

Authenticity: Is Corporate Social Responsibility the Key to Overcoming Crisis?

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1 Introduction

The paper aims to develop within the theoretical and normative perspective the concept of the “golden rule” of authentic CSR-driven strategies as a necessary path to overcoming the financial crisis.

To this end, firstly a critical review is provided of the recent Encyclical Letter (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 2015) focusing on the care of our “common home” (our planet) that emphasizes the complexity of the crisis (financial and economic, preceded by a socially and anthropologically-based crisis) and suggests the path to overcoming the crisis through a renewed environmental, economic and social ecology. This last orientation involves the collective contribution to the common good, which presupposes the genuine responsibility of every person and organization belonging to the “near and far” socio-economic environment and the authentic orientation toward the integral development.

Secondly, the work provides the business context with a series of examples related to companies which in “hard times” voluntarily persist in investing in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities conceived as an effective and leading way to building the future and replying to the current and future crises.

The adopted research methodology was based on a content analysis of the encyclical document and on an empirical analysis which was developed through interviews addressed to the top management of ten Italian companies (both medium, large and small-sized) whose strategies are based on CSR and that have been studied for more than a decade.

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The implications of the work are twofold: on the one hand it intends to feed the scientific debate on the opportunity to focus the attention on the origins of entrepreneurial and managerial behaviors that have led to the crisis and the need for a profound rethinking of the business conduct. On the other hand the work provides suggestions and examples to the corporate world by observing the validity of the strategic and operational behaviors founded on a durable CSR orientation and a genuine responsible decision-making process.

The paper is organized as follows. The following section introduces the theoretical framework, focusing on authenticity in CSR-driven strategies and on the business contexts where it is present. Third section presents a critical review of the “*Laudato Si*” Encyclical Letter and discusses the main issues connected to the topic of sustainability and common good. Subsequently, after having introduced the methodological approach, fourth section describes the empirical findings while the final section synthesizes concluding remarks.

2 Authenticity and CSR

Authenticity has its roots in enlightenment philosophy. Rousseau relates authenticity to morality in the sense of pursuing the inbuilt voice of nature found within us (Taylor, 1992: 27). In contrast, Herder asserted that authenticity is more concerned with the idea that human beings have their own originality (Costas & Fleming, 2009). Authenticity as a driver of entrepreneurial and managerial behaviour relates to the expression of integrity (see Kaptein & Wempe, 2002 and “the diamond of integrity management model”). It is about being sincere, honest and genuine (Trilling, 1972). Entrepreneurship offers a mean to express one’s authenticity and inwardly-derived values (Aragón Amonarriz & Iturrioz Landar, 2016; Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009). Entrepreneurial and managerial authenticity influences the nature and extent of CSR approaches and explains the orientation toward a genuine CSR and sustainability approaches claimed by the Encyclical Letter which forcefully invites to rethink the roots of the crisis and the values needed to overcome it by proposing a new social, economic, environmental and anthropological ecology.

“Organizational integrity means that the organization’s values should guide its interactions with internal and external stakeholders” (Painter-Morland, 2006: 358). It reflects the organization’s identity, goals and culture and is supportive of the ethical behavior. In other words, it requires an alignment and an ongoing interaction between an organization’s values and its everyday practices, as well as between CSR programs and its ethics management processes (Painter-Morland, 2006). It can only exist where there is mutual trust between the organization and its stakeholders (Paine, 1994) which, in turn, depends on the manner in which the organization succeeds in living according to its stated values (Painter-Morland, 2006). Stakeholder engagement, organizational integrity and stakeholder activism (Alford & Signori, 2014) could be used to reconstruct a “social grammar” that would place business in a more sustainable relationship with society. A lack of integrity in the

organization's functioning, as well as in organizational practices, constitutes "companies' vices" often diffused in large public companies which hinder an authentic CSR approach and innovative paths to facing the current and forthcoming crisis (Borgato, 2014; Malloch, 2008).

In the framework of leadership studies authenticity emerges as a key factor. Debating on the nature of CSR leadership, Visser (2011) points out that "We are convinced that without bold and effective leadership—at a political, institutional and individual level—we will fail to resolve our most serious social and environmental crisis" (Visser, 2011: 1). Moreover, as the latest Encyclical Letter clearly states, we will fail to resolve our deep anthropological crisis.

The various theories and approaches have set a frame for CSR leadership and relative key characteristics (i.e. systemic understanding, emotional intelligence and a caring attitude, values orientation, compelling vision, inclusive style, innovative approach and a long term perspective). A CSR leader is someone who inspires and supports actions toward a better world (Goffee & Jones, 2009). An authentic CSR leader orients the company toward the common good and respects the "golden rule"—typical of the Christian tradition—to do unto others what you would want for themselves.

Within the CSR debate, on the one hand CSR is either a commercial instrument and extrinsically motivated; on the other hand, it is based on intrinsic (or idealistic) reasons, which makes it a moral activity (see Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015: 2).

The former—extrinsic CSR—is formalized, oriented to increasing legitimacy by improving image and market share and is aimed at external recognition (Matten & Moon, 2008). This opportunistic approach renders CSR a *façade* "or" emancipator rhetoric, giving rise to the so called "green-washing" phenomena (Mahoney, Thorne, Cecil, & LaGore, 2013; Visser, 2011).

