Economy of Communion as a Culture of Working Together for Economic Transformation: A Perspective of Culture of Unity

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Abstract: This paper explores the Economy of Communion as a culture of working together for economic transformation from the perspective of the culture of unity in the African economies. Economic transformation is influenced by growth of industrial and service sectors that reflect the transformation process. This process is determined by the attitude and perception of the agents of change towards non-economic factors such as culture of unity that may fast-track the process of transformation. Further reviews on economic transformation explores the model of the Economy of Communion as an alternative culture of running the industrial and service sectors in order to achieve the expected economic progress in the economies. The Economy of Communion promotes oneness as a culture of an economy that is all inclusive.

Key words: Economy of Communion, Economic Transformation, Culture of Unity

I. INTRODUCTION

This is a proposal of the model of the Economy of Communion as a paradigm shift for a new order of economies of Africa. It is a proposal as an alternative to Africa's economic system of exclusion and marginalization. Economic transformation has development implications because it strengthens the socio-economic modernization and aspects of participation in development. Africa's economies, despite expansive resources lag behind. The paper reviews the economic relations between countries of the continent because their performance to boost economic relations is decimal even with establishment of the trade blocs.

Economic Transformation

Economic transformation involves modernization of a country's economy, society and institutions (Gray, 2018). This has an impact on human life, changing values, norms, beliefs and customs in the transformation from traditional to a modern (Inglehart and Baker 2000; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). It is imperative for a society and institutions to make adjustments in the process of transformation especially those of Africa in order to create societies that are more inclusive.

Economy of Communion

The Economy of Communion is a concrete attempt to address acute social problems by creating systems that promote equality and solidarity by placing the human person at the center of every activity. It represents an alternative economic and business model founded on a vision of interpersonal and social relationships (Ferrucci, 1998). EoC is a calling to live, work and do business in an integrated way, a life of reciprocity where there is culture of giving or sharing (Arujo, 1996; Ferruci, 1998, Bruni, 2002; Gold, 2004). It is not corporate social responsibility but seeks to unite people through economic activities that we might all be one (Araujo, 1997. Argiolas, 2006). It unites entrepreneurs, companies/organizations/institutions, customers, employees, stakeholders, competitors, suppliers and governments in a local and global effort to create material and spiritual abundance and freely share that abundance in ways that *make* us all better off (Gold, 2004).

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employs desktop research method, which is acquiring in-depth information from document analysis, that is, publications, books and government policy documents. The author will examine and interpret secondary data in order to elicit meaning and insights relevant to the economy of communion as a culture of transforming African economies into better performing economies. There will be review of how the economy of communion as a perspective of the culture of unity can transform economies of Africa to overcome the socio-economic challenges facing the continent and the world at large thus promoting a culture of working together to achieve an integrated economic environment for Africa.

III. CULTURE OF UNITY

The promotion of the culture of having makes a human person passive and uncreative, deprives him or her of the ambitions to acquire higher values, it limits him or her to the use of material wealth and consumer goods (Linard, 2003). Such vision of humanity clearly leads to the increasingly divided society in accordance with the criteria of material prosperity and ultimately, to serious social diseases such as greed and corruption. The need to get out of this track and develop a new vision of man and society in a new *culture of giving* as opposed to a *culture of having* must become evident. This new vision of a new culture can be presented by the model of, to work \rightarrow to earn \rightarrow to have \rightarrow to give (Linard, 2003).

A human person, who knows how to free him or herself from the culture of having must be open to the needs of others both in private and public life. In particular, in the economic activity the sharing of material goods and intangible assets with others must be a sincere, gratuitous and disinterested gift which comes as an expression of human solidarity and empathy towards others (Naughton, 2004). The culture of unity has profound implications on the economic and social structures which provide strong motivation for positive action in favor of social justice and its influence on the economic and social relationships. Bad relations or lack of them in a community are very often the main causes of poverty. The improvement of these relationships often leads to better living conditions thus transforming the society socially and economically. To avoid the birth of a joyless economy it calls for merging the understanding of everyone to create a more humane economy based on fraternity and mutual respect. To this effect we need to create economies with sustainable development that is, economies where prosperity is shared. This creates greater social justice and environmental sustainability which allows for economic transformation to support a just sustainable development.

