



# From Profit to Purpose: The Distinctive Proposition of the Economy of Communion Approach

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## Abstract

In this essay, we highlight 7 distinctives of EoC businesses which set them apart even from other humanistic approaches to management. Not that EoC's distinctives make them a non-humanistic form of management, but they distinguish it with a unique set of goals and aims. These are: 1. Social and Economic Transformation Towards Unity; 2. The existential Self giving aspect—Creating a Culture of Encounter; 3. Redistributing Wealth for the Common Good; 4. Concern to Alleviate Poverty in All of Its Forms, and to Participate in Poverty; 5. EoC Entrepreneurs Participate in Poverty (The Wound and the Blessing); 6. Fraternity and the Market as a Place of Community-Building (Communion); and 7. Competitors as friends—Acting as “Starters of Cooperation.”

**Keywords** Economy of Communion · Humanistic Management · Common Good · Poverty · Culture of Encounter · Competition · Unity

Business, if it is to be a humanizing influence in society, must be rooted in a cultural soil that draws upon the graces that can structure business towards authentic human development. Without such an embedded reality, business eventually defaults to a narrow form of instrumental rationality focused only on efficiency and profitability. EoC businesses stand as evidence that an integration of deep culture and business, of faith and work, are possible. (Naughton 2014, xiii)

The Economy of Communion (EoC) movement provides a humanistic style of management which is distinctive from other forms of humanistic management. There have been a number of articles attempting to show how EoC compares to other like-minded movements. Crivelli and Gui discuss the commonalities between EoC companies and social enterprises in their “Do ‘Economy of Communion’ Enterprises Deserve the ‘Social’ Label?” (2014). Fremeaux and Michelson compare EoC to Conscious Capitalism (2017). And there have been articles showing commonalities between EoC and humanistic management. Showing

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commonalities is an important step in the dialogue among academics, helping to increase the visibility of EoC as a movement. But it is also important to highlight some of the key unique aspects of EoC which make it unlike other movements. Crivelli (2011) argues that EoC is much more than “business with a conscience”. Harvey (2020) points out how EoC companies are distinct from social entrepreneurship, B-corps, and companies with robust CSR commitments. In this essay, we will highlight some of the key features which make the EoC distinctive as a unique type of humanistic management. Given that the Economy of Communion and some of its affiliated companies have been established and running for over 30 years, these companies provide clear exemplars of humanistic management in practice. In highlighting the EoC approach, we hope to help enrich and strengthen the humanistic management movement and to encourage research into EoC companies with hopes of developing humanistic management even further as a field of research.

Here we will develop the distinctives of the EoC approach by highlighting seven principles of the EoC movement in seven distinct sections. First, EoC seeks to bring about unity through social and economic transformations; second, EoC seeks to create a culture of encounter where the entrepreneur finds fulfillment in giving of oneself; third, EoC seeks to promote the common good by having entrepreneurs voluntarily contribute to wealth redistribution; fourth, EoC encourages entrepreneurs to alleviate poverty in all its forms (existential, spiritual, communal, etc.); fifth, EoC encourages entrepreneurs to participate in poverty by taking less so others can have more; Sixth, EoC sees the market as a place for community building, even for communion; and seventh, EoC has an alternative view of competition, and frequently EoC entrepreneurs see competitors as friends, and they act as “starters of cooperation.” While all 7 of these principles or practices are essentially congruent with standard humanistic management values, they seem to be distinctive and so, important contributions which Economy of Communion can bring to the Humanistic Management discussions and research.

