JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT, SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION
2023, VOL 20, NO. 4, XX-XX
https://doi.org/10.51327/BUFY3940

The Economy of Francesco: Ongoing Perspectives for a New Economy

Giacomo Ciambotti[1], Andrea Roncella[2], Antonietta Riccardo[3], Lucia Marchegiani[4] and Matteo Rizzolli[5]

[1] ALTIS - Graduate School of Business & Society, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy

[2] Center of Studies for Applied Economics, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy

[3] Department of Political Science, University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy

[4] Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Rome, Italy

[5] LUMSA University and John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences, Rome, Italy

Contact: Giacomo Ciambotti: giacomo.ciambotti@unicatt.it

ABSTRACT

In this editorial we introduce and discuss what the Economy of Francesco (EoF) is and why it matters for research at the crossroad between Economics, Management, Spirituality and Religion. EoF is both a process and a community of people researching economics and management, and/or practising economic activities in the spirit of the long tradition of Catholic social teaching. Founding its ideal roots in the mediaeval spiritual movement of St. Francis, and its fresher branches in the recent encyclicals of Pope Francis on integral ecology (Laudato Sì) and on fraternity (Fratelli Tutti). In this editorial essay, we present and discuss the four papers published in this special issue, and we explore three main areas of research which may be advanced through the lens, the process and the spirit of EoF: sustainable entrepreneurship, inclusive finance, and relationships and communities. Finally, we offer some inspirational research questions that this process has still left unanswered.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 3 February 2023
Accepted: 17 February 2023

Keywords

Economy of Francesco; integral ecology, Catholic social doctrine; sustainable entrepreneurship; inclusive finance; community

Introduction

We live in a time of growing and profound changes which range from societal transformations to economic crises, technological developments, demographic evolutions both in developed and emerging economies. Many of these changes have been started and supported by citizens, stakeholders, and in general people who are moved by similar interests, beliefs, and ideals. The common term "participation" has spread the realm of sociology to gain full citizenship in managerial and economic studies. What participation really is, how it is mobilised, and how it directs towards specific goals of change, remains

© 2023 Association of Management, Spirituality & Religion

mostly unexplained. Having attracted a great deal of participation, from practitioners to scholars of management and organisation studies, the question "What is the Economy of Francesco" (EoF) remains very interesting in itself. As members of EoF from the very beginning, we are still puzzled and intrigued by its unique features. It is certainly easier to begin by saying what it is not. The Economy of Francesco is NOT an academic conference, albeit there are many academic economists (especially young ones) and from other disciplines attending it. It is NOT a business association, although many young business leaders, entrepreneurs and startuppers are part of it, and they look at EoF as a platform for sharing, practising and advocating different business practices. It is neither a political party nor a grassroot movement, although young change makers have been attracted by EoF potential to establish a young and radical political agenda.

These questions were even more puzzling and pressing when this special issue was originally planned in Winter 2020, and the scientific work that has followed has helped us to find some answers as well as to refine the contours of the important research topics that have been significantly affected by the process of EoF. We have organised them in three main areas namely: *sustainable entrepreneurship for common good*; *finance for inclusivity*; and *relationships, networks and community*. These research areas were already present in the original call for papers and will be reflected in the structure of this editorial.

Among the initial submissions to the special issue, we received many interesting papers and, through the revise and resubmit process, we finally accepted four of them that we deem to be very relevant for both theory and practice. Those papers are then part of this special issue. We believe that these works are very fruitful to enlarge the practitioners' debate, stimulate new ideas, and advance theory around such relevant topics as entrepreneurship, finance, and networks. Therefore, this editorial aims at illustrating the process of EoF, offering a theoretical underpinning among the three areas - entrepreneurship, finance, networks - and, through the illustration of the four published papers, stimulating new avenues for further research inspired by EoF.

This editorial is structured as follows. We first introduce the reader to the Economy of Francesco through its short but intense history. We then contextualise EoF horizon within the broader debate around the SDGs and we map the thematic villages of the EoF into three main area of research - *Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Hybrid Organisations (1)*, *Finance for Inclusivity (2)* and *Relationships, Networks and Community (3)* - that this special issue has been specifically focusing on from its inception. We then illustrate the specific contributions to the four papers presented in this special issue, and we finally draw a list of urgent and open research questions that may guide future research in the spirit of EoF.

EoF between participation, community and process

EoF started with a letter sent on May 1, 2019, where Pope Francis invited men and women – scholars, change makers and economists – younger than thirty five, and interested in a different kind of economy to meet in Assisi for an event originally planned for March 2020, on the 26-28th. But why give one's own name to an event? Why meeting in Assisi? Why addressing specifically young people? What did the Pope want from them exactly?

The name Francis and the location of Assisi are inextricably linked, as the small medieval town in the hearth of Italy was home to Saint Francis (1181–1226). Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone – the actual name of Saint Francis – was a friar that lead a life of radical poverty and itinerant preaching and funded one of the largest and most enduring movements within the Catholic church which – following the law of unintended consequences- has in turn chiefly contributed to the establishment of the cultural background and of key institutions that allowed the economic blossoming of the italian Renaissance (Bazzicchi, 2013; Bruni, 2022). But The Franciscan economic ideas still have much to say to the present world: in the words of Pope, St Francis' "decision to embrace poverty also gave rise to a vision of economics that remains most timely. A vision that can give hope to our future and benefit not only the poorest of the poor, but our entire human family. A vision that is also necessary for the fate of the entire planet, our common home, "our sister Mother Earth" (Pope Francis, 2019).

Pope Francis' continued reference to Saint Francis is no secret: from his own chosen name to the titles of his most prominent encyclicals[1], his teaching is largely inspired by the small friar and we can therefore understand Pope's Francis' choice for the name of the "event" as a clear attempt to put the teaching of St. Francis back into sight for economists and policy makers.

And why addressing specifically young economists, entrepreneurs and policy makers? In his letter, Pope Francis' seems to be both disenchanted about the possibility that current leaders (being them both academics or policy makers, who are nevertheless responsible for the current state of economic affairs) could possibly offer a bold new vision for a new economy and at the same time he wanted to be surrounded, in this endeavour, by young people with genuine "desire for a better and happier future"; who can hear "the ever more anguished plea of the earth and its poor"; who "feel part of a new and courageous culture"; who "will not be afraid to face risks and work to build a new society".

