

ECONOMY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

A cooperative and sustainable approach to the economy

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1 Introduction

The array of future-fit economic models is growing. Some of these alternatives focus on ecological sustainability (being “green”, “blue”, “circular”, “sustainable”, or “regenerative”) (Raworth, 2017; Pauli, 2017), on social cohesion and just distribution (being more “equitable”, “distributive”, “fair”, “just”, “cohesive”, or “inclusive”) (Piketty, 2014; Atkinson, 2018), or on stronger, broader, and deeper democratic participation (Albert, 2004; Schweickart, 2011). As a fourth pillar, some of these models build on systemic cooperation and solidarity (Giegold & Embshoff, 2008; Exner & Kratzwald, 2021).

There is a strong case for prioritizing cooperation and solidarity over competition and individual utility maximization in the economy. On the theoretical level, solidarity and cooperation belong to the basic sets of constitutional values (solidarity) and relational values (cooperation), whereas neither competition nor utility maximization belong to these value systems: both pseudo-values are only propagated in economics textbooks (Kasser et al., 2007). Second, research in neurobiology (Bauer, 2006 and 2008), social psychology, and educational science (Kohn, 1992) has born evidence that the motivational effect of competition is weaker than that of cooperation; besides, competition functions mainly through a negative driver – anxiety – (Kohn, 1992: 63), whereas the motivational force of cooperation results from flourishing relationships (Bauer, 2006: 61–62 and 203). The “discovery effect”, often ascribed to competition, can be assured by the freedom to conduct a business. Hence, there are strong arguments for building both, economies and businesses, upon cooperation and solidarity rather than on competition and utility maximization.

The Economy for the Common Good (ECG), similar to the Social and Solidary Economy and the Commons, promotes these values, together with those mentioned above. It builds on the democratic definition of “common good” (in each cultural context) and is a holistic alternative that considers itself an “ethical market economy”. The ECG model includes:

- 1 A definition of “economy” (different from most leading textbooks);
- 2 A clarification of goals and means of economic activities;
- 3 A consistent methodology of success measurement on the macro, meso, and micro levels;

- 4 The regulation of the use of profits;
- 5 Cooperation instead of competition as a new paradigm;
- 6 A differentiated approach to property, presenting a broad range of property types, conferring constitutional boundaries and conditions to all types;
- 7 A clear concept of the limitation of inequality (and power concentration);
- 8 A notion of money as a “public good” and the monetary and financial system as a public infrastructure;
- 9 An “ethical trade order” that constitutes an alternative to free trade and protectionism;
- 10 “Ecological human rights” that confer equal, but limited individual ecological consumption budget to every human.

Next to the ten cornerstones, the ECG goes hand in hand with a proposal to further develop, deepen, and strengthen liberal democracies, involving the citizens more actively in relevant political decisions and giving them more power than they have today; this “twin concept” of the ECG model on the procedural level is called “sovereign democracy”.

On the basis of the theoretical and procedural proposals, the ECG movement is also a strongly vivid movement, borne by some 5,000 actively involved citizens in 200 local chapters in 35 countries. Together, they have developed almost a dozen “real-life prototypes” that are applied by a growing number of companies, cities, schools, universities, and other organizations in many countries. Some of them are highlighted at the end of the chapter.

2 The ten cornerstones of the ECG model

2.1 Definition of “economy”

Interestingly, economic textbooks are not consistent when it comes to what is included or excluded in “the economy”. But, if we don’t know what “economy” means, how can we study it? How can we evaluate its success? A trio of authors of the ECG movement propose the following definition for economics: “the science of the satisfaction of the needs of living and future human generations, in alignment with democratic values and ecological planetary boundaries” (Dolderer, Felber & Teitscheid, 2021: 7). This is a legitimate point of departure that needs a lot of further debate. But it at least provides a base for the discussion of the potential objectives of the economy and, especially economic policy; as well as for economic success measurement on all levels.