The second one—intrinsic CSR—assumes that many companies are characterized by a business culture making CSR a moral duty (Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015). In these contexts the underlying motivation which affects the entrepreneur/manager and the entire organization induces a stronger involvement in CSR, increases perceived sincerity, nurtures a positive relationship with employees and customers (Graafland & van de Ven, 2006). In these cases authentic leadership renders social entrepreneurship a driver for social change and CSR has the power to generate "social goods".

Extrinsic CSR is mainly diffused among large companies while SMEs are more often intrinsically motivated by their tradition/family capitalism and rely on their long-standing informal networks rather than on formal, extrinsic policies (Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015; Spence, Schmidpeter, & Habisch, 2003). Among the promising sustainability business and leadership models that have emerged, the "ideal-based company" (Capaldi, 2013; Del Baldo & Baldarelli, 2015; Malloch, 2008; Molteni, 2009) demonstrate a purest form (genuine/authentic) of CSR as it is ethical and supports CSR because that is "the noble way for corporations to behave" (Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015: 3). Several studies in recent decades have in fact highlighted the existence of many companies, often little known, even silently, which are witnesses of authenticity in their CSR strategies and actions. Particularly, intrinsic motivations are diffused among community-based companies (Peredo & Chrisman,

2006), territorial companies (Del Baldo, 2010a), Economy of communion companies (Baldarelli, 2011), as well as family-based enterprises, whose social responsibility vision affects its responsible behavior (Aragón Amonariz & Iturrioz Landar, 2016; Chua, Chrisman, & Sharma, 1999; Del Baldo, 2012).

All these companies form a widespread network that throughout the world, offers example of authentic CSR orientation and ethical-based connotation (Hoivik von Weltzien, 2014; Hoivik von Weltzien & Melé, 2009).

Accordingly, the “maturity model” proposed by Walker (2015) poses values and virtues at the foundation of practical wisdom in the European society. The set of cardinal virtues is relevant in the business context: justice has a strong relationship to the values of solidarity and integrity; temperance is related with respect, appreciation, freedom; fortitude has a strong connection to the value of subsidiarity, which represents a key value for innovations; prudence has a strong connection to the values of responsibility, accountability and liability. To overcome the crisis, the “typical” active entrepreneur orientation (aimed to increase equity capital and efficiency) is no longer enough. Hence, a proactive entrepreneurial behavior and new integrative management approaches are needed to manifest resilience through adaptability, diversity, efficiency and cohesion) which is a precondition for achieving sustainability (Walker & Salt, 2006). This approach includes fundamental pillars: stakeholder orientation, continuous improvement process, and the idea of a learning organization to foster knowledge and competences, ethical behavior, integrated reporting/accountability (see Walker, 2015: 5–6).

In short, what is needed is a genuine orientation to an integral (or holistic) development (Ketola, 2008; Sorci, 2007). The business world needs for “the application of successful intelligence and creativity toward the common good” and brave leadership capable of inventing actions which serve the common good through balancing values across diverse stakeholders and to contrast mainstream economics and business which neglect the common good, consider only monetary values, disregard non-market stakeholders, and discount the future (Zsolnai, 2015).

There has been an ongoing questioning concerning the lack of practical ethical training and the responsibilities and accountability of the business leader. Managers who hold a spiritual perspective on life are more ethical in their business conduct than those who do not hold a spiritual perspective (Bouckaert, 2011; Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2002; Pruzan, 2011). Ethics literature has in fact emphasised management integrity, authenticity and virtues which are becoming widespread in the corporate context, giving rise to new models of governance and business aimed at constructing a more civil economy (Argandoña, 2003, 2011; Cortright & Naughton, 2002; Driscoll & Hoffman, 2000; Gui & Sugden, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Pruzan, 2001; Zadek, 2006; Zamagni, 1995). These studies are a significant and emerging part of the theoretical framework of CSR and sustainability (Becker, 1998; Brown, 2005; Garriga & Melé, 2004; Hoivik von Weltzien, 2014; Malloch, 2008; Ruisi, 2010).

The “golden rule” translates concretely into principles which characterize purpose-led businesses: providing good and safe products and services; openly sharing knowledge and competences; building lasting relationships; being a good

citizen; nurturing a responsible and responsive employer; being a guardian for future generations; and having a purpose which delivers long-term sustainable performances (Alford, 2015).

The Catholic social doctrine provides a relevant contribution in this field. Particularly in the last decades the encyclical letters have increasingly gone beyond the political and ecclesiastic/religious domain to impact significantly on the lives of every person (believer or non-believer) and the corporate world dimensions.

3 The Encyclical Letter “Laudato Si”: The Integral Ecology for People and Companies

Pope Francis’ Encyclical on integral ecology provides an excellent opportunity for nurturing a conversation between the scientific, economic and spiritual “worlds” on the issues of responsibility, common good and sustainable development.

Integral ecology proposed by the Encyclical integrates concerns for people and the planet and suggests a path to sustainable development through a more frugal and moderate life-style, acknowledging the intrinsic value of nature and seeking holistic actionable knowledge. Frugality implies a low level of material consumption and a simple lifestyle (Bouckaert, Opdebeeck, & Zsolnai, 2007) and should precede efficiency in achieving sustainability. An integral and interdisciplinary understanding of the world sees ecology, economy, equity and justice, natural and social sciences, arts and humanities as systemically linked.

