, that they are having problems coping with them.

I must, however add that the business people who did respond to the questionnaire were very helpful and encouraging, and a few also showed interest and requested to know the findings of my research so as to be able to improve their business.

The location chosen also limited my main data collection method to resorting to a questionnaire, since other means, such as telephone interviews, or personal interviews would have been too costly and probably impossible anyway due to the language barrier.

The questionnaire entailed to be translated into the Portuguese language. This proved to be a greater challenge than I had foreseen, since the original translator I had commissioned for the task dropped out at the last minute, and for some time I had to shift my focus from the project to find a replacement, which was not that easy.

During the course of this study, I was aware that I must remain impartial. This is because for the past eleven years I have been part of 'The Focolare Movement'. For this reason to my best knowledge, the literature review, questionnaire, and above all the research findings, have been based wholly without any bias, and illustrate the true findings.

My various work experience greatly helped me with sorting and analyzing data obtained through the questionnaire. I am very familiar with coming up with results on the computer after having conducted some kind of survey. My knowledge and skills in Microsoft Excel helped me deal confidently with information acquired, and saved me a lot of precious time.

Finally, I must say that I feel I have acquired a fresh perception of the values and principles which are adhered to by the EoC project. I now have a new perspective to complement the way business theory could be implemented. I also feel that through this research, I have improved various practical skills such as planning, self-motivation, time-management, research and communication skills.

Appendix A : Questionnaire sent to the EoC companies in Brazil

Questionnaire :-

‘The Economy of Communion : Does it contribute to more effective Business Administration of an SME?’

Note that the questions below are to be answered in view of end year 2006 unless otherwise specified

Q1. Number of employees, excluding management, employed with the company.

Q2. Number of management personnel employed with the company.

Q3. Area of the company's business. (*Choose only the main one*).

Agriculture, hunting and forestry	
Fishing	
Mining and quarrying	
Manufacturing	
Electricity, gas and water supply	
Construction	
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods	
Hotels and restaurants	
Transport, storage and communication	
Financial intermediation	
Real estate, renting and business activities	
Education	
Health and social work	
Other community, social and personal service activities	
Private households with employed persons	
Extra-territorial organizations and bodies	

Q4. Major products of your company. (*Mention at least the main one*).

Q5. Where are the Products/Services of your company sold? (*Please give a score as a percentage*).

Type of area	Percentage of Sales
In your local area	%
In your region	%
In the continent of America	%
In the rest of World	%
Total of Percentage	100.00%

Q6. Legal status of your company. (Choose one).

Sole Proprietor	
Private limited enterprise	
Public limited enterprise	
Partnership	
Other (please specify) :	
Don't know	

Q7. Year when company was initially established.

Q8. Year when company started practising the 'Economy of Communion' ideal.

Q9. How did the company get to know about the 'Economy of Communion'? (Choose one).

Through the Focolare Movement	
Through other businesses practicing the 'Economy of Communion'	
Through the media	
Through a conference	
Other (please specify) :	

Q10. What is the main reason why the company decided to practice the 'Economy of Communion' ideal? (Choose one).

To follow the spirituality of the Focolare Movement	
To make more profits for the company	
To share some of the profits with the poor	
To have a more effective business administration of the company	
To motivate the workers	
To strengthen communication between management and employees	
Other (please specify) :	

Q11. How many of the employees, excluding management, are aware that the company practices the 'Economy of Communion'?

Q12. How many of the employees, excluding management, are in some way involved with the Focolare Movement and practice its spirituality?

Q13. How many of the management personnel are aware that the company practices the 'Economy of Communion'?

Q14. How many of the management personnel are in some way involved with the Focolare Movement and practice its spirituality?

- Q15.** Since the company started practicing the 'Economy of Communion', write the three most important Business Administration benefits for the company, which are directly linked to the ideal of the 'Economy of Communion' practice. (Maximum of twenty words per answer).

1	
2	
3	

- Q16.** Since the company started practicing the 'Economy of Communion', write the top three most negative Business Administration consequences for the company, which are directly linked to the ideal of the 'Economy of Communion' practice. (Maximum of twenty words per answer).

