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Abstract: While contemporary Catholic campaigns on issues related to family policy, educational policy and civilizational issues enjoy high visibility in the public sphere, this is not the case for socio-economic campaigns. Yet Catholic social thought continues to inspire conceptions of economic linkages and of local socio-economic configurations. These experiments have even undergone a silent process of renewal since the 2008 economic crisis. The hypothesis assumed in this paper is that the elective affinities existing between Catholic thought and economic approaches are to be numbered in the plural, and that this pluralism can be fully grasped only at the local scale. This paper emphasizes the internal diversity of the various Catholic ethics. The Catholic entrepreneurial repertoire tends to oscillate between a straightforward discourse on the need to raise the moral standards of capitalism and a search for utopian alternatives to the market economy, with an infinity of nuances in between. The economic crisis has paradoxically given new visibility to this entrepreneurial repertoire, with Catholic discourse aiming to extract the socio-assistance repertoire from its charitable dimension. Comparison will focus on the Spanish Basque Country and on the Italian province of Brescia, in Lombardy. Both territories have long been Catholic bastions, within industrialized regions, with high levels of regional social capital. Both have experienced, in different ways, a process of secularization, and both were affected by the 2008 economic crisis. The paper comprises four sections. The first addresses the theoretical debate about the contribution made by religion to local development. The second section compares narratives of the role played by the Catholic matrix in matters of local development in the Spanish Basque Country and in Brescia. The third section proposes a fieldwork-based typology of contemporary Catholic approaches to the economy. The final section reviews the individual career profiles of five Catholic entrepreneurs and activists, in order to refine at an individual scale what has been said about the role played by religious socialization in the shaping of economic ethics.
While contemporary Catholic campaigns on issues related to family policy, educational policy and civilizational issues enjoy high visibility in the media and the public sphere (della Sudda 2014), this is not the case for socio-economic campaigns. Yet Catholic social thought continues to inspire conceptions of economic linkages and of local and regional socio-economic configurations. These experiments have even undergone a silent process of renewal since the 2008 economic crisis, which particularly hit Southern Europe. The hypothesis assumed in this chapter is that the elective affinities (Weber 1991) existing between Catholic thought and economic approaches are to be numbered in the plural, and that this pluralism can be fully grasped only at the local scale. In other words, and rather than repeating the sometimes ideologically-marked post-Weberian controversy over the respective economic impact of the Catholic and the Protestant ethics (Tropman 2002; Novak 1993), this chapter instead emphasizes the internal diversity of the various Catholic ethics. The Catholic entrepreneurial repertoire tends to oscillate between a straightforward discourse on the need to raise the moral standards of capitalism and a search for utopian alternatives to the market economy, with an infinity of nuances in between. Local observation provides an opportunity to grasp the concrete dimension of these different interpretations as well as, in a comprehensive approach, the doctrinal and ethical interpretations made by the social actors concerned. This perspective also permits some consideration of the changes experienced by the Catholic matrix, which was long a major presence in some of the territories considered here. The economic crisis has paradoxically given new visibility and presence to this entrepreneurial repertoire, with Catholic discourse aiming to extract the socio-assistance repertoire from its purely charitable dimension by including it within a global approach to economic action.

In this chapter, comparison will focus on the Spanish Basque Country, and more precisely on the provinces of Biscaye and Guipuzcoa, and on the Italian province of Brescia, in Lombardy. Both territories have long been Catholic bastions, within very industrialized regions, with high levels of local and regional social capital (Cartocci 2007; Mota and Subirats 2000; Barandiaran and Korta 2011). Both territories have experienced, in different ways, a process of accelerated secularization over the last two decades. On the economic front, both territories were affected by the 2008 economic and financial crisis which created difficulties for part of the local and regional economy, starting with the industrial sector. In this context, my fieldwork was intended to (1) find out ‘what remains’ of a Catholic territorial matrix which long played a crucial role in the historical constitution of the social capital within these regions, as well as models of local development; (2), to measure, where appropriate, the pluralism of Catholic approaches to economic linkages and their territorial ‘translations’ in a context of post-secularism and economic crisis.

The first of these two questions relates this chapter to the literature on the role of religion, both as an ethic and as praxis, in the making of territorial economic development. The second question refines this line of investigation by highlighting the multiplicity of Catholic approaches to entrepreneurship and, more broadly, to economic activity. The internal pluralism of the ‘Catholic archipelago’ (Colozzi and Martelli 1988; Giorgi 2012) here extends to economic conceptions and practices. This second perspective means we can avoid the culturalist

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1 ‘No job, no meal’. Inscription above a fireplace in an ancient house in the Aldudes (French Basque Country). This chapter is drawn from a book manuscript (The invisible politics of religion. Catholic mediation and contentious politics in Southern Europe), currently under submission.
temptation to mechanically associate one model of local development with one line of thinking and religious networks. Again, we are obliged to conclude that here too pluralism is present.

Ethico-religious conceptions are embodied in organizational and territorial experiments, which are themselves embedded in religious and economic institutions (Granovetter 1985). These forms of imbrication and embeddedness were historically constructed through processes of institutionalization, de-institutionalization and re-institutionalization of the Catholic presence within the local economy. Some of these economic experiments were linked to social movements of Catholic origin which thus expanded their social reach and influence through activity within the economic field. Finally, and in a Weberian perspective, these approaches were translated through the individual and collective interpretations of territorial actors, rather than by any mechanical implementation of the institutional discourse of the Church, which, truth to tell, seems less and less prescriptive.

This chapter comprises four sections. The first addresses the theoretical debate about the contribution made by religion to local development. The second section compares narratives of the role played by the Catholic matrix in matters of local development in the Spanish Basque Country and in Brescia. The third section proposes a typology of contemporary Catholic approaches to the economy, based on our fieldwork. The final section reviews the individual career profiles of five Catholic entrepreneurs and activists, in order to refine at an individual scale what has been said about the role played by religious and political socialization in the shaping of economic ethics. By doing so, the chapter proposes a pathway from the territorial matrix down to the individual actor, passing through the meso-organizational scale.

1. Religion and local development: culture, ethics and institutions

How has the doctrinal debate over the socio-economic thought of the Church, as reconstructed in the previous chapter, been translated into economic experiments on the ground? From a political sociology perspective, the challenge is to observe the role played by religion both as a doctrine and as a system of actors in the structuring of territorial political cultures which have helped to shape local models of development. For Philippe Braud, political culture, in its broadest sense, is ‘constituted by knowledge and beliefs that enable people to give some meaning to the daily experience of their relations to the power governing them and to the groups with which they identify’ (Braud 2002: 257, our translation). Lagroïe, François and Sawicki add that these political cultures are ‘maintained by the enduring nature of particular social relationships and by the continuation of norms, beliefs and models of behaviour’ (2002: 413). These representations may constitute a basis of commonly-shared values, which can affect perceptions of the political and economic power and linkages which exist in a variety of forms at the territorial scale. To what extent, and with what effects is religion one of the constitutive elements of these territorial political cultures, where political and economic dimensions are intermingled?

By focusing on the territorial scale, we distinguish our approach from cultural explanations of economic development through the measurement of values via large-scale opinion surveys (Dargent 2002). We would be equally sceptical about those macro-comparative approaches demonstrating the influence of religious beliefs on the growth rates of GDP per inhabitant (Barro and McCleary 2003). The territorial approach, in contrast, can be used to give some empirical consistency to approaches challenging the Weberian approach of elective affinities between religious beliefs and economic behaviour. In this vein, Niall Ferguson (2005) refers to the role of religion as an explanatory variable in order to understand the gap between the economic decline of Europe and the dynamism of the American economy. Despite its negative findings (while Americans became more fervent Protestants,
this in no way translated into a strengthening of their ascetic economic ethics and an increase in savings), Ferguson’s research has the merit of proving the contemporary relevance of, not so much the results, but the initial questions posed by Max Weber: is there a linkage between religious beliefs and attitudes and economic behaviour? In *The Catholic Ethic and Global Capitalism*, Bryan Fields (2003) also relies on Weber’s methodological intuition, but challenges Weber’s conclusion about the role of Protestantism by pointing to the example of Ireland. The economic development of the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s would thus present a challenge to any overly simplistic schemes (which caricature the Weberian but also the Marxist theses) depicting Catholicism as an obstacle to economic development:

The importance of using the Celtic Tiger in this debate should not be underestimated, for as long as countries such as Ireland remained Catholic and poor, these long-standing insights on the natural link between the Protestant ethic and capitalist development could not be challenged. However, if Ireland became wealthy while still remaining predominantly Catholic, how secure then would these insights remain? Furthermore, if it could be established that Catholicism was a key influence in shaping progressive socio-economic development before and during the Celtic Tiger, then Marx’s economic relations model would also have its work cut out to stay theoretically relevant. (Fields 2003: x)

Transposed to the territorial scale, this line of questioning can make sense if, departing from statistical correlations, the religious factor is integrated within a series of other indicators, (attachment to identity, local know-how, the historical trace left by specific economic organizations, etc.) which may underpin a predisposition for cooperation in one specific place rather than another. In other words, taking account of the religious factor calls for a flexible conception of the forms of a territorial economic linkage resulting from a complex alchemy between inter-firm competition, political strategies and localized predispositions towards cooperation.

A large number of territorial experiments in local development, including those which are a product of the social economy, partly owe their origins to politically- and/or religiously-marked currents of thought which are supported and extended by bodies whose functions include socialization, such as political parties, movements, trade unions, and Churches. George (1997) has stressed how self-management, as an economic system, could be both taken up by and criticised by political thinking as different as Marxism, Anarchism (in both its left-wing libertarian variant and in libertarian ultra-individualism), and democratic liberalism. One might add, historically speaking, religious sources and, in more contemporary fashion, the commitment shown to the themes of the social and solidarity economy by the ecology and anti-globalization movements. While the workers’ movement remains one of the principal matrices for the development of the social economy, with its periodically-updated controversies between Marxist and Proudhonian approaches to the social economy, the role of Social Christianity, standing alone or combined as in the Basque Country with nationalism, must also be stressed in the emergence of cooperative dynamics (Itçaina 2007). The role of Catholicism, beside other social and territorial factors, has also been stressed in the formation of a system of collective values leading to specific entrepreneurial forms in Quebec (Aktouf, Bédard and Chanlat 1992; Palard 2009). The historical genealogies of territorial forms of the Social and Solidarity Economy are crucial to highlighting the interconnections between ideologies, political, social and religious subcultures, political systems and social economy experiments. This stress laid

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2 In France, the tracking of cooperative or mutualist traditions by the MiRe-DIES regional monographs research programmes in 2001-2005 opened up ways forward in this direction. See for example, the weight of territorial and historical matrices which partly explain a distinct development of the social economy in Mulhouse and Besançon (Bessette, Guinchard, and Goutas 2003).
on political cultures can be used to plot more exactly the role of one of the constitutive factors of territorial social capital whose lack of definition can lead to confusion (Ritaine 2001).

Reflecting on the new forms of political and economic regionalism in eight European regions, Keating, Loughlin and Deschouwer (2003) propose an approach to the role of culture - among other strands, political and religious culture - which can be used, without closing down the debate, to find a new way to reintegrate this variable within explanations of territorial development³. According to these authors, ‘Here, we consider the matter of culture to be critical, not in the primordialist or essentialist sense, but as a symbolic realm in which a territorial level can be endowed with meaning, and a set of values to which actors can subscribe.’ (Keating et al. 2003: 35). This nuanced approach to the cultural factor is far from closing the door to an institutionalist approach. Its aim is rather to supplement more traditional analyses of territorial development by stressing the role played by the value representations shared by the actors involved. We would doubtless find, under another name, an equivalent of what the French approach to public policy terms a system of reference (référentiel) to designate this bedrock of values.

The religious is an integral part of those territorially-anchored markers which actors draw upon to construct their collective identities, perhaps deriving predispositions towards cooperation from this sense of belonging. Saying this is not the same as adopting a culturalist or essentialist position. On the contrary, it is precisely on the basis of a social and institutional constructionalism (Avanza and Laferté 2005) that we can fully grasp the range of the identity-associated and instrumental uses of the stock of cultural resources by actors in territorial development. When Thierry Berthet and Jacques Palard (1993) attribute great importance to the ‘religious fragment’ in the socialization of local entrepreneurs in north-east Vendée, they succeed in finding a balance between an explanation based on the properties or qualities of the territory and a constructivist approach: territorial identity is deconstructed, but its fragments are analysed, giving due weight to each part. They were thus able to reconstruct the linkage between a professional ethic, the Catholic matrix and the unreceptive political culture in which the actors were socialized. This mode of community relations has contributed, together with other factors, towards the formation of a specialised local industrial system in the Vendée, one of the four major governance models for local economies identified by Patrick Le Galès (2004). Studying an area in Quebec (the Beauce region), Palard has set out in quite similar terms the question of the weight of the local cultural model, including its religious dimension, in localized industrial development (Palard 2009). This analysis is less in terms of voluntarist strategies explicitly devised by the actors than seen as deriving from non-intentional social principles and practices, which does not mean that conscious strategies should be neglected.

This issue is framed in a neo-institutionalist perspective in that what is at stake is not only the prevalence of the order of social relationships over the motivations of individuals - a structural approach - but the cognitive dimension of institutions and the relative autonomy of cultural factors. We seem to find here some similarities with the treatment of the problem of

³ These authors propose a ternary typology of culture. Conceived of restrictively, culture is the field targeted by cultural policies. Culture may then designate the values and practices of a society which help to structure behaviours and expectations. Finally, culture can equate to identity. This notion may itself, when it is applied to regional identity, appear in the form of three constitutive elements. The cognitive dimension of identity refers to the level of knowledge of the region possessed by its inhabitants. The affective dimension designates the level of attachment to the region, or to what extent this dimension provides a frame of reference for a shared identity and for solidarity, which may find itself competing with other identities. Finally, in its instrumental dimension, regional identity may be used as a basis for campaigning and for collective action. These three dimensions may constitute historical stages in the construction of regionalist militancy, but not all regional experiences necessarily lead to the third stage.
the articulation between culture, institutions and economic development in studies by Évelyne Ritaine of the diffuse form of industrialisation found at Prato (Tuscany), which is located in a territory with a socialist and communist political culture (Ritaine 1989). More broadly, the classic works on the Third Italy have emphasized the interweaving of communal senses of belonging, political socialization and an endogenous mode of economic development (Bagnasco and Trigilia 1993).