EoC is founded on a desire to radically transform the very idea of what business is about, so that it can be used fully in the service of helping the poor and contributing to the common good by transforming the priorities of market and economics. Rather than financial acquisition, the goal is communion, relationship, and support of others. Zamagni writes that an essential aspect of EoC enterprises is generativity, which is “the capacity to generate new forms of doing business, new modes of organizing the productive process, new ways of realizing the specific role of entrepreneurship” (Zamagni 2014, 46). The EoC is “a radical social innovation” being social “in both its ends and means” (Esteso Blasco et al. 2018, 90). These enterprises pursue not mere profit, but a way of being in the world through one’s business activities, with goals to make concrete changes in the economic system itself and the way in which business is practiced. “EoC companies help to create a society that is more civil due to the fact that they are directly involved in combating poverty while being not only a productive structure but also by promoting new humanistic management” (Esteso Blasco et al. 2018, 90). So while EoC is a form of humanistic management, it is very distinctive, and we will highlight some of those unique features of the EoC here.

## Social and Economic Transformation Towards Unity

While the focus of humanistic management is reforming the internal workings of the business for the common good, EoC has a larger aim to transform society and bring about unity (even communion) by transforming the economy, both how it works and what it does to

people, in the conviction that business itself can “promote unity among people of all social strata, cultures and ethnic origins” (Crivelli & Gui 2014, 29). It has been said that “The EoC did not come about to renew businesses, but to renew social relations” (Bruni and Hèjj 2011, 378). Bruni refers to this pursuit of unity as ‘universalism’ meaning that the EoC seeks to overcome any we-vs-them logic, and that “the ‘we’ of communion opens up to take on the whole of humanity” with an openness to “universal brotherhood” (Bruni 2002, 61). This pursuit of unity through business activity is a central focus and commitment of EoC entrepreneurs. Gallagher and Buckeye, in their groundbreaking study of North American EoC companies, identify a common “commitment to remaking the economic system” and “every act at work is understood as a means to live out beliefs” (Gallagher and Buckeye 2014, 178). Bruni has called this active expression of beliefs through economic acts an ‘expressive rationality’—that some economic action is not guided by a primarily instrumental logic, but rather, “by the desire to ‘express’ something of one’s own personality or one’s own values through that kind of economic action” (2002, 61). Pope Francis describes this transformative goal of the EoC well when he said,

The economy of communion, if it wants to be faithful to its charism, must not only care for the victims, but build a system where there are ever fewer victims, where, possibly, there may no longer be any. As long as the economy still produces one victim and there is still a single discarded person, communion has not yet been realized; the celebration of universal fraternity is not full. . . . Therefore, we must work toward changing the rules of the game of the socio-economic system. (2017)

The Economy of Communion of course wishes to change the view of individuals and the mission and vision of businesses, but even more it wants to help transform the socio-economic system itself. This is a grand plan at the macro-level which has a broader call than transformation of the firm. As Bruni and Hèjj point out, the goal is much bigger than trying to make a company or companies better:

Rather than concentrating on the need to make businesses more ethical or more humane, the EoC is based on the need to do our part to build a more just world, one where fewer people are forced to live in often inhumane conditions. This is why it cannot and should not become a corporate-social-responsibility project. It did not come about to renew businesses, but to renew social relations (Bruni and Hèjj 2011, 378).

CSR has a place in business, but EoC is not merely some sort of CSR. The goal is not primarily to renew or improve business, but ultimately the goal is to renew society itself. Practicing business in this radically different manner, seeing business as a means to transform society and the economy, is a quite unique approach.

## Existential Self-Giving: Creating a Culture of Encounter

Humanistic management generally eschews the economic paradigm (Pirson 2017), but the Economy of Communion disrupts typical economic thinking by bringing love of others into the equation. In the words of Zamagni, “contrary to what might be believed, economic phenomena have a primary interpersonal dimension” (2014). Leo Andringa highlights this aspect of EoC when he writes,

The Economy of Communion goes against the mainstream with respect to the ordinary way of understanding economics when it speaks explicitly of love. This conviction is a nonconformist and revolutionary proposition. Mainstream economic science has been skeptical of behavior motivated by love for others and has dismissed it as inefficient. Economics has focused on the sphere of human life in which love can be avoided and considers that the more the market is able to cut down on “love”, the more efficient it will be. There is also another conflict between love and economics: love requires the gift to be free, unconditional, which is a scandal for economics, which believes a price must be attributed to everything (Andringa 2004).