Pope Francis asked this young generation *to* "enter into a 'covenant' to change today's economy and to give a soul to the economy of tomorrow". An economy "that brings life not death, one that is inclusive and not exclusive, humane and not dehumanising, one that cares for the environment and does not despoil it".

In the weeks after the letter first circulated, more than three thousand young people applied from more than 120 countries; two thousands of them were selected to join the event that was supposed to take place in Assisi on March 24 and 26, 2020, with Pope Francis. The work was organised through twelve thematic villages which have evocative names that are worth being mentioned also for the continuation of our paper: Agriculture and justice; Business and peace; Businesses in transition; CO2 of inequality; Energy and poverty; Finance and humanity; Life and life-styles; Management and gift; Policies for happiness; Vocation and profit; Women for economy; and Work and care. In addition to the hundreds of young participants, each village was coordinated by one senior and a group of young coordinators. Furthermore, a limited group of senior villagers could take part in the village activities in a

[1] Laudato Sì (Pope Francis, 2015a) and Fratelli Tutti (Pope Francis, 2020a) are two of the three encyclicals - encyclicals are the most prominent documents published by popes of the Roman Catholic Church - published by Pope Francis. Both titles are direct citations from Saint Francis writings.

backseat position. The March event was eventually cancelled because of the Covid19 pandemic and in fact, on March 26, instead of being in Assisi, Pope Francis was praying alone for the end of the tragic events on a desolated St. Peter Square in an iconic and historic moment (Tondo, 2020). EoF was not over and from early March all the activities moved online and took a new breath as the goal of preparing the covenant for a new economy was moved to sometime after the summer 2020. Each village self-organised its works while the central committee built an IT infrastructure through a closed online platform to funnel and coordinate the activities (albeit the self-organisation led to a wide range of different platforms and tools being experimented and deployed by the different villages and subgroups). The event eventually took place on November 19-21, 2020, while the second wave of Covid-19 contagions was well under way in Europe, and this meant that the event only had a virtual dimension (except for the limited staff that was broadcasting and coordinating from Assisi). An interesting phenomenon clearly emerged in that phase: participants not only wanted to organise their work by themes through the villages, but they also wanted to belong and participate to geographical EoF communities. Local and country groups started to self-organise and they were readily co-opted into the general structure of EoF. The event in November 2020 ended with a message from Pope Francis and a Final Statement and Common commitment[2] which let all participants understand that the EoF was transforming from a one-time event towards an ongoing process without an expiring date. In the year 2021, together with many local and village projects, some important activities happened at the central level, including i) the EoF Academy (a research fellowship program with research grants and mentorship provided to 18 researchers around the world); i) the EoF School (a series of webinars with world leaders and academics including Partha Dasgupta (Cambridge University), Jennifer Nedelsky (Università di Toronto), Joseph Stiglitz (2001 Nobel Laureate), and Robert Frank (Cornell University) and iii) the in-presence intensive summer school[3]. Both schools revolved around the topic of *rethinking economics starting from the commons*.

The year 2021, while Europe was struggling with a new wave of Covid infections, closed with another major online event that involved EoF in several locations around the world and several scholars including Sabrine Alkire (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative), Jeffrey Sachs (Columbia University Center for Sustainable Development) and Sr. Helen Alford (Angelicum University) and that ended with a video message from Pope Francis to the young people addressing them with these words: *"let your ideas and dreams emerge and through them bring to the world, to the Church and to other young people, the prophecy and beauty of which you are capable. You are not the future: you are the present. Another present. The world needs your courage. Now."* (Pope Francis, 2021). During the year 2022 a new edition of the EoF school was organised with webinars that looked at the plant's world as a new paradigm for economic and business organisations (see Rotondi et al. 2022)

[2] The 2020 Final Statement is available on the EoF website here: https://francescoeconomy.org/final-statement-and-common-commitment/

[3] The summer school took place from August 29 to September 4, 2021 in Gubbio -another town in central Italy deeply linked to the life and spirituality of St Francis.

and 2022 was arguably the year where some deliverables have started to materialise. In addition to several academic projects which also include this special issue[4], some entrepreneurial projects have also been started. On the 22nd of September 2022, the EoF community finally met in Assisi and spent two intense days on plenary sessions together with some major economists and business figures including Gael Giraud (Georgetown University), Kate Raworth (Oxford and Cambridge University) and Stefano Zamagni (University of Bologna); holding workshop and poster sessions, presenting projects born in the spirit of EoF, discussing global and local challenges in idea incubators, getting to know each other in fishbowl conversations and attending artistic workshops[5]. Half day was devoted to the villages-based gatherings as well as to individual time for reflection and for breathing the deeply spiritual dimension of Assisi. On the last day of the event the community welcomed Pope Francis who held a speech (Pope Francis, 2022) that is a must-read for whoever wants to understand the Economy of Francesco, even from an organisational point of view. In fact the Pope first acknowledged EoF as primarily a community of people *already committed to creating a new economy* before the letter brought them together and "when a young person sees in another young person the same calling, and this experience is repeated with hundreds, even thousands of other young people, then great things become possible, even the hope of changing an enormous and complex system like the world economy". The Pope then recalled the reasons for following in the footsteps of St. Francis and the preferential (*prophetic* in His words) choice of the young people who in the sacred scriptures are "the bearers of a spirit of knowledge and intelligence and when civil society and businesses lack the skills of the young, the whole of society withers and the life of everyone is extinguished". The Pope laid the horizon of the EoF "as an economy of friendship with the earth and an economy of peace. A transformation from an economy that kills into an economy of life, in all its aspects". The Pope insisted repeatedly on sustainability but declined the word as a multidimensional concept that has *social, relational and spiritual dimensions*, in addition to the environmental one. On the spiritual dimension of sustainability – a topic that is particularly dear to this journal – the Pope argued that "the first capital of any society is spiritual capital, for this is what gives us a reason to get up every morning and go to work, and engenders the joy of living that is also necessary for the economy. [...] I ask, do you have a spiritual capital? Everyone can answer quietly. We urgently need to rebuild this essential spiritual patrimony". The Pope ended his speech with a vigorous encouragement to *incarnate* the spirit of EoF, that is to say to transform the many ideals, desires and values that EoF is

[4] But see also Beretta and Maggioni (2021) and all other papers included in the same special issue on "The Economy of Francesco" Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali and Rozzoni & Limata (2022); Rotondi et al. (2022) and Rotondi and Santori (2023).