The links between territorial and cultural factors in the development of entrepreneurship have been the subject of an extensive literature in economic sociology, no inventory of which can be drawn up here. Cusin and Benamouzig (2004: 291-293) identify four additional explanations providing an account of these links between businesses, territory and culture, based on an analysis of industrial districts. These links form part of distinct paradigms. An initial approach, neoclassical in inspiration, has been developed by Paul Krugman. This American economist stresses the importance of positive external factors linked to agglomeration effects, which play a part in attracting businesses to the cumulative formation of development hubs. A second explanation extends to industrial districts the thinking on transaction costs which economic institutionalism applies to the business firm (Williamson 1975). Granovetter (1993) applies this thinking to the case of business groups by ‘establishing a continuum between the loose coalitions of small units, such as regional districts, and more integrated forms of organization, such as cartels and business firms’ (Cusin and Benamouzig 2004: 291). A third approach stresses the local know-how drawn upon by businesses, the constitution of local networks favouring collective learning which help make up the specific character of certain districts, which are later exploited on a broader scale in markets (Maskell and Malmberg 1999). Finally, a fourth approach stresses those local norms and values which constitute and consolidate these entrepreneurial networks. This cultural and normative dimension has been theorized by Salais and Storper (1993) who, on the basis of the economics of convention, show how formal or informal rules, which may vary from one district or territory to another, enable the activities of individuals and companies to be coordinated, and distinct ‘real worlds of production’ to be constituted. We feel closest to this last approach here, assigning religion to a place among the cultural and normative factors in play, though amending this by a specific stress on the political and institutional dimension of these forms of affiliation. Speaking of the influence of the religious factor on the entrepreneurial repertoire refers both to an ethical system interiorized, sometimes implicitly, by economic actors - the non-intentional social practices which Palard elicits in the Beauce region of Quebec - as well as to conscious strategies on the part of sectors of institutional Catholicism active in economic affairs.

However, studies of territorial economic development are far from unanimous in attributing crucial importance to explanations from territorial cultures or identity preferences, including religious ones. Everything basically depends on what we are trying to understand. In his research on the restructuring of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Saint-Étienne, Le Galès shows that the hypothesis of ‘economic exchanges under identity preference constraints’ noticed by Jean Saglio (1991), is not necessarily valid, and that we should instead look closely at the way than competing local goods and services are constructed in order to understand local dynamics (Le Galès 2006). Sociological institutionalism has offered avenues for research in this respect. In order to establish a cultural effect on economic development, says Paul Di Maggio (1994), it has to be proven that culture influences the way that actors define their interests (a constitutive effect), by constraining their own behaviour (a regulatory effect), and by modelling a group’s capacity to be mobilized. If there is indeed a cultural effect, it must be detected at the scale of the institutions and relationships involved in production, exchange and consumption. This kind of nuanced approach would therefore answer
economists’ legitimate misgivings about approaches to territorial development which are seen as culturalist (Lung 2007).

Italy has been the classic study site for any economic sociology intending to stress the congruence between the territorialisation of industrial districts and various political subcultures (Bagnasco and Trigilia 1993; Ritaine 1989). Emilia-Romagna has been fertile ground given the hegemonic role which the Italian Communist Party long played in structuring an economic model of a district-based and ‘productively decentralized’ economy (Brusco 1982), a model which underwent considerable changes when economic and social conditions changed in the 1990s (Bellini 1996; Rinaldi 2005). This is true of social economy structures and for the history of cooperatives (Menzani 2007), which we shall examine here. Originally stabilized in the post-war period, the territorialization of political and cooperative subcultures underwent modifications with the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the demise of the Italian Christian Democrats in the early 1990s. Transformations to the political system at this time generated a specific approach to the third sector and the social economy based on a meeting of two great traditions of social action (Leonardis and Vitale 2002). The tradition of Catholic social and economic engagement had been rooted in a relationship characterized by closeness and localism, traditionally termed ‘collateralism’ when associated with the Christian Democrats. The fall of this party system at the beginning of the 1990s did not at all weaken the third sector of the Catholic matrix. This wave of political change instead freed up the third sector by enabling it to set up a space for itself where it could reshape its position as a linkage between the social world and public administration.

If we look beyond the social sector in the strict sense of the term, cooperatives in Italy inspired by Catholic ideas joined the Confcooperative federation. The second source of the third sector and social economy is made up of organizations promoting social rights and citizenship, and favouring universalist welfare politics. This conception has historically been maintained by the matrix formed by the workers’ movement, in both its political and trade union forms. Of less numerical importance, a third political matrix, this time liberal-republican and inspired by Mazzini, also generated its own network of cooperatives, the ACGI created in 1952. Cooperatives, in these various models, long constituted the third point of a territorial triangle within a social framework associating political parties with trade unions.

2. **Genius loci: Catholic matrices and their narrative of local development**

The influence of the religious on local development and on the social economy within a given territory is not just a cultural effect. In contrast to culturalist interpretations, it seems to me that at least as much as an ethical motivation, Catholicism supplies actors with instruments and resources for collective action which spring directly from Catholic institutional networking within a given territory. Each of the regions studied here provide its own illustration of this point. The southern Basque Country and the province of Brescia share a common narrative of local historical development bearing the imprint of Catholicism. This narrative is structured around three principal characteristics.

**A process unfolding over the long term**

It is in the first place a historically-situated, multi-sector process which corresponds to society’s capacity for self-structuring in order to meet socio-economic needs through Catholic associative activity. This societal framework has its origins in the - sometimes venerable - history of these territories, as illustrated by the Congrega della Carità Apostolica confraternity in Brescia,
whose statues date back to the sixteenth century. The modern history of Catholic engagement with socio-economic affairs began at the end of the nineteenth century with the encyclical Rerum novarum (1890). The motivation to become active in socio-economic matters was particularly felt by Italian Catholics who were forbidden to take part in politics while the Non expedit ban was in effect between 1868 and 19195, as the Pope considered himself to be the prisoner of the Italian state, whose legitimacy he denied. In the Basque and Italian regions, this institutional incentivizing took the form of a proliferation of initiatives attempting to assert Church oversight over various socio-economic categories: farmers, manual workers, students, women, young people, managers, etc. Though in no way limited to the regions described here, the Catholic socio-economic offensive was to take on certain specific characteristics.

In Brescia, Catholic social action concerns all institutionalized relationships (IR) structuring each industry or economic sector in the way described by Jullien and Smith (2014): Institutionalized purchasing relationships, trading relationships, financial relationships and employment relationships. Financial IR are strongly marked by a process institutionalizing what some have termed ‘Catholic finance’ (Cuny de la Verrière 2013). In Brescia, this takes two forms. On one hand, a tight regional network of local agencies developed at the beginning of the twentieth century to provide credit to rural cooperatives, generally under the aegis of local priests. Other bodies, such as Credito Agrario Bresciano, had closer connections with the lay, liberal matrix. On a larger scale, it was at the instigation of a Catholic lawyer from Brescia, Giuseppe Tovini (1841-1897), that the Catholic insurance and banking sectors developed (AA.VV 2013). Tovini first founded the Banca di Valle Camonica while he was mayor of Cividate between 1871 and 1874, the Banca San Paolo in Brescia in 1888, and the Banco Ambrosiano in Milan in 1896. Beatified in 1998 by John-Paul II, Tovini, whose memory has been kept alive in Brescia by the Foundation of the same name since 1957, originally intended these banks to have an ethical dimension. Designed to meet regional needs, alongside their financial activity they supported social, cultural and educational activities in the region. Catholic mentoring of cultural and educational life took the form of a network of schools, training institutes, universities (the Università del Sacro Cuore, founded in 1921) and active entrepreneurship involving the Catholic press and publishing houses with national circulation. The La Scuola publishing house was founded in Brescia in 1904 in order to support and promote the Scuola Italiana Moderna journal founded by Tovini in 1893. At the local scale, Catholic oversight of education was also developed by the institution of the oratorio, church youth clubs similar to patronages in France, where a large number of spiritual as well as cultural and sporting activities were offered to the youth of the parish.

The Institutional Relationship in matters of employment was also affected by the Catholic offensive, which concerned both companies with a traditional relationship to wage earners and cooperative businesses, and was particularly in phase with the Social Doctrine of the Church. Pezzini and Gheza (1989) note, merely for the period between 1886 and 1926, 319 cases of cooperatives with priests among their backers in Brescia province. Agricultural cooperatives developed under the aegis of the Church, but cooperative housing initiatives initiated by Father Marcolini in the 1950s were also a distinguishing feature of Brescia at the national scale. The Confcooperative federation brought under its umbrella these initiatives in Brescia from 1948 onwards (Danesi, Marchini and Ambrosini 2002) by institutionalizing a level of trans-sector coordination which associated labour, farming, housing, consumer and, from 1991, social cooperatives. Catholic cooperatives quickly became dominant in this regional where cooperatives belonging to the Socialist and Communist matrix (Legacoop) were few in number.

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5 Leo XIII was the first Pope to chip away at Non expedit when he allowed Catholics to take part in municipal elections, and in 1913 Pius X would allow bishops to authorize participation in parliamentary elections. In the November 1919 elections, the Partito Popolare led by the Sicilian priest Don Luigi Sturzo put up candidates.
These Catholic cooperatives were distinguished by being small-scale structures, spread around the whole region on the dissemination model of a ‘field of strawberries’ (campo di fragole). In contrast, large-scale labour and consumer cooperatives affiliated to Legacoop and with a strong presence in Emilia-Romagna, were less prevalent in Brescia. Innovation came about through the integration of social, education and health services with the emergence of social solidarity cooperatives in the 1970s, which were then institutionalized as social cooperatives by a 1991 law. These found one of their most favourable environments in Catholic circles in Brescia.

The history of socio-entrepreneurial Catholicism in Brescia presents a number of major characteristics: a) a concentration of Catholic power in the hands of major families and charismatic figures: the lawyer Giuseppe Tovini, the entrepreneur and notary Giuseppe Camadini (1931-2012) (Cistellini 1954), described as the ‘key man in the Catholic economy’ at his death\(^6\), the Montini family (which produced Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI 1897-1978); b) a duality or complementarity between a ‘Catholicism of public figures’ and a ‘Catholicism of charitable works’\(^7\); c) the strong presence of lay figures in the structures of social Catholicism\(^8\). This entrepreneurial Catholicism, itself split\(^9\), played its part in the localized implantation of industrialization in Brescia, with industry concentrated in districts within the city and mountain valleys and in agriculture on the plain.

In Spain as a whole, Basque Catholicism, like its equivalent in Brescia, was characterized in the period after *Rerum novarum* by its socio-economic engagement, with a proliferation of social service activities, economic institutions, farming cooperatives, and cooperative credit institutions in rural areas. On an economic level, throughout the nineteenth century, successive waves of industrialization gradually marked out Bilbao as a hub of development, with the city also becoming a bastion of socialism and the Basque labour movement, with other enclaves in Biscay and Guipuzcoa. As might have been expected, the first Basque experimental cooperatives emerged from the labour movement in the form of consumer cooperatives in Bilbao at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1920, at Eibar (Guipuzcoa), the first production cooperative - the Alfa arms factory - also emerged from the labour movement\(^10\). Socialists, liberals and republicans (Belaustegui 2014) went on to develop various cooperatives experiments.

Basque cooperatives’ most emblematic experiment emerged from an ideologically-plural melting pot involving labour movement traditions, Basque identity, opposition to Franco and a local interpretation of social Catholicism. The history of the Mondragón cooperative complex is so complex that it requires long, detailed treatment (Azurmendi 1992; Cheney 2002; Azkarraga 2007; Itçaina 2007). We only refer to it here to emphasize the cultural and institutional role of Catholicism at the outset of this experiment in fully-fledged, multi-sector cooperativism. Here Catholicism was at first present as a doctrinal reference-point in accord

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\(^6\) ‘Morto il notaio Camadini, Brescia perde un pezzo di storia’ (‘With the Death of the Notary Signor Camadini, Brescia Loses a Piece of its History’), *Corriere della Sera Brescia*, 25 July 2012.

\(^7\) Interview with the Provincial Chairman of Confcooperative Brescia, Brescia, November 2013.

\(^8\) Differing in this, for example, from the neighbouring diocese of Bergamo, which is reputed to be more clerical, especially as regards the organic relationships between the Bishop’s Palace and Catholic press outlets.

\(^9\) Some observers see in the history of Brescia a distinction between a liberal and democratic Catholicism (the Montini-Giovanni Bazoli axis) and a more intransigent Catholicism (the Tovini-Camadini) axis (Tedeschi M., ‘Così è cambiata la galassia cattolica’, *Giornale di Brescia*, 6 October 2012). <http://brescia.corriere.it/brescia/notizie/cronaca/12_ottobre_6/20121006BRE04_05-2112134078989.shtml>.

\(^10\) Alfa, which shifted from arms production to making sewing machines, had its origins in a group of manual workers close to the UGT trade union and to the efforts of Toribio Etxxebarria (1887-1868), a writer and socialist campaigner from Eibar, and a PSOE and UGT member.
with the cooperative ethic. But Catholic mediation operated above all through the leadership of a priest, Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta, and campaigning by a local Catholic Action for Workers group. The structure of political opportunities then created the conditions for the experiment to be born. In the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936-9), the Franco regime took action to rebalance Falangist influence among the victors by strengthening the place of the Catholic Church as an institution of social control or mentoring (Hermet 1981). The signature of the Concordat and the Spanish-American pact in 1953 provided two principal guarantees of the regime’s longevity. The institutional compromise reached with the Church, in exchange for legitimizing the regime, allowed the Church a great deal of latitude in its oversight of civil society. The interstices within and between institutions which then arose were to have the effect that a large number of movements challenging the dictatorship took shape within Catholic parishes, associations and movements (Iztueta 1981). In the same way, the cooperative movement, because of the plurality of interpretations to which it can be subject, was seen in a corporatist light by the regime and by a Church hierarchy which saw it as an internal institutional compromise likely to moderate the class struggle. Mondragón had its origins in this institutional context, in a Basque Country ravaged by the Civil War. The experiment nevertheless developed on the fringes of institutional Catholicism. In his thesis on Arizmendiarieta’s thinking, the philosopher Joxe Azurmendi (1992) shows that it was based on a very personal interpretation of the Social Doctrine of the Church, as well as being associated with a good number of other reference points (nineteenth-century utopian thought, the labour movement, and even Mao’s little red book). From this atypical Christianity there sprang a cooperative institution which would in the 1960s and 1970s become one of the sources of resistance to the Franco regime.

The experiment began with education: Arizmendiarieta founded the Polytechnic School in 1942, while the first production units only started up in 1956. The industrial and trading sectors (Purchasing IR and Trading IR, according to the Jullien-Smith model) at Mondragón were to experience their well-documented development (Cheney 2002) with the expansion of industrial cooperatives within the group during the 1960s and 1970s as well as the development of the Eroski cooperative distribution system. Funding of this development was facilitated by the founding in 1959 of the Caja Laboral bank to meet the funding needs of cooperatives and to support cultural and educative initiatives (and later the Basque language ikastola schools) in the region. Finally, the employment IR would be organized around Arizmendiarieta’s approach to cooperativism with mechanisms regulating industrial democracy, limits on the salary scale and the cooperatives’ own system of social protection (Lagun Aro). In 1997, the founding of the University of Mondragón put the final touches to this system.

Mondragón emerged more from an original form of Catholic thinking than from an institutional initiative on the part of the Church in the strict sense. Arizmendiarieta did not conform exactly to the canons of official social Catholicism but drew on various sources: not only Catholic conceptions of intermediary bodies and a rejection of the class struggle, but also international cooperative doctrines, nineteenth-century French and English utopians, and labour movements (Azurmendi 1992). Mondragón was born from a heterodox Social Catholicism, in a territory which had been ravaged and which would see industrial democracy as a substitute for an absence of political democracy. In many ways, Mondragón offers a counter-example of a constitutive effect of Catholic culture in an industrial setting, with this influence being more usually attested in farming settings. In contrast, at Mondragón, it was in a rural setting that cooperativism found its limits. When the cooperatives attempted to extend their model of fully-fledged cooperativism to the farming businesses immediately surrounding their industrial valley, they came up against resistance. Several institutions clashed at this point (Zulaika 1988), with the cooperative institution on one side, and on the other that of the baserria (family--based
farm), which had no intention of giving up the family farm’s autonomy to the pooling arrangements characteristic of cooperatives.

