

POLICIES AND PUBLIC HAPPINESS:
THE ECONOMY OF FRANCESCO SEEN THROUGH THE LENS
OF THE CIVIL ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

The Economy of Francesco, launched by Pope Francis's initiative in 2019, is a global movement of young economists, entrepreneurs and changemakers aiming to rethink the whole economic system. The initiative has now developed over two years, seeing the commitment of thousands of young people from various parts of the globe. The work was divided into thematic areas and villages. This article addresses what has been developed in the Policies and Happiness village, highlighting the pros and cons of this policy setting.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term *capitalism* is employed to describe the current global economy because there is no better alternative. Even though many are aware that the term should be pluralized, i.e. *capitalisms* instead of *capitalism*, to describe the different shapes of local and regional economies all over the world, both supporters (Friedman, 2020) and critics (Zizek, 2019) still refer to capitalism, sometimes adding adjectives such as “new” (Sennet, 2007), “natural” (Hawken et al., 2011), “crowd-based” (Sundararajan, 2016), “platform” (Srincek, 2017), or “surveillance” (Zuboff, 2019). We might infer that there is some overlap between the global economy and capitalism and that the different forms local and national economies take are just variations of the same thing, whereas the core principles of capitalism guarantee similarity.

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An exhaustive list of these principles cannot be given because of the continuous evolution of capitalism. For the purposes of the present analysis, we mention just a few general principles that form the basis of capitalism's edifice. We start with those described by Weber in his masterpiece, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5): a constant, endless, rational search for gain; the pursuit of profit based on peaceful instances of exchange; the rational employment of capital (means of production) to obtain more capital; and profitability of the economic enterprise, calculating the rate of profit by weighing the final balance against the initial one (i.e. the calculus of capital). At the national level, the belief is that the growth of GDP is the sign – if not the cause – of the betterment of conditions for everyone. Since exchanges do not take place in abstract spaces and equality is often a condition *de jure* that is not realized *de facto*, we can add the use of power at the individual, national and international level to determine in one's own favour the result of the exchange. This last aspect seems particularly relevant when reading and analysing global relations, such as that between the North and South, and cannot be underestimated in every other (unbalanced) relation in which the private interest is pursued and gained, exacerbating different conditions of strength. The liquification of modernity (Bauman, 2000) has intensified the individual dimensions, disrupting old ways of understanding relationality in quantitative and qualitative terms. There is a need to overcome utilitarian relationships and read social relationships as interpersonal relationships (Zamagni, 2006), highlighting the nature of an encounter (Gui, 1987; 2000), in order to develop a we-thinking (Smerilli, 2014) and let relational goods spread (Bruni, 2011; Becchetti, Pelloni and Rossetti, 2008) to fully develop a community of advantage (Sugden, 2018).

The Economy of Francesco (EoF, henceforth) and the concept of the civil economy both challenge the principles of capitalism. The former is a global movement of more than 2000 young (under 35 years old) economists, entrepreneurs and change-makers who, in 2019, answered Pope Francis' call to gather in Assisi to rethink and change the global economy. The three pillars of the EoF are Pope Francis, with his social and economic magisterium, the Franciscan economic thought of the late Middle Ages, which is a source of precious knowledge with which to imagine a new economy, and – it goes without saying – the ideas of young people thinking, working and living a new economy.

The civil economy (Bruni and Zamagni, 2016) is a different creature. It means basically two things: 1) a tradition of economic and philosophical thought that flourished in the Italian cultural context of the 18th century, and 2) an open laboratory of theory and good practices that today involves scholars and protagonists from the worlds of business, education and civil society. Civil economy adds different terms to those recurrent in classical (political economy) and neoclassical economics: common good, reciprocity, civil virtues, public trust, mutual assistance, public happiness. From the practical side, the civil economy promotes a responsible consumption where individuals are called on to vote with their wallets (Becchetti, 2011) and ethical finance is accompanied by shareholder activism (Becchetti et al., 2012). Commerce has a 'peacekeeping' power for societies, and actors in the market are called