[5] To give a flavour of the variety of themes, here is a list of workshop topics: New business models for human flourishing and ecological regeneration; A new economic education for a new society; Stories of business for impact; Inspiring stories to transform our Economy into an EoF from the World's four corners; Practising integral economy at Buen Vivir School to a Harmony with Nature; Meritocracy, evaluation, excellence: the case of universities and research; Economy of Care, Economy of Giving; Reflecting on St Francis' It is only in giving that we receive; Universal Fraternity: An Idea that could Change the World; Dangers of the managerialization of society. What to do about it?

mobilising in concrete actions. The event was concluded with the *pact for the Economy*[6] signed by the Pope and representatives of the young economists, entrepreneurs, changemakers, students, and workers who belong to the EoF community. While the pact does not define what the EoF actually is, it certainly lays down what it believes in. Meeting the Pope and signing the pact was the goal set at the beginning with the 2019 letter so the EoF process could end on September 24th. In fact it did not. A new wave of activities are already underway, that includes a new edition of the EoF academy with new young scholars to be supported and a new EoF school: both a recurring online seminar that will be organised by the twelve villages and an intense in-person summer school developing the themes of the *Capitals beyond capitalism* that follows up on Pope Francis's words from the 2022 message about the importance of the relational and spiritual capitals.

Before moving on, it is useful to evaluate where EoF stands within the current socio-political and economic debate that is rooted in the philosophy of sustainability and sustainable development and which is based on the evidence that it is necessary to embrace technical-scientific innovations without discarding an ethical and moral development of mankind. In a follow up to his encyclical letter, Pope Francis (2015a) wrote: "There is a clear link between the protection of nature and the building of a just and equitable social order. There can be no renewal of our relationship with Nature without a renewal of humanity itself"; This way of thinking resonates with the one that lays behind the Sustainable Development Goals framework (SDGs) set by the UN in the same year as a "universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity" (United Nations Development Program, 2015). Indeed, EoF, by embodying the spirit of Laudato Sì, responds to this urgent call to action, strengthening the SDGs view with a disruptive belief on integral human development (Cichos et al., 2021). Since we are facing profound crises which are social, environmental and economical, EoF aims at detecting strategies and innovative/creative solutions for an "integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." (Pope Francis 2015a, §139).

In the footsteps of Pope Francis, EoF is sceptical of the immanentist view of reality, which conceives the infinite power of man as self-creator. This view has led to an "irresponsible mismanagement of the global economy, guided only by ambition for wealth and power" (Pope Francis, 2015c). EoF has the ambition to study and possibly implement alternative models of production and consumption that pursue human promotion instead of mere material development. Even if, there are many seeds of change detectable in the global agenda, that EoF can and should intercept, the challenge is very high, and requires a change of paradigm. As an example, the Covid-19 pandemic, the energy crisis, and the upsurge of wars have emphasised the vulnerabilities of global value chains (GVCs) across different industries, and have stimulated a rich debate on how a reconfiguration of GVCs should be sought to enhance their resilience (Phillips et al., 2022). This provides an opportunity for EoF to advance the view of integral ecology so to promote a reconfiguration of GVCs that is not

[6] See it in the Appendix or online: https://francescoeconomy.org/pope-francis-pact-for-the-economy-with-young-people/

only capable of maintaining the production standards, but, most important of all, to promote decent work, equal access to resources, gender equalities, and integral development of human beings. Similarly, inequality and social exclusion of vulnerable and marginalised individuals (such as women in developing economies, disabled people, poor, immigrants) are frequently in the agenda of institutions, policymakers and various economic actors, calling to build a more inclusive society (Bakker & McMullen, 2023). Tackling such grand challenges urge of innovative entrepreneurial initiatives who take the responsibility of creating social change by integrating marginalised individuals (George et al., 2012), aiming at poverty alleviation (Sutter et al., 2019) and generally addressing the social and environmental problems (Ferraro et al., 2015; Saebi et al., 2019).

EoF in entrepreneurship, finance and community

It is now time to move on and introduce the three areas of research that organise -in our opinion- the content of EoF that is relevant for this special issue. We begin from hybrid organisations.

Sustainable entrepreneurship and hybrid organisations: Businesses for the common good

Pope Francis letter that started EoF echoed the growing interest of scholars and practitioners in investigating the role of businesses and entrepreneurs in creating social and environmental impact (Doherty et al., 2014), civic wealth (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019) and a sustainable development for a better life and a better world (Saebi et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2019). In fact, there is a flourishing field of research dealing with questions such as how and why sustainable entrepreneurs and organisations pursue social and environmental impact, thereby addressing grand challenges and figuring out enabling solutions for processes of change. The role of sustainable entrepreneurs and organisations in this sense has been studied in relationship of various challenges of our societies (Gümüsay et al., 2022), for instance in achieving a sustainable peace (Sottini & Ciambotti, 2021), alleviate poverty reduction (Sutter et al., 2019), and tackle climate change (George et al., 2021b). To offer some valuable examples, among several studies, Mair et al. (2016) investigated how social inequality can be resolved in rural Bangladesh through a process of scaffolding, while Shepherd et al. (2021) researched the importance of health and children education in Indian slums to alleviate poverty; Sottini and colleagues (2021) discussed how to build social enterprises to solve community issues at the base of the pyramid in Uganda; Chatterjee et al. (2022) illustrated how women can achieve wellbeing in poverty contexts. This broad research stream on social and environmental entrepreneurship has also included different levels of analysis, investigating individuals as social and environmental entrepreneurs (Zahra et al., 2009), organisations such as social enterprises, B Corp and others (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Ciambotti & Pedrini, 2021), communities where change happens (Lumpkin et al., 2018), and ecosystem levels (Theodoraki et al., 2022).

Therefore, the current knowledge is rich in research perspectives including a 'broad' scope concerning the different levels of analysis, and a focus which is spread among developing and developed economies, but also a 'deep' view that allows to dig into the complexities of specific

contexts. This is important if one wants to capture the origins of grand challenges in the lived experience of individuals at their local contexts (e.g. local communities) (Lumpkin et al., 2018), where change happens and local solutions are crafted with approaches which may diverge from other contexts (Mair et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2019). Breadth and depth of research significantly enriched the knowledge on how societal transformation is enacted by entrepreneurs and organisations and is ultimately contributing to suggest valuable answers to the Pope Francis call. With such approach in mind - a broad scope in terms of theoretical lenses, level of analysis and geographical areas, and a deep focus into the local peculiarities and lived experiences of individuals - the work in the village "Businesses in Transition" at the Economy of Francesco tried to contribute in this direction with new theoretical and practical knowledge (Ciambotti, 2022). The active work of around 150 scholars and practitioners revealed several practical solutions to the grand challenges, in contexts such as Zambia, Guatemala, Italy, but also created a fruitful debate at the intersection between theory and practice to enrich the field of studies in social entrepreneurship and hybridity (Saebi et al., 2019).