The effects of love in the EoC can be seen in many ways: “Unconditional giving isn’t present in the Economy of Communion only in the form of a free gift of a part of the profits, but it is demonstrated in many other actions as well as trusting the suppliers or clients even in circumstances that would be out of the question according to ordinary business logic.” (Andringa 2004). EoC is not just an economic suggestion, it is an entire way of life, a way of being in the world which carries with it a purpose to give of oneself to others. Vera Araùjo writes: “EoC isn’t a matter of being generous, of giving charity; it isn’t philanthropy or merely a way of providing assistance. It has to do with acknowledging and living the dimension of giving and giving of oneself as essential to one’s own existence” (Araùjo 2002, 23). As an EoC entrepreneur, one finds that one’s very meaning for being is wrapped up in the way one attempts to give of oneself to others through the activities of business. EoC is a movement to help create a “culture of encounter” and overcome the “culture of indifference” (Pope Francis). For an EOC entrepreneur, any market interaction is primarily an encounter providing an opportunity to enhance community and communion. Naughton describes the EoC approach, economic relationships can be “a gift of self and a way to live out a most important Christian duty: to be Christ for one another. For the EoC businesses...daily encounters between buyers and, between co-workers, between the business and the community, are as good a place as any in which to give and receive Christ’s love” (Naughton 2014, xi). As John Mundell puts it,

Joy—this is the gift the EoC gives! It is the happiness, well-being and deep satisfaction that comes from living a meaningful life integrated with our most heartfelt beliefs and resulting from the relationships that grow out of this giving and receiving. (Mundell 2014, xvi)

And this giving is not limited to quantifiable things: one can give away one’s knowledge and understanding, attention, forgiveness, talents, and ideas as gifts (Bruni and Uelmen 2006). Chiara Lubich, founder of the EoC and the Focolare movement highlighted the very different mindset of EoC in contrast to typical economic thinking of the market: “In contrast to the consumerist economy, which is based on a culture of having, the Economy of Communion is an economy of giving” (Lubich 2010). Although this seems heroic, it is in some sense truly natural to humans and possible because “... man, who is made in the image of God, who is love, finds fulfillment in loving, in giving. He experiences this need in the depth of his being, whether believer or not” (Lubich 2010). This not an instrumental giving—giving because of what I will get in return—but rather, this giving is what each of us, as human beings, desire in our innermost self. This is certainly counter to what we are told about human beings and the market, that we are essentially egoistic beings who primarily consider how to satisfy our own desires

above all else. The EoC provides a vision of gratuitousness—giving beyond what is expected or required (Fremeaux and Michelson 2011)—altruism (Esteso-Blasco et al. 2021), and even (unconditional) agape love (Bruni 2008).

## Redistributing Wealth for the Common Good

Humanistic management sees economic inequity as a problem, and seeks to pursue business with an aim for the common good and the dignity of all (Pirson 2017). The EoC provides a radical option for this by encouraging entrepreneurs themselves to help redistribute wealth for the common good through their own practices. At the heart of the EoC is a vision for private entrepreneurs to freely choose to use their business activities and wealth to contribute to the Common Good and to intentionally help others to flourish in part by redistribution of goods and wealth, following the teachings of the Church and Scripture by exercising a preferential option for the poor (Gallagher and Buckeye 2014, 13). The formal name of EoC is The Economy of Communion in Freedom emphasizing the role of free private enterprise in their vision. By having a different mindset about the purpose of business, private entrepreneurs themselves “correct the unjust and wrong distribution of goods” (Andringa 2010) rather than relying on government welfare-distribution policies. EoC aims to “give back meaning to economic practice and culture” seeing our business ventures as meaning-producing activities which enhance the state of human beings and improve the common good (Bruni & Héjji 2011, 378).