Reconsidering the role of business in society and nature is unavoidable as well as transforming it into a progressive social institution which respects nature, future generations and the common good of society (Zsolnai, 2015). This urgency has been previously pointed out by Patriarch Bartholomew (1997) who—drawing attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems—claimed for solutions “not only in technology but in a change of humanity habits by replacing consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing and by learning to give, and not simply to give up” (See: Encycl. Letter, 2015: 8–9).

In the first section of the document (“what is happening to our common home?”) Pope Francis underlines how the continued acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet (so-called “rapidification”) has developed many contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution (pollution, waste and the throwaway culture): “Moreover, the goals of this rapid and constant change are not necessarily geared to the common good or to integral and sustainable human development” (Encycl. Letter, 20: 15). “The growth of the past two centuries has not always led to an integral development and an improvement in the quality of life. Some of these signs are also symptomatic of real social decline, the silent rupture of the bonds of integration and social cohesion” (Encycl. Letter, 46: 32).

Another issue addressed is the gap of leadership approaches and models capable of incorporating the orientation toward the common good and, consequently, to assume an ethical connotation (Olsen, 2010; Visser, 2011) “The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice toward coming generations” (Encycl. Letter, 53: 39). Only recently, in fact, has the issue of leadership been placed at the center of the international debate. For instance, both the accountability international guidelines for drafting sustainability/integrated report have included a specific section on leadership (GRI, 2013; IIRC, 2013).

Nevertheless, good examples and best practices of sustainability-oriented actions and strategies developed by companies, institutions, governments and individuals are increasing worldwide. “These achievements do not solve global problems, but they do show that men and women are still capable of intervening positively” (Encycl. Letter, 58: 42).

At the same time a “false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness” is rising (Encycl. Letter, 59: 42–43). The Encyclical underlines in fact that every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective, which—as mentioned in the previous sections—is typical of particular types of company, whose mission, governance and accountability are forged by the principle of “universal communion” and the common destination of goods (Del Baldo & Baldarelli, 2015). The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, is a golden rule of social conduct and “the first principle of the whole ethical and social order” (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul, 1981, 626); see Encycl. Letter, 2015, 93: 68).

In Chapter three the Encyclical tackles the most profound aspect relative to “the human roots of the ecological crisis” (Ency. Letter, 101 and 102: 75) (Guardini, 1998).

The immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience (Encycl. Letter, 105: 77–78) and the object of holistic development has been missed since the idea of unlimited growth and the false notion of an infinite quantity of energy and resources has prevailed” (Encycl. Letter, 106: 78–79). Accordingly, the needs of “a distinctive way of looking at things” refers to the urgency of charismatic people and leaders capable of turning problems into opportunities and generating social innovation, starting from a different use of the immense potentialities of new technologies. In fact “the fragmentation of knowledge often leads to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things” (Encycl. Letter, 106: 82), and first and foremost, for relationships among people and the parts of the ecological systems which are a fundament of the holistic development (Gui & Sugden, 2005; Bruni, 2009). “We can put (technology) at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral” (Encycl. Letter, 112: 84–85).

The Encyclical calls for a moral-based conduct oriented toward the daily implementations—including the business context—of fundamental values and virtues which have an authentic anthropological connotation (Argandoña, 2003, 2011; Melé, 2009, 2012). In fact the crisis of modern anthropocentrism is due to the underestimation of interpersonal relations. “There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology” (Benedict XVI, Benedict, 2009; Francis, 2015, 118: 96). We can read: “If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships” (Encycl. Letter, 119: 89). The person is “the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life” (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul, 1991). (See: Encycl. Letter, 127: 100).

An integral ecology (Chapter four) is the one that respects its human and social dimensions (Del Baldo, 2014b). Consequently, environmental and social crisis are not separate; rather they form one complex crisis which is both social and environmental and therefore “Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (Encycl. Letter, 138–139: 104–105).

The Pope claims the need for an “economic ecology” capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality, as we can read: “We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision” (Encycl. Letter, 141: 105–106).

Moreover, he highlights the importance of a renewed cultural ecology, as well as an ecology of daily life. The first one is relative to the preservation of the historic, artistic and cultural heritage (Encycl. Letter, 143:107–108). The second one relates to efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life which entails considering the setting in which people live their lives: “It is not enough to seek the beauty of design. More precious still is the service we offer to another kind of beauty: people’s quality of life, their adaptation to the environment, encounter and mutual assistance” (Encycl. Letter, 151: 112).

The integral ecology is deeply connected to the common good which represents a central and unifying principle of social ethics¹ and should be concretely applied at a local level and extend to future generations (intergenerational solidarity) (Encycl. Letter, 159 and 196:118).

What emerges is the urgent need for dialogue and transparency in decision-making as well as an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of the so-called “global commons” (Encycl. Letter, 174:128). As stated by

¹The common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment” Encycl. Letter, 156, p. 112) “Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, applying the principle of subsidiarity” (Encycl. Letter, 157: 116–117).