An important framework in sustainable entrepreneurship and social transformation literature is related to the nature and processes of individuals/organisations, which is characterised by hybridity. With hybridity, scholars mean a combination of goals, processes, models and resources which needs to be crafted to pursue and achieve social change (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Such hybrid nature of organisations and individuals who pursue social change, bring several tensions for instance in the combination of financial and social goals, in acquiring and training skilled-employees (Doherty et al., 2014), but also offers opportunities such as enabling entrepreneurs to acquire resources even in the presence of resource scarcity (Ciambotti & Pedrini, 2021), to build business models which are suitable to address needs of the poor (Yunus et al., 2010; Sottini et al., 2022), and leverage the digital technologies to achieve sustainable development (George et al., 2021b). Building on this, scholars and practitioners who engaged in the Economy of Francesco process, specifically debated around four important aspects of the literature on social entrepreneurship and hybridity: i) mission and role of enterprises, ii) sustainable business models, iii) technologies for the common good and iv) institutions and ecosystems for pursuing social change. The remainder of this section briefly illustrates these important aspects of the research.

Mission

Sustainable entrepreneurs and businesses exist in order to address people's needs, going beyond profit and including social and environmental problems and challenges (Zahra et al., 2009; Yunus et al., 2010). A company's mission, indeed, concerns the responsibility that it holds towards the world: from poverty to social exclusion, from weak healthcare systems to inequality, organisations are required to design missions that take effectively such challenges at the core. Scholars have recently pointed out the concept of *purpose* in corporations, which "provides a clear definition of the firm's intent, creates the ability for stakeholders to identify with, and be inspired by, the firm's mission, vision, and values, and establishes actionable pathways and an aspirational outcome for the firm's actions" (George et al., 2021a, p. 7). In addition, social entrepreneurs are required to embed in their identity the firm's mission and

keep the commitment to the dual goals (addressing social needs, and achieving financial results) (Doherty et al., 2014). In fact, the risk of prioritising profit-making activities, while neglecting the social mission, is very common in social entrepreneurs (Saebi et al., 2019; Ciambotti & Pedrini, 2021). This phenomenon has been investigated as the risk of 'mission drift' (Battilana & Lee, 2014), which may bring organisations to diverge from their purpose of social change and to jeopardise the social impact for communities and beneficiaries.

Sustainable business models

Social and environmental entrepreneurs and organisations such as BCorps, social enterprises, community-based organisations, need to craft and build business models which are sustainable in their hybrid nature, thus incorporating the three missions: social, environmental and financial. Building sustainable business models presents several challenges, as for instance it requires a strong adaptation to the local problems faced by poor individuals (Sottini et al., 2022), or requires building financially-viable solutions even with a strong complexity of the societal challenges (Yunus et al., 2010).

Technology

One of the enabling conditions for designing a purpose-oriented mission and building a sustainable business model, is represented by the technologies. Technology has a fundamental role in advancing social and environmental impact, contributing toward sustainable development if correctly integrated into the organisations (George et al., 2021b). In fact, various social entrepreneurship initiatives are leveraging technologies in positive ways, for instance to allow access to education in rural areas or to provide access to health services to the poor (Ciambotti, 2022). At the same time, technologies can also hinder the "integral human development of all" (Pope Francis 2020, §133), by fostering greater exclusion of marginalised and vulnerable individuals if not correctly integrated into the work contexts. In this sense, the current research is missing evidence on dark sides of technologies, both in developed and developing countries.

Institutions and ecosystems

Finally, research on social and environmental entrepreneurship and hybrid organisations also started to consider the role and processes involved with institutions and ecosystems, including the local communities. For instance, Ciambotti et al. (2022) investigated the importance of communities for social entrepreneurs in engaging with a 'bricolage' entrepreneurial approach, meaning doing whatever is possible to offer new solutions even in the face of severe challenges. Scholars also illustrated the importance of an ecosystem which needs to be sustainable (Theodoraki et al., 2022) in order to enable productive entrepreneurship, and triggering social transformation. In many contexts of the world, institutions are weak or absent as in Bangladesh or Africa (Mair et al., 2016; Ciambotti & Pedrini, 2021), and this negatively affects the work of social entrepreneurs toward integral development of all the individuals. Thus, Government and policymakers are also called to collaborate in an ecosystem perspective to foster societal transformation (Pope Francis, 2021).

"*We need change; we want change and we seek change*", this is the key message of Pope Francis (2020) for businesses and entrepreneurs who are actively engaged for addressing social and sustainability issues; such change is possible "blazing trails, broadening horizons and building common bonds" to finally forge "new ways to make history" (Pope Francis, 2020). The research which is generated through the Economy of Francesco perspective overall contributes to the global debate around sustainable entrepreneurship and hybrid organisations, enriching it with new insights on how to achieve an integral development for all human beings. We now move to the second area of research that concerns finance.

Finance for inclusivity

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent general disdain, the world of finance started to reflect on its relevance and role in improving society. Among the attempts to explain through which mechanisms finance contributes to this purpose, Greenwood and Scharfstein (2012) and Kay (2016) underscore four main functions: i) providing a payment system; ii) matching creditors and debtors; iii) managing risk and; iv) allocating personal and business resources. The authors go on to explain how through the correct working of these functions, finance partially overcomes typical market shortcomings such as asymmetric information, incomplete markets and limited substitutability. As described by Cremers (2021), the persistent presence of these failures in the markets eventually jeopardises the goods of information, risk and discipline sharing, which in a competitive equilibrium model are instead achieved by means of market transactions themselves.