EoC scholars like Bruni consistently point out that despite the growth of wealth, happiness has diminished especially in rich countries (Bruni and Sugden 2008, Bruni and Porta 2007). EoC seeks to bring about true happiness by resurrecting a healthy understanding of the role of business in bringing about communion and its power to impact the common good. When we see business as a means to communion, not just personal profit, it becomes much more meaningful as a life endeavor. In speaking about the 2008 financial crises, Leo Andringa said.

this type of crisis developed because society and the market lost their ethical reference and the authentic sense of their existence for the common good. . . . The Economy of Communion . . . shows a way that is sustainable for businesses and it can give a contribution to correct the unjust and wrong distribution of goods and give back meaning to economic practice and culture. (Andringa 2010)

## Concern to Alleviate Poverty in All of Its Forms

The Economy of Communion has a view of poverty which is much broader than what is typical. While EoC in São Paulo was initially started for the purpose in part of alleviating financial poverty by providing very poor members of the Focolare with employment, the poverty to be overcome was not merely financial. For the poor also suffered from a poverty of dignity. As Luigino Bruni has written, “poverty means above all exclusion from productivity, the community, and society” (Bruni 2014, 37). So “a solution which focuses only on the financial needs of an individual rests ultimately on a very thin anthropology of the human being, and does not meet the needs of human beings in the fullness of their complexity as children of God” (Gustafson 2020, 13). The EoC sees itself as alleviating not

only financial poverty, many types and forms of poverty. The types of poverty EoC seeks to overcome include:

- a. Financial Poverty
- b. Poverty of community
- c. Poverty of purpose
- d. Poverty of Meaningful Employment
- e. Existential poverty (basic meaning and purpose)
- f. Spiritual poverty (lack of connection to God/transcendent) (Gustafson 2020)

As Lorna Gold points out regarding the EoC, “Its focus, therefore, is not on poverty alleviation per se but on building relationships based on mutual care and solidarity, which also involves addressing financial poverty” (Gold 2004, 636). As EoC attempts to help the poor (in the above mentioned ways), and to bring about unity of all through communion, and even spiritual enrichment through business activities, we see that it is not a typical social entrepreneurship paradigm. Humanistic management is attentive to the important role that participation in business can play in alleviating some of these forms of poverty, but it has not explored the significance of business for others of these. Because humanistic management stresses embrace of the whole person, it refuses to see workers simply for their utility value and recognizes that the worker must be empowered to bring their whole self, including their power for autonomous decision-making, so the work should be designed in such a way to be humanly meaningful and give a sense of purpose. EoC addresses social and existential dimensions of engagement in economic life not typical of other forms of humanistic management insofar as it sees its aim to address poverty in all of these various forms.

## EoC Entrepreneurs Participate in Poverty (The Wound and the Blessing)

While humanistic management frequently decries the inequalities of the economic situation of the poor those excluded from the economic system in various ways (Pirson 2017; Pirson, Von Kimakowitz et al., 4), it does not typically advocate voluntary poverty. By contrast, it rather holds out the hope and promise of “doing well by doing good,” (or the business case for business ethics) that doing business “the right way” is the best path to financial success in the long-term if not in the short-term (Dierksmeier 2016, 20). Thus humanistic management often emphasizes the “win-win” aspect of this approach. EoC entrepreneurs, as agents of change, not only work to overcome these poverties but also make an effort to participate in poverty. While combatting involuntary poverty, it is believed that voluntary poverty has special value. Crivelli writes about this difference between voluntary and involuntary poverty. Voluntary poverty is.

a type of poverty, one that is freely chosen and which truly renders a person blessed. This is the poverty which is born from the awareness that all that I am has been given to me; likewise, all that I have must, in turn, be given. This is the foundation of the dynamics of reciprocity. This poverty prompts us to free ourselves of goods as absolute possessions in order to make them gifts, and thus to be free to love, the only thing that is truly important. (Crivelli 2020, 22)

From a financial perspective, of course choosing to be an EoC entrepreneur carries a cost—at least “the cost of pursuing other opportunities, to do business their way”

(Naughton 2014, xi) and this is not only about money, but time and effort—it is not always easy to extend yourself and your possessions for the good of others, gratuitously and sometimes sacrificially. An outsider could view participating in the EoC as “simply another layer of non-revenue generating complication in an already burdensome endeavor” (Naughton 2014, xii).