Benedict XVI, “Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also “macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones” (Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009; Encycl. Letter, 231: 156).

The reference to the responsibility at micro, meso and macro level and the proactive involvement of the community and the importance of a local shared orientation toward sustainability (territorial social responsibility and/or multilevel territorial governance) (Del Baldo, 2014a) “A community can break out of the indifference induced by consumerism” (Encycl. Letter, 167: 168).

Finally, the document recalls the importance of the dialogue between science and religion, and recommends a re-discovery of the ethical and spiritual treasures which could greatly contribute to providing replies to today’s needs: “It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care. Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment” (Encycl. Letter, 210: 154). In this respect, the rich heritage of Christian spirituality can offer a precious contribution to the renewal of humanity because it proposes a growth marked by sobriety and moderation (Thomson & Eynikel, 2011). “When there is a general breakdown in the exercise of a certain virtue in personal and social life, it ends up causing a number of imbalances, including environmental ones. We have to dare to speak of the integrity of human life, of the need to promote and unify all the great values” (Encycl. Letter, 224: 163).

4 Authentic CSR-Orientation and Integral Ecology in the Daily Life of Companies

After having presented and briefly discussed the most important contents of the Encyclical Letter (Table 1), this section presents the first results relative to the empirical analysis aimed at verifying the presence of values, actions and strategies that consolidate these principles and are coherently characterized by an authentic CSR-orientation.

In order to verify whether these principles are applied in the business context, ten Italian companies have been selected from two different databases. The first is a national data base related to the companies monitored by the ISVI Italian Observatory (Istituto per i valori d’impresa—Institute for the Company’s values). The second one is the international Observatory of the Economy of Communion companies (www.eoc-online.org). All the selected companies are CSR-oriented and over the years have implemented many actions, projects and accountability tools. Some of the companies were analyzed in previous stages of our research as best practices with reference to specific aspects of excellence (see: Del Baldo, 2010b, 2013a, b; Del Baldo & Baldarelli, 2015). The analysis was based on a qualitative

Table 1 Main and recurrent principles of the Encyclical Letter “Laudato Si”

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|--|
| The Common Good |
| The urgency for “not weak responses” |
| Universal communion |
| The crisis and effects of modern anthropocentrism |
| Holistic/Integral development; Sustainable development |
| The question of leadership |
| The integral ecology: environmental ecology, economic ecology, social ecology, cultural ecology, and ecology of daily life |
| The centrality of the person and interpersonal relationships |
| Dialogue for innovative national and local policies |
| Transparency in decision-making |
| Subsidiarity |
| Collaboration, active involvement of the local community |
| Educating for the covenant between humanity and the environment |
| Ecological conversion |
| Toward a new lifestyle (sobriety, humility, frugality, spirituality) |

research approach. Data have been collected through a variety of sources: interviews addressed to the entrepreneurs and the top and middle management team; direct observation during company visits and meetings (workshops, focus-groups, conventions); documental analysis (relative to company books, sustainability reports, company report) as well as technical, managerial and scientific publications refereed to the selected enterprises (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Naumes & Naumes, 2006; Yin, 1994).

The period of analysis is multi-year. Some of the companies have for years been involved in different forms of cooperation (interventions in entrepreneurship education initiatives, in meetings and congresses). Portions of the interviews are presented below. Moreover, some projects and strategies that concretize the Encyclical principles are briefly described. Table 2 summarizes the essential attributes of the ten companies.

Below, for each company some entrepreneurial and management statements grasped from informal conversations are cited.

4.1 *Ariston Thermo Group Spa—Merloni*

“In any entrepreneurial and business venture the value of the economic success does not exist if the commitment to social progress is not present” (A. Merloni, Founder of the Group, 1967).

Concrete and lasting values, with which the whole group identifies are: integrity, people, excellence, customer and Sustainability. Accordingly, among the shared key principles are: the centrality of the person; respect for employees’ rights and

Table 2 Companies' profile

| Company's name | Ownership and size | Economic sector and activity | Italian region | Year of foundation | Market |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Ariston thermo group—Merloni group | Unlisted; Open-family companies Large-sized | Mechanics and electronics: production of appliances for heating water and environments | Marches | 1930 More than 6,600 employees | Mainly international |
| 2. Brunello Cucinelli Spa | Listed Open-family company Large-sized | Textile: production of high quality clothing, shoes, and accessories | Umbria | 1978 1,300 employees | National and international |
| 3. BoxMarche Spa | Unlisted; family based company (open to external members) small-sized company | Paper industry: design and production of packaging for the food and house-ware sectors | Marches | 1969 50 employees | Mainly national |
| 4. Elica group | Listed: majority family-owned large company | Mechanics end Electrical equipment: motors for home appliances and central heating boilers | Marches | 1970 Over 3,000 employees | Mainly international |
| 5. FAAM Spa | Unlisted; medium-sized Not family owned | projects and solutions in the field of electrical accumulators and of environmentally friendly vehicles (i.e electric cars) | Marches | 1974 300 employees | Mainly international |
| 6. Loccioni group | Unlisted; family-owned medium-sized company | Electronic industry: electrical and automatic equipment; plants-design-robots; automotive; integrated technologies for environmental monitoring and quality control; biomedicine and medical | Marches | 1968 More than 300 employees | Mainly international |