In this context we can underline the role played by finance: on one hand, it may actually solve some market failures that contribute to the achievement of shared goods, on the other, the same finance can lead to worsen a situation and have detrimental effects. The difficulty in recognizing the exact moment in which a similar shift takes place, lies in the fact that the financial sector lacks an internal criterion able to halt that sentiment of euphoria which triggers the typical mechanisms behind financial bubbles or herding behaviours and that seems to be the reason why finance at times detracts from its original purpose (Rajan 2011: 126).

Therefore, it is necessary to find some principles that can correctly steer finance towards its aim. Among the possible alternatives, in order to understand the role that the EoF plays, we refer here to the social teaching of the Catholic Church that since the Encyclical Letter Rerum Novarum by Pope Leo XIII (1891) is precisely pursuing this goal. Since then the Catholic Church has continued to engage critically with finance both by highlighting its positive role in sustaining economic growth and by warning about the social and ethical threats that its products can deliver. As Benedict XVI argues, "economy and finance, as instruments, can be used badly when those at the helm are motivated by purely selfish ends. Instruments that are good in themselves can thereby be transformed into harmful ones" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, §26).

Along this line, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith together with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (henceforth, the Congregation) recently published a document (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery For Promoting Integral Human Development, 2018), which recalls the long-standing tension in

the financial world between the systematic presence of distortive practices and the existence of a vocation of its own consisting of serving the real economy.

If finance has a crucial role to play within the larger economic order, there should be a virtuous way to fulfil it. Pope Francis, who in some of his social writings did not spare words of harsh condemnation for a certain type of self-referential finance (Pope Francis 2013, § 58; 2015a, §109), also said that "economy and finance are dimensions of human activity and can be occasions of encounter, of dialogue, of cooperation, of recognized rights and of services rendered, of dignity affirmed in work" (Pope Francis, 2014). EoF is therefore part of this stream of thought that has not spared important criticisms of a certain type of finance, but which has also not lost hope of seeing this type of activity be oriented towards the common good, through both the continuous conversion of the people who are called on to work in this field and the organisation of just institutions. The contribution of EoF to this body of knowledge and practical wisdom may be best understood through its focus on integral ecology.

Integral ecology substantially implies two dimensions: on one hand to take into consideration the whole of reality, which like a polyhedron presents numerous faces, starting from the ecology of the human being, created in the image and likeness of God, placed by God at the centre of reality; and on the other hand to overcome the dichotomic reasoning that sees opposition between employment or sustainability; growth or care for the environment; anthropocentrism or respect for creation; integral ecology poses in this sense a challenge under the lemma 'everything is connected'.

Let's take the specific case of corporate finance to see how the new paradigm of 'integral ecology' developed in the EoF can enrich the broad debate that is concerning the purpose of the firm (Mayer, 2020; Edmans, 2020). Since the limits and problems of shareholders capitalism – which has been the main theoretical framework in corporate finance - have already been addressed in authoritative forums, we would like to focus on one aspect of it, which we could define anthropological, that allows us to introduce our approach. As pointed out by other authors, the 'shareholder capitalism' - like any economic perspective - has its roots in a certain vision of the human being (Cremers, 2017): Agency theory, at the root of shareholder capitalism, is aimed at reducing managerial opportunism and is based on the ability/necessity to formulate contracts that are as complete as possible, aligning the interests at stake. In this sense, companies are perceived as a 'nexus of contracts' in which the various stakeholders, not only managers and shareholders but also employees, suppliers, customers, etc., are free to participate by entering and exiting the contract that binds them, always with a view to maximising their own utility function. Despite the undisputed elegance of the model and its effectiveness in describing behaviour, the reality that have emerged in the last ten years, starting from the global financial crisis of 2008 to the one following the COVID-19 pandemic, have shown the limits of such an approach and therefore the need to create new forms of business organisation.

Contrary to interpreting the company as a "nexus of contracts", the lens of the integral ecology, as expressed in the EoF, proposes to redefine the company as a community (Fontrodona & Sison 2006; Sison & Fontrodona, 2012), which lives and relates with other communities and which finds in the purpose–commitment binomial the link capable of

integrating and enriching the contractual relationship typical of the modern public corporation. In this community, the various stakeholders have an active and indispensable role in building this new relationship, which is nourished, on the one hand, by the personal commitment of the agents and, on the other, by the 'rules of the game' designed to encourage this commitment in the direction of the company's purpose. In concrete terms, the shareholders, being owners of the company, have the duty and the responsibility to carefully monitor so that the 'purpose' of the company, firstly decided and approved by them, is directed to the achievement of the common good pursued (shareholders activism) also through the choice of the management. The latter has the role of applying the purpose operationally, respecting and generating a real 'commitment' in both employees and other stakeholders. In this context, profit, far from being a forgotten or excluded dimension, is rather the thermometer, and not the compass, through which to assess the sustainability (understood in economic terms) of the company.

The literature on the purpose-driven corporation comes to the aid of this business model by focusing in particular on correcting the incentives contained in corporate governance guidelines and proposing reforms aimed at ensuring a greater focus by shareholders on the purpose of the company (see the proposal of the 'say on purpose' put forward by Edmans, 2020), a greater consideration of ESG (environment, social and governance) dimensions in the remuneration of managers (Flammer et al., 2019), a greater involvement of employees in the board or in worker-buyout operations. These are all legitimate and worthwhile considerations, but they must be grounded in the anthropological dimension, which inevitably underlies these reforms and which companies must somehow consider.

The moral paradigm of integral ecology makes up for this void because it allows for the introduction of the notion of purpose and meaning into human action by integrating it with legitimate aspirations for freedom and autonomy. It is the responsibility of the individual, in his or her role as shareholder, manager, employee, and so on for the other stakeholders to act in the company–community so that the institutional purpose is realised in the direction of the common good.

If, on the one hand, the large corporations that characterised the years after the Second World War gave their employees a sense of belonging and allowed them to recognize themselves in something greater than themselves, on the other hand, they could also lead to the annihilation of the individual, crushed within organisational mechanisms that made it impossible for the individual to express his or her creativity. If agency theory, in a classic manifestation of the pendulum effect, has emphasised the need for autonomy, flexibility and independence in a more significant way, today we find ourselves once again faced with an attempt to enable people to find meaning in what they do and to find themselves in the corporate purpose. A sense that is not only personal self-fulfilment, achievable only by a small number of people, but a desire to flourish within a reality where they can express themselves and grow.