It would however be reductive to reach a definitive conclusion from this one example on the limited influence of religion on cooperativism in rural areas. The structure of the rural fabric here counts for as much as structures of collective action. At the time when Mondragón began to develop in 1958, it was another priest, Florentino Ezcurra, who initiated an experiment in fully-fledged cooperativism in a farming environment at Zuñiga, near Estella in Navarre. With a high reputation at the European scale, the Zuñiga experiment ‘took root’ in a region where the pooling of farms proved to be easier to achieve than in an area of small food-producing farms in the hills such as in the Alto Deba of Guipuzcoa. The influence of the religious factor thus depends on a conjunction of at least three factors: (a) a doctrinal congruence between the religious ethic and the intended model of economic development; (b) a Catholic institutional fabric favouring a disposition towards collective action (Catholic Action associations and clerical or lay leadership); and (c) an economic structure likely to incorporate organizational innovation (including cooperation).

Two distinct linkages to the political system in the territory

The two territories are different as regards the linkages between this Catholic socio-economic matrix and the local political system. At a historical level, the two territories are characterized by the strongly anti-statist tone of the first experiments in regional social Catholicism seen from the end of the nineteenth century. This tone was particularly evident in Italy, in particular until the lifting of the Non expedit ban in 1919. What happened next is well known: it was under the aegis of the Sicilian priest Don Luigi Sturzo that Catholics were able to associate social concerns more closely with political activity, via the Partito Popolare in the first instance, and later by the Christian Democratic party (CD). Brescia would provide one of many examples of the principles and practices of collateralism, cooperatives and Catholic enterprise in the post-war period. Legitimization of the alliance and the dominance of the Christian Democratic party was also, according to my interviews, due to the strong presence of a Catholic component within the ranks of the partisans in the Brescia region during the Second World War. For this reason, and under the influence of the Catholic matrix, the Christian Democrat hegemony in Brescia was to have more social connotations than in other regions. Corsini and Zane (2014) stress that the Christian Democrats’ anchoring resulted from the activities of a large number of members of the governing class in the Resistance and from the CD’s diverse presence in social life, felt in both elite and popular forms of expression. Following the Christian Democrats’ fall at the start of the 1990s, Brescia became one of the Italian regions marked by the rise of the Northern League, which at the time of my survey in 2013 held power in Brescia province, before the Partito Democratico (PD) gained power there in 2013. Beyond its xenophobic regionalism, the League is characterized as regards religion by its instrumentalization of Christianity as a negative identity (in opposition to Islam), an instrumentalization which has led to some friction with the social sectors of the Catholic Church (Guolo 2011) as well as between some Catholics in the North of Italy and a Church of Rome seen as close to central government (Garelli 2013: 343)11.

A quite different form of nationalism developed a complex set of relationships with social Christianity in the Basque Country. Since the Second Republic (1930-9), Basque social

11 ‘Another paradoxical aspect of this situation regarding the relationship between the Church and the Northern League, often populated by practising Catholics who, when making their political and electoral choices, are more inclined to follow their political leaders than Church leaders. Over the last fifteen years, the Catholic Church has often spoken out against localist organizations and against the closed-doors policy towards immigrants, themes which are often dear to the Northern League. This is why there is a perceptible tension,
Catholics have been distinguished not only by their proximity to Spanish parties of the centre but also to the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), a party guided by Christian Democrat thinking and influenced by French personalists. A large number of social Catholic initiatives during the 1930s can be traced to this proximity. The civil war, the installation of the Franco regime and its legitimizations by the conservative sectors of the Church would put a stop to this movement, which re-emerged discreetly from exile in the 1950s. Institutional religion showed that it could be flexible on the margins and social Catholics could play on the large number of interpretations inherent in Church social doctrine. Mondragón’s cooperativism, before it became a source of resistance to the regime, was paradoxically backed by a Francoist apparatus of state which saw it as an expression of the official corporatism intended to smooth away social conflict. Now, at the same time in the Basque Country and Catalonia, the Catholic infrastructure acted as an institutional screen for the structuring of movements opposing the regime, with the links between rural Catholic Action and ETA being the most complete expression of this (Iztueta 1981). The transition to democracy saw the PNV attain an almost hegemonic position within the Basque autonomy movement, and control power within the region with only a few exceptions (there was a Socialist regional government between 2009 and 2012). While some observers stressed the PBV’s closeness to the Basque episcopate during the transition and for some time afterwards, this proximity was expressed over the issues of peace and political sovereignty, but at no stage meant a Northern League-style instrumentalization of Christian identity. At a socio-economic level, the transition saw the autonomous government and the Mondragón cooperative group develop closer links, something not unconnected with the shared Christian Democratic basis of the party in power and the cooperative experiment.

The debate on the political linkages of Basque cooperativism was long crystallized around two positions. On the one hand, a ‘demystifying’ school of thought, Marxist in inspiration, saw both the reference to religion and that to the Basque identity as an argumentative construct intended to mask the power (and class) relationships within the region, in particular a Christian-Democrat nationalist hegemony intended to eliminate the class struggle by promoting a horizontal, cooperative form of governance (Kasmir 1996). On the other hand, a more nuanced school of thought perceived an argumentative and performative function in the religious fragment, with tangible economic effects, at the same time deconstructing the discourse of identity by according each factor its due weight. In the same vein, the sociologist Jobseba Azkarraga (2007), starting from an intergenerational approach to Mondragón cooperative members, emphasized in a Weberian way the role of ‘the religious ethic and the spirit of cooperativism’ for the founding generation. This influence would encompass more than the status of the founding priest and the Catholic Action for Workers nucleus. It impregnated the entire cooperative experiment with a rigorous moral code and even an austere work ethic, at the risk at one time of seeing the ethical and moral dimension take priority over any scientific approach towards work. ‘We were very Franciscan, and not Jesuit enough’ was the observation made, not without irony, by a ‘historical’ Mondragón cooperative member questioned by this sociologist (Azkarraga 2007: 208).

which often remains latent, between local churches and the top levels of the Church nationally.’ (Garelli 2013: 343; our translation).

12 To the point of giving rise to an alternative narrative from left-wing Basque groups and the abertzale left, which saw the Mondragón experiment as an expression of collusion between the Catholic Church, technocratic circles within the Franco regime controlled by Opus Dei from 1957 onwards, and, during the transition to democracy, the PNV (Lertxundi 2002).
The societal secularization of the Catholic territorial matrix

While the economic institutions with origins in the Catholic matrix would remain, the religious reference was to gradually disappear, in step with the secularization of society. The two regions display certain contrasts in this respect. Southern Basque and Navarrese provinces experienced a rapid and radical secularization during the transition to democracy, to the point of ceasing to be the most Catholic regions in Spain and becoming the most secularized ones. The transition to democracy in the Basque Country was remarkable for the rise of Basque nationalism and the centrality of the nationalitarian conflict as the new organizing principle of politics. As a result, Catholic socio-economic experiments experienced a dual set of changes. On the one hand, cooperativism with Catholic origins underwent an internal secularization (Isambert 1976) initiated from the very beginnings of the experiment with the translation of religious frames of reference into an ethical system, an ethics of labour and of business behaviour. Mondragón saw its founding reference to social Christianity unravel in the 1970s to be replaced by other political frames of reference, including left-wing Basque nationalism and above all economic pragmatism as well as managerial models. Moreover, the Church was not mistaken when the Social Secretariat of the Diocese of Saint-Sebastian reminded Mondragón of its original principles, castigating its capitalist ‘excesses’ (Itçaina 2007: 260-262). The group’s internationalization in the 1990s gave rise to persistent questioning about the future of this secularized ethical framework (Cheney 2002). Azkarraga sees a certain dilution of the original work ethic, with its strongly religious component, with the new Mondragón generations maintaining an instrumental relationship to the status of a cooperative (Azkarraga 2007). Moreover, those social organizations linked to the Catholic Church, far from disappearing, experienced a resurgence of activity with the successive economic crises of the 1980s, the 1990s and 2008, which hit the Basque industrial fabric particularly hard. The diocese of Bilbao, with a reputation like that of Brescia for its governance closely involving the laity, was to develop a series of initiatives on social matters, including some discreet political work on the adoption of Basque social policies.

In Brescia, the secularization of society was more gradual. On the basis of data collected in 2004 and 2006, Roberto Cartocci places the province of Brescia 43rd out of the 110 Italian provinces on his aggregated index of secularization, an index based on the decline in the centrality of the Catholic Church, the decline of religious practice, the number of church weddings and the level of confidence in the Church (Cartocci 2011: 131). Today the region still maintains a relatively substantial level of religious practice. But above all, at the level of the Church’s social organizations, the fall of the Christian Democrats and the First Republic in 1992, far from marginalizing the Catholic third sector, actually gave it new room for manoeuvre and unprecedented liberty of movement. The Catholic Church would now play on the strong presence of its organizations in the social field in order to maintain its own legitimacy in the eyes of Italian society (Garelli 2010, 2013; Donovan 2003)13. This strategy has been particularly effective in Lombardy (Giorgi 2012). The world of cooperatives also underwent a gradual weakening of its ideological and religious components. In 2011, the constitution at the national scale of the Cooperative Alliance associating the three great cooperative federations (Confcooperative, Legacoop, and AGCI) bears witness to this pragmatic turn motivated by a strategy of a single dialogue with government (Pezzini 2012). In Brescia, the 2003 inauguration of the Third Sector Forum (Forum del Terzo Settore) which brings together social entities emanating from various ideological matrices also bears witness to this movement.

13 Without the Catholic laity as a whole necessarily seeing eye to eye with the Catholic counter-offensive and the ‘Cultural Project’ initiated by Cardinal Ruini and a number of Italian bishops in the mid-1990s (Garelli 2013 : 339).
Confcooperative has retained the reference in its statutes to the Social Doctrine of the Church, and a priest remains a member of its governing bureau, but the main directions of its institutional policy are guided by economic and entrepreneurial motivations, which are still oriented towards values.

This new Catholic presence made itself felt through its plural forms of expression. While the lay movements traditionally engaged in social matters, such as Catholic Action and the ACLI, are today stalled in terms of recruitment, ‘new’ religious movements such as Comunione e Liberazione, particularly active in Lombardy, are making their presence felt in the socio-economic field, but based on different premises and a model distinct from the traditional parish-based territorial model. The Lombardy regional model of management of social services, based on subsidiarity and delegating all or a part of its services to Third Sector entities is a sign of this shift and thus of the success of a certain Catholic entrepreneurial discourse (Giorgi and Polizzi 2015).

Finally, it will be noted that some initiatives in the Basque Country and in Brescia are aimed at restoring the connection between religion and culture: in the Basque Country one example would be the movement to canonize Father Arizmendiarríeta, the founder of Mondragón. This operation might be seen as a message for two recipients: on the one hand the Church, which is asked to return to the territory and to culture, and to recognize the cooperative experiment as a concrete manifestation of a Church social discourse which too often lacks flesh on its bones; and the cooperative group itself, with a pointed reminder of its founding values. The fact, when all is said and done, that this initiative is upheld by Christians campaigning not only within the PNV as might be expected, but also within the Socialist Party of the Basque Country (PSE-EE) is not the least interesting aspect of this initiative. In a striking parallel, in Brescia, the process of beatification of several Catholic lay figures engaged with socio-economic affairs (including Giuseppe Tovini, beatified in 1998 by John-Paul II) also look like reminders of values directed not only towards the Catholic community in general but perhaps above all towards financial, banking and insurance institutions, or the media outlets founded by these figures. Here we are at the heart of politics, in the sense of working with values and symbols.

The two territories are thus distinguished by a narrative relatively close to a Catholic matrix of local development, rooted in a territorial business fabric (whether involving cooperatives or not) and financial and social institutions with a great capacity for mobilization. This narrative seems more hegemonic in Brescia than in the Basque Country where, as early as the 1970s, a counter-narrative emanating from the Basque left, both abertzale and non-abertzale, has thrown into question the transformations of the social economy and of cooperativism in the light of the original ethical ambitions. What remains of these regional trajectories in contemporary Catholic conceptions of the economic linkage, and to what extent is this original narrative made use of by actors?

3. Institutional trajectories: Catholic pluralism and approaches to entrepreneurship and the territorial economy

Far from having disappeared from societies which are now highly secularized, Catholic socio-economic action continues in both regions. This activism does not correspond to a single cognitive matrix. To trace the dimensions of this Catholic pluralism, one might refer to the

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14 On the history of the ACLI and their relations with Christian Democracy and Catholic trade unionism, see Diamanti and Pace (1987).

15 Basque nationalist.
typology of Catholic approaches to social justice, reviewed in Chapter 1, which Krier Mich (2009) has noticed within the Catholic Church in the United States: conservatives, liberals, communitarians, and liberationists. Three of these approaches (conservative, communitarian and liberationist) can be seen in the two regions studied here. A fourth approach should be added, the Economy of Communion, which is irremediable to any of these ideal types—because of its specific articulation to a religious movement (the Focolari) and its communitarian and globalized perspective. We can examine the socio-economic conceptions and practices of the Catholic organizations to be found in these two territories to discuss the validity of this classification in a European context.

Entrepreneurial ethics and liberal interpretations of subsidiarity

A first set of actors refer to a Catholic ethics of entrepreneurship associated with a liberal (in the French sense) interpretation of subsidiarity. In our regions, the clearest expression of this thinking was doubtless expressed by the Compagnia delle Opere (Company for Charitable Works, CDO) in Brescia and, in a distinct version, by Opus Dei (God’s Work) in the Basque Country. The thinking behind these organizations is reminiscent of the conservative visions which Krier Mich has noticed in American Catholics. The free market is seen by them as the essential principle regulating society, as are the conditions of economic growth, personal liberty and a guarantee of equal opportunities. The role of the State is perceived as at best residual (Krier Mich 2009: 327). In an instructive comparison, Colomonos (2000) sees in the Opus Dei and in Comunione e Liberazione the expression of Catholicism’s ‘conservative modernization’ in the economic and political field.

In Brescia, it is probably inside the Compagnia delle Opere that this kind of thinking is found. The CDO, the expression in the economic field of the Catholic movement Comunione e Liberazione (CL), is an association of entrepreneurs instituted at national level in 1986 in accordance with the precepts of the Milanese priest Don Giussani, and in Brescia in 1992 at the instigation of the lawyer Graziano Tarantini. In 2013, the Brescia CDO, which covers the provinces of Brescia and Mantua, brought together 1,300 firms belonging to industry, the small business sector, trade, farming and non-profit social enterprises (60% of these having less than 15 employees) and acts as much as a business network as an economic and social operator. In the Basque Country, and even more so in Navarre, Opus Dei, a religious movement and not a business network, primarily has a reputation for being present in academic and university circles, including the emblematic University of Navarra at Pamplona. Opus Dei nevertheless presents some similarities with the conception of economic and social life developed by the CDO. Four ideas enshrine this common ground.