on to act, recognizing the mutual benefit of their relationships. Although some authors operationalise a difference between social and civil enterprises (e.g. Zamagni, 2013), focusing more – in our understanding – on the property relationships within a company rather than their social responsibility, enterprises are being called on to operate sustainably in terms of both their inner and outer dimensions. Nowadays, in accordance with the principles of a real corporate social responsibility (Zamagni and Bruni, 2013) or the so-called creation of shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2006; 2011), we might say that there should be an effort to substitute a culture of waste (Pope Francis, 2015) with a culture of care. From another perspective, although there is no indicated business model when it comes to the civil economy, in our opinion it is possible to find and build sustainable business models that take into consideration enterprise citizenship and aim to change the linear production envisaged by capitalism, in line with more sustainable approaches such as the circular economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015; Kirchherr et al., 2017) or the doughnut economy (Raworth, 2017).

The authors of this article joined the EoF after/while obtaining their Ph.D. degrees in Sciences of Civil Economy. Before the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the in-person meeting in Assisi, the 2000 young participants in the EoF were divided into twelve thematic “villages” working on particular topics and projects. Given our background in civil economy, defined in the 18th century by its founder Antonio Genovesi as the “science of public happiness”¹, we were asked to join and coordinate the “Policies and Happiness” village. As the name suggests, the idea is that economic policy, and public policy more generally, should focus and be based on multidimensional indexes of the development of a country (Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi 2009; Alkire and Foster, 2011). The corollary is that GDP is a poor measure to determine the happiness of a country and its population. Within the village, we worked on this topic with international scholars from many countries.

The scope of this article is threefold, and it coincides with its structure. First, we explore the sense in which the EoF and the civil economy challenge contemporary capitalism, highlighting the overlap and differences between the two approaches. Second, we illustrate the work undertaken within the Policies and Happiness village, presenting the topics and activities considered. Third, we highlight some limits that the work within the village presented and that, hopefully, can be overcome. Final remarks will conclude this article.

2. REFORM, TRANSFORM, REVOLVE

The EoF’s basic principle, born from the overlapping of Pope Francis’ ideas, Franciscan economic thought, and young economists and entrepreneurs, is that every economic system, practice and theory should put at its centre those excluded from

¹ The correct expression should be *felicitas publica*, in light of the etymological differences between the Latin word *felicitas* and the English *happiness* (Bruni, 2018a, b).

the contemporary global economy. The aim of every economy – its *telos* – should be the social inclusion of the excluded (Pope Francis, 2015). There is something analogous, if not identical, in the part of political philosophy that focuses on the theories of justice. The idea of prioritarianism (Arneson, 2000) is that the social and economic status of something should be judged by the way it deals with the least advantaged, the excluded. Somehow, one can also infer this from John Rawls's Difference Principle, even if in his *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1999) inequalities are legitimized insofar as the least advantaged benefit from these. Be that as it may, the EoF started asking: who are those excluded from capitalism? The answers are globally applicable: poor people, the least advantaged, those marginalized from the productive and distributive process, and the environment, seen as a sterile background or a source to exploit (Pope Francis, 2015; Dasgupta, 2021). The list can be extended. We can also mention the women in the workplaces (exclusion here stands for unjust treatment) and some topics from economic theory (there are thousands of courses in microeconomics focused on private goods, but few, if any, focus on common goods). To them, for them, with them, the EoF wants to build a fraternal economy (Francis, 2020) where sustainable development and social justice go hand in hand. St. Francis of Assisi's life went in the very same direction (Todeschini, 2009). His choice of voluntary poverty (the highest poverty; Agamben, 2020) aimed to free others from non-chosen poverty. Franciscan institutions such as the Monti di Pietà, protoforms of the bank that resemble contemporary microcredit (Yunus, 1998), aimed to free people from the tragic dilemma between poverty and usury. The EoF gathered people in academia as well as in enterprises and civil society who are already working for this different economy to emerge and substitute capitalism.