1	
2	
3	

- Q17.** Since joining the 'Economy of Communion', how do you rate the following statements relating to the employees? If the company was established prior to starting practicing the 'Economy of Communion' please also rate accordingly to be able to compare.

Rate before the company started practicing the 'Economy of Communion'						Rate after the company started practicing the 'Economy of Communion'				
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
					Choose : 1 = very bad / 5 = very good					
					<i>This is an Example: Contentment</i>					
	X				Employees' motivation to work				X	
					Work disagreements amongst the employees					
					Employees' cooperation to management decision making					
					Employees' collaboration for implementing a company strategy change					
					Employees being sacked by the management					
					The relationship of the employees towards the management					
					The employees have adopted the general skills required for work					
					Work performance of employees					
					Employees' overall performance at your company when compared to other similar companies in your region which do not practice the 'Economy of Communion'					

- Q18.** Since joining the 'Economy of Communion', how do you rate the following statements relating to the management / company. If the company was established prior to starting practicing the 'Economy of Communion' please also rate accordingly so to be able to compare.

Rate before the company started practicing the 'Economy of Communion'						Rate after the company started practicing the 'Economy of Communion'				
1	2	3	4	5	Choose : 1 = very bad / 5 = very good	1	2	3	4	5
	X				<i>This is an Example: Discipline</i>				X	
					Gross profits of the company					
					Net Profits of the company					
					Production / Services cost of the company					
					General strategy implementation of the company					
					Strategy implementation is completed within the required time frame					
					Management decision making					
					Future planning by management					
					The relationship of the management towards the employees					
					The management personnel have adopted the general skills required for their role					
					General company overall performance when compared to other similar companies in your region which do not practice the 'Economy of Communion'					

- Q19.** Does your company have any of the following written policies or plans? (Select any that apply).

Business Plan	
Training Plan	
Data protection policy	
Environmental policy	
Cash flow projection	
IT Plan	
Equal opportunities policy	
Other (please specify) :	

- Q20.** Does your company adopt the 'Total Quality Management (TQM)'?

Yes	No

- Q21.** If yes, how do you rate the implementation of the 'Total Quality Management (TQM)'?

Choose one : 1 = very bad / 5 = very good				
1	2	3	4	5

Q22. If no, please choose one of the following.

The management of the company is not aware what 'Total Quality Management (TQM)' is	
The management intends to adopt the 'Total Quality Management (TQM)' in the future	
The management sees no need to adopt the 'Total Quality Management (TQM)'	
The management does not know how to adopt the 'Total Quality Management (TQM)'	
Other (please specify) :	

Q23. What were the company's **gross profits** for the years between 2004 and 2006?

2004	2005	2006
R\$	R\$	R\$

Q24. What were the company's **donations** to the EoC for the years between 2004 and 2006 to help the poor people?

2004	2005	2006
R\$	R\$	R\$

Q25. What were the company's **gross incomes** for the years between 2004 and 2006?

2004	2005	2006
R\$	R\$	R\$

Q26. What is the overall average yearly **gross** pay for each employee of the company for the years between 2004 and 2006?

2004	2005	2006
R\$	R\$	R\$

Q27. What is the overall average yearly **net** pay for each employee of the company for the years between 2004 and 2006?

2004	2005	2006
R\$	R\$	R\$

Q28. How do you rate your company's financial confidence in relation to its financial goals for the year 2007? (Choose one).

Very confident	
Confident	
Not confident	

Q29. What is the overall average number of workers employed as full-time and/or part-time with the company for the years between 2004 and 2006?

Description of Workers	2004	2005	2006
Full-Time Workers			
Part-Time Workers			

- Q30.** When the company makes business (buying or selling) with other companies, with whom is this done?
(Please give a score as a percentage).

Type of Company doing business with	Percentage of Business
Companies embracing the EoC ideal	%
Companies not embracing the EoC ideal	%
Not aware if companies embrace the EoC ideal	%
Total of Percentage	100.00%

- Q31.** How many of the management personnel employed with the company, possess one of the following qualifications in Business Administration?