Firstly, at the level of Christian doctrine, both movements are based on the thought of a charismatic founder (Don Giussani for CL-CDO, and Jose Maria Escriva de Balaguer for Opus Dei). In both cases, the founder’s thinking stresses Christian fulfilment through good works: ‘being in the world to generate good works’18. During the inauguration of the University of Navarra in 1967 in Pamplona, Escriva de Balaguer spoke of a ‘Christian materialism which is boldly opposed to that materialism which is blind to the spirit’:

‘(…) On the contrary, you must understand now, more clearly, that God is calling you to serve Him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us

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17 Opus Dei has 4,500 members in the two Autonomous Communities (interview with the Opus Dei communications officer, Bilbao, 6 August 2014).
18 CDO Brescia interview, op. cit., translated from the Italian.
every day, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.”

‘Sanctify work, be sanctified by work’, ‘work well done’, the importance of professionalism and education: these expressions can all be heard as often in CDO Brescia circles as by the Opus Dei in the Spanish or French Basque Country. This work ethic is presented in the first place as an individual demand and choice - a dimension particularly stressed by the Opus - with this individual dimension being capable of bringing an actor to internalize and not publicize the religious sources of his or her professional ethics. Jose Casanova even sees Opus Dei as the first manifestation within Spanish Catholicism of a militant type of Protestant ethic with aspirations to produce new elites through a message of sanctifying work and ascetic devotion to the professional calling (Casanova 1994: 82-3). The ethical rationalization to be seen within the Opus Dei and the CDO, at least on the level of discourse, rather reminds us of the Protestant approach to work for which ‘the only face of the Protestant’s social activity is the glory of God: work as a service carried out in the interests of the rational organization of the social universe, both desired by God and exalting His glory’ (Hervieu-Léger and Champion 2008: 210). The institutional dimension of belonging to the movement is not affirmed openly but discreetly, through good works and internalizing the ethic (Bréchon, Duriez and Ion 1994). Opus Dei transmits this ethical approach mostly through educational bodies. In this regard, its position is more hegemonic in Navarra (with the University of Navarra and hospital centres) than in Bilbao, where there is strong competition from the Jesuits (including the University of Deusto) in the educational field.

For the CDO and based on this individual foundation, the second dimension relates to the association between work ethic, free enterprise and a form of inter-business coordination through networking. The CDO slogan, the principle of ‘operational friendship’ (l’amicizia operativa) refers to a form of local regulation of competition through networking between SMEs in the same sector or within the same region, based on mutual learning and a selective exchange of information. This networking is significant for a regional economy based like Brescia’s, on SMEs and industrial districts. The CDO, not without references to the Social Doctrine of the Church, stresses the family dimension of a large number of its business members and their roots in the territory. In consequence, amicizia operativa may be said to have enabled a certain inter-business solidarity organized along mutualist lines, to put up more resistance to an economic crisis which in Brescia hit the industrial sector particularly hard. The Opus Dei, in contrast, rejects any self-definition as a business network, doubtless in order to distance itself from the image of an elite network tightly associating economic and political circles. Stress is laid on the individual commitment of members to fulfilment in and through one’s work.


20 Historically, as Danièle Hervieu-Léger and Françoise Champion (2008) emphasize, Catholicism halted this process of ethical rationalization undertaken by Calvinism by establishing all sorts of mediations (the Virgin, the Saints, the Angels, etc., ) between the individual and God. In this sense, movements like Opus Dei can be seen as re-rationalizing the professional and economic ethic in the Catholic context, with a pronounced elite dimension.

21 For a discussion, in a Weberian perspective, of the influence of the Jesuit work ethic in the Basque Country, see Hess (2007). Colonomos nonetheless remarks upon the closeness between certain themes espoused by Opus Dei and the Jesuits, including the stress on excellence and the aspiration towards international expansion, in spite of the rivalry between these two organizations within the Catholic church.
The third component of this thinking is a challenging conception of government interventionism in economic and social matters. This dimension is particularly upheld by the CDO. The interpretation of subsidiarity expressed here, largely in line with the analyses of the Fondazione per la Sussidiarietà headquartered in Milan (Vittadini 2002), is based on a liberal approach which sees Statism as a threat to free enterprise and initiatives from civil society. In this sense, the Lombardy regional model of delegating public services to the third sector, in particular in matters of health and education, and largely driven by political actors linked to Comunione e Liberazione (Giorgi and Polizzi 2015; Muehlebach 2012) is seen as virtuous. From this perspective, the crisis in public finances becomes an opportunity to consolidate a liberal interpretation of subsidiarity:

Everything which was redistributed by the State, by municipalities, provinces, regions, the European community, has dried up. And consequently, a concept like subsidiarity, which until a few years ago was merely theoretical, is currently getting a foothold. And instead of the conception which says ‘I’m doing something for you’, I introduce the concept that ‘I’m doing something with you’. This doesn’t seem much but on a conceptual level, it’s very, very different. […] Not waiting for the State, the government or any politician, not making it necessary for the politician to be responsible for doing something for me. These days, one can’t, one can no longer count only on politicians.22

In the view of the local CDO Chairman, business struggles to enter a dialogue with the State, which ‘does not see the value of business. The State is a bit closed in on -itself, on its own problems, when it has a resource there which it does not fully understand. That is the main problem’23. This anti-state dimension is not publicized as openly by Opus Dei in the Basque Country, perhaps because of the particular nature of the regional model of Basque governance as regards public-private partnerships.

Finally, this liberal Catholic thinking on economics is complemented by the effective presence of these organizations, and various third sector entities which have emerged from them, in the social sector, in restricted sense of that term. This engagement with marginalized populations whose access to the labour market is blocked, immigrants, etc., is presented as the logical consequence of the Catholic nature of these movements24. This social engagement has become stronger during the crisis. Both the CDO in Italy and Opus Dei in Spain have set up food banks. In Brescia, the CDO is associated with the Centro di solidarietà - Solidarity Centre, a non-profit entity entirely based on volunteering and intended to help young people enter the workforce. For its part, Opus Dei, following a major qualitative survey of perceptions of the Opus in the Basque Country, has become aware of the limited effectiveness of its social action and its image deficit in this regard, and is launching a series of initiatives in the Basque Country, Spain, Africa and Latin America in the areas of development aid, inclusion, combating drug addiction, etc.25 Whether as social action directed to further the interests of partner businesses or working as a charity, the fact remains that the 2008 crisis, by causing an increase in need,

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22 Interview with the Director of the Associazione Compagnia delle Opere Brescia, Brescia, 17 December 2013. Translated from the Italian.

23 Interview with the Chairman of the Associazione Compagnia delle Opere Brescia, Brescia, 17 December 2013. Translated from the Italian.

24 Colonomos (2000: 133) notes that Comunione e Liberazione and Opus Dei have distinct positions as regards international expansion and North-South relations. For Opus Dei, ‘the North has to be humanized and the South professionalized’ (op. cit. p 133: ‘contacts with decision makers are given top priority in Western countries, whereas, when Opus Dei gets involved with a country in the South, it also takes care to develop close links with the world of workers, without neglecting any less important groups or bodies.’ p. 134).

25 A detailed presentation can be found at: <http://opusdeisocial.org>.
saw a strengthening of these social initiatives emanating from modernist, conservative Catholicism.

Non-profit activities are presented through a discourse intended to make them consistent with the discourse of entrepreneurship. For the CDO, non-profit activity fulfils a series of functions not covered by public authorities, which is seen as positive in itself. One of the lessons of the crisis, again according to the CDO, is that non-profit businesses, themselves facing a shortage of resources, have had to make efforts to manage themselves in a business-like way and rationalize their own management along the lines of the efficiency models to be found in the business sector: ‘you have to manage your non-profit business as if it were a for-profit business’.26 Here we see the expression of an approach which brings to mind the philanthropic North-American conception of the third sector (Laville 2000) where a company makes a distinction between economic activity, which may operate in accordance with a capitalist accumulation regime, and its ‘social arm’, acting through a social foundation, trust, association or cooperative. Andrea Muehlenbach (2012), on the basis of an anthropological study of the third sector in Lombardy, has thus been able to talk of the ‘Catholicization of neo-liberalism’ to designate the way in which, in particular, *Comunione e Liberazione* (Communion and Liberation) and the CDO are said to turn to the third sector and volunteering to legitimize government’s retreat from territorial welfare in a context of an increasing scarcity of resources. There has thus developed, as Salvatore Abruzzese has shown for *Comunione e Liberazione* (Abruzzese 1989), a ‘substitute Christianity’ which while rejecting the marginalization of religion imposed by secularism, thinks of itself as undertaking a counter-offensive, or even in terms of an instrumental and disenchanted relationship with politics and the economy.

Colomonos rightly notes that beyond their differences, groups such as *Comunione e Liberazione* and Opus Dei, to which he would add the charismatic organization Full Gospel27, [...] organize their relationship with the world - the world of work and the international space - in accordance with a demand for excellence and high performance. This type of concern has unexpected consequences: their action validates a series of presuppositions and theoretical hypotheses. Indeed, in their praxis, these organizations give life to and corroborate the neo-Weberian scheme of Novak’s theses on the Christian and particularly the Catholic ethic. The difference between Catholics and Protestants is thus blurred in favour of the diffusion and circulation of an ethos which cleverly plays on traditions and denominations (Colonomos 2000: 135, our translation).

In this way there take shape28 local translations of the Catholic ethic and the spirit of capitalism whose origins were identified in Chapter 1, as well as their ideological orientation as the case may be. This analysis, while limited to reconstructing the systems justifying organizations, does not investigate exhaustively how effectively these principles are implemented, or any excesses due to network effects. It is well known how, in Lombardy, a large number of *Comunione e Liberazione* members have been caught up in political corruption at the scale of the regional executive. Nor shall we discuss here the well-known network effects linked to Opus Dei in Spain, in particular in business and political circles (Normand 1995) since

26 Interview with Chairman of CDO Brescia, *op. cit.* Translated from the Italian.

27 *Full Gospel Business Men’s Christian Fellowship*. Founded in 1953 in the United States in order to promote the socialization of Christian businessmen, this charismatic organization mainly brings together Evangelical Protestants and a small number of Catholics in the countries where it operates (Colonomos 2000, 135 sqq.).

the Franco regime (Hermet 1981). I merely identify here an initial discursive register on the socio-economic linkage, which however does not have universal support in Catholic circles.

*The Communitarian approach: gift ethic, empowerment and appeals to government*

Other Catholic organizations are developing a quite different discourse on matters of social and economic justice. Their discourse is a conscious reminder of the communitarian approach which Krier Mich identifies as being adopted by bishops in the United States in the mid-1980s and which is characterized by: (a) a rejection of the individualism contained both in the neo-conservative visions and the radical positions of liberationists; (b) a vision rooted in the communalizing ethic of the Bible and the social philosophies of Aristotle and Saint Thomas Aquinas; (c) a perception of poverty and unemployment as forms of exclusion from participation in the economic life of the community. This approach can be discerned in organizations with varying degrees of institutional affiliation to the diocesan church, ranging from formal affiliation to lay bodies inspired by Christianity. The communitarian approach to work and the economy which makes itself felt in the two territories presents four main characteristics.

Firstly, it includes social assistance organizations which, as will be seen more fully in Chapter 3, refuse to be reduced to charitable agencies and which see themselves as guides during a process of empowerment directed initially towards socioprofessional integration. This thinking as put into practice is based on the centrality of work to personal fulfilment. Caritas groups, nodal actors in Catholic social action in the two regions, in addition to their specialization in emergency situations, a function which has grown tenfold since the crisis, develop mechanisms for help in finding employment directed at individual beneficiaries as well as companies or even public institutions. In Brescia, *Spes at Work* (Hope at Work) programme, initiated by the *Pastorale Sociale e del Lavoro* and operated by Caritas is backed by the diocesan church as a whole. The programme mediates within the job market by placing young people into the ordinary business environment and in particular in social cooperatives. Caritas, in this instance, plays the role of initiator not only by supporting beneficiaries financially but also by supporting the companies who take them on. Since the crisis, some public institutions have also had the benefit of this support. In 2013, 131 persons with low qualifications were taken on by the programme, with 22 of them finding work. Caritas doubles up this initiative with a business incubator whose objective is to put to work the professional competences of retired or similar people in order to help young people create their own employment. Finally, Caritas Brescia is working on a micro credit experiment in collaboration with local cooperative credit unions, thus bringing together two forms of regional coverage. A similar prioritization of integration by and for work can be found in Bilbao in the operations of the diocesan pastoral and social outreach and by Caritas. The entrepreneurial orientation is strengthened here by the presence of the *Bultz-lan* (Boosting Work) limited company created by Caritas in 1983. Originally conceived to help those affected by the 1983 floods in Vizcaya, this consultancy firm, 95% owned by Caritas Vizcaya, evolved towards promoting employment and the creation of companies. Bultz-lan operates in the Basque Country, in the rest of Spain and in Latin America, by supporting initiatives to achieve integration through economic activity in the Basque Country as well as by helping non-profit and for-profit Basque companies in their export and foreign presence strategies. At the level of resources, Bultz-Lan makes strong claims for independence and financial autonomy. ‘We live from our work’ (interview): neither

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29 Significantly, the work of the American sociologist of religion Rodney Stark on capitalism and Catholicism would be cited by the CDO. See in particular Stark (2007) and the review by Michon (2007).
government nor Caritas are approached to finance an enterprise generating its own resources. Thus, far from merely constituting an extension of the charitable work of the Church in Vizcaya, Bultz-Ilan figures more as its entrepreneurial translation, fully-immersed in the market and intended to invigorate the economic community.