Today, as in the 18th century, the civil economy is built around the idea of mutual assistance. The rationale behind mutual assistance is that the parties involved in market exchange can internalize its mutually beneficial nature (Bruni and Sugden, 2008): each intentionally invests in the interest of the other in addition to his own interest. Mutual benefit is part of everyone's intentions. In civil economy humanism, there is no common good without intentionally seeking it. From here, we can understand Genovesi, who, even before indicating economics as the science of the wealth of nations, preferred to define it as the science of public happiness. The economy is "civil" when it considers the good of the *civitas* (meaning a social agglomerate) as a determining element of the actions and choices of economic actors, and it is "uncivilized" when it promotes economic activities that damage the *civitas* in all its expressions, from people to buildings, from quality of life to the environment.

One can note an area of overlap between the EoF and the civil economy. Both promote the idea of the common good over the total good. The latter is the sum of all individuals' utility: some individuals scoring 0 is not important as long as the total amount is high. The common good is a multiplication: if one member scores 0, then the final result will be 0 for all. In civil economy terms, one cannot make oneself happy without making others happy.

Moreover, the EoF and civil economy highlight some worrisome hidden principles of capitalism. The EoF shows that the pure pursuit of profit does not benefit all since

an increasing number of people are excluded from capitalism. Capitalism seems connected to increasing inequalities, not to mention the exploitation of nature. The civil economy unveils the limits of the invisible-hand principle, according to which the individual pursuit of self-interest unintentionally promotes the public good.

All of these things considered, we should not stretch the similarities too far. The civil economy is an expression of a southern European way to a market economy (some would say of a different spirit of capitalism from that developed in northern Europe). The Economy of Francesco, at least in its intention, is a global movement composed of many different cultures and traditions. Nevertheless, the real difference lies not in the structure or the content of the two economic traditions. Conversely, we think that they diverge when relating their principles to those of contemporary capitalism. To explain our point, let us first show how, in general, economic theory and practice can deal with the principles of contemporary capitalism. We see three main ways.

First, there is the reformistic approach. In this scenario, the principles of capitalism are fully accepted and endorsed. However, recognizing that there is a gap between principles and their application in concrete situations, there is an attempt to reduce the gap through progressive implementations. The reforms can be carried forward by a decision-maker (government, international institution) or can emerge spontaneously, mirroring the demands of civil society. In their monumental book, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski and Chiapello (2018) showed that capitalism evolves by incorporating the criticisms it receives from various fronts into its structures. Thus the “social” criticisms (from socialists, workers, environmentalists, etc.) and the “aesthetic” ones (from intellectuals and artists), which represented the main reactions to capitalism in the second half of the twentieth century, rather than causing the collapse of capitalism have become its cornerstones, giving life to the capitalism of today in which the major players are businesses borne of young people with cultures and mentalities very different from those of the capitalists of the past century. Today, in large companies we are increasingly witnessing the development of social and environmental budgets, of “social business”, attention to workplace well-being, leading to the recent concepts of “symbolic” or even “spiritual” company capital. Parallel to the inclusion and transformation of social criticism, this capitalism has also internalized “aesthetic” criticism, giving rise to a new creative era. Chameleon-like, capitalism transforms itself, feeding on everything it finds in its path, like an empire conquering enemy peoples and incorporating their culture, art and religion. We see it even today, with capitalism absorbing a new series of criticisms, such as the “ecological” ones – one can see this in the expanding phenomenon of impact investing (Brest and Born, 2013) and green bonds (Tang and Zhang, 2020).