2.2 Goals and values

The well-being of the members of the household (*oikos*) was the original sense of the Greek *oikonomia*. Aristotle differentiated this eponymous concept of the modern word “economy” from its opposite *chrematistiké*, which was characterized by turning the means of money and capital into ends (Dierksmeier & Pirson, 2009). Whereas *chrematistiké* can be translated into modern language with capitalism, *oikonomia* was by definition a well-being economy or, in other terms, an ECG. This distinction was not an exception in the history of thought, but the rule. Claus Dierksmeier writes that “From Aristotle via Thomas Aquinas, up to and including Adam Smith, there was a consensus that both economic theory and practice needed to be legitimated as well as limited by a certain overarching goal (Greek: *telos*) such as the ‘common good’” (Dierksmeier, 2016: 35). Whereas economics as a science took a different route with the upcoming of the neo-classical school since the 1870’s until today, the constitutions of democratic nations still contain

the common good imperative for the economy. For instance, the Bavarian Constitution says: “The economic activity in its entirety serves the common good” (Art. 151). The Constitution of Columbia states: “Economic activity and private initiative must not be impeded within the limits of the public good” (Art. 333).

2.3 Success redefined: common good product and balance sheet

In an ECG, success is redefined and realigned with the common good, just as constitutions foresee. At the level of the national economy, a common good product (CGP) could replace the monetary GDP, measuring democratically defined goals that are aligned with widely supported values. According to experience, the citizens would include such goods as health, happiness, flourishing relationships, social cohesion, just distribution, fundamental rights, stable ecosystems, or peace. This would follow the growing trend of alternative metrics to GDP, from the “Happy Planet Index” to the “Better Life Index” (OECD), the “Gross National Happiness” (Bhutan) or the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN) (Ecogood, 2023a; Hoekstra, 2022). On the microlevel, the common good balance sheet (CGBS) shows how much a company contributes to the common good. Once, the CGP has been composed and anchored in constitutions, the CGBS would simply measure how much an organization contributes to its 20 sub-goals. The current (pre-)version of the CGBS measures, to which degree these economic entities factually live human dignity, solidarity, justice, sustainability, and democracy. Reporting questions include, for instance:

- Do products and services satisfy human needs?
- How humane are working conditions?
- How environmentally friendly are production processes?
- How ethical is the sales and purchasing policy?
- How are profits distributed?
- How diverse is the workforce and do they receive equal pay for equal work?
- How involved are stakeholders in core strategic decision-making?

The Common Good Reports are examined by independent auditors. The quantified and comparable outcome – up to 1,000 common good points – is published. To avoid greenwashing, negative aspects such as violations of human rights, profit-shifting in tax havens, or direct environmental destruction lead to the deduction of points (to a maximum of minus 3,600 points). The core of the proposal is to reward companies with high balance sheet scores with tax benefits, lower tariffs, better terms on loans, and priority in public procurement. These measures would make ethical and environmentally friendly products and services cheaper than ethically questionable ones, instead of suffering a competitive disadvantage due to higher costs and prices, as this is the case today. The “system error” of capitalistic market economies would be fixed (Figure 32.1).

By the end of 2023, almost 1,200 companies have implemented the CGBS. The firms come from all branches: agriculture, food, tourism, manufacturers, service providers of all kinds, or banks. Typically, pioneer companies collaborate with each other, and they scan their supply chain on ethical risks and switch to organic suppliers, renewable energy, and ethical banks. One company cut the budget for flights to zero and invested part of the saved money into a videoconference infrastructure. Another building company decided to not participate in the building of new houses, but exclusively engage in the (ecological) restoration of existing infrastructure. Several medium-sized family-owned businesses have changed the legal form into a foundation or a cooperative, in order to distribute property, risk, and responsibility more widely (Ecogood, 2023c).