Secondly, the communitarian approach to the socio-economic linkage as developed by Catholic social organizations is distinct from a large number of NGOs and lay organizations in its communitarian vision of socio-economic action. In a perspective which brings up to date the personalist legacy, the person and not the atomised individual is considered alongside the communities to which he or she belongs: family, region, occupation, etc. The *Pastorale Sociale e del Lavoro* in the diocese of Brescia, for example, considers dialogue with the world of business to be insufficiently developed. The economic crisis has restored legitimacy within Catholic circles to a discourse on new lifestyles marked by voluntary sobriety and degrowth. In Italy, a diocesan national coordinating body on ‘nuovi stile di vita’ (new lifestyles), coordinated by the diocese of Padua, has been set up for this purpose. In the light of this new priority, officials in the Brescian diocese responsible for pastoral and social outreach emphasize the risk posed by focusing on actors’ individual behaviours to the detriment of a dialogue with the traditional interlocutors of Catholic social action: workers, entrepreneurs, and politicians. The *Scuola di Formazione Impegno Sociale e Politico* (Training School for Social and Political Engagement) set up in 2011 by the Pastorale Sociale and now supported by the Church in Brescia as a whole, is intended to renew the post-Council approach of Catholics’ socio-political commitment, with reflection on the themes of work education, politics, etc. The *Scuola* brings together participants who have very diverse political profiles. The diocese thus bears witness to a desire to return to its traditional presence in the world of work, but focussing more on education and training than on direct intervention as in the past. In the view of the Councillor for Social Affairs in the municipality of Brescia, a historic actor within the Italian cooperative movement, the Church in Brescia was long characterized by its focus on the rights of workers from a trade union perspective, and less on a large-scale, integrated experimental cooperative of the same type as in Mondragón. In this view, the priest, like the lay person, is a sort of ‘small social entrepreneur’:

‘We have not had an Arizmendiarrrieta capable of imparting a moral vision and promoting the autonomy of lay persons, as he did. Without getting involved in management, but to guarantee a moral reference-point, a moral authority. What enabled Mondragón to have their extraordinary growth and manage the tensions which they experienced on several occasions, which is normal in development, but without getting to the point of splits. All the conflicts were managed by groups of men and not by splits. Here, we have not had a moral leadership with this characteristic. Now we have several cooperative bodies which often have opportunistic relations, but no real integration’  

The diocese of Brescia emphasizes the *ad limina* report of 2013, maintains close relations with certain trade unions and Catholic workers’ organizations (CISL - Confederazione Italiana Sindacato Lavoratori, ACLI - Associazione di lavoratori cristiani italiani, MCL - Movimento Cristiano Lavoratori), while relationships with other organizations are stretched more thinly. The ACLI, a great part of whose work (with employers) aims for the recognition of workers’ rights, emphasize how imperative is communitarian engagement:

It is part of the ACLI’s missions to be present in the world of politics, of the common wealth, of the community. Not to be politicking like a party, it’s not a party. But politics, the management of the common wealth, can also be carried on by other non-party organizations, by

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30 Interview, 20 November 2013, Brescia. Translated from the Italian.
associations, through instruments: campaigns to raise awareness, campaigns to get signatures for a referendum or for a citizens’ initiative law. In dialogue with the political world and with institutions. And the world of education and training: ACLIs do a lot of training for administrators or for people who get involved in politics.32

This communalizing discourse contains the seeds of an implicit criticism of new social movements which, while they are close to the ACLI because of their objectives of Catholic mobilization, always run the risk of individualist excesses. Significantly, the GAS movement (Gruppi di Acquisti Solidale, ethical purchasing groups) has developed strongly in Brescia as in the north and the centre of Italy (Forno and Graziano 2014; Andretta, Guidi 2014), as a new form of politicizing consumption (Dubuisson-Queillet 2009). While this is a secular movement, the fact remains that a large number of GAS within the province were initiated in an informal way by parish-based groups. Here, Catholic discourse takes the form of a safeguard against individualist excesses, which are always possible, even at the heart of the solidarity economy.

There is a risk that it becomes a bit elitist. That consumers’ personal choices, healthy eating, organic food, etc. Consumption choices. But which rather forget the political and communitarian dimension. The ‘new lifestyle’ isn’t just ‘What do I do, myself personally, when out shopping for the family?’ It’s also ‘What can I do in community terms?’ And also ‘What can politics do to change lifestyles?’ This is true also for the world of GAS’s: those taking part in GASs, once they have bought organic products, once they have saved a bit of money and they are eating healthily, basta, they are happy.33

This reminder of the communalizing dimension is at play here in the call for a properly political commitment: the act of consumption is politicized in the sense that it is seen as a collective issue, part of a shared construction of public problems with a wide social reach.

In a similar set of ideas, the relational conception of the gift which Caritas is aiming to develop both in Brescia (Ferrari and Grazioli 2004) and Bilbao has some of this communalizing aspiration. The crisis and the increasingly pressing calls upon Caritas groups, including those from government who make them a natural default option, have given rise to an identity crisis within Caritas, whose emergence has been noted in Brescia: in what way is Caritas -a specific NGO? What happens to the Church dimension when Caritas is transformed into a welfare agency by default? These are questions which the stress on the communitarian dimension of exchanges are intended to answer.

Even more immersed in the economic field, the Confcooperative central coordinating body, which although autonomous from the local Church, maintains a statutory reference to the Social Doctrine of the Church, networks with the diocese and refers to the Vatican Council’s drive towards social action34. But above all, social cooperatives share this communalizing reference in the sense that the conception of cooperation is based here on a rejection not only of philanthropy and pure charity (beneficenza) but also of cooperation as a restricted form of mutualism, cut off from the community. Doubtless we might see here, with the model of territorial diffusion espoused by social cooperatives, an additional expression, in an implicit way, of Catholic communalizing thinking.

Thirdly, while this communalizing discourse finds a certain societal echo, especially with social movements, and particularly in a time of crisis, the fact remains that, at an institutional level, this school of thought is itself going through a crisis within the Church. In both territories

32 Interview with a Brescia provincial ACLI official, Brescia, 5 July 2013. Translated from the Italian.
33 Ibid.
34 ‘non preghate la cattolicità, fatela’ (‘don’t pray for Catholicism, practise it’) (Confcooperative interview, Brescia, 3 July 2013).
there is confirmation of the observation by sociologists of Catholicism (Hervieu-Léger and Champion 2008), that most social organizations within the church are running out of steam, in particular lay movements such as Catholic Action, to the benefit of new religious movements, (charismatics, neo-catechumenal, Comunione et Liberazione, Opus Dei, etc.), whose socio-economic colouring is closer to the first model identified above. Catholic Action, although campaigning strongly on societal issues, is declining numerically in both territories. In Brescia, Catholic Action was present in 2013 in 77 parishes, or a quarter of the parishes in the diocese. This presence has not stopped diminishing in quantitative terms since the 1980s. This fall is due, according to the Chairman of Catholic Action within the province, to a conjunction of several factors. On the one hand, supply within Catholic associationism has considerably increased, and Catholic Action no longer has the quasi-monopolistic position within lay movements which it enjoyed at the end of the 1960s. The second factor is the secularization of society, whose effects are being felt. Thirdly, Catholic Action has struggled, as it admits, to modernize its communication, hence there has been an effort to relaunch a somewhat forgotten association, even in Catholic circles. A quite similar diagnosis has been drawn up by officials from Catholic Action for Workers in Bilbao. As in Brescia, Catholic Action (Workers’ and Rural) is said to have been up to the 1970s in the Basque Country a central agency for economic and political socialization for a large number of trade union, political and association leaders (Izueta 1981). This auspicious period was followed by a decline in numbers. Nevertheless, just as in Brescia, Catholic Action aims to maintain or even strengthen its modes of engagement in the socio-economic world, by developing a form of action centred on workers’ rights and an ethical discourse founded on a more frontal criticism of economic neoliberalism. It should be noted that the fall in the number of Catholic Action members may have soothed the frictions which the movement had experienced at one time with Catholic movements claiming to be guided by different ethics. In Italy, the tensions between Catholic Action and Comunion e Liberazione, which at one stage were considerable (Marzano 1995), have eased today. However, the differences between the movements remain real, at least over three points: a) Catholic Action’s local anchoring; b) Catholic Action’s strictly democratic governance, with rotations of elected responsibilities at all levels; c) a ban on any member of Catholic Action simultaneously holding a post in an association and a political post (since the ‘religious choice’ made by Catholic Action in Italy at the end of the 1960s) in order to avoid any collusion between the movement and political power. This last point risks being tested by a movement such as Comunione e Liberazione, which since it began has sought to achieve transformative social action through a dual religious and political engagement (Almond, Appleby and Sivan 2003: 170).

Finally, this communalizing Catholicism maintains a conception of subsidiarity and relations with government which is noticeably different from the first school of thought. Subsidiarity, in this instance, means not less State involvement but better State involvement. With a strong presence in social matters, the organizations concerned are badly hit by budgetary restrictions on social policies, restrictions which weaken both those being aided and the organizations themselves. Consequently, far from magnifying the retreat of public authorities from regulation of social matters, this withdrawal is perceived more as an abandonment of  

36 In Bilbao, Catholic Action is still organized along specialist lines (interview with Bilbao diocesan pastoral workers’ outreach, June 2013, Bilbao). While specialized Catholic Action still exists at national level in Italy, in Brescia it is general Catholic Action which is present. The absence of Catholic Action for Workers is partly explained by the strong involvement of the ACLI in workplace issues, the Association having a vision very close to that of Catholic Action.
responsibility by government. For Caritas, both in the Basque Country and in Italy, subsidiarity does not mean substitution.

The deputy mayor responsible for social affairs in the municipality of Brescia since 2013, Felice Scalvini, with a background in the Catholic cooperative world, has given expression to this kind of approach to subsidiarity. This takes the form of an ongoing municipal reform intended to abolish competition between third sector organizations through a management model incorporating invitations to bid on the social services market. Referring to the conception of subsidiarity as stated in the Italian Constitution, ‘The State, regions, metropolitan cities, provinces and municipalities shall promote the autonomous initiatives of citizens, both as individuals and as members of associations, relating to activities of general interest, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity’

Scalvini casts doubt on the idea that public invitations to bid are the best way to promote citizens’ autonomous sense of initiative. Similarly, the mayoral deputy criticised Lombardy’s regional policy which has concentrated ‘mainly on support for demand, based on a faulty interpretation of the idea of freedom’.

In the search for a median model incorporating neither the neoliberal approach to subsidiarity, nor unrestrained public interventionism, Scalvini also drew upon the memory of the entrepreneurial territorial matrix, suggesting that the perspective on industrial districts should be extended to the social sector:

The objective which we must adopt consists of looking at the social with the eyes of the industrial district. My idea would be that the Municipal Social Policy Directorate (Assessorato) should be able to ‘do business’ in that sense. Through an industrial policy in the social sector as well, we will ensure that this world is covered in a universalist way.

These median conceptions of subsidiarity can also be found in Brescia within organizations which could be seen superficially as an expression of philanthropic thinking in the classic liberal tradition. Specific to Brescia, the Congregation of Apostolic Charity (Congrega della Carita Apostolica, CCA) is an emblematic institution whose origins go back to the thirteenth century and whose statutes were codified in 1535. Governance of the CCA is based on a Council (sodalizio) of 62 confraternity members. Originally functioning along the lines of restricted mutualism, the CCA was originally intended to assist prominent citizens who had fallen into la povertà vergognosa, shameful poverty, within the city.

The CCA became a public body by becoming an IPAB following the Crispi Law of 1890, then became a private Foundation again in 1991. The CCA is similar to the narrative of Brescian Catholicism, or the ‘Catholicism of good works, Catholicism of doing’ (il cattolicesimo delle opere, il cattolicesimo del fare (interview)), where the laity plays an essential role, and a conception of qualified volunteering where professional competencies are tapped. Following the acquisition of property holdings at the beginning of the twentieth century and a legacy from Count Gaetano Bonoris in the 1920s, the CCA set up several foundations, becoming the administrator of a total of seven associated foundations in 2013. Autonomous of the Church and entirely administered by lay persons, the CCA nevertheless exhibits a Catholic culture and identity. In 2013 the CCA was

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40 See, along similar lines, the history of the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino in Florence, which remains active.
41 Istituto Pubblico di Assistenza e Beneficenza. (Institute of Public Assistance and Charity).
administering a portfolio of social housing and bureau of social assistance which carried out more than 1,000 individual interviews per year. These interviews might lead to a financial contribution following examination of each case by the sodalizo. A large number of applicants are directed towards the CCA by the municipality’s social services. However, the CCA has adopted a discourse fairly critical of the Lombardy model of subsidiarity:

There is a grave crisis situation in the social services, in the public sector, and the attempt to outsource the institutional obligations which the public services should undertake towards people who are in need. This gap, this crisis, is structural. This crisis internal to the market is generating a very high number of poor people. Brescia has always been par excellence, one of the richest cities in Italy, one where a shortage of work has never been felt. Today, in contrast, the problem is very serious. [...] There is a transfer of the right and the duty of the public authorities to take action on behalf of these people and, in contrast, a tendency to shuffle onto the third and fourth sector [direct management by users, families etc.] the responsibility towards the community in this time of grave crisis.\textsuperscript{42}

According to the CCA, understanding subsidiarity solely in terms of the distribution of public funds by third sector organizations is a mistake. The crisis in public finances automatically generates bankruptcies among private-or social entities. This model, well-developed in Lombardy because of the autonomy left to regions in matters of social policy, has had its unintended consequences:

The problem is that in Lombardy, and perhaps also in other regions, during the last few years people have tried to invoke the concept of subsidiarity, but applying it solely to economic resources. And at a time when there is a shortfall of economic resources, subsidiarity has become a problem. […] The famous welfare mix is a bit of a political fantasy. Because invitations to bid are generally won by whoever proposes the lowest financial budget, but not necessarily the best quality of service.\textsuperscript{43}

While Lombardy - like Emilia-Romagna - has long represented a model region for the excellence of its social services for the disabled, drug abusers, alcoholism, etc., the crisis has seen the notion of excellence fall away. According to this CCA social worker, this situation results just as much from choices in public policy:

Personally, I think that the money is there, but that the use made of the funds has been shifted. To the detriment of service to individual people. I have been working in the social services for 25 years, I was lucky enough to work first of all with disability where everything was up for construction, for testing out. It was a period when on the part of the public authorities and the third sector, there was in Brescia a very strong tradition of transferring services via the third sector. We are perhaps the top dogs in Italy when it comes to transferring to the third sector, even if it is very much the same in the Emilia region, but here it comes from the Catholic world. So from volunteering etc., etc., it was a period when there was funding for this and when the Lombardy region tried out lots of things in each intervention sector. Today this is no longer the case and many services are in difficulty. But I insist: the funding has been transferred to other headings. It is not thought useful to spend money on the people who are living with these difficulties.\textsuperscript{44}

Ultimately, both in Brescia and in Bilbao, the communitarian repertoire of Catholic entrepreneurship, though it finds particular expression in the social sector, aspires towards linking social action to the world of business, whether traditional or cooperative, with autonomization of the publics being helped and a call for public authorities to become involved.

\textsuperscript{42} Interview, CCA Social Assistance Bureau, Brescia, 19 December 2013, translated from the Italian.
\textsuperscript{43} Interview, CCA historian and staff member, Brescia, 19 December 2013, translated from the Italian.
\textsuperscript{44} Interview, CCA Social Assistance Bureau, Brescia, 19 December 2013, translated from the Italian.
This repertoire has no doubt been strengthened in terms of discourse, but also weakened in terms of resources by the difficulties faced by public finances after 2008.

A liberationist ethic

For the liberationist vision of social justice set out by Krier Mich, poverty, unemployment, marginalization and indifference towards poverty are not seen as mere dysfunctions of an otherwise acceptable economic system, or as the collateral damage caused by cultural individualism. These realities result from a political and economic order generated by dominant structures in order to maintain their privileges. Radical change to the system, or even revolution, thus becomes the most logical way to change the system. Historically embodied in the Catholic world by liberation theology, this socio-economic thinking is in more than one way an extension of the communitarian line, but one with a more radical analysis of the social causes of inequalities. This school of thought inevitably accompanied its social action by a theoretical enquiry into the relationship between Christianity and Marxism, Third-Worldism or, more recently, anti-globalization.