The second approach is the transformative one. The idea is to scrutinize the principles of capitalism, trying to determine what is acceptable and what should instead be replaced. To pick just one example, one can think that the neoliberal libertarian ideology of a minimal state (Nozick, 2013) behind capitalism is wrong and that current times call for the recognition and enhancement of the entrepreneurial role of nation states (Mazzucato 2018; 2021). Moreover, one can aim for some economic activities (such as the weapons or gambling industries) to not be ac-

counted for within the GDP of a country because they worsen the quality of life. Meanwhile, as already stated, consumers are given the chance to vote with their wallets and influence enterprises thanks to shareholder activism. We can list many other examples, but the core of this idea is to change some principles while maintaining others.

The last approach is the revolutionary one. One can refuse the principles of capitalism in bulk, aiming for a new economic system. When Karl Marx pointed out that the capitalistic productive process was exploiting workers and concentrating wealth in the hands of few, he did not have in mind the reform of that intrinsically wrong system. He refused all socialist solutions and tried to give his analysis a scientific vest, specifically to move toward a new production system. Leaving aside the concrete realizations of Marx's project and the merit of his analysis, his thought was a good example of what we mean by a revolutionary approach. For example, history saw this kind of approach when Europe moved from a feudal agricultural system to an industrial economy.

Where do the EoF and civil economy stand in this tripartition? In our view, the civil economy held and holds a transformative approach to capitalism, while the EoF leans more towards a revolutionary one. Nevertheless, things are more complicated than that: intentions have to confront reality. In other words, the results the EoF and civil economy can obtain do not depend solely on their aims – otherwise, this would be the kind of “idealism” that Marx criticized in Hegel – but also on how those aims impact reality. Under these new lenses, both recede one step behind in the tripartition. The civil economy might have a fundamentally reformistic approach, especially in the countries in which it is developing (Southern Europe). The Economy of Francesco, potentially, can be transformative of many of the dominant economic theories and practices in contemporary society.

Having sketched the principles, aims and reciprocal relationship between the EoF and the civil economy, we now move to the work of the Policies and Happiness village.

3. POLICIES AND HAPPINESS

As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic has strongly influenced the development of the work undertaken by the EoF villages. What was supposed to be an in-person event was replaced by a completely digitized process that allowed the continuation of the works online, or to put it in Floridi's (2014) words, *on-life*.

The focus of the first discussions among participants was the different potential ways of contributing to happiness (personal and social) in light of the “biodiversity” of cultures and roles present in the village (e.g. university students, policymakers, urbanists, economists, veterinarians, philosophers, lawyers, and consecrated people). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 situation impacted participation, which was significantly reduced compared to initial expectations. Of 120 participants initially assigned to the village, only 50 attended and actively participated in the activities. In addition, geographical representation was unbalanced, with a huge majority of South Ameri-

cans and Europeans proactively engaged and small numbers coming from Africa and Asia. Perhaps difficulties in attending due to time zones had an impact as well.

The abovementioned overlap between EoF and civil economy principles characterised all of the work carried out. This work was developed in two directions, one vertical and one horizontal, which have been progressing in different ways over time and were integrated in several moments of reflection among sub-groups. The first phase was marked by a series of input and webinars provided in a top-down modality. This was done to give all participants the chance to understand and become familiar with the theoretical background behind the EoF and the civil economy, in order to have a mutual understanding of the topics addressed.

Therefore, in the first year of activity, several webinars with several scholars (J. Sachs, V. Shiva, N. Folbre, L. Bruni, S. Bartolini, to mention just a few) were organized, giving birth to a format that was successfully transformed into the “EoF School” carried out in the second year for the entire movement. The format involved the presentation of a topic by an academic, followed by a dialogue with two junior discussants. This served to go deeper into the issues and bring out the voices of young people by giving them a leading role, which they are hardly used to.

The topics addressed were varied and included *eudamonia*, public happiness, and “*Felicitas Publica*”, relational goods and education, *oikonomia* and family, the importance of care, the relationship between food and social structures, urbanism and well-being, among many others. In between these virtual appointments, the village work was carried out using several facilitation tools such as the world café methodology, which allowed participants to get to know each other better and gain confidence in the topics discussed and processes to be carried out.