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

| Company's name | Ownership and size | Economic sector and activity | Italian region | Year of foundation | Market |
|------------------------------------|--|--|----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| | | equipment; equipment for the management of domestic energy (green energy); training courses and consultancy for technical and management education | | | |
| 7. SGR group | Unlisted; family-based company medium-sized | Multi-utility Gas-energy sector: Distribution of natural gas and electric energy | Emilia Romagna | 1956 330 employees | Regional, national and international |
| 8. Insurance Agency "Ornella Seca" | Unlisted Individual entity EoC company small-sized | Insurance | Abruzzo | 2002 6 employees and 7 collaborators | Local and regional |
| 9. Bertola Srl | Unlisted; family-owned small-sized EoC company | Metalworking: galvanizing, grinding and polishing | Piemonte | 1929 24 employees | National and international |
| 10. Mercurio Net | Unlisted; Not family owned small-sized EoC company | ITC—Informatics solutions (hardware, software, services) | Marches | 1994 7 employees and 10 external collaborators | Local and regional |

needs, adoption of a participatory model of industrial relations; respect and care for the environment; innovation and quality; creation and distribution of the added value; continuous learning and training; transparency and fairness; integrity.

The Group, which was the first in Italy to introduce the social balance in the 1960s, is part of the international association "UCID"—Christian entrepreneurs for the common good. Starting from its foundation, the Group has greatly contributed to the development of the socio-economic conditions of the region, providing jobs to people in very poor and under-developed local areas and fighting depopulation caused by the flows of migrants to the Americas. Moreover, it has supported numerous projects aimed at enriching the cultural and social development of local territories, in Italy and abroad. It was part of the Copenhagen Communiqué

on Climate Change and it was a pioneer in the development of high technologies aimed at preserving the environment and climate (i.e. The Energy Aware House”, the ecological house for the future which obtained numerous award such as the Ecotech Award for being an eco-virtuous company).

4.2 *Brunello Cucinelli Spa*

Convinced that the peaceful atmosphere and the beauty of a local area enhance creativity and the respect of human values, Mr. Brunello Cucinelli set up the headquarters of the company in the fourteenth century village of Solomeo, in Umbria, in the same places where he had absorbed St. Francis’s philosophy since his childhood. The entrepreneur is actively involved in working for the common good by producing a shared value, which is the fruit of his involvement, together with his employees and the local community.

“I dream of a form of modern capitalism with strong ancient roots. I believe in a humanistic enterprise, which always places human values in first place. I think that there can be no quality without humanity. In my organization the reference point is the common good” (B. Cucinelli, 2015).

“All revenues are divided in four equal parts: the first is attributed to the company, in order to consolidate future investment; the second one to the entrepreneur; the third to the employees, whose salaries are about 20% higher than the national contract, while the fourth part is to beautify humanity, that is, the creation of services, i.e. a theater or a hospital, that can benefit the entire community” (B. Cucinelli, 2015)².

“I would like to convey our land and the place from which we come through our artifacts, trying to work with dignity, tolerance and respect. Our daily work becomes a partaker of spirituality” (B. Cucinelli, 2015).

4.3 *BoxMarche Spa*³

“The true roots of BoxMarche and of many Marchegian entrepreneurs, can be traced back 400 years to the culture surrounding the harvest, which prepared these populations for the world of entrepreneurship. The agrarian culture embraced profound values that were based on Christian doctrine, and which became the foundation for sustainable, authentic and humane socio-economic development. The management of BoxMarche is the classic demonstration of this category of entrepreneur who has embraced the precious education inherited from one’s

²www.brunellocucinelli.com/it/filosofia#/page1

³For a more detailed analysis of this case, see: Del Baldo (2010b).

ancestors, from whom they inherited the fundamental values of family, faith, work, commitment, and courage. The family unit was and is today at the forefront of BoxMarche's hierarchy of values; it is the reason why the company stands out, a badge of honor for our land" (Don Lamberto Pigni, President of Pigni Group, partner, 2013).

"We have an emotional tie to our territory. We want to use our abilities to sustain the local economy. Our activities are not only business choices but are networks made, first and foremost, by Human Beings (T. Dominici, Managing director of BoxMarche, May 23rd, 2012)."

"Perhaps it's a little presumptuous, but we love to define ourselves as the agents of civilization. The small entrepreneur is a "builder" (of activities, of men, of wealth). Our firm embodies a narrative identity and tells a story. For this reason, it has a soul linked to the spirit and dignity of the persons and is called to a great responsibility, inasmuch we have inherited the land from our fathers, but we also have it on loan from our children" (T. Dominici, Managing director of BoxMarche April 5th, 2011).

4.4 Elica Group

Elica has obtained a number of awards and recognitions that formally acknowledge the genuine commitment to human resources. Since 2007 it has been among the leading attractors of talent in Italy. For three consecutive years it was included in the Top Employers Italy and in 2011 acknowledged as "a company excelling in the management of human resources" by the CRF Institute (CRF, 2012). Moreover, it was recognized as "Best place to work in 2011 in Italy and Europe" by the Great Place to Work Institute, which evaluates over 1000 businesses throughout Europe to identify the best working environments. In Mexico, it has been awarded by the Instituto Nacional para la Educaci3n de los adultos for its work in improving the scholastic education of those who work for ElicaMex. The Ermanno Casoli Foundation, in the memory of the founder of Elica, was established in 2007 in order to strengthen the link between the worlds of the arts and industry, by promoting initiatives in the field of contemporary art.