VALUE	HUMAN DIGNITY	SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	TRANSPARENCY AND CO-DETERMINATION
STAKEHOLDER				
A: SUPPLIERS	A1 Human dignity in the supply chain	A2 Solidarity and social justice in the supply chain	A3 Environmental sustainability in the supply chain	A4 Transparency and co-determination in the supply chain
B: OWNERS, EQUITY- AND FINANCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS	B1 Ethical position in relation to financial resources	B2 Social position in relation to financial resources	B3 Use of funds in relation to the environment	B4 Ownership and co-determination
C: EMPLOYEES	C1 Human dignity in the workplace and working environment	C2 Self-determined working arrangements	C3 Environmentally friendly behaviour of staff	C4 Co-determination and transparency within the organisation
D: CUSTOMERS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS	D1 Ethical customer relations	D2 Cooperation and solidarity with other companies	D3 Impact on the environment of the use and disposal of products and services	D4 Customer participation and product transparency
E: SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	E1 Purpose of products and services and their effects on society	E2 Contribution to the community	E3 Reduction of environmental impact	E4 Social co-determination and transparency

Figure 32.1 Common good matrix for companies (Ecogood, 2023b)

2.4 Regulation of the use of profits

Profits, like money or capital returns, are economic means. How a company uses its profits should be transparent and limited in scope. Society regulates business and individual activity in a multitude of ways; the use of profits should be no exception. A company should be free to use its profits for investments in the business; reserves for future losses; dividend payouts to employees; or solidary loans to other businesses. A company’s use of financial surpluses should be restricted to other activities, such as investments in financial services and dividend payouts to proprietors and shareholders who do not work in the company. Finally, some practices could be outlawed, including hostile takeovers or donations to political parties.

2.5 From “counterpetition” to cooperation

One cornerstone of the capitalist market economy is the concept that competition drives business. Riksbank Prize (Felber, 2019a: 165–175 and 2019c) laureate Friedrich August von Hayek wrote that competition is “in most circumstances the most efficient method known” (Hayek, 2005: 45). It is associated with a strong motivational effect and described as an efficient method of discovery and resource allocation. Against this widely held and taught belief, empirical research has shown that cooperation outperforms competition in motivating humans, the key to innovation and efficiency. Competition does, of course, motivate people, as proven by capitalism and market economies. But where one person succeeds only if another person fails, the main motivation is the fear that permeates market capitalism. Millions fear losing their jobs, their incomes, their social status, and their places in the community. Why encourage this state of mind and affairs? More philosophically, competition elicits delight in outshining others. But the purpose of our actions and work should not be besting others but, rather, performing our tasks well, enjoying our work, and seeing that it is helpful and valuable. Feeling better because others are worse off is considered as pathological in psychology (Kohn, 1992: 113). The word competition is derived from the Latin concept of searching together (cum+petere). Economics for the

Table 32.1 From “counter-petition” to “com-petition” = cooperation

<i>Active damaging of co-companies</i>	<i>Omission of help and cooperation</i>	<i>Cooperation on the individual level</i>	<i>Cooperation on the systemic level</i>
Price dumping	Non-disclosure of relevant information	Liquidity compensation, interest-free loans	Open source, creative commons licenses
Blocking patents	Incomplete information to consumers	Forward of orders	Participation in branch table for crisis resolution
Hostile takeover	Retention of remanent resources	Forward of labor force	Definition and aspiration of “appropriate size”
Advertising through mass media	Retention of unused means of production	Support with know-how	Participation in egalitarian product information system
Strategic lawsuits	Non-sharing of free labor force	Joint R & D	Participation in rescue fund
Bad result of CGBS	Poor result of CGBS	Good result of CGBS	Excellent result of CGBS

Common Good fosters true competition according to its original meaning of working together. Competition would not disappear. But its darker side would show up in a company’s CGBS. Aggressive behavior against competitors, such as hostile takeovers, price dumping, advertising via mass media, or enclosure of intellectual property, would earn companies’ low marks on their ethical scorecard and inhibit market success. Conversely, treating customers well or sharing know-how, resources, and the means of production openly with competitors raise business’ common good score (Table 32.1).

The theory of evolution informs us that not all species grow endlessly. On the contrary, most living organisms, after an initial, and necessary, period of growth, find their “optimum size” (Schumacher, 2019) that they keep until they die. Besides that, biologists and ecologists, after focusing on competition for centuries, have discovered that cooperation is the more fundamental pattern (Margulis & Sagan, 2000) even trees are feeding each other across species borders within complex symbiosis. In the words of Martin Nowak, the Harvard mathematician and biologist, “Cooperation is the master architect of evolution” (Nowak, 2012: xx).