Personal costs come when EoC entrepreneurs choose not to distance themselves from others, but to be authentically involved in the lives of those they encounter through business. Modern economics has traditionally encouraged distance from others. As Italian Economist Luigino Bruni puts it, “Economic science in late modernity, with its promise of life together without sacrifice, represents a great escape from the contagion of personal relationship with the other” (Bruni 2012, xxi). It was thought that we can have the blessing of mutual exchange with others, and avoid the wounds which might come with authentic personal interaction, by keeping things ‘professional’ and ‘just business, nothing personal’. But this “joyless human condition” is the result of “the great illusion that the market, or a bureaucratic and hierarchical enterprise, could offer a painless and peaceful society, mediating encounters with others with whom we interact harmlessly, without contention or wound” (Bruni 2012, xxi). But this illusion tricks us because an encounter with the other which cannot injure “is also an encounter that cannot lead to a fully human life” (ibid.). The EoC calls the entrepreneur to get into the messiness of life with those she engages—to suffer the wounds of authentic human relationship along with enjoying the blessings of that human encounter with the other. And the Economy of Communion illustrates precisely this: that “the market can be a place where the other can truly be encountered, a place of blessing, as long as we open ourselves to gratuitousness and do not flee from being wounded by the other” (Bruni 2012, xxiii).

So there is also a sense in which entrepreneurs chose to participate in poverty, or at least to live more modestly so they can use their own resources for the benefit of others. This is a type of poverty, freely chosen, is again “the foundation of the dynamics of reciprocity” (Crivelli 2020, 22). Again, this is not merely a financial giving, but a giving of self which can result in one’s own life being much more messy as one enters communion with those who are in need. But with those wounds come blessings.

## Fraternity and the Market as a Place of Community-Building (Communion)

For EoC companies, “Business relationships are not seen as sources of insurable clashes of interest, but rather as opportunities for entering into rapports of mutual recognition and respect, up to ‘communion’” (Crivelli and Gui 2014, 37). EoC believes that the market can and should be a means of bringing about fraternity and even communion. Bruni & Uelmen point out that the EoC follows the spirit and expectations of Adam Smith that the market would actually increase equality and community, believing “that wherever markets arrive, sooner or later, also interpersonal relationships will become more free and more equal, thus imploding feudal and caste systems” (2006, 667). Yet today, the hierarchical feudal tendencies continue in the marketplace, so EoC resists that, with a hope for communion through business. EoC companies obviously know that the market is competitive, but they choose to “bring the logic of love and communion into the relationships” (Bruni and Uelmen 2006, 669). They.



live a ‘culture of love’ immersed in the economy of the market, while producing and selling goods and services side by side with other businesses in today’s globalizing economy, unprotected from the fierce laws of competition. (ibid.)

EoC companies see business interactions as an opportunity for initiating communion between people. Gallagher and Buckeye point out that.

EOC companies are indeed different. And that difference is centered on a conviction of the business as a set of relationship, or more accurately, a *community*, and the conviction that the purpose of economic activity—the production and distribution of goods and services—is to bring people together, to create *community*. (2014 188)

Bruni and Sugden have argued for a ‘logic of fraternity’ which foregoes the chance to behave opportunistically in market transactions. This is, they say, a minimum requirement for a ‘civil economy’. Crivelli and Gui say that “EoC philosophy belongs to the same species as fraternity...It is only more demanding” (2014, 38). This is not simply a basic logic of fraternity— a shared intention for mutual benefit (you have something I want, I have something you want, and so we cooperate in a win–win scenario). And the reason that EoC is more demanding than fraternity is that the EoC calls on us to have an attitude of openness to everyone—not just to those from whom we can mutually benefit.