"Elica is for us an engine through which passion, experience, innovation, well-being and listening to internal and external needs can create an impression on our surrounding environment" (F. Casoli, President of Elica Group, May 27th 2011).

"We are very proud of these awards, which recognize the bounty and continuity of the work that we're doing. The first objective of human resources management is to give support to the company in order to create the best conditions for the personal and professional development of its people and provide the necessary tools for them to become the main actors in their own growth with the same willingness dedicated to the group's growth" (E. Zampetti, HR Manager, June 12th, 2011).

"Excellence cannot be created if we do not live in a workplace which practices excellence in the care of the individual, both within and outside the workplace environment. From this starting point, Elica Life was created, whose objective is to

provide employees with a series of services to improve their lifestyle and work life balance and establishing more than a mere professional relationship” (CEO, September 10th, 2011).

4.5 *FAAM Spa*

FAAM aims to be a proper, innovative and transparent company, mainly founded on human resources and, more generally, on social and relational capital, which are the basis of growth projects. It has created a junior academy for internal training, adopted a code of ethics, the balanced scorecard, and several environmental certifications. The company has obtained numerous awards for its products quality, innovations, and the promotion of women in all hierarchical positions.

“Each stakeholder who has with us any kind of relationship, looks for trust in our relationships (. . .) If you want to get out of the crisis, the only way is to re-orientate toward CSR authentic practices. FAAM will continue the path already taken because we believe in it and in the future we will be more and more geared toward CSR” (F. Vitali, Past President, February 21st, 2012).

4.6 *Loccioni Group*⁴

Enrico Loccioni’s entrepreneurial venture represents an excellent example of an evolutionary path (started in the 1960th) taken toward a knowledge-based business, centred on the principles of tradition and innovation. At the same time it exemplifies the industrial processes of many Italian small towns launched first by entrepreneurs who knew how to recuperate and give value to the heritage of customs, traditions, civil conditions that their sharecropper ancestors had left. An inheritance of co-responsibility that is deeply entrenched in the Marchegian spirit and culture: solidarity, good sense, wisdom, prudence, work ethics and neighbourliness. Nowadays the Loccioni Group is included among the Italian best performing companies (Marchegian excellent companies—Istao, 2014) and has been recognized as “the best place to work” and “top employers company” 2014 by the CFR and the Great Place to Work Institutes. Moreover, a multitude of recognitions have been attributed both to the founder (Enrico Loccioni) and to his Group: for the excellent level of innovation, the authentic implementation of CSR and sustainability-oriented projects and the genuine ethical orientation (i.e.: the Sodalitas Social Award in 2005, 2008 and 2009, for “Internal Processes of CSR and network enterprise model”, the “Metalmezzadro project in the knowledge-based business” and “Sustainability Projects”); the “Business and Culture” Award in 2003; the Legambiente award (for the “Leaf Community

⁴For a more detailed analysis see: Del Baldo (2013a).

Project: Leaf Energy and Future” and for being a partner of the European Commission in the Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign); and the “Olivettiano Business of the year 2008” by Ernst & Joung.

“I had the opportunity to meet him (Enrico Loccioni) the first time in the early Sixties, as a supplier and installer of electrical equipment at our plant. I followed his “take-off” and his high flying” with admiration (F. Merloni, Ariston Thermo Group, Preface; see: Bartocci, 2011: 11).

The culture of the whole Group is based on the following shared values: Imagination (being capable of creating); Energy (the capability to dream and to accomplish one’s dreams); Responsibility (for the air that we breathe, the land that we walk on, the resources that we utilize, and the trust that we earn); and Tradition & Innovation.

“I had and I have the dream to create a model of a company aware of its social role, of its future in the territory and the world; we desire to be the creators of the future rather than just mere spectators. To nurture this dream, people must understand the future they want for themselves and for the group” (E. Loccioni, President of the Loccioni Group, March 23rd, 2014).

“Take care of this piece of land where the company is located, to stay here where our roots are, trying to add value to people and the environment, is my (and our) great enterprise. We want to spread a new work culture based on passion, enjoyment and beauty. To network with the territory, with its institutions, its cultural and economic community is essential for me and for us. Our young people (employees and external collaborators) are passionate about doing their job well. Seeing them with a smile in their eyes, seeing their respect and sense of fair play in the work place is something which fills my heart with joy and affection. There must be a passion for continuous improvement because as a friend of mine, a village priest, said: the best thing we can do is leave things in a better way than how we found them as we have received more than we have given”. (E. Loccioni, President of the Loccioni Group, July 20th, 2013).

From these speeches the charismatic personality of the leader emerges, his ability to interpret the reality through a different outlook and to transform problems into opportunities for the community and for business (Bruni & Sena, 2013). The afore stated values and principles have driven the Loccioni Group to take care of the Esino river, which twice in the past damaged the company when it flooded. A specific investment project called “Flumen” (which involves five towns and the local public institution) has been implemented to reinstate the river course to its original position, to drain and clean up the dunes, preserve the fauna and flora biodiversity. At the present time the 2 km of “river auction” are a fluvial laboratory for the measurement and prevention of ecological disasters. It is an example of good practice in “social imagination” which refers to the love of the territory and the fusion of innovation and tradition (Varvelli & Varvelli, 2014).