An initial review of the fieldwork carried out in 2012-2013 identifies no movement or organization within the world of Catholicism which explicitly claims to espouse this kind of tendency. Doubtless these results would have been very different in the 1970s, the period when left-wing Christians had most influence, this taking numerous forms both in Spain and Italy. Nonetheless, some contemporary Catholic campaigns are in my opinion in line with an interpretation of social reality which has again become radicalized during a regime in crisis. While they can be considered in part as radicalized continuations of communalizing thinking, they are very clearly distinct from the first, conservative, school of thought.

Looking more closely, it is those branches of the institution which specialize in serving segments of the population and geographical areas which would radicalize the Christian message in this direction. It is not so much, as in Bilbao at the end of the Franco regime, the liberation of the ‘Basque working people’ which today radicalizes left-wing Christians, but solidarity with the new forms of exclusion, including migrants. Some of the conceptions of social justice which are expressed in Catholic circles are very much in line with liberationist discourse. Missionary circles (particularly the Combonian missionaries in Brescia or the Jesuits in Bilbao) on the one hand constitute bridges between mission territories and migrants in Europe. Ideas are passed in transit alongside men and women and generate solidarity economy experiments. The diocese of Brescia has been strongly involved in Africa, including the Kiremba mission in Burundi, and in Latin America since the end of the 1950s. International Voluntary Service (Servizio Volontariato Internazionale, SVI) is an NGO with links to the diocese and has been active since the 1960s; the Tovini Foundation works on cooperation for development, etc. In Bilbao in the mid-1990s, the Society of Jesus undertook to build its social sector on new foundations, decimated as it was by the departure of its most committed members between 1970-1980. This reorganization was channelled through Jesuits who had worked in Latin America and especially in Peru, and who founded in Bilbao the development aid NGO Alboan (‘Alongside’). Conceived in similar fashion, development aid was accompanied by action directed towards migrants to the Basque Country. The migrant assistance centre is named Ignacio Ellacuria, after the Basque Jesuit assassinated in El Salvador in 1989. More than liberation theology proper, it is Ellacuria’s thinking on ‘popular minorities/majorities’ which is put into action in this social work. In Brescia, similar thinking makes itself felt in campaigns by the Pax Christi group, which campaigns strongly for the rights of migrants. One could doubtless -place in the same category some parishioners’ associations organized following the model of grass-roots communities and adopting a liberationist discourse, similarly to the Bidari collective in Bilbao. This grass-roots Church community, with around fifteen members, is
characterized by a commitment to social action, development aid and degrowth. Each Bidari member contributes 10% of his or her income to a common fund, which is then redistributed as follows: 10 % for the receiving parish, 10 % for community functioning, 40 % for diocesan Caritas and 40 % for development projects in countries of the South channelled via Alboan.

Basque debates cross the border to France: in the French Basque Country the liberationist critique makes itself felt in the activity of the Euskaldun gazteria (Basque Youth) movement, the Basque branch of the Rural Movement of Christian Youth (Mouvement rural de la jeunesse chrétienne, MRJC). This movement, having played an essential role in the restructuring of Basque agricultural trade unionism in the years between 1960 and 1980, then underwent a period of decline. The association experienced a renewal in the 2000s, which was expressed through a commitment to the solidarity economy. Since 2011 Euskaldun gazteria has organized a Local Savings Committee for Young People (CLEJ-GALT Gazteako aurrezirkako Lekuko Taldea) in Lower Navarre, along the lines of the CLEJ in Soule, which was an innovation in its time at the national French scale (Branca and Jégourel 2010) and intended to support the creation or recovery of companies by people aged under 35. The association became involved in social housing when it set up a property management company, savings accounts and the acquisition of a house in 2008. Euskaldun gazteria illustrates a case where the religious dimension is not stressed in a collective action motivated above all by secular values: the solidarity economy, an attachment to the region and to the rural, and the Basque identity. It maintains a link, however tenuous, with institutional Catholicism and above all bases its action on an interpretation of Catholicism close to the liberationist ethic. However, in 2015 Euskaldun Gazteria formalized its process of internal secularization by officially distancing itself from the MRJC.

The liberation ethic is linked with thinking about poverty as a model of spirituality (Rimbaut 2009). In La logica del pane, l’eucaristia modello dell’economia, Antonio Agnelli, a priest in the diocese of Cremona in Lombardy sees the figure of the poor man in the Gospel as a theological resource with which to challenge the dominant economic models:

Only he who feels like a pilgrim journeying towards the Reign of communion has the strength to judge the absolutization (l’assolutizzarsi) of those economic structures which do not seek after people’s well-being but the accumulation of riches. Becoming poor, from this perspective, means having the courage to challenge these false utopias of the economy and globalization which corrupt hearts in our historical reality. (Agnelli 2011: 37, translated from the Italian).

Taking up the approaches put forward at the Brazilian episcopal conference, Agnelli is a good illustration of the liberationist interpretation, seeing poverty not as an inevitability but as ‘the result of perverse free choices’ (Agnelli 2011: 19), as resulting from the ‘false utilitarian ethic’ based on the encounter between consumerism and economic and financial speculation. Leading towards alternative proposals, this Catholic liberationist discourse is close to that of proponents of the solidarity economy, suggesting that sobriety and degrowth represent the road to be taken, and prioritizing the common good (Agnelli 2011: 108-109).

In the regions examined in this study, several secular initiatives which are nevertheless shared with Catholic actors and organizations working beside social movements, feel the effects of liberationist ideas. In the solidarity lending sector, the new generation of ethically-driven experiments strongly features collectives with Catholic origins. In Italy, the Banca Etica illustrates this phenomenon. The bank emerged from the encounter at the end of the 1980s

46 And in particular the ecumenical text Voces não podem servir a Deus e ao Dinheiro (Mt 6, 24), published by the Conference of Brazilian Bishops with other Christian churches on the occasion of the 2010 Fraternity Campaign.
between two very different social worlds (the FIBA-CISL\textsuperscript{47}, ACLI, and ARCI\textsuperscript{48} trade unions, international volunteering, the pacifist movement, conscientious objectors, anti-nuclear movements, etc.), both aspiring to respond to social organizations’ funding needs (and in particular those of social cooperatives), which were at that time developing fast. Of the 18 organizations which were founder members of the Banca Etica in Italy as a whole, six emerged from the Catholic matrix in one way or another\textsuperscript{49}. From the outset this new instrument was conceived of as a proper bank, in order to be able to join the Italian Banking Association and be able to change the system from inside. The Banca Etica was founded upon ethical and economic criteria: transparency, responsible economic choices, support for the civil economy, internal democracy, etc. At territorial level, the Banca Etica was founded in Padua, but the first of its 17 branches was set up in Brescia, which at that time was the Italian city with the largest number of members. In 2013 the Brescia branch had 2,200,000 Euros in social capital, out of a national total of 44 million, a not insubstantial proportion (5 %). It has had very diverse shareowners, with as many coming from collectives close to the centri sociali, and markedly left-wing, as from Catholic circles, such as the Combonian missionaries and the scouts’ association AGESCI\textsuperscript{50}.

This experiment was to expand via the Basque Country: the Fiare ethical bank, the Spanish subsidiary of the Banca Etica, originated in the Basque Country in 2002-3, before spreading to the whole of Spain. This experiment differs from micro-credit approaches (based on the Grameen Bank’s Yunus model) in its strong desire to position itself within the conventional banking system. Although completely secular, Fiare nevertheless emerged from two main sources: the banking networks of the solidarity economy on the one hand, and on the other the more ‘progressive’ sectors of the Basque Church, in particular in Vizcaya. In 2012, 23 of the 48 Fiare member organizations in Euskadi were institutionally linked, in one way or another, to the local Church (Caritas, dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, foundations, Catholic schools, parents’ associations, and lay communities). This is also the case with 33 of the 80 members of the Fiare Foundation who support the project. According to one of its founding members, Fiare gains its ‘reputational legitimacy’ from the Catholic organizations, and thus provides an illustration of a process of post-secular learning (Rosati and Stoeckl 2012) between religious and secular actors on one hand, and between south-European regions on the other.

As secular initiatives but also joined by Catholic networks turned towards openness (among others), ethical banks were founded to a great extent in order to remedy the capitalist excesses of the great financial institutions. In Brescia, the initiative has taken the form of a reminder of their values aimed at the great banks which themselves emerged historically from the Catholic matrix. In Bilbao, the myriad of initiatives undertaken in association with Fiare by actors in the solidarity economy implicitly involve a questioning about the future development of the principles of social economies in the great internationalized cooperative businesses. It is all as if, at bottom, Social Catholics are discreetly becoming involved again in those instruments which provide institutional safeguards against any possible excesses. This can be seen in the limits imposed on participation in social capital, in the funding of projects with modest dimensions, and the priority given to local and regional projects. Social Catholics thus gain in

\textsuperscript{47} Federazione Italiana Bancari e Assicurativi.

\textsuperscript{48} Associazione recreativa e culturale italiana.

\textsuperscript{49} <www.bancaetica.it>, accessed 29 July 2013.

\textsuperscript{50} Associazione Guide e Scout Cattolici Italiani. Interview at Banca Etica Brescia, 17 December 2013.
ethical commitment what they lose in religious visibility, by becoming involved in the financial instrument of a social movement with a wide socio-political footprint.

A global and local Catholic ethic? The Economy of Communion

While the initiatives described above often bear witness the low profile (Bréchon and Duriez 1994) of the religious dimension in socio-economic engagement, the same does not apply to one specific economic experiment which is actually marked by its visible linkage to a religious movement. Even if only briefly, we must devote some space to a third type of Catholic socio-economic thinking in action. The experiment of the Economy of Communion (EOC), through the values and representations of social justice which it represents, is difficult to reduce to one of the three sensibilities presented above. It doubtless borrows from several of them. It nevertheless differs from the above-mentioned experiments in its overall dimensions as a project irreducible to a territorial anchoring and in the visibility of its religious dimension. At the time of the survey, there was no EOC centre within the regions considered here. Nonetheless, the participation of actors from the territories being considered in the EOC experiment and its centres\(^\text{51}\) justifies a brief incursion into a venture unique among Catholic socio-economic issues. Led by a religious movement (the Focolari) rather than a specific territory, the EOC is an instance of the new generation of globalized religious movements who are radically rethinking the links between religion and culture in a de-territorialized way (Roy 2008).

Like most Catholic movements, the EOC had a charismatic founder, Chiara Lubich, a native of Trento who began the Focolare Movement in 1943. From the outset, the Focolari communities functioned on the basis of sharing goods, on the model of the Acts of the Apostles: pooling and redistribution of goods to each according to his needs, and redistribution of what remained to those in need. The culture of the gift (cultura del dare) was from the outset a cornerstone of Focolari praxis. In 1991, Lubich went to Sao Paolo to visit the Focolari community and came to realize that the rule of community of goods did not prevent great poverty and destitution in the favelas. Lubich consequently concluded that the movement had to include some businesses with a presence in the market, run by professionals and with profits being used for three purposes: development of the business, help for the needy, and support for training and education.

The ethic of communion put forward by the EOC represented in its promoters’ eyes a revolution in the world of business management. Businesses associated with the EOC make a commitment to distribute the profits they make only in accordance with EOC principles. Engagement with the EOC is not contractual but is based upon the entrepreneur’s free choice. In the same way, the economic relationship between producers, suppliers and customers is not based on a utilitarian conception of contracts but on relations of reciprocity, within which the gift, freedom of access and charges, or even friendship find their place. Adopting the distinction made by the economist Luigino Bruni (2006), Giuseppe Argiolas remarks that EOC enterprises aspire towards an association between three sorts of reciprocity: a reciprocity of prudence (reciprocità-cauta) associated with the contractual relationship, a reciprocity of philia, where the relationship in itself generates interest from the partners; and a reciprocity of agape, unconditional, gratuitous and free of charges or obligations (2009: 338-9).

While the first objective of the business is not to make a profit, this does not mean the EOC turns its back on utility: the EOC is not a non-profit association but a system which asks

\(^{51}\) Several entrepreneurs from Brescia are participants in the EOC, including some directly at the Loppiano Centre. Similarly, one of the officials at the Citadel of the Focolari in Loppiano is from the Basque province of Guipuzcoa.
companies to direct their profits towards human and social ends. This specification does not however prevent the EOC from including non-profit cooperatives and entities. Finally, the EOC is based upon a work ethic, one destined to ‘complement creation’ (interview), referring to the figure of Jesus sent into the world as a worker. The congruence between the EOC and the Social Doctrine of the Church as regards work led to the EOC being cited in the encyclical Caritas in Veritate (n° 46) by Pope Benedict XVI. The EOC ‘did not originate with the intention of creating new forms of companies, though it was not thought impossible that this should happen, but to transform existing companies from the inside’ (Argiolas 2009: 344, translated from the Italian).

There was thus constituted a transnational network of companies claiming to follow in the footsteps of the EOC (800 in 2013). In addition to individual members, the movement set up EOC centres, clusters of companies who are EOC members and geographically located close to Focolari Citadel. The first EOC centre saw the light of day in Sao Paulo in 1992, and then other centres were set up in Recife (Brazil), in Argentina, in Italy (Loppiano), in Croatia, in Belgium and in Portugal52.

For Argiolas (2009), these centres differ from traditional industrial districts in that districts are characterized by the presence of just one industry, while EOC centres link various companies which offer different goods and services. In contrast, the shared social culture and the capacity for synergies between companies are similarities between centres and districts. This form of diffuse shareholding helps make the poles experiment unique in that it allows the least well-off to take part.

The EOC’s Italian centre was set up in 2001 at Loppiano, in the municipality of Incisa val d’Arno (Tuscany). The Lionello Bonfanti centre is located three kilometres from the Citadel of the Focolarini, because of a concern for mutual support in bearing witness to a utopia in practice (Séguy 1984). The Citadel consists of the Focolari and their families, a university and training centres, a number of retail outlets and meeting places, a seminary and a religious sanctuary. The Lionello Bonfanti centre includes the business firms. One thus sees taking shape a thoroughgoing micro-society where the movement provides structure for its members and provides internally for the satisfaction of their material, cultural and spiritual needs.

The Lionello Bonfanti Centre, built on 9,500 m² of grounds, in 2013 comprised twenty-two companies. Differing from other centres more oriented towards production activities, this one is basically geared to services and trade. Some very diverse service and production activities are located there53. The site is home to the School of Civil Economy, one of whose principal theoreticians, Luigino Bruni, is close to the EOC and the Focolari (Bruni and Zamagni 2009). Around 90 persons work at the centre, whose construction was funded through mass shareholding with 5,800 shareholders having invested between 50 and 500 euros. 87 % of the shareholders are not company heads but housewives, students, salaried workers, manual workers, etc.54 The Lionello Bonfanti centre sees itself as a centre for relationality and as spearheading the civil economy beyond the EOC itself, for the whole of Italy. While the

52 At the time of my survey in Loppiano, (December 2013), other EOC centres were being set up in France and in Germany.
53 An outpatient clinic, a bookshop, a theatre, a philosophy cafe, a wool-working workshop, a bar, a gymnasium, a builders, a company installing wind turbines and sanitary facilities, etc., traders’, surveyors’ and insurance offices, a branch of the Banca Etica, an agricultural equipment business, a cooperative managing the charitable works of religious bodies, an IT company, a sustainable habitat company, the company managing the complex as a whole, and a consulting company specializing in business strategy, working in particular with religious congregations.
54 Interview, Polo Lionelle Bonfanti, Incisa Val d’Arno, 20 December 2013.
EOC is focussed on the entrepreneurial dimension and has no specific discourse on the role of public policy in social justice, the Focolari nevertheless initiated in 1996 a political movement, the cross-party Movimento politico per l’Unità (Political Movement for Unity) aspiring towards a ‘universal fraternity’ made present in Brescia as well as other locations, and which intervened in March 2012 to call for a reform of electoral law and the party system in Italy 55.