Before the final event in November 2020, and in light of the various themes addressed, the participants of the village were divided into 3 subgroups called on to reflect on three papal encyclicals (*Laudato si'*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Amoris Lætitia*) and from which to draw inspiration for the conception and planning of 3 “prophetic” proposals. These were:

1) The penguin model for happiness in flourishing cities:

Low rates of lasting happiness are observed in modern metropolises. The way human actions have modified nature and built our environment today is compromising human flourishing. Specifically, the way cities have been designed induces behaviour that isolates people. The world’s major cities are becoming overcrowded, negatively impacting people’s lives and nature, with higher costs of living, traffic jams, insufficient infrastructure to provide critical services (schools, preschools, nurseries, hospitals and public transportation), the destruction of ecosystems, and other environmental impacts generated by human activities. Furthermore, people who live in rural areas are migrating to big cities. The depopulation of small to medium-sized cities leaves these places with infrastructure that is underused. In both rural and urban areas, this also directly affects people’s capacity to bond with and care for others: while people in overcrowded cities lack time and space to develop strong relationships outside of work, people in rural areas often live in isolation with few opportunities for innovation, meaningful work and a sense of purpose.

There is a need to rethink the existing pattern of development and innovation, away from a system that is easy for governments and beneficial for large businesses (pooling the workforce in one place) but harms our common home, the planet. Both older people and young families with children in increasingly overcrowded cities face the challenge of providing/receiving adequate care and services for vulnerable citizens, as social networks fray as a result of young adults relocating to mega-cities. The lack of solid intergenerational bonds is not conducive to human happiness and well-being.

The process of urbanization, in which human beings relocate from the countryside to cities, has helped to create and drive improvements in quality of life standards. However, there is a point where the benefits of agglomeration are negated. Huge human populations in one or several metropolises result in the concentration of wealth, with little-to-no benefit to the wider economy. Furthermore, this may result in widespread negative effects in small and medium-size cities that are neglected and left without adequate job opportunities and access to services. Consequently, young people are left with few opportunities in their hometowns and are forced to leave their birth communities for mega-cities, in search of material wealth, safety and career opportunities. On the other hand, well-designed small and medium-sized cities can provide a healthy balance between innovative and impactful work for human beings, the well-being of families through solid social bonds, and protecting nature.

A process of *deglomeration* is needed. Investing in small and medium-sized cities can drive sustainable innovation and strengthen local economies. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves (Laudato Si').

2) Inclusive mapping (for flourishing communities):

A map is the registration of a specific flow of information and is a powerful tool for storytelling. How the story of a place is narrated can influence social life and social inclusion. The project on inclusive mapping will reveal and narrate stories that are usually hidden, ignored or even "invisible". These include the stories of people in situations of vulnerability who, nonetheless, have something to contribute to the common good. Inclusive mapping will also include subtle characteristics of a place, such as sounds, feelings it elicits and relational goods. In order to change the narrative and be an informative tool for positive change-making, maps can represent the knowledge, skills, resourcefulness and resilience of communities, as a way to facilitate connections and empower citizens to be the main protagonists of social transformation.

Using a collaborative methodology, the proposal addresses social fragmentation, invisibility, inequality and lack of belonging to a territory. In addition, ignorance of the resources and possibilities for human flourishing within a community will be taken into consideration.

The information will be mapped following E. Ostrom's framework: biophysical-technical characteristics; attributes of the community; rules-in-use. The aim is to map the following elements: barriers to happiness; availability of resources;

community dreams; urban experiences; soundscapes; nature and green areas; common and relational goods.

3) Children's Flourishing Index:

Policymakers set goals and measure their accomplishments using scales, such as gross domestic product (GDP), which generally do not truly reflect the priorities and needs of people and future generations. While new indexes and measures, such as the Human Development Index, have been proposed and adopted, an instrument truly capable of capturing the complexity of human flourishing, especially in terms of its relational dimensions, and that focuses on the well-being of future as much as present generations, is still lacking. Therefore, inspired by John Maynard Keynes, a new development index called the Children's Flourishing Index (CFI) will be developed.