“Why spend money on something that is not mine? I saw an opportunity in the river, not only a threat. With the biomass (hydropower) energy we will repay our investments and the benefits will be shared by the entire community. And, most importantly, I returned the territory to its history and its beauty of 50 years ago” (E. Loccioni, January 26th, 2014).

A further examples of the authentic orientation to the common good is provided by many other projects, such as the Leaf Community and the Chemo Apothecary.

“The leaf community is something like a philosophical current and religious faith. The leaf house is inhabited on the top floor by transient guests, and the other two floors are permanently inhabited by young people working in the Group. However, this house does not produce an ounce of the dreaded CO₂. It does not consume a single watt of electricity, nor does it waste even half a litre of water” (Bartocci, 2011: 89 and 91).

“As a first point, the centrality of the Humancare project lies in the word human, that is the centrality of the man, a fundamental asset of this company. And, so the health line of the Loccioni Group has already taken consistency in the Chemo Apothecary, a system for automatic dispensing of chemotherapy drugs, first in the world and produced by Loccioni researches”. (Bartocci, 2011: 105).

4.7 SGR Group

The importance that SGR has attributed to authentic relationships comes from the past; going back 20–30 years to the history of the group’s business activities, the supply of methane gas to the area and the country, represents a strong relationship with the territory. The group is in fact a “territorial company” (Baldarelli, Del Baldo, & Nesheva-Kiosseva, 2014) which spreads the culture of sustainability through a wide variety of initiatives. It actively contributes to building a model of sustainable local governance, promoted by a network of public and private operators (universities, institutions and non profit organizations) which activate mechanisms of participation in the socio-economic fabric aimed at the common good.

The President of the Group is a woman—Dionigi M.—who acts as a charismatic leader and reference point for the company, whose values have been inherited from the founders and interpreted in coherence with the changed internal and external environmental context. Throughout difficulties and challenges, she has combined humility with tenacity, determination, the spirit of sacrifice and energy. Her relational approach can be translated into the principle of the “door being open” to each collaborator. Democratic participation, trust and relationships characterize SGR governance.

“We are known as an innovative and dynamic multi-utilities company, respectful of the environment which is greatly tied to the territory and the community. Our sustainability report is a process of dialogue with all the protagonists of context in which the SGR Group operates and which contains challenging objectives on which we will concentrate our efforts. It is the story of a live experience with the territory, the community and our stakeholders (M. Dionigi, President, May 2012).

4.8 Insurance Agency Ornella Seca

Ornella (the founder) decided to enter the project Economy of Communion from the start of the company, because her life has always been based on the sound values of brotherhood, love of neighbor and justice, which she also wants to integrate in her

work. Each year she allocates part of the profits to the Association United World, a NGO aimed at spreading the culture of dialogue and unity among peoples and to realize sustainable activities for the development of poor countries (i.e. in Bolivia).

Ornella is always the first to take responsibility for the good of others—whether it is an employee or a customer—and this is perceived as a concrete example of being able to implement the EoC values (the willingness to dialogue, clarification and training) even in difficult times.

4.9 *Bertola Srl*

The founder (Mr. Livio Bertola) introduced the basic concepts of the Economy of Communion, proposing to live the “golden rule” in his daily life: “whatever you wish that men would do to you, do you to them”. He progressively became interested in his employees, their daily difficulties and personal interests, as well as their family environment. This knowledge allowed him to take care of everyone’s needs, making them feel part of a big family, near (the company and the local community) and far (the entire world). Among the main project promoted by Bertola Srl, the company created schools in Sudan and Senegal that provide the training and education of young people and women.

“One day an unemployed person came looking for work. He looked like a man in pain; he was tired and had no family. I knew that at that moment I could not hire anyone, because there was not enough work and that person seemed the less suitable. But I could not bear the thought of leaving him on the road. I decided to take the young man reserving a warm welcome. Subsequently I found out he was a drug addict. I helped him. Today this young man is still among our employees. He has given up his drug addiction, is happy and works with the same community to help others overcome drug” (L. Bertola, October 2nd, 2014).

4.10 *Mercurio Net Srl*

The company is part of the EoC project, based on the principles of communion and universal fraternity applied to the business environment, following the charisma of Lubich (2001) who founded the Catholic Movement called “Focolare”. It is a concrete example of how the spiritual and moral values can actually influence daily economic life. All corporate profits are divided into three parts: one for future investments, one for the poor living near and far, and the third one to fund projects for the formation of “new men” (through professional and spiritual education and training).

“The EoC entrepreneur must have a strong charisma, so as to become a guide for himself and for others and act as educator, aware that the relationships that are built

during life are much more important than the company itself ” (R. Ruffini, November, 11th, 2014).

“Every Monday morning we have a meeting with all our employees, to share objectives, politics, problems, results and outcomes, i.e. the periodical revenues and the budget. Everyone is called to express ideas, in other words we put the activity and the business planning in communion” (R. Ruffini October 9th, 2014).