At an economic level, the Economy of Communion brings together companies which are defined more by their practices than by their statutes. Echoing the debate in France (Richez-Battesti and Petrella 2015), the EOC is closer to the model of the social enterprise than the social and solidarity economy. For the EOC, it is more a question of instilling a civic and social dimension within entrepreneurship, whatever the company’s governance model, rather than driving statutorily-participative models such as the model of the cooperative 56. But above all, the EOC stands in contrast to the experiments described above in its linkage between the economic experiment and a de-territorialized, transnational religious movement, one typical of new religious movements dense in communitarian and spiritual values (Hervieu-Léger and Champion 2008: 144; Marzano 2013 57). The Focolari movement, stresses Colonomos (2000: 240), puts out an emotional message aimed first of all at the individual, independently of national frontiers. This religious movement, through its diffusion dynamic and claims for the natural universality of its message, targets the global sphere by promoting micro-enterprise at the local scale. However, here the local is a local reconstructed on a communitarian and affinity basis, distinct from traditional institutional Catholic territorial coverage, whether this be based on the parish or the diocese. More than ever, the territory is here the institutionalization of space (Smith 2011), in accordance with norms, symbols and values characteristic of an organizing principle of movement.

Like any typological enterprise, the classification made here is artificial. Numerous cross-referencings and linkages can be made between these four approaches: a given member of the Compagnia delle Opere may be an active board member of social cooperatives, the Banca Etica may be present in Economy of Communion centres, etc. The fact remains that undeniable nuances separate these Catholic worlds once one looks beyond affirmations of common principles.

56 Bruni nevertheless locates the EOC within the line of descent of the ‘large-scale cooperative movement’ as well as that of various economic experiments with a religious scope: Jesuit reductions, the medieval Monte di Pietà, the Quakers, etc. (Bruni 2007: 191).
57 If one follows Marzano’s approach (see Chapter 1), the Focolare Movement would be seen as a typical illustration of the sectarian (in the sociological sense) transformation of the Catholic Church. At the level of narrative, we might note the filiation claimed by EOC theoreticians with medieval monasticism. Marzano in fact stresses that this comparison between new Church movements and earlier monastic orders, one very popular in Italian sociological debates and in Pope Benedict XVI’s discourse, is misplaced: ‘monasticism has always been a Christian way of life relatively separate from the “world” and reserved for the “special” faithful who have decided to consecrate their lives to Christ and the Church. For the diocesan clergy, this confers a privileged status, and it requires specific theological and pastoral training managed by the institution. In contrast, the members of the movements are the ordinary lay faithful who, instead of paying obedience to their priest and participating in normal sacramental life, choose a separate itinerary of faith with its array of doctrines, symbols and rituals) in many respects completely autonomous from that proposed by the Church’ (Marzano 2013: 312).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Role of the market</th>
<th>Role of the state</th>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th>Territorial anchoring</th>
<th>Support organizations</th>
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<td>Opus Dei</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communitarian</td>
<td>Needing regulation</td>
<td>‘Better State’ Partnership subsidiarity</td>
<td>Traditional social Catholicism, Catholic Action movements</td>
<td>Strong Parish and territorial networking</td>
<td>Caritas Diocesan organizations, Catholic Action, CCA Brescia, Cristianos en el socialismo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberationist</td>
<td>Radical critique of deregulated market and utilitarianism</td>
<td>Radical critique of neo-liberal State</td>
<td>Liberation theology, theology of popular majorities, adjusted for European context</td>
<td>Strong Linkage to social movements and solidarity economy experiments</td>
<td>Missionary circles, Ignacio Ellacuria Centre, Alboan, Pax Christi, Bidari collective, grass-roots community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy of Communion</td>
<td>Gift ethic and civil economy as market correctives</td>
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<td>Founder’s charisma Emotional and communitarian religiosity</td>
<td>Global-local articulation, Affinity principle of EOC centres</td>
<td>Focolari</td>
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*Source: drawn up by author*

### 4. Individual trajectories: Catholic socialization and pluralism of economic and political ethics

Distinguishing the nuances of the Catholic palette becomes an even more complex exercise if observation descends to the level of the individual. The final section of this chapter, on the basis of the personal trajectories of Catholics involved in the two regions, attempts to indicate the pluralism of rationales for socio-economic initiatives emerging from the Catholic matrix. Following in the steps of sociological works addressing the combination of individual and collective effects on religious socialization (see Introduction), the aim of this section is, on the basis of five individual trajectories (two in Italy, two in the Spanish Basque Country and one in the French Basque Country, to emphasize the plural nature of Catholic socializations as well as the high permeability of the religious and social spheres of commitment.

The first case is that of Alberto\(^58\), the head of an electrical installations business with 300 employees, located in a small town in the province of Brescia. Currently a member of the Compagnia delle Opere, Alberto embodies the work ethic and the entrepreneurial ethic advocated by the CDO, directly related to the Catholic territorial matrix in Brescia:

Associationism, for people in Brescia, derives directly from the Faith. Which explains why so many people have inspired our activity. I say our, because I do, I also do more or less the same

\(^{58}\) First names used here are pseudonyms.
thing. I try to transform, to bring into the real life of each day the experience of meeting with Christ. I sanctify my life through work. Because I practice my profession of company head correctly and I observe a code which comes from my faith.59

Alberto’s Catholicism takes the form, in his terms, of an approach to company management closely inclusive of employees and developing a long-term relational approach with clients. This ‘rather nineteenth-century’ (‘un po ottocentesca’, interview) sets a limit on commercial aggressiveness in market terms, but consolidates the company internally. Alberto’s professional activity is combined with volunteer activities in several social cooperatives in the area. The discourse on subsidiarity is in line with that of the CDO: the individual person, and not the State, should be placed at the centre of welfare in the region. Subsidiarity, in the Catholic welfare model, stems from voluntary service, from cooperation and from being free of charge, and is distinct from State responses which are provided ‘in a cold manner’ (interview) by agents of the state.

Alberto has very wide experience of Catholic movements: Comunione e Liberazione, Opus Dei, Focolarini, Rinnovamento dello Spirito, etc. His theoretical citations are taken as much from Don Giussani as from Escrivà de Balaguer, and generally refer to the liberal-conservative approach identified above. However, and -perhaps above all, Alberto was until the age of thirty an active member of the local section of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), before experiencing a religious conversion. Today in his sixties and far from considering these two forms of activity as antithetical, Alberto sees a continuity between two utopian forms. For him the difference stems from the desired pace of social change:

Q. this change [from Communism to Catholicism] is interesting

Alberto: it’s not a change Let’s say that when a young man wants to change the world, he wants to do it all at once. He thinks that with social and political activity the world can be changed quickly. Communism wants to bring about justice quickly. And then you realize that the world does not change because even if there are rapid political changes, what predominates is lots of little internal changes. There are so many men who in their private life, at their own small scale, change. It’s the consciousness and mindfulness of so many people which brings about a different level of humanity. Not just revolutions. We’ve seen plenty of revolutions throughout history. Thousands, of all kinds. But in the end they did not bring about that many changes. The greatest changes that humanity has experienced come from internal revolutions, great saints, great men. (ibid.)

The link between the two forms of commitment comes from a continuity of values:

There were values when I was a communist, there were values when I became a Catholic. Values have always been at the centre of my interests. When I was a communist forty years ago, that was when the workers in the factories did not have the rights they should have had. So many hours working, low wages, lives of poverty. So being a communist was a bit like being a militant Christian. Afterwards I changed, but at the end of the day my life has always been marked by the presence of significant values. Which force you into choices. The choice to be always on the side of the person in need. (ibid.)

This trajectory led Alberto to look lucidly at the development of the local and regional economy, which leads him to distance himself somewhat from the hegemonic narrative of Brescian entrepreneurship. Confronted by the difficulties of the economic crisis, the Brescian industrial model, previously the spearhead of one the richest provinces in Italy, has been ‘massacred by relocation’ (interview). This weakening of the productive fabric is said to have

59 Interview, 17 December 2013, translated from the Italian.
caused a weakening in Catholic finance, long a pillar of the Brescian model of industrial development:

Today, the influence of Catholic finance is very much reduced. Catholic finance exists on paper but not in reality. It’s a memory of the past. Not unlike mythology. Let’s say that the influence of the Catholic world on culture and the economy is very reduced these days. It is comparable to the proportion of people who go to Mass on Sunday. 10 %, when it was 90 % at one time. Which means that for 90% of citizens, what the Church says has no importance. They are Catholics only for outward show (cattolici di facciata). (Ibid.)

At bottom, what can be found in Alberto’s discourse and in his successive commitments, from the PCI to the CDO, - is a continuity of intransigencies, a continuity transcending political change.

The second profile is that of Giorgio. Today the manager of the Brescia agency of the Banca Etica, Giorgio is 31 years old. He belongs to a different generation from Alberto, and has experienced a history of militant and professional activity situated at the intersection of the Catholic communitarian and liberationist models. A native of a mountainous district in the Val Trompia, Giorgio was first a member of the AGESCI Scouts group in Gardone Val Trompia between 1995 and 2007. Between 2000 and 2007, Giorgio worked tutoring children and as group treasurer. During his studies, he was a student representative at his secondary school and on the provincial student council between 1997 and 1999. Once at university, he continued his activities as a student representative by founding the Studenti Democratici (Democratic Students) list and carrying out representative functions between 2000 and 2006. He also worked with disabled students. He was also an activist in the Brescia branch of the Federation of Italian Catholic University Students. As such, between 2003 and 2007 he was part of the university pastoral outreach of the Diocese of Brescia. His experience of Catholic Associationism was supplemented by his temporarily chairing the Young ACLI (2010-2012). He was also a provincial councillor for Confcooperative and Vice-Chairman of the Work, Tourism and Culture sector (2008-2012). Giorgio is involved in the management of several student and social cooperatives. He is a member of the Fiamme Verdi Brescia association, intended to honour the memory of the partisans and constitutional values. Finally, since he became a member in 2013, Giorgio is the youngest of the 62 Brothers of the Congregation of Apostolic Charity in Brescia.

Giorgio stresses the role of the Catholic oratorio (oratory) within the province of Brescia in socializing future economic and social leaders. A sort of functional equivalent of a Catholic youth club, the oratorio originated as a space for prayer but in fact offers a set of social, sporting and cultural activities:

There is a bar, the table tennis, the soccer championship, the scout group, Catholic Action, the theatre group, the choir, catechism, and get-togethers on various subjects. It is the place where people are formed. All Brescians have been to the oratorio, since they were really small. All of them. There are small oratories and large ones. Those who were at the oratorio with me, at Gardone, now make up the Gardone municipal council. The oratorio is essential for understanding the organizing principles behind Catholic activities. There is not one committed Catholic in Brescia who has not had experience of the oratorio.60

These community activities are accompanied by political commitments within centre and centre-left parties. Giorgio is the provincial secretary of the Popular Party’s youth section (Giovani Popolari) and of the Democracy is Freedom - The Daisy (Giovani della Margherita) youth section between 2001 and 2006. He then became a member of the provincial executive of the Democracy is Freedom (Margherita) party, and then of the Democratic Party.

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60 Interview, 17 December 2013, translated from the Italian.
The vision of Catholic subsidiarity to which Giorgio refers is distinct from that of the liberal-conservative grouping. He referred in particular to the thinking of Don Luigi Sturzo, the priest who founded the Partito Popolare in 1919, who saw subsidiarity not as a legitimization of withdrawal by government, but more as the autonomy of local (public and private) administrations from the State and from centralizing ambitions. Catholic subsidiarity, in this sense, can play both ways:

The good side of the Catholic movement is its capacity to structure itself, to coordinate itself. The bad side is that it substitutes for the State in certain areas where the State is already active. Or it tries to move into certain areas where the State is present, with a view to making profits. (ibid.)

Attached as he is to ‘Democratic Catholicism’, Giorgio rejects any comparison between a religious school of thought and a political line. He recalls that Don Sturzo, at the time when the PPI was created in Bologna, refused to create a specifically Catholic party on the grounds that ‘religion unites, while politics divides. The party is a part’ (interview). A plurality in political opinions does not prevent the sharing of faith and the conception of the person linked to religion. This conception leads Giorgio to express positions very critical of the Northern League, which is well established in the valley from which he comes, and which instrumentalizes religion in matters of identity (‘the same ones who will perform neo-pagan ceremonies at Monte Viso and who will then say they are the defenders of so-called Christian values’ (interview)), but not forgetting the complex situations which popular support for the League generate for the local clergy:

One example, a village in the Bassa Bresciana, whose name I shall not divulge. Festival of the League (Festa della Lega). The parish priest provides everything for the Festival: the tables, the machine for cutting salami, etc. Through an intermediary, the Bishop lets the parish priest know that it is not appropriate to do this. One can’t lend out parish facilities for a political activity. The parish priest’s reply was worth making a trip to hear: ‘What? But they are all people from my parish. It’s people from Caritas, from the Oratorio’. To show how far the League has got itself on the inside. (ibid.)

Now the manager of the local Banca Etica agency, Giorgio combines his community and political activities with socio-economic activities marked by strong values and at the heart of the solidarity economy. His profile is testimony to the permeability of the religious, political and economic spheres as well as, given his age, the contemporary vigour of Catholic socialization agencies in Brescia.

The pluralism of Catholic trajectories is just as perceptible in the Basque Country. I shall merely give three examples here.