If the dimension of corporate purpose is to avoid being just a slogan, it is necessary to go back to considering the purpose or telos of the human being who operates within the institution. For some time now, the literature in social psychology has been trying to explain that the human being is moved by the search for meaning and various publications have

explained the centrality of the search for meaning in motivating people to greater commitment (Ariely et al., 2008; Grant, 2008).

Integral ecology, with its ability to relate the nature of man to social and environmental needs, represents a paradigm capable of providing a more integral perspective for the future of work, both in its personal/anthropological dimension and in its social and institutional structure. As we will see in the next section, the attention towards integral ecology moves from the role of relationships.

Relationships, networks and community

Current health, economic and political crises are making it clear that the human family is to be understood as a human and planetary 'community of destiny' (Morin, 2012). The tendency towards the interconnectedness of peoples, as a product of globalisation, does not only concern the obvious interdependence between national economies or between social and environmental policies across national borders, but embraces the vision that humans can express a consciousness of *belonging and planetary communion.* In this perspective, the choices and behaviours of an individual are capable of producing effects that can spread and amplify on a global scale. In the economic dimension, this means, for example, that consumers thousands of miles away enjoy the benefits of products made by others in distant areas, rarely thinking about the (economic, social and environmental) 'costs' incurred by others, because they are largely unaware of them.

The Catholic Church, in this global network of interdependencies, takes a social perspective where it invites the 'entire human family' to come together to seek new forms of integral and sustainable development, to redefine the system of progress by considering human development and to care for the common home. These invitations spur from the church recognition of profound dignity of the human person and its fundamental human rights and from a preferential option for the poorest, overcoming the so-called 'globalisation of indifference' that is the inevitable consequence of assuming that economic growth is adequate to achieve justice, trusting in the "sacralised functioning of the prevailing economic system" (Pope Francis 2015a, §54).

For a few decades, the notion of interdependence, responsibility towards others and solidarity have started to gain some attention among economists in an attempt to overcome the original and still prevailing individualistic and utilitarian approach, typical of mainstream neoclassical economics (Bulsei, 2008).

The neoclassical notion comes from utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham for whom, the community is to be considered as an imaginary body where the interest is substantiated in the sum of the interests of the different members that compose it (Bentham, 1789 [1823], I, IV). This idea sees the market as an institution based on a double principle: impersonal exchange relations and the exclusively self-interested behaviour of all those who participate in it. In this view, it is sufficient to postulate a single attitude on the part of economic agents, namely the human propensity to transport, barter and trade, as Adam Smith wrote, and where the instrument of trade is represented by the 'price' signal (Bruni & Zamagni, 2007). In this way, the global economy functions as an enormous network of superficial

relationships where it is therefore not necessary to assume that agents have socially-oriented motivations and where every interaction is an extremely narrow form of relationship.

The Catholic church's notion of the 'human person', developed since the early centuries, is different from the neoclassical economic notion of an 'individual' insofar as the first notion is enriched by the idea of *relationality*: a person is an individual within its relations to others. Many economists by now explicitly study the dimension of interpersonal relationships and the central role for individual wellbeing as well for social development of *relational goods* (Uhlaner, 1989, Nussbaum, 2002, Bruni & Stanca, 2008, Becchetti et al., 2009).

These and many other economists realise that economic phenomena have an interpersonal dimension. Individuals are immersed (*embedded*) in networks of pre-existing social relations that cannot be considered merely constraint, but rather are factors that influence individual goals and motivations (*social influence processes*). The relational paradigm and value attributed to relational goods has also prompted, within EoF, a new debate on the issues of *public happiness*, linked to relational goods, in response to the utilitarian vision. In civil humanism, as well as in classical thought and the Christian tradition, is rooted the idea that true virtue is civil virtue, that human life is the *vita activa*, and that there is no virtue in solitary life, but only in cities. All of this on the trail of Aristotle (from Aristotle, 1980), who had laid the foundations for emphasising the relationship between happiness and relations, saying that "it is certainly strange that the supremely happy man should be a loner; for no one would choose the whole world on the condition of being alone, since man is a political creature whose nature is to live with others"; adding then "therefore the happy man also lives with others, because he possesses the things that are by nature good". In summary, Aristotle had associated the good life (*eudaimonia*) with a life of relationships, that is, with the availability of relational goods (friendship, love, civic engagement, trust, and so on). These are also the deep roots at basis of the discourse of *civil economy*, sustained by Antonio Genovesi regarding the constitutively relational nature of *happiness*: "toil for your own interest; no man could work otherwise than for his own happiness; he would be a lesser man: but do not want to make others miserable; and if you can, and as much as you can, endeavour to make others happy. It is the law of the universe that we cannot make our own happiness without making that of others" (Genovesi, 1962, p. 449). It thus happened that the utilitarian vision gives up its place to the idea that true happiness can only be enjoyed with and thanks to others: as Aristotle had already taught, "one can be rich even alone, but to be happy one must be at least two".

There is a crucial implication that is worth picking up to explain the economics of happiness and relational goods. It has to do with the so-called *'happiness paradox'*. Discovered by the American scholar Richard Easterlin in 1974, this 'paradox' showed that utility and happiness are not necessarily correlated. Because utility is the property of the relationship between a human being and thing (goods), happiness on the other hand is the property of the relationship between person and person. It has been empirically shown that the relationship between per capita income - as an indicator of utility - and subjective well-being (happiness) are not correlated. Thus, at a certain level, further increases in per capita income actually decrease the subjective perception of well-being. Precisely because happiness

depends, for the most part, on the relational goods that are invested, it is easy to understand the sense of the paradox whereby we succeed, on the one hand, in accumulating more wealth and thus increasing our levels of utility, but we are less happy (Bruni, 2004).

EoF takes up this perspective, emphasising how the challenge to which we are called as the 'human family' gives the value of relationships a new and prophetic direction also on a global scale: *if cooperation activates solidarity, interdependence calls for responsibility* (Viola 2009). This 'growing interdependence' finds its realisation only at the 'deepest level of interpersonal relationships'. This is already expressed in the final document of the Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, where it speaks of 'socialisation' as a product of the growth of communication over great distances and of economic and political activity that multiplies the 'bonds' between different men and women. And for this reason, one sees in the growth of global human interdependence the rise of a truly universal common good that implies "rights and duties" with a social identity (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council 1966, § 6, 23, 26).