Crivelli and Gui provide a few examples to demonstrate what they mean: giving employees who show poor work habits a second chance to come back to work again; a seller who actively works to convince a willing buyer to not purchase a product because the seller doesn’t think it is in the buyer’s best interest; and a company who volunteered to help a competitor’s company to stay afloat when they were facing a serious illness (2014, 38). Other examples could be drawn from Lorna Gold’s or Gallagher and Buckeye’s research (see Harvey 2020) for more such examples. The point is that EoC owners or managers frequently.

behave in an other-regarding, or supererogatory, way; their actions tend to trigger reciprocity, in various forms, not necessarily on the part of the beneficiary. Indeed, one could say that EOC businesses act as promoters of relationships of positive reciprocity, either direct or indirect.” (Crivelli & Gui 2014, 39)

EoC entrepreneurs are called to be “agents of communion.” As Pope Francis said.

You see the entrepreneur as an agent of communion. Business entrepreneurs who see themselves as agents of communion believe they have been called to business for a purpose – as a vocation – to help the poor, to benefit the common good, and to use business to bring about improvement in people’s lives and a transformation of society for the better. (Pope Francis 2017)

EoC entrepreneurs are salt and light in the world, or, if you wish for another analogy, leaven to help the whole market rise to a better level of human engagement and care for one another. This transformative effect is the purpose of EoC businesses— “the ability of EoC firms to transform otherwise cold and cautious business interactions into relationship of reciprocity and mutual openness, up to “communion”, is an additional positive effect of their presence, possibly more significant than those that can be measured in monetary terms” (Crivelli & Gui, 43).”



## **“Kick-Starting Cooperation”: Competitors can be Friends too**

Economy of Communion is not simply concerned with treating customers or employees well. It is about bringing unity among all. This includes treating competitors as friends, not adversaries. Crivelli and Gui describe the role of the EoC entrepreneur as one of being a ‘starter of cooperation’: “It is here that EoC logic can make a difference, as it pushes those who adopt it to act as ‘starters of cooperation’. Starters must be willing to suffer a loss, due to the possibility of non-reciprocation by other parties” (40). For gratuity and reciprocity to begin, one party must take the initial risky step of acting gratuitously for the other, without any expectation of return response. This kind of giving to a competitor or customer can happen in a number of ways, including transmitting useful information, providing services, lending or donating goods that would remain idle otherwise, or transacting at a moderate loss (Crivelli and Gui 2014, 40).

Bruni, who has done research on Happiness Economics, points out that.

Recent experiments in economic theory show that in interactions (or games) based on trust, the subject has the incentive to reciprocate trust if he knows he has first received unconditional trust from the other. The feeling that we are worthy of trust, therefore, changes us and makes us more capable of reciprocity. Receiving trust from the others, at the end of the day, makes us better people (Bruni 2002, 65).

This logic motivates the initiative-orientation of the EoC entrepreneur to be an agent of change. Gratuity is unconditionally given to others—even to one’s competition—with hopes that there will possibly be reciprocity, because that will then lead to authentic communion. Lest this sound far-fetched, there are plenty of examples of EoC companies acting with gratuity habitually and with real results.

John Mundell, EoC entrepreneur and owner of Mundell and Associates in Indianapolis recounts the time he bid for a project and, unbeknownst to him at the time, the potential client called up his competitors to find out their opinions of his company. This potential client chose to work with Mundell and Associates when, to their utter amazement, they found that his competitors had only kind things to say about the company. This was due, in part, to the fact that John had not infrequently referred qualified employees to his competition when he himself had no openings (and some of those referrals went on to be his competitors’ best employees). (From a Talk on EoC at Creighton University 2019, by John Mundell).