The first, whom I shall call Pedro, is today a numerary member\textsuperscript{61} of Opus Dei, who spends all his time working for the organization. Born in 1956 in San Sebastian (Guipuzcoa), Pedro is from a family from Leitza, in the Basque-speaking area of Navarre. He spent part of his career in Basque public administration, first as a provincial government officer in the Department of Public Health of the provincial government of Alava, before taking up a political post in 1995, becoming Director of Cultural Affairs for the Alava Diputacion. After a four-year term of office, he became Head of the Planning, Housing and Environment Department of the Alava provincial government, before joining the regional autonomous Government as Head of Environmental Affairs. Pedro’s professional activity in public administration was accompanied

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\textsuperscript{61} Opus Dei has four membership categories: Numeraries (clergy or celibate lay persons, who commit to poverty, chastity, obedience and the life in common), Associates (same commitments except for living in common), Supernumeraries (lay persons who live ‘in the world’ but contribute financially), and Co-operators (sympathisers, whether Christian or not). (Normand 1995).
by political activities. While Opus Dei is generally associated with Basque (the Popular Party) and Navarrese conservative parties (Unión del Pueblo Navarro - UPN), Pedro is himself a member of the centre-left abertzale (Basque nationalist) Eusko Alkartasuna (EA), born in 1986 from a split in the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). He is also a Basque speaker. At the religious level, Pedro found out about Opus Dei through people he mixed with (‘like you become an Athletic Bilbao supporter’, interview) and entered the movement at aged eighteen. He became a numerary five years later. Today the head of Opus Dei’s communications for the Basque Country, Pedro aimed to correct the movement’s elitist image by stressing its charitable works. Pedro stressed that Opus Dei’s ‘corporative’ actions, carried out as such by the organizations, ultimately take second place to the actions carried out individually by Opus members, without them necessarily publicizing their affiliation. If there is any sign here of a Catholic ethic of work and social action, it is interiorized and takes the form of acts rather than display. In symbiosis with the Vizcaya Church as regards social campaigns, Pedro, despite his political allegiance, is more circumspect about the work for peace undertaken by the Basque church (see Chapter 5). The nephew of a UPN municipal councillor for Leitza assassinated by ETA on 14 July 2014, Pedro had trouble taking on board the Church discourse favouring an unconditional pardon for those who have perpetrated violence. Pedro nevertheless pointed to the work of Rafa Larreina, another member of Opus Dei and of the Eusko Alkartasuna party, as regards the peace process. Finally, at the socio-economic level, Pedro saw a relationship between the thinking of Escrivá de Balaguer and that of Arizmendiarieta, the founder of Mondragón about work and business enterprise.

The final Basque career path we shall look at here follows an identical doctrinal line but with a different socio-political profile. Claude, a chemical engineer from the French Basque Country, currently resides in the Landes and works in a plant chemistry business with around 1,000 employees in its four factories in Aquitaine. A supernumerary member of Opus Dei, Claude was born in Ascain in 1967. A former choir boy, Claude felt very early that he had a vocation, although this did not lead him to the priesthood. During his secondary education at a Catholic lycée in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Claude got to meet some Spanish families who were in Opus Dei. According to Claude, if during the period immediately after the Franco regime, Opus did not manage to establish itself in the French Basque Country, this was partly due to the firm opposition of the Bishop of Bayonne at that time. Claude made more regular contact with Opus members during his engineering studies in Marseilles, through meetings with lecturers and engineers who were members of the organization. He then went to work in the chemical industry in Normandy, a period during which he spent time in Opus Dei circles in Paris, and then in a multinational pharmaceutical firm in Béarn before joining the company in the Landes, as previously mentioned.

A trained engineer and profoundly steeped in the thinking of Opus’ founder, Claude emphasized the central importance of sanctification of work as a tool for evangelization.

We have to re-evangelize, and to re-evangelize, we are like the first Christians, like the Apostles. You read the texts, and you realize that Paul does his job. What is the best thing available to Paul? It’s not just going and talking with the best Jews and rabbis. No. He does do that, but alongside, there’s work, too. Because at work, there is activity which gets people relating to each other, and in a relationship of confidence. If you work with someone and that person does a good job of work for you, you have respect for their work. And through this work, very, very, very naturally you bring about an apostolic desire again in the people around you. And this is

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62 An intellectual relationship which would validate the counter-narrative of the history of Mondragón (see below).

63 Claude sees the new Bishop of Bayonne, appointed in 2008, as much more open to Opus ideas.
something Saint José María [Escrivá de Balaguer] had understood perfectly. And the first ones who approached this, now we know who it is because we have had the canonization of Álvaro del Portillo: he was one of the best civil engineers in Spain. He came top of his year in the exams.64

The central position of work and the value placed on professional excellence are for Claude the constituents which give Opus Dei its specific nature, in contrast to other strands of Catholicism, especially charismatic ones. In this view, professionalism and ‘doing the job properly’ have religious justifications, in the Weberian sense:

For us, even if you take for example the head of the Opus, who is the Prelate, if he does not do his job properly, he is less saintly than us. And if the cleaning ladies who clean the college toilets do not do their job properly, they are less saintly than him. And vice versa. […] You realize that your job, you do it, but for God. The power you get from working for God is that you are above the boss. You are above the boss, above all the worries, above all the wheeling and dealing. If you want to work for God’s sake, you don’t have any professional careerism. You are in a situation where you are continually trying to do better. And your boss knows it. In how many companies do people spend 50% of their time sharpening up their career prospects? In my company I start to work in the morning at 7 am, I pray a bit, I start working at 7.30. My boss doesn’t get in before 8.30-9.00 am, he knows that when [Claude] starts to work, he is 100% on the job. And what brings people together on a job? It’s that, it’s that you are 100% on the job. If all the hours that you spend at work you really devote them to your work, then you are sanctifying more than someone doing work which seems more apostolic or more theological. And that’s something I’ve seen in reality. I’ve seen a certain number of very intelligent priests who, because they were very intelligent, could also dodge a certain number of things that were difficult to do. Whereas in this respect you are really in total contradiction with that, because the aim is to really do your job.65

As regards the question of whether this individual ethical relationship to work results in an ethical and therefore critical relationship towards workforce relations, the economic model of enterprise and capitalism as a system, responses are more divided. While Claude denounced the excesses of neo-liberalism via the practices of the multinational pharmaceutical company where he had worked, this did not lead to a structural condemnation of capitalism. From the perspective of Opus Dei, the challenge is more one of changing things from within. ‘On this point Saint Jose Maria was very clear: you must get into all the occupations which are worthy of sainthood’ (interview). Reporting remarks made about the financial crisis by a Spanish banker met during an Opus Dei course, Claude stressed ‘he told me “If I don’t get in there, who will change it?”’ (interview). The discourse is more about the enterprise of raising capitalism’s moral standards from within than a call to overhaul structures.

In contrast to Pedro, Claude does not complement this professional ethic with party political activities. On this subject, he emphasized the opposition of the Opus Dei’s founder to setting up a Catholic party. Nonetheless, far from reducing his Catholic commitment to an internalized work ethic, Claude has taken part in Catholic campaigns following the Manif pour tous (‘Demo for all’) in France (Della Sudda 2014) by becoming Vice-Chairman of the Association of Catholic Families in the Adour region. We see again here the central characteristic of Opus Dei: the defence of a traditional family model perceived as threatened by the legalization of marriage between persons of the same sex (the Taubira Law of 23 April 2013). This marks a certain form of division of labour: for Claude, it is not for Opus Dei to take

64 Interview, Herm (Landes), 27 April 2015.
65 Ibid.
up the cudgels on matters of family legislation. Nevertheless, the family’s central position in Opus Dei doctrine may lead its members to political activities within ad hoc movements.

Finally, Claude is one of the spearheads of Opus Dei’s development strategy in the south-west of France, one still embryonic at the time of the survey. This strategy requires setting up nuclei of activists with a great deal of cultural capital, ‘very high level’ university lecturers and engineers who by capillary action will circulate the Opus Dei message and will recruit co-operators, the first level of belonging to Opus, perhaps followed by supernumeraries and numeraries. Two influences feed into this strategy: a French influence, from Opus Dei networks in the Paris region (especially around the Collège-Lycée Hautefeuille), but also an influence from the Spanish Basque Country, with regular links with Opus Dei and its educational institutions (such as the Colegio Erain at Irun). In a typically Catholic show of unity, Claude sees the Opus as deriving neither from Catholic traditionalism, nor from the ‘most progressive’ schools of thought, but as having a conciliar filiation.

I am in Opus Dei because I am a product of Vatican II. You have to understand. A product of Vatican II. Otherwise, it would not exist. So you are seen by traditionalists as a horrible Vaticanist. And you are seen by ultra-Vatican II adherents as the most obscurantist guy in existence and the most traditionalist under the sun. And as far as that is concerned, it really helped me knowing Spain well and knowing the Spanish Basque Country well as compared with the French Basque Country. To understand what there was different compared to it. But it’s true that it has been a real poison inside the Church. And today we are going to get out of it. By rising above it. We haven’t had a war of religions. We could have created a schism. But the Pope [Benedict XVI] was much more intelligent than that, he rose above it all. It’s up to the fundamentalists to understand the message which has been given, and as for the liturgy, if they want to do it in their own way, they do it in their own way, nobody tells them not to. [...] In France there has in fact been this difficulty. People were saying ‘Ah, Opus Dei, you are traditionalists’. And in fact, no. Catholic means traditionalist and progressive. You have to do both at the same time. Otherwise you are not a Catholic. The Catholic is the one who reaches out towards everybody.66

A third profile, one very diverse politically and religiously, is that of Ander, a Vizcayan Catholic activist concerned about socio-economic issues and the peace question, who has become a full-time political professional. Born in 1963 at Zalla (Encartaciones, Vizcaya), as a youth he took part in grass-roots Church movements. He coordinated the Diocesan Youth Movement and the JOC (Juventud Obrera Cristiana - Young Christian Workers) in Vizcaya and in 1997 was appointed Director of the Laity Education Service of the Diocese of Bilbao. Ander took part in the Basque pacifist movement, which involved Christian groups, either as conscientious objectors or by helping to found the Gesto por la Paz (Gesture for Peace) movement, or by reflecting on what could be learned for the Basque conflict from the Northern Ireland peace process. An activist in the Euskadiko Ezkerra (Basque Left) party, Ander then joined the Socialist Party and became active at municipal level. He was a local councillor for Sestao (Vizcaya) for four years, before joining the party’s General Committee for the party in this municipality located in a working class area on the outskirts of Bilbao. Ander was one of the stalwarts in the Cristianos en el socialismo (Christians in Socialism) movement which looked to the Basque leader Ramón Jauregui, manifesting a Christian tendency within the PSOE (Díaz-Salazar 2006: 267-277; Jauregui and García de Andoin 2001). In 2008, at that time a federal coordinator for Cristianos en el socialismo, Ander joined the Spanish government as an adviser in the private office of María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, Vice-Chair for religious policy questions and the Basque question. Ander backed up his political profile with a solid academic education in Political Science by preparing a thesis on Fernando de los Ríos, a

66 Ibid.
socialist intellectual and politician who decreed freedom of worship under the Second Republic. Ander is also a graduate in Theology and Psychology from the Jesuit University of Deusto.

As regards social justice and socio-economic models, Ander, alone amongst Cristianos en el socialismo members, fought for Left Christian involvement in two Basque Social and Solidarity Economy experiments. The first campaign was to enhance the standing of the Mondragón model of cooperatives. To this end, Ander made use of his relations with the Pax Romana movement, the Christian collective Barandiaran Kristau Elkartea (Barandiaran Christian Association) and the Mondragón cooperative’s bank Caja Laboral Popular. Above all, Ander campaigns to disseminate the Mondragón model within the International League of Religious Socialists. He notes the interest in Mondragón ‘as an alternative to capitalism’ (interview) from a nucleus of American members of the organization. Ander is himself influenced by works such as After Capitalism by the Jesuit David Schweickart. He organized a visit to Mondragón on the occasion of a League meeting in Bilbao. As a coordinator of Cristianos en el socialismo, Ander played the role of facilitator to promote relations between Mondragón and Patxi Lopez, firstly when Lopez was Secretary General of the Socialist Party of the Basque Country (PSE) then when he became President of the Autonomous Community between 2009 and 2012. Using the contacts he made with the Vatican during his period in the Spanish government, Ander and the Christian Socialists became involved, together with other organizations, in the process leading to the canonization of Jose María Arizmendiarrrieta:

In this sense, all the contacts which we have played a part, in addition to the situation of the economic crisis, moral entrepreneurs, the grass roots economy, and thus this theme of Mondragón… And now the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Turkson. But there was also the visit of the previous President of the Pontifical Council, Cardinal Martino, who came to Mondragón, in May 2009 I think. […] It is interesting to see that the Mondragón group itself, on the basis of the canonization, has started a process of updating its background, its roots. And on the other hand, it is interesting that the Church recognizes this experiment. Cardinal Martino said ‘If I had known this before, Caritas in veritate, the encyclical on the economy, would have certainly made some reference to it’.

Ander and the Cristianos en el socialismo collective have also been involved in organizing the collection of funds for Fiare-Banca Etica. While Fiare owes its origins to a great extent to the initiative by the pastoral and social outreach of the Diocese of Bilbao, the HOAC (Hermandad Obrera de Acción Católica, Catholic Action Workers’ Brotherhood) and other religious and lay organizations, the Cristianos en el socialismo would make particular use of their relations with Patxi Lopez, at that time lehendakari (President of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country) and with several elected councillors from the margen izquierda in Bilbao to collect funds for Fiare’s social capital and thus to legitimize it socially.

These five profiles are merely intended her to illustrate the internal pluralism of Catholic agency of socialization which may, in the same region or territory, lead to very contrasting forms of socio-economic campaigning in terms of ideology and religion. ‘Going down’ to the individual level provides an opportunity to nuance the typological approach by showing that political itineraries are more intermingled than a too definite vision of religious cleavages would lead us to believe. In the Basque Country, the figure of Arizmendiarrrieta may be invoked simultaneously by Opus Dei, by Christian Socialists, by the PNV, by the abertzale left or by solidarity economy networks. In Brescia, an entrepreneur member of the Compagnia delle Opere will also get involved on a non-profit basis in certain social cooperatives which on the face of it embody a model of social transformation fairly distinct from that advocated by the

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67 Interview, Sestao, 30 June 2012, translated from the Spanish.
CDO. Individual activist trajectories are useful in nuancing, without invalidating, our tracking of Catholic pluralism as regards the social economy and social justice.

The economic conceptions and practices of Catholic actors in the territories considered here are located to a greater or lesser extent on the continuum between the two Catholic poles of Catholicism of identity and Catholicism of openness (Portier 2002). The liberal-conservative school of thought, as well as the Focolari, are located more towards the identity model, sharing with it the three characteristics identified by Portier: intransigence and disqualification of the modern world, ecclesiology and an aspiration to place the social universe back under the influence of Catholic doctrine; and a strategy of religious visibility within the public space. We should nevertheless, with regard to this last point, distinguish movements such as the Focolari, with great religious visibility taking communitarian and emotional forms, from Opus Dei, which has long stood for a strategy of discretion and a re-centring on the work ethic. In contrast, both the communitarian and liberationist approaches look to a Catholicism of openness maintaining a more distanced relationship towards what the hierarchy says, advocating individual autonomy or even discretion as regards religion, but joining in with economic approaches promoting forms of solidarity supported by a high level of engagement by the public authorities.

This attempt at classification begins to lose clarity as soon as it is formulated. We have seen how individual political itineraries were more transversal than appears at first sight. Moreover, it will have been noted that the internal pluralism of Catholicism, including economic matters, is often minimized by actors in contrast emphasizing doctrinal references. Now, as was stressed in Chapter 1, one of the foundations of Institutional Catholicism is to leave a relatively wide margin of interpretation for its recommendations, in particular as regards social justice. While the Church’s recommendations are explicit, prescriptive and directly address public policy in matters of family policy, euthanasia or genetic research, its teachings when it comes to the economy or social justice are often limited to statements of general principles regarding workers’ rights and a concern for equity and equality in economic affairs. There are multiple interpretations of the Social Doctrine of the Church and these vary depending on the economic, religious and cultural matrices of local regions and territories.

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