The CFI aims to measure and incentivize important variables that we believe are key to the flourishing of children and future generations, such as the environment and nature, health and well-being, food security and nutrition, love and parental relationships, perceptions of beauty, dreaming ability, transformational and quality education, simplicity and curiosity, gender equality, generativity, and participatory processes. By measuring and incentivizing the flourishing of children, this index aims to develop evidence-based public policies to ensure integral human development through the generations.

Two main failures are related to the goals we understand should be pursued as a society. First, policymakers still focus on financial and other tangible outcomes (like GDP). Even when well-being and happiness are considered, they are referred to using a utilitarian notion of happiness as the fulfilment of individual desires. Thus, there is a failure to recognize the role that families, communities and all relational aspects of life have for human flourishing and the well-being of our planet. Fifty years of happiness and family studies show that happiness depends on genuine relationality: once people have enough income to live a decent life, it is their relational being, rather than their material one, that becomes the primary source of their happiness. Moreover, in line with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, happiness can be read as human flourishing, a concept that also accommodates the value of communities and non-instrumental relationships.

The second failure comes from the short-termism of policymaking. By focusing on the present generation's financial wealth/utility/happiness, we are undermining the capacity of future generations to face their own sustainable and fulfilling lives. Not all humans have the same opportunities, freedom of choice, and capabilities to dream the future they wish for, and these inequalities get even wider if future generations are considered.

The presentation and discussion of these projects concluded the first year of activities for the EoF. The second phase, launched in 2021, saw some structural changes within the governance and activities of the village. In line with the functional role of hierarchies (Meadows, 2019), a horizontal approach to the work of the village was undertaken, in which the role of the coordinators was to help, whenever needed,

the participants in carrying out their work. The subgroups were confirmed and given the freedom to develop their projects by looking for external (to EoF) interventions to enrich their proposals. Moreover, an incubation path was launched to translate the theoretical approaches into practical ones. The process is on its way, and future development is expected in line with the future steps of the EoF movement.

4. THE MISSED ENCOUNTER BETWEEN PUBLIC HAPPINESS AND OTHER CULTURAL TRADITIONS

In the 18th century, the Catholic priest Genovesi read contemporary (for his time) philosophers such as John Locke, Pierre Bayle and Jean-Jacque Rousseau. This resulted in charges of heresy, together with his removal as Chair of Metaphysics in Naples. The heterogeneity of ends, which brings to light results different from those expected by human design, is always at stake in history. In 1754, Genovesi was appointed as Chair of Commerce and Mechanics in Naples. From that moment on, he worked on the civil economy, inspiring many students and scholars, even today.

In the Policies and Happiness village, while talking about Genovesi's ideas we overlooked his eclecticism. Why? Because we ignored – more or less consciously – other traditions, mostly non-European, that could have contributed to the development of our collective reasoning. The unbalanced representation of different cultures that do not share or are alternative to Western culture was almost neglected. The process evolved much more as a rethinking of capitalism and its shapes, focusing on its foundational elements, missing the opportunity to include elements pertaining to other cultures and geographical contexts. Here we refer, for example, to the concept of *buen vivir* (typical of South American Indigenous cultures) or to the ideas of *harmony* (Asia) or *ubuntu* (Sub-Saharan ideology).