In recent years, Pope Francis has offered enough elements to consider the value of the human relationship a central point of his pontificate, for instance both in the Laudato Sì (Pope Francis, 2015a) and in the other important encyclical Fratelli Tutti (Pope Francis, 2020). Further, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 epidemic, he has repeatedly emphasised how the pandemic has made us realise that we are all in the same boat and *no one is saved alone, that we can only be saved together*. The Pope's strong message which EoF has fully embraced throughout its activities is based on fraternity and social friendship that are the central foundation on which to build a liveable future for the present and future generations.

The papers included in this special issue

In this section, we now illustrate the specific contributions that have been produced in response to our original call for papers, and that are published in this special issue. The original call was launched with the intent to reach an audience as wide and diverse as possible. The call was disseminated through EoF channels, as well as traditional academic channels. Fiftysix papers were submitted for revisions, of which twenty-two were admitted to the round of double-blind revision process. Reviewers were recruited among academics who have had a role in the first phases of EoF. Four papers have finally reached the publication stage and are included in this Special Issue.

In the paper titled "***Achieving Inclusive Microfinance: Recommendations from Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Development Literature***", the authors (Gallenstein, R. A., Dougherty, J. P., & Jent, J.) deal with the important issue of microfinance in light of the Catholic Social teaching. Throughout the centuries, the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) has developed its own analytical toolkit in order to read and interpret social reality, and can be summarised in the three phases of 'see-judge-act'. The first phase of "seeing" involves the analysis of any reality according to the main scientific results as a necessary step to avoid any shallow moralism. The second phase expresses a moral judgement according to three pillars of the CST, specifically: 1) human dignity, which is the foundation of the entire CST (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (henceforth CSDC), §105, §132), 2) subsidiarity, which is entrenched with human freedom (CSDC, §186) and 3) solidarity,

which relates to responsibility (CSDC, §192, §193). These principles, which form the permanent core of CST, are rooted in a complex network of social ideas that shape a comprehensive and transcendent vision of socio-economic life. Finally, the third phase of this methodology provides an analysis of "acting" without which the CST "would become simply inanimate words rather than a lived reality" (CSDC, §62). Even though the CST does not propose any technical solutions or models, the Church reminds us that "there is no genuine solution of the 'social question' apart from the Gospel" (Pope John Paul II 1991, §5).

An interesting example of how to apply this methodology to a specific sector is provided by this present paper where the authors review microfinance literature highlighting the benefits, drawbacks, and potential mechanisms of exclusion inherent in current microfinance models. They outline principles, rooted in Catholic Social Teaching, that provide a fuller understanding of the human person and can help inform a more inclusive version of microfinance. Finally, they apply these principles and recent innovations in the economics literature to propose a list of practical recommendations for inclusive microfinance to achieve integral development.

In the second paper titled "***Public value creation by the Catholic church in Brazil: analysis based on its outputs and outcomes***", the authors (Portulhak, H., & Pacheco, V.) contribute to the empirical development of public value theory as a possible alternative for measuring the performance of non-profit organisations. The authors are motivated by the manifest difficulty of identifying valid theoretical approaches for the analysis of intangible elements, such as the set of outcomes produced by public and non-profit organisations, because of the complexity and subjectivity of its results. They refer, in particular, to the production of the public value of religious institutions. The aim of this research is to identify public perceptions of the outputs (products, goods or services) and outcomes (impacts, benefits or consequences) offered by a non-profit organisation (NPO) that are considered creators of public value. On an empirical level, the analysis focused on the perception of the public value produced by the institutions of the Catholic Church in Brazil. On the basis of the data collected, the authors found that Brazilian society considers the Catholic Church to be a creator of public value, based on the social results it achieves, especially in the area of social assistance and social service in general, and by its religious institutions.

In the third paper titled "***Social Entrepreneurs Perceived Success by Integrating Cognitive Mapping and MCDA Techniques***", the authors (Carvalho, E., & Bicho, M.) deal with the open question of how to assess the multidimensional performance of social enterprises. In fact, embracing a new and disruptive approach to economics and business also includes defining a new set of indicators and parameters to assess what business success is and how it is possible to capture and measure the multifaceted value that businesses can create. This is particularly true for those enterprises that pursue social goals by means of market mechanisms, such as Social Enterprises (Ebrahim et al., 2014; Doherty et al., 2014). For these social enterprises, the traditional schema of measuring success through economic indicators may fall short in capturing the whole spectrum of value that they can create. Yet, a sort of assessment of their economic performance is required. Carvalho and Bicho in their paper emphasise the use of the perception of success as a way to deepen the understanding of SEs

success. Using a subjective measure contributes to a better understanding of success as it provides a unique view on the social entrepreneurs' understanding of their business, their scope, and their goals. Also, a focus on the perceived path to success opens up new perspectives on how to assess the outcomes of SEs, and to define a SEs success evaluation framework. This perspective is also informative on how the decision-making processes can be shaped in SEs. By assessing SEs success, it can provide SE managers with the necessary information to guide their choices and to improve effectiveness and efficiency of their business (Arena et al., 2015).

The last paper titled "***Sustainability: The Role of Spiritual Capital, Transformational Leadership and Effectuation***", written by Gil-Barragan, López-Sánchez and Aguilera-Castillo, investigates how the individual and collective identities, as in the form of spiritual capital and transformational leadership, interact with the entrepreneurial orientation toward effectuation to finally achieve sustainable performance. In fact, as illustrated above, social (sustainable) entrepreneurship differs from traditional entrepreneurship, because entrepreneurs and organisations which aim to address social issues need to incorporate social, environmental and economic goals and means in the same organisation (Doherty et al., 2014). Accordingly, entrepreneurs are decision-makers and leaders who are in charge to design effective solutions and business models, while also avoiding risk of drifting from their 'hybrid' nature and purposeful ideal (Zahra et al., 2009; Battilana & Lee, 2014). Yet, research on how social entrepreneurs take purposeful decisions to achieve sustainable development is at the early stage (George et al., 2021b). For instance, in a recent research Ciambotti and colleagues (2022) investigates the impact of a sense of community on entrepreneurial processes such as bricolage. This study takes the perspective of African social entrepreneurs, who engage with bricolage for collecting the resources necessary for pursuing social change (Ciambotti & Pedrini, 2021). Another entrepreneurial process is called 'Effectuation' defined as "processes (which) take a set of means as given and focus on selecting between possible effects that can be created with that set of means" (Sarasvathy 2001, p. 245). The paper by Gil-Barragan, López-Sánchez, and Aguilera-Castillo (2022) fills this spot in the literature. The authors, using a rich database of 52 entrepreneurs in Colombia analysed through the fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), discovered that effectual orientation, spiritual capital, and transformational leadership are important to achieve sustainable development; however, they are not relevant as standalone variables, but rather, what makes entrepreneurs achieving greater sustainable performance is the interaction of the effectual with an high degree of spiritual capital and a transformational leadership approach. Therefore, this study is very relevant to contribute toward the impact of individual characteristics as the intensity of spiritual capital toward the achievement of sustainable performance (Saebi et al., 2019; George et al., 2021b). More importantly, the results shed light on how such individual characteristics (Zahra et al., 2009) interact with entrepreneurial processes (e.g., effectuation, bricolage…) to better enact and achieve sustainable entrepreneurship.