“Since 2008, with the outbreak of the economic crisis, there has been a worsening of the company finances and I decided to waiver my compensation, until the end of the crisis. At this point all the employees spontaneously decided to reduce their salary” (R. Ruffini October 9th, 2014).

“We should never compromise on the ethics issue, making unfair competition (i.e. selling unoriginal software). Even at the cost of risking the closure of the company, we have always found different solutions. For example a few years ago a bank accidentally credited 35,000 euro onto the current account of the company; we immediately decided to inform the bank and return the entire amount, although we had serious cash flow problems. A few days later our company was selected by a major customer to handle an important project. Our silent partner (the Providence) could find space in our company” (R. Ruffini, November, 11th, 2014).

The above mentioned narrative statements and principles are summed up in the following table (Table 3) where for each company the main values are linked to the Encyclical principles.

5 Concluding Reflections

Francis (Enycl. Letter, 2015) urges a major attempt to integrate all dimensions of ecology and suggests that the main task is to incorporate nature as primordial stakeholder in the functioning of human organizations, including businesses, public administration and civil society organizations. Hence, the crucial question concerns how to develop the ecological sensitivity and responsiveness of people at different levels of organizations, and how then to translate the emerging ecological consciousness into effective and caring organizational practices that organizations can develop into a culture of Earth Citizenship.

Starting from this assumption, the work highlights that both scholars and companies demonstrate that resilience and a creative response to the deep economic, social and anthropological crisis can be experienced and testified. The case studies are in fact examples of how entrepreneurs/managers can promote cultural reorientation, helping others to unlearn the bad habits inspired by ‘turbo-capitalism’ (Matacena, 2010) and valorize humanity, relationships and the territory in which they do business. They show not so much original business experiences, but rather exceptional stories of humanity in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the reasons of the heart from those of the mind (F. Merloni; see: Bartocci, 2011, Prologue). These companies can be considered virtuous and “happy companies” where the gap between the declared and shared values is reduced, and people are

Table 3 Summary of the case study analysis

| Encyclical principle | Company |
|--|---|
| The common good | Mercurio Net Srl Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca, Brunello Cucinelli, BoxMarche, Loccioni |
| The urgency for “not weak responses” | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca, Loccioni group |
| Universal communion | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca |
| The crisis and effects of modern anthropocentrism | Mercurio Net Srl Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca, Ariston thermo group, Brunello Cucinelli, BoxMarche, Loccioni group |
| Holistic/Integral development; Sustainable development | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca, Brunello Cucinelli, Ariston thermo group, BoxMarche, Elica, Faam, Loccioni, SGR group |
| The question of leadership | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca, Brunello Cucinelli, Loccioni group, SGR group |
| The integral ecology: environmental ecology, economic ecology, social ecology, cultural ecology, and ecology of daily life | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca Ariston thermo group, Brunello Cucinelli, BoxMarche, Loccioni group |
| The centrality of the person and interpersonal relationships | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca, Ariston thermo group, Brunello Cucinelli, Box Marche, Elica, Faam, Loccioni group, SGR group |
| Dialogue for innovative national, local and international policies | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca., Ariston thermo group, Box Marche, Elica, Loccioni group |
| Transparency in decision-making | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca. Box Marche, Elica, Faam, Loccioni group, SGR group |
| Subsidiarity | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca., BoxMarche, Elica, Loccioni group, SGR group |
| Collaboration, active involvement of the local community | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca., Ariston thermo group, Brunello Cucinelli, BoxMarche, Elica, Faam, Loccioni, SGR group |
| Educating for the covenant between humanity and the environment | Mercurio Net Srl, Brunello Cucinelli, BoxMarche, Elica, Faam, Loccioni group, SGR group |
| Ecological conversion | Brunello Cucinelli, BoxMarche, Loccioni group, SGR group |
| Toward a new lifestyle (sobriety, humility, frugality, spirituality) | Mercurio Net Srl, Bertola Srl, insurance agency O. Seca, Brunello Cucinelli, BoxMarche, Loccioni group |

really engaged in the pursuit of the common good (Borgato, 2014). Accordingly, we can summarize the following lines of reflection.

Fist, a courageous and ethics-driven leadership render themselves capable of influencing the socio-economic terrain they belong to and calling others to imitate those virtues. A common trait of all entrepreneurs/managers considered in this study is that they possess moral depth (often related to the family nature of the business, and a high level of social cohesion and social capital), which generates charisma, enthusiasm, the capacity to communicate the vision of a company where it is a pleasure to work. Entrepreneurs also present themselves as innovators, who—starting from ‘an act of faith’—are able to inspire in others the positive will to emulate their choices.

Second, the conviction that the bases for integral development are in the diffusion of authentic anthropological values, characterize the companies which “adhere” to the Encyclical Letter’s principles and render them multicultural companies engaged in the local and global community.

Finally, the capacity to stimulate and contribute to the progress of individuals and the socio-economic contexts derives to a rootedness which is not an anchor, but rather a jumping off point for confronting the world armed with a collection of authentic values (Del Baldo & Demartini, 2012).

We can thus conclude drawing from A prayer for our earth (Pope Francesco): (we should) Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction (Encycl. Letter, 2015: 178).

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