Buen vivir can also be discussed through the concepts of *sumak kawsay* or *ally kawsay* (a difference that we will not address here and that most of the time is not recognized in the Western simplification) and refers to the idea of harmony and the principle of reciprocity between living beings, with and in nature. It indicates life in harmony with the community and with nature, where the private and community spheres and the material and spiritual spheres are conceived of as interdependent. The Ecuadorian Constitution (2008) gives a practical example. In its articles, the right of the population to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment is recognized, and they guarantee sustainability and good living, *sumak kawsay* (art. 14), and the right of people, communities, and nationalities to enjoy their rights and exercise responsibilities within the framework of interculturality, respect for diversity, and harmonious coexistence with nature (art. 275). The differences between the Andean and Western worldviews are significant: the Andean idea is cosmo-centric, with man conscious of his passive and subordinate role with respect to the order of things, while the West holds an anthropocentric view. In the Andean system of thought, well-being is possible only within the community and in respect of *Pacha Mama*. The idea of development represents the Western modality for a good life, which includes

living better; *buen vivir* is the Andean way, which contemplates harmonious existence (Baldini, 2015).

The concept of *harmony*, which is fundamental in Asian cultures more focused on the well-being of the community rather than on the individual's rights, was also missing from our discussions. The concept of harmony in Asian culture is related to the structuring of communities according to a hierarchical rather than egalitarian dimension of relationships, where everyone has to fulfil the particular roles that society confers on them. In fact, individual rights are only those that do not conflict with social interests. In this perspective, there is a moral order created by Nature, not by man, and this reflects some analogies with the South American cosmovision. Moreover, such a view highlights the idea that there is no difference between private and public interest – an understanding very far from the Western idea of a tendential contrast between these different interests.

Ubuntu is a Sub-Saharan African ethic or ideology that focuses on loyalty and mutual relationships between people. It is an expression in the Bantu language that indicates “benevolence towards others”. It is a rule for life based on compassion and respect for others: “I am what I am by virtue of what we all are”. Ubuntu emphasizes support and help for one another and becoming aware of one's rights and duties; it is an ideal bestowed upon the whole of humanity, a desire for peace.

The three cultural concepts mentioned exhibit some elements of commonality and overlap with the principles of the civil economy and the EoF. Moreover, we believe that these are in line with some recent attempts to create new metaphysics (Coccia, 2019) that recognize the role of the vegetal world in our lives and well-being (Mancuso, 2017). Vegetable capitalism (Bruni, 2018a, b) may enrich our economy, giving us the opportunity to dismantle hierarchical systems typical of the animal kingdom and to learn more by looking at plants. It is undeniable that we need to reconstruct the relationship between human beings and their environment in an “integral ecology” (Pope Francis, 2015) that allows everyone to develop freely and in accordance with the principles of mutual aid and benefit (Genovesi, 2013). Dimensions such as reciprocity and trust cannot be left out. Many participants expressed their dissatisfaction and concern about a poor anthropology that assigns human beings the brutish role of taking care of their own interests. We are much more, and it is time for economics to start leaving behind dogmas such as *homo oeconomicus*, making space for new insights provided in past years by behavioural economics (e.g. Pelligra, 2006) and a capacity to recognize other dimensions that accompany self-interest and utility. In line with the idea that biodiversity is enriching, there is a need to create space in which people are allowed to produce their own synthesis and flourish (Nussbaum, 2006).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The activities described here cannot be considered exhaustive in terms of the experience the EoF as a process that we may read as a *rizoma* (Deleuze and Guattari,

2017), aiming to connect different cultures and perspectives, open new spaces, and depart from the hierarchical and stratified way of constructing knowledge.

The Economy of Francesco aims to construct an alternative to capitalism. In this purpose, it is in good company. To list a few alternative approaches, there is the civil economy (which we consider in this article), social economy, circular economy, doughnut economics, and so on. One can wonder if the emergence of so many alternatives, which inevitably overlap one with one another, is good news for people who are dissatisfied with capitalism. Our answer is affirmative, and it relies on the idea of freedom as opportunity, developed by Amartya Sen (2001). All of these alternatives constitute opportunities for the exercise of personal freedom. Opportunity is the yardstick of freedom: the choices we make every day, in fact, take on more meaning the more they are enriched by the reasons why we have discarded the others.

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