EoF looking forward

The papers included in this special issue are just some examples on how the EoF process - and the researchers that are involved in it - are trying to take seriously the call of Pope Francis in the various domains and disciplines, including finance, networks, entrepreneurship etc. Grounding on the evidence offered above on the EoF multifaceted viewpoint, this Editorial finishes with highlighting new ideas and research questions organised around the three main pillars of this special issue: social entrepreneurship, finance and communities.

On *social and environmental entrepreneurship and hybridity* this special issue and the EoF process, have contributed in highlighting the active role of sustainable entrepreneurs and hybrid organisations in pursuing social change in developed and developing economies (Ciambotti, 2022). However, more research is needed to deepen the role and processes of social entrepreneurship and hybridity toward integral development, for instance investigating the following topics.

- The mission of organisations is a central aspect of their commitment. How and why an 'integral development' mission is designed and embedded into organisations? How is it crafted differently based on contexts such as poor communities in Africa, or developed regions as Europe?
- Pope Francis (2020) called toward a change who takes in consideration all the human beings; therefore, it is important to deepen questions such as "How entrepreneurs and organisations pursue social and environmental impact without compromising life of other individuals?" Similarly, how can organisations scale their products and services in respect of integral development (e.g., avoiding mission drifts)?
- How different entrepreneurial processes such as effectuation and bricolage (Ciambotti et al., 2022; Gil-Barragan et al., 2023) shape the pursuit of dual mission, by amplifying it or hindering it?
- Business models need to be designed in a sustainable way. What are the possible challenges in designing sustainable business models oriented to integral development, and what are the enablers for pursuing it? How sustainable business models take in considerations the voice of the poor and marginalised individuals, as well as are better crafted toward communities where change happens (e.g., Lumpkin et al., 2018; Sottini et al., 2022)?
- How to incorporate technologies which may enhance integral development by addressing grand challenges? What are the drivers and outcomes of technology adoption to achieve sustainable development?
- How is digital transformation impacting sustainable entrepreneurship and hybrid organisations? Do they effectively embrace the new ways of working with a consistent approach to human integral development? Are there supportive HR practices that enhance workers' engagement and wellbeing in a dignified way?
- The engagement of private actors in the system of international cooperation for development has increased over the last decade and it is now pivotal to foster economic prosperity in marginal areas while achieving business outcomes. This has

led to hybrid partnerships that face tensions and opportunities in pursuing sustainable and inclusive business models. However, there is still a paucity of research that studies these hybrids through an integral development lens and combines it with the view on SDGs.

On the topic of *Finance for inclusivity,* some further research questions that are left unanswered and that the EoF process can help to answer to are:

- What is the relation between finance and value creation and how can its institutions contribute to it?
- How can mainstream pricing models be enriched in order to get a better understanding of tangible and intangible assets?
- ESG finance is getting more attention every day. How can the EoF paradigm fit into this new wave of the investment industry? What may be EoF contributions to it both in theory and practice?
- Classical corporate finance tools, such as the Net Present Value analysis, are showing their limits as they are challenged by the rise of intangible assets as a relevant component of firms' productive factors. Which new principles may help the management to get the right investment decisions?

And finally, searching for future trajectories to the study of *Relationships, Networks and Community*, we might seek answers to the following open questions:

- How does the relational paradigm contribute to the envisioning of reconfigured Global Value Chains? How could innovations such as additive manufacturing and microfactories be designed toward customised delivery of products at point of use in a way that is coherent with the view on human integral development?
- How networks and relationships can be designed to better achieve integral development both in emerging and well-developed countries?
- How entrepreneurs, organisations and policymakers can design support-programmes for communities, by taking in consideration the poor and marginalised actors in such context and achieving inclusivity? How may relationships help or hinder poverty alleviation?
- Heeding also the discussion on the role of entrepreneurs in relationship with ecosystems and institutions, we recognize that research is needed to deepen such relationship with actors involved in promoting and supporting entrepreneurship toward sustainable development (Theodoraki et al., 2022). For instance, a macro-level of analysis includes all the actors which seek to trigger, support, and amplify processes of transformation (from Government, policymakers and other institutional actors). We then ask, how such ecosystems need to be designed, governed, and developed to effectively support organisations toward sustainable development? What are the enabling processes offered by the public sector at ecosystem level especially in more

nascent ecosystems? What relationships and interactions among the actors involved (public and private) need to be designed in order to ensure concrete support to entrepreneurs and organisations?

- While the ecosystem perspective has gained prominent importance across the management fields of research, there is still little evidence of the role of relational capital in the ecosystems' organisation and outcomes. How does the relational capital perspective add to the understanding of ecosystems, especially in terms of the capability to self-organise and adapt to changes?
- Finally, much on the literature focus on well-established and "formal" network, while in many contexts (such as in poverty condition, developing economies, rural areas etc.) most of the relationships happen in informal ways, and through strong community- and social-ties. Thus, new research could deepen such relationships investigating how those are established, what are the drivers and outcomes of such relationships, and what is the impact toward a sustainable and inclusive development. Once again, Economy of Francesco process might shed new light on this important aspect of management and entrepreneurship literature.

Overall, this special issue has created the condition to investigate economics and management phenomena and build new knowledge under the theoretical and practical lens of EoF. The four papers included in the special issue are clear examples on how the EoF process, knowledge, and community can be mobilised in order to build rigorous research which creates, extends, complements or even challenges the extant knowledge. As we can see from the broad examples offered, various questions remain underexplored, and we believe that by building on the EoF process, knowledge and community (both of scholars and practitioners) research could be significantly enriched in content, creativity and perspectives. Such new