In the current system, cooperation is negatively connoted as it can be used as a means to build cartels and monopolies and to maximize profits at the cost of the whole. To avoid such systemic failure, a strong antitrust regulation is also needed in an ECG. But in the latter, cooperation would principally turn into a means to increase jointly the common good, as this primary goal is measured in the individual CGBS. The current win-lose paradigm would accordingly give way to a win-win paradigm. The network of structural cooperation would be characterized by “Live and let live” rather than “dog-eats-dog-competition”.

2.6 Plurality of property types

Socialist economic theories value public and collective property highly while capitalism makes private property the supreme form of property. The ECG doesn’t rank property types but aims (through limits and conditions) to prevent the dominance of any property type. Furthermore, it includes all “stages” of the economy: markets, commons, public services, and households (a characteristic shared with the Doughnut Economics approach) (Raworth, 2017) (Table 32.2).

Table 32.2 Types of property, fields of application, limits, and conditions

<i>Type of property</i>	<i>Public property</i>	<i>Private property</i>	<i>Collective property</i>	<i>Commons</i>	<i>Usage rights (not property)</i>	<i>Protection of Nature (no use)</i>
Field of application	Schools, theaters, central banks, money	Bicycle, home, company	Large production facilities	Meadows, fisheries, seeds, software	Water, energy, land	Areas of regeneration and reproduction of species
Examples	Infrastructure	Consumer goods	Basic goods	Commons	Nature	Protection areas
Limits and conditions	Privatization with the consent of the public	Size limit, common good balance sheet	Common good balance sheet	Legal framework for commons	Use enters in ecological human rights	Rights of Nature; intrinsic value of nature

2.7 Limitation of inequality

The public health expert Richard Wilkinson and his team showed on a broad range of factors how equality in society is directly correlated to a better quality of life for all (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In many countries, a large majority of the citizens would support a lower degree of inequality. A Financial Times survey and Harris Poll found that 78% of US respondents felt that inequality had increased too much. In the UK, it was 79%, in China 80%, and in Germany 87% (Thornhill, 2008). A linchpin of Economics for the Common Good is, therefore, limiting inequality. Limits could be placed on income, property, inheritance, or company size. To determine how to set boundaries, the international Economics for the Common Good movement uses systemic consensus. This effective variant of consensus decision-making measures resistance to a proposal within a committee or larger group. In systemic consensus, several proposals are presented and voted upon, measuring opposition against all proposals. The proposal with the least opposition wins. ECG speakers have tried this voting method in 25 countries from Sweden to Chile. The maximum incomes proposed used to be 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 12, or 50 times the lowest pay. The winner is usually factor ten, whereas the proposed extremes of unlimited inequality as well as full equality frequently meet with strong resistance. Today, Austrian top executives are paid 1,150 times as much as the lowest-paid workers. In Germany, it's 6,000 times more (Felber, 2015: 81), and in the US, some top executives are paid an incredible 350,000 times more (Ahmed & Creswell, 2011).

Apart from these limits against excessive inequality, additional measures such as higher and more progressive capital income taxes, financial transaction tax, and progressive wealth taxes would complete the picture of stronger social cohesion and more moderate inequalities. On the global scale, a tax of 1% or 2% on the wealth of high net worth individuals (HNWI) would bring in a handsome USD0.8 trillion to 1.6 trillion. That would be exactly the amount needed to fully finance the SDGs (Oxfam International, Development Finance International, 2015: 30). And such a moderate tax on HNWI assets is by far less than what these assets used to grow per year over the last decades. Their number has increased from 6 million in 1996 to 20.8 million in 2020, and their combined wealth from USD15.1 trillion in 1995 to USD80 trillion in 2020 (Capgemini, 1997: 2–3 and 2021: 6–7).

2.8 Money as a public good

Just as business needs to view profits as the means and the common good as the end, priorities need to change in the realm of money and finances. Money should also only be a means to reach a higher goal. Making money a public good means first and foremost that sovereign citizens set the rules of the monetary system. In democratically organized assemblies, the people could define the new monetary and financial system. Its guiding principles would include the following:

- The central bank is a public institution whose organs are composed of all relevant stakeholders of society
- The monetary policy mandate and the objectives are determined by voters
- Only the central bank can issue money; private banks are simply intermediaries of “sovereign” money; the profit from money creation is renamed from seignorage to “sovereignage” (Felber, 2016/2020)
- Commercial banks’ goal should be to serve the public’s interests and not to distribute profits to owners
- Loans can be granted only for investments in the real economy that do not harm the public good, but not for leveraging investments on the financial markets; accordingly, ahead of the financial risk assessment, every finance – credit, equity, bond, and other – has to approve a “common good assessment” (which, through traditional lens, could also be considered as an “ethical risk assessment”). Only if no fundamental value is damaged and no common good expropriated – trust, clean air and water, democracy and peace – the financial assessment is done as well. The more favorable the finance conditions will be, the more the underlying project contributes positively to the (now measurable!) common good (Sieben, 2023).

Next to common good banks, regional common good stock markets would channel equity into reasonable and responsible companies, but company shares will not be tradable, and investors will receive meaning, utilities, and immaterial values instead of a financial ROI. Thanks to this, the allocation of money will follow the economy’s objectives and guiding values.

2.9 Ethical world trade

The international dimension of a common good-oriented market economy would be ethical world trade. “Free” trade agreements embody the premise that more trade is always better. Yet, just like money or loans, trade should simply be a means for furthering the goals: human and labor rights, distributive justice, social cohesion, long-term sustainability, and democracy. Accordingly, the current system of multi-, pluri-, and bilateral free trade agreements is proposed to be replaced by a single multilateral ethical trade zone within the United Nations (UNETZ) (Felber, 2019b). Such a UNETZ would be based on four pillars:

- 1 The overarching umbrella is the commitment to even trade balances, an idea originally pronounced by John Maynard Keynes (1943).
- 2 Under this premise, all countries could be as open or protected as they wish to be (a truly “free trade order”). This new freedom – I call it dancer’s dress instead of “straitjacket” (Friedman, 2000) – would allow low-income countries to protect sensitive industries and unfold their own industrial, technological, and development strategy, as advocated by Cambridge economist

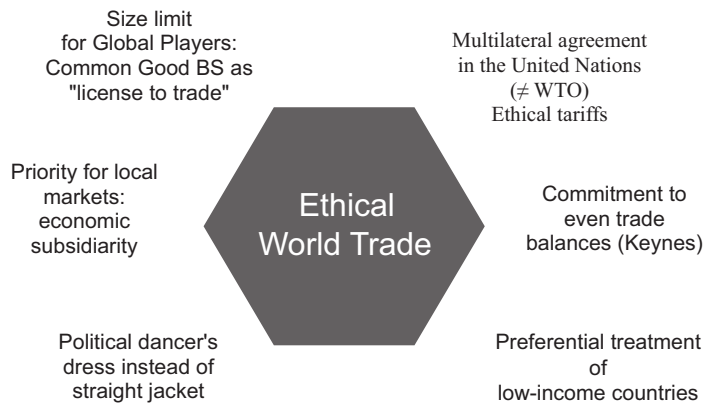


Figure 32.2 Ethical World Trade (Felber, 2019b)

Ha-Joon Chang (2003). Consequently, poorer countries would enjoy the same opportunities to support their infant industries, which developed countries took advantage of in their history.

- 3 Low-income countries are allowed for a certain surplus until closing the gap with richer countries. Instead of pulling away the “ladder of development”, over which the today industrialized countries climbed in their past with tariffs, subsidies, and other protection measures (Friedrich List), this ladder would be explicitly put at the service of countries that lag behind.
- 4 Countries that engage more for peace, human rights, climate stability, biodiversity protection, tax justice, and cultural diversity should trade more freely with each other than with countries that engage less or not at all for these goals. Refusing cooperation in human rights, labor rights, climate protection, or financial regulation would turn into a structural disadvantage.
- 5 Likewise, companies that engage more with the values and goals of the international community, published in their comparable sustainability report such as the CGBS should access the ethical trading zone more freely than companies that engage with less ambition. UNETZ would be considered as a global common that offers freer access to more responsible and sustainable businesses.
- 6 Finally, new elements would be added to the existing global governance architecture: a global fusion control, a Global Tax Authority and a Global Financial Authority (Stiglitz et al., 2009: 96) or a World Court of Human Rights (Kozma, Nowak & Scheinin, 2010) (Figure 32.2).

2.10 Ecological human rights

The challenge of deep sustainability, especially given climate change and biodiversity loss, is so big that a highly diverse policy mix is needed. Up to date, most policy measures, from carbon taxes to subsidies for renewable energy and organic agriculture, have been relatively ineffectual. More ambitious proposals, like global resource management, haven't yet caught on.

A radical – and liberal – measure would be creating and allocating per capita consumption budgets designed as ecological human rights. This idea builds on the “doughnut model” developed by the British economist Kate Raworth (2017), which expands upon the “planetary boundaries” concept of the Stockholm Resilience Centre (Rockström et al., 2009). Mother Earth's annual gift of natural resources and ecosystem services could be divided by the total number of human

beings, priced sustainably, and allocated as a global per capita resource budget, e.g. 1.6 global hectares in the “unit” of the “ecological footprint”. Each consumer’s personal “ecological credit card” would be reloaded annually. Once its balance reaches zero, the ecological purchase power is expired (though, of course, nobody would be allowed to starve or freeze). With this equal ecological budget for all, consumers would enjoy freedom of choice so long as their lifestyles do not rob people living in other places and future generations of their sustenance: if they don’t endanger the global and intergenerational common good.

A two-step model could bring along further advantages.

- A The per capita consumption right to the extent of the inner circle of the Doughnut becomes an unconditional, non-negotiable, and inalienable human right.
- B The amount between the two circles, the actual doughnut, becomes tradable. Assuming that 1.3 global hectares are needed for one person to cover all basic needs, the resulting surplus reserve, comprising 0.3 hectares per person, and only that, would become a tradable commodity. Thanks to this mechanism, low-income people who lack the (financial) purchasing power to use up their whole ecological budget might sell what was left to better-off individuals who would have a softer “landing” in their decreasing consumption curve: a socio-ecological win-win situation.

Sovereign democracy

The ECG model does not only propose more participatory ownership and governance models for companies, but also a deeper, stronger, and more direct democracy for nations. In such a “sovereign democracy”, the sovereign people would be the highest authority and hold the ultimate power, standing above the legislature, the government, every international treaty, and every law. Sovereign citizens could directly modify the constitution, laws, economy, and institutions they exercise their “sovereign rights” to:

- 1 Draft a constitution (elect a constitutional convention and vote on the results);
- 2 Change the constitution e.g. by a citizens’ assembly;
- 3 Elect a government;
- 4 Vote out a government;
- 5 Correct legislative decisions;
- 6 Directly put bills to vote;
- 7 Directly control and regulate essential utilities;
- 8 Define who has the right to issue money;
- 9 (Dis)approve the Parliament’s will to go to war;
- 10 Define the framework for negotiating international treaties and vote on the results of negotiations.

Thanks to these rights, the citizens could initiate direct decisions on fundamental questions such as:

- Do we want “chrematistiké” or “oikonomia”, capitalism, or an ECG?
- Should the central benchmark of economic policy be GDP or a CGP?
- Should the economy be based on structural cooperation or competition?
- Should money as a means of payment be issued by the public central bank or by private commercial banks?

- Should every person get the same limited individual ecological consumption budget or should environmental pollution merely depend on financial purchase power?

One concrete example: Most people seem to prefer a CGP to the GDP. In a representative survey ordered by Germany's Federal Ministry of Environment, only 18% of Germans wanted the GDP to remain a main benchmark for economic and social policy if all things equal; almost two-thirds preferred a more comprehensive life-quality indicator (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit & Umweltbundesamt 2015: 22 and 35). Exercising their sovereign rights, the people could make a big difference.

Implementation with real-life prototypes

Since its origin in 2010, the international ECG movement has created a growing array of practical tools that are applied by companies (already described in Section 4), start-ups, banks, cities, regions, schools, and universities. Any one of these “real-life prototypes” can be refined, scaled up, and applied by any region.

Start-ups: For start-ups, the ECG movement has developed an ECG Business Canvas (Ecogood, 2023d). This tool helps them to ask essential ethical questions, to find a meaningful purpose, and embed them empathetically in the democratic society. Sustainable, Smart, or Circular Cities can give a grant to impact hubs on the condition that new start-ups apply the ECG Business Canvas or a similar tool.

Banks: Any bank can open up a “Common Good Center” with common good accounts (current account, savings account, business account, student's account) and ethical loans at the other side of their balance sheet. The Vienna-based “Common Good Cooperative”, which has marketed Austria's first common good current account, is up to help interested banks to make their first steps into Common Good Banking.

Cities: More and more municipalities apply the CGBS either on the whole administration, like Mertzig (Luxembourg), Eschlikon (Switzerland), Mäder (Austria), Steinheim (Germany), or the district Horta de Guinardò of Barcelona (Spain) (Ecogood, 2023e). Other cities and local governments decide the CGBS to be applied in public companies, e.g. Zaragoza, Stuttgart, Marburg, Münster, or Hamburg. Some cities are searching for ways to use ECG values and indicators in public procurement and economic promotion decisions.

Common Good Index: The first regions and cities are now heading for developing a regional/local Common Good Index (CGI). The ECG movement developed a participatory process that allows citizens to design the CGI directly. A convention could be composed randomly, but representatively according to age, sex, professions, income groups, and migration background. Convention members could collect their own proposals plus those from the population (through liquid democracy) and filter out the 20 sub-goals that enjoy the strongest support. Operationalized with indicators, the CGI's progress can be measured from year to year and be compared between regions. The first steps toward a CGI have been taken in Guarroñan and Salamanca (Spain), in the city of Münster; and in the land of Baden-Württemberg (Germany).

Universities: The Universities of Flensburg and Kiel in Germany have concluded a three-year research project on implementing the CGBS in large corporations (Heidbrink et al., 2018). The University of Valencia in Spain established an ECG Chair in 2017 and concluded the first empirical study on 206 companies with a CGBS (Sanchis, Campos, Ejarque. 2019). The University of Applied Sciences of Burgenland offers an MA in Applied Economics for the Common Good. The University of Córdoba in Argentina has launched a three-month course “PINE” to introduce

alternative economic models to a broader audience (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2023). Any university can offer a course, a study, or establish a chair for new sustainable economic models.

On the political level, a major success has been achieved in the European Union: In 2015, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) issued an own-initiative opinion, on base of which it “considers that the Economy for the Common Good (ECG) model is conceived to be included both in the European and the domestic legal framework” (EESC, 2015).

3 Conclusions and recommendations

Cooperation and solidarity belong to the established set of constitutional values (solidarity) and relational values (cooperation). On the contrary, competition and utility maximization are neither constitutional nor positive relational values. Whereas the current economic model and scientific doctrine favor competition, there are alternative economic models that build on cooperation and solidarity. This can be applied to both the micro level of companies and the macro level of the national and global economic order that incentivizes and rewards these behaviors structurally, rather than fostering “counter-petition” and individual utility maximization.

The ECG is one of the concrete and practical economic models that build systemically on cooperation and solidarity, next to the Social and Solidary Economy or the Commons movement, for instance.

It would be for the benefit of all these alternatives if they shared and compared their best cooperative practices and joined forces in order to lobby for the inclusion of incentives and rewards for cooperative and solidary behaviors in the economy, while the legal framework of the future economy should disincentivize and provide a structural disadvantage to behaviors and strategies of aggressive counter-petition and individualistic utility maximization.

The focus shifts from financial success indicators to a CGP (macro level), CGBS (meso level), and Common Good Assessment (micro level) contributing to deep sustainability of the economy. Ethical world trade and “ecological human rights” provide further for an inherently ecological design of this future-fit economic model.

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