IV. THE VALUE OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Economic transformation is an interrelated process of structural change that accompanies economic development (Syrquin, 1998). Economic transformation relates to transition from centrally planned economies towards market economies (Ahrens, 2006). It is a continuous process of moving labor and other resources from lower areas to higher areas of productivity growth that lead to structural change of the economy or its transformation (McMillan and Rodrik, 2011). With no single theory that describes the transformation process, it is a universal outcome that characterizes the process of change such as change of economic structure which is the rapid increase in the share of manufacturing followed by a decline in agriculture's share of the economy (Chenery, 1960, 1968; Graham, Cameron, Dombroski, Healy and Miller, 2017). Within the process of economic transformation, the country's economy shifts from rural areas to cities and the degree of urbanization increases significantly. From a neoclassical perspective, timing and pacing transformation replaces state-ownership of means of production, central planning and coordination mechanism with private property and a flexible system of relative prices which constitute a necessary condition for successful economic transformation (Ahrens, 2006).

V. THE ECONOMY OF COMMUNION MODEL; ITS FOCUS AND APPROACH

The Economy of Communion model is a paradigm shift as an alternative of doing business where the manager and employee as human persons are poverty-sensitive and open to human needs (Bruni, 2002). The model of Economy of Communion (EoC) is a new idea for eradication of poverty

and reduction of social exclusion in an economy (Lubich, 1991).

Economy of communion is not a realization of a theoretical economic model drawn up by economists, but it is rather generated by the practice of new man's behavior and by the necessity to face today's *social problems*. It can be considered as an attempt to overcome the dilemma between free market and centrally planned organizations.' (Ressl,1995). It focuses not only on helping people but *building relationships*. It seeks to create a better tomorrow by changing the world today. The model is based on the spirit of people who believe in the good of all mankind especially in the use and *sharing of resources* (Gold, 2004).

Business people are the custodians of the natural resources that God has blessed mankind with because they *add value to those resources* for everyone else to use in a *simplified and usable form* but at the same time can be a cultural stream that creates a way of doing things that stresses social love, the most fundamental rule of social life (Bruni, 2004, 2005).

Working in Communion: "To love and Togetherness"- for Economic Transformation in Africa

In the culture of unity it is not enough to work "for" others. We also need to work "with" others and "thanks to" others. There is no communion if there is no reciprocity and without living as each other (Bruni, 2005, 2013), for communion of love and togetherness in excellence, to reach it 'I' need others (Bruni, 2013).

An all-inclusive economic progress in Africa is proving to be a challenge and this is the reason why economists are promoting countries' specific approach for identification of growth opportunities to prosperity (Rodrik, 2003). This is because the process of economic transformation comes with a period of rapid growth of per capita combined with structural change. It is the interrelated processes of structural change that would sustain economic transformation in Africa (Chamberlin and Benfica, 2018). In the culture of communion during the process of economic transformation, it reduces rising inequalities during the process as any inequalities are a persistent challenge to economic progress (Breisinger and Diao, 2008).

For instance the existence of African trading blocs have failed the common market 'good' leaving most African economies struggling in the global market (Mshomba, 2017). In this case the diversity of pace and pathways of economic transformation in Africa can mutually be increased and connected respectively in order to achieve common outcome, that is, unity in economic transformation through the Economy of Communion.

Through enhanced and strengthened regional markets, it would help manage the heterogeneous nature of the region's transformation gradually. The communion of Africa's economic relations would expand the region's markets overtime resulting in increased demand for goods and services (Christiaensen and Todo, 2014). This agglomerates economies associated with production and the entire region's economies will become gradually transformed and hence structural transformation that allows inclusion of all thus doing away with exclusion and marginalization in the African economies (Gleaser, 2011; Tschrley, Snyder, Dolislager, Reardon, Haggblade, Goeb, and Meyer, 2015).

Economy of Communion: An all-inclusive Economic System

The Economy of Communion is seeking to create a new economic order that will not create victims in a march to amass and control wealth. As noted by Pope Francis (2013), 'If old ways persist in dominating economies and wealth, it is one more day that billions of poor people suffer (Pope Francis, 2013)'. Pope Francis further noted; '*Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape (Evagelii Gaudim, 2013).*

There is need to speed up change but we cannot just contend with having a few companies who are interested to do good. We need entire societies to consider this proposition and work towards reshaping a new and a more sustainable economic model that makes the human person the integral part (Gold, 2004).

VI. AFRICA'S ECONOMIES AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION

Economic transformation as mentioned above is influenced by growth of industrial and service sectors. They reflect the transformation process of an economy (Breisinger and Diao, 2008). Transformation is dependent on industrialization strategies and in a culture of togetherness, negative effects of industrial development are mitigated. This is especially where there is home-grown, export-oriented industrialization involving private entrepreneurs in the culture of unity which opens up broader opportunities for sustainable growth (Breisinger and Diao, 2008; Diwakar, Lemma, Shepherd, and te Velde, 2019).

Africa is experiencing significant economic transformation as seen in the progressive economic growth over the last two decades (Chamberlin and Benfica, 2018). The transformations are diverse and progressive as seen in improved governance, improved agricultural growth, expansion of employment in rural non-farm activities and policy reforms (Diao, Harttgen, and McMillan, 2017; Barrett, Christiaensen, Sheahan, and Shimeles, 2017; Yeboah and Jayne, 2018). More people are receiving secondary and university education (Yeboah and Jayne, 2018). The once vicious challenges of hyperinflation, black market exchange rates and macro-economic turmoil are largely over (African Centre for Economic Transformation, 2017). Africa has benefited from massive new local and foreign investments in many economic sectors. All this progress is evidenced by increase in per capita where between 2000 and 2014 it increased by almost 35% (Barret et al, 2017). The region has managed to achieve 4.6% inflationadjusted annual increase in agricultural growth between 2000-2016 and poverty rates have significantly dropped since 2000 (World Bank, 2017).

However despite this progressive transformation, the pace has been highly uneven across the region raising questions of sustainable transformation (McMillan, Rodrik and Verduzo, 2014). This transformation has seen exclusion and marginalization of countries in the region and people of those countries marginalized in their own countries (Bhalla, 2016; Bormann, Cederman, Pengl, and Weidmann, 2016).

For instance, empirical observation reveals successfully transformed countries of Thailand and Mexico (Breisinger and Diao, 2008). In China, South Korea and Taiwan income inequality greatly reduced during their economic transformation process (Zhou, 2000; Zhang, 2011). But in most African countries the transformation process has been associated with uneven growth and rising income inequalities across regions, population groups and individuals (Oyeyinka and Lal, 2016). This is thought to be mainly because of history matters and endogenous structures found in these countries (Palma, 2019). It is paramount that in the shared growth, the most important objectives of the transformation process must be observed, such as doing away with exclusion and marginalization.

Business today and lack of Reciprocal Relationships

In view of industrial and service sector growth instead of serving the economy, the present market in Africa and world over has become highly damaging by reversing relationships where the goods, services, environment, as well as working people have become subordinated and manipulated by speculative capital and seeking to maximize profits from the businesses set up. Being an important element of the economic system and social relationships-human labor has become the slave of profit, which is no longer the profit of the entrepreneur, but the profit of speculative capital, far from workplaces, one which does not see human work but only consumption and income. It must be said that at present the essence of social conflict is no longer between the employer (manager) and the employee but between the world of work (an entrepreneur and an employee acting together) and the world of finances (Grochmal, 2012).

A fraction of owners and managers of big industrial corporations, international financial institutions, and banks appear as a group with common interest but without any moral limitations in misconduct and in managing their institutions because they have only one goal, to maximize profits (Bruni, 2004). As a result in the absence of social love maximization, self-interest and profits devastates the reciprocal relationships on the market and in the business environment (Pitelis, 2002). The unlimited greed of shareholders leads to a monopoly like situation, inequitable distribution of income, unemployment and an environmental

disaster which has ultimately led to increasing human suffering and affecting sustainable development especially in Africa.

VII. APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Communication

The EoC believes that communication should be a gift of self (Lubich, 1991, Gold, 2004). It is viewed as an open communication foundation of trust that is built with each other and a result of the integrity with which we perform our work. The fruit of that trust is communication without fear of reprisal (Linard, 2003). We work to clearly communicate fundamental values and create business environments that are open, honest and hospitable (Specht, 2007). When feedback is provided and is expressed openly and with responsibility, it becomes a tool for improving the quality of our management structure, decision-making and mission (Mundell and Luiz, 2007). This environment encourages and supports the best contribution of each person and the human flourishing of each one and of all. This breaks walls that block information flow.

Ethics and Values

The EoC believes in adopting and fostering the highest ethical standards even in situations where a behavior is difficult or heroic. It recognizes each person's inherent dignity and the need to comply with all legitimate and just laws and regulations. This promotes a just sustainable economy progress that is all inclusive while protecting our environment, and contributing to the common good of all (Zamagni, 2004).

Love

In order to build togetherness with others we must love everyone in such a way that he or she becomes "one" with others (Lubich, 2007). Mutual love leads to reciprocal understanding, sharing the fatigue of others, to make our own the problem of others and seek solutions together, to find new agreements for new forms of organizations and to participate in the means of production and in the fruits of profits ridding many African economies of greed and corruption. We must love the value and contribution of each other (Bruni, 2013).

Organizations

Organizations must discover their purpose and importance of relationships internally. There is need to redesign business and organizational model to enable unity. This strengthens psychological safety which unleashes innovation and business performance (Gallegher, 2014). People who are quite competent remain the objects of other peoples' ideas, studies and research when in fact they wish to be recognized as subjects in their own rights capable of thought and analysis especially the youth in Africa.

Culture of Unity and Human Dignity

The culture of unity is one which comprises in a significant and wide way, all the aspects of human activity from the social, political, and economic, up to the cultural and spiritual ones (Gold, 2004). The culture of unity treats man as an integral entity shows new humanism which would be not only a sign of hope but would be a new positive image of reality. Such integral and solidary humanism is able to create a new social, economic and political order, based on the dignity and freedom of every human person in the society (Zamagni, 2004). Biela (2008) pointed out this can help make the social reality more civilized and transform large areas of disintegration, conflicts, wars and senseless deaths to areas of integration, harmony and mutual goodwill among men.

VIII. SUCCESS OF THE ECONOMY OF COMMUNION PARADIGM

In order to succeed in economic transformation there has to be humanization of the economy, the awareness that a new style of running economics is possible, based on the values higher than profits and economic effects, appreciating the human person and all his or her needs. Also, economic transformation depends on changing the mentality accomplishable in different conditions and in different cultures through the respect of workers, consumers and competitive industries' rights as well as those of the community and the environment. For the Economy of Communion as a culture of unity to succeed in the running of businesses and better management of institutions, there is need for humanization of economic activities, where there is placement of the human's authentic needs at the center of all relationships in organizations and their surroundings.

IX. CONCLUSION

The Economy of Communion model requires a thorough change of mindset in reference to running of economies and how resources, profits and incomes are distributed as well as in consumption patterns or in the gratuitous giving. There is need for mental and attitude change towards the spirit of unity in institutions and businesses which require a cultural change of both the employer and the employee for sustained structural transformation. It is imperative to appreciate the human capital in institutions and organizations, have shared responsibility towards these institutions and organizations as well as the communities. The model allows for the establishment of mechanisms on how resources are shared by all stakeholders for a complete transformation to a new order of economies of Africa. This requires institutions and businesses to redesign new frameworks that embrace the culture of unity that will be relevant and work for all of us in future in our societies and economies.

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