Type of Qualification	Number of Management Personal
Diploma	
Degree	
Masters	
Other (please specify) :	
Still studying one of the above	
Not qualified in Business Administration	
Total Management Personal	

- Q32.** In your opinion, does the 'Economy of Communion' contribute towards more effective Business Administration of your company?

Yes	No

- Q33.** If yes, rate how the 'Economy of Communion' contributes towards more effective Business Administration of your company.

Description of better effectiveness	Choose one for each description : 1 = very low / 5 = very high				
	1	2	3	4	5
Management Style					
Management Planning					
Management Strategies					
Companies Finances					
Other (please specify) :					

- Q34.** If no, write in short why the 'Economy of Communion' does not contribute towards more effective Business Administration of your company. (Maximum of 50 words).

- Q35.** How do you rate the company's satisfaction regarding overall Business Administration since practicing the 'Economy of Communion'?

Choose one : 1 = very low / 5 = very high				
1	2	3	4	5

- Q36. In your opinion, is your company's Business Administration better practiced compared with another similar company which does not practice the '*Economy of Communion*'? (Choose one).

Our Business Administration is better than other companies	Our Business Administration is the same as other companies	Our Business Administration is not better than other companies

- Q37. Are there any plans for the coming 5 years by the management not to continue practicing the '*Economy of Communion*'? (Choose one and write a short answer giving the reason why – maximum of thirty words).

Yes	No	Maybe

- Q38. Which of the following do you feel describes your growth objectives over the next 3 years? (Choose one).

Become Smaller	Stay Same Size	Grow Moderately	Grow Substantially

- Q39. Name of company

Appendix B : Results of question seventeen of the questionnaire²²

		Rate before the company started practicing the EoC					Rate after the company started practicing the EoC					
		1 = very low / 5 = very high										
The following statements relating to the employees, as rated by each responded questionnaire	Questionnaire Number	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Employees' motivation to work	1			1	1					1	1	
	2									1		
	3									1		
	4									1		
	5		1						1			
	6										1	
	7									1		
Work disagreements amongst the employees	8									1		
	11									1		
	13			1							1	
	TOTAL	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	6	3	
	1			1	1					1		
	2											
	3								1			
Employees' cooperation to management decision making	4						1					
	5			1						1		
	6										1	
	7						1					
	8						1					
	11									1		
	13		1				1			1		
Employees' collaboration for implementing a company strategy change	TOTAL	0	1	2	1	0	5	0	1	4	0	
	1		1							1		
	2			1						1		
	3									1		
	4									1		
	5		1						1			
	6									1		
Employees being sacked by the management	7									1		
	8									1		
	11									1		
	13		1							1		
	TOTAL	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	6	3	
	1		1							1		
	2			no response					no response			
The relationship of the employees towards the management	3								no response			
	4								no response			
	5	1						1				
	6											
	7						1					
	8								no response			
	11						1					
The employees have adopted the general skills required for work	13	1					1			1		
	TOTAL	2	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	2	0	
	1				1					1		
	2				1					1		
	3									1		
	4									1		
	5		1							1		
Work performance of employees	6										1	
	7										1	
	8										1	
	11									1		
	13			1						1		
	TOTAL	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	8	1	
	1			1						1		
Employees' overall performance at your company when compared to other similar companies in your region which do not practice the EoC	2			1						1		
	3				1					1		
	4									1		
	5		1							1		
	6								1			
	7									1		
	8									1		
ALL TOTALS	11									1		
	13			1						1		
	TOTAL	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	
			Rate before the company started practicing the EoC					Rate after the company started practicing the EoC				
			1 = very low / 5 = very high									
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
			2	12	13	8	0	8	1	5	8	21
Percentage		5.71%	34.29%	37.14%	22.86%	0.00%	9.30%	1.16%	5.81%	59.30%	24.42%	
		yellow colour indicates rated the same					blue colour indicates rated better					
		red colour indicates rated worse					grey colour indicates rated only after started practicing the EoC					

²² Results for questionnaire number nine, ten and twelve are not included as they did not respond to question seventeen of the questionnaire.

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