Another example of treating competitors as friends comes from Paul Capiton, CEO of Netpro in New York City, an IT consulting firm. He had hired and trained a number of unemployed friends over the years to help him in his growing business, and occasionally the clients they were serving would say to Paul how much they liked his employees; and they wished they could hire his employee as their own. Paul describes their surprise when he encouraged them to make his employees an offer. He recognized that moving on to these bigger companies could be good for his people, and Paul actually encouraged his friends to go work for his clients as employees, even though it would lead to him losing a good employee that he himself had invested in and trained. What he never realized was that down the road, when that company needed a service that his own company was equipped to provide, his former employees—who knew very well what NetPro could provide—would suggest his company, and so they ended up bringing him more business than ever before (From an EoC symposium talk, Creighton University 2017). These are the sorts of practical ways in which EoC countercultural fraternal practices have ended up helping EoC

entrepreneurs to succeed in unexpected ways. Lorna Gold, Jeanne Buckeye and John Gallagher have collected many such stories of EoC companies around the world (Gold 2010; Gallagher and Buckeye 2014).

## Conclusion

Here we have highlighted 7 distinctives of EoC businesses which set them apart even from other humanistic approaches to management. Not that EoC's distinctives make them a non-humanistic form of management, but they distinguish it with a unique set of goals and aims. These are:

1. Social and Economic Transformation Towards Unity
2. The existential self-giving aspect—Creating a Culture of Encounter
3. Redistributing Wealth for the Common Good
4. Concern to Alleviate Poverty in All of Its Forms
5. EoC Entrepreneurs Participate in Poverty (The Wound and the Blessing)
6. Fraternity and the Market as a Place of Community-Building (Communion)
7. Competitors as friends—Acting as “Starters of Cooperation”

These are very challenging goals for an entrepreneur to pursue. But as Pope Francis told EoC entrepreneurs in his 2017 speech to them at the Vatican, “As long as the economy still produces one victim and there is still a single discarded person, communion has not yet been realized; the celebration of universal fraternity is not full” (Pope Francis 2017).

The Economy of Communion sees the role of EoC companies as being to improve the lives of the poor, but much more than that. EoC companies seek to bring about communion through business interactions—communion within the companies themselves, between companies, and in all market activities. EoC sees the possibility of business activities being a means of sanctifying us as human beings to be more fully what we are meant to be, and also transforming not only our businesses, but the economy and market itself in order to bring out the best in human behavior and potential (Gallagher and Buckeye 2014, 191).

In conclusion, it is useful to return to Crivelli and Gui's powerful summary of the EoC entrepreneurs' vision:

In their business relationships EoC proprietors, or managers, do not limit themselves to acting correctly, but are willing to—and sometimes actually do—behave in an other-regarding, or supererogatory, way; their actions tend to trigger reciprocity, in various forms, not necessarily on the part of the beneficiary. Indeed, one could say that EoC Businesses act as promoters of relationships of positive reciprocity, either direct or indirect. (39)

The EoC aim “to transform otherwise cold and cautious business interactions into relationships of reciprocity and mutual openness, up to “communion”” is powerfully focused on human beings. And the relationship-effects of the business engagement are “possibly more significant than those that can be measured in monetary terms” (Crivelli & Gui 2014, 43). Insofar as EoC envisions business as a means to promote community and human flourishing, as well as opportunity for prompting generous reciprocity, the Economy of Communion certainly provides an established, thoughtful means of practicing a more human-centered form of management and business behavior in general.

In this essay, we have attempted to highlight aspects of the EoC which make it a distinctive type of humanistic management. The EoC and its nearly 1,000 companies worldwide are clear exemplars of humanistic management in practice. In drawing attention to the EOC approach, we hope to have helped enrich and strengthen the humanistic management movement and to encourage research into EOC companies with hopes of developing humanistic management even more as a field of research.

EoC entrepreneurs spend more time putting their values into action than in writing about their values. The research literature on EoC is richer in Italy, but in its infant state in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> This is a limitation of this research but also a great opportunity. Building on the research of Gallagher and Buckeye (2014) and Gold (2010) and others, there are many opportunities for developing the humanistic management tendencies uniquely found in the EoC companies. Much empirical research remains to be conducted, and that work will help to showcase the practices and fruit of the Economy of Communion approach to business.

## Declarations

**Conflict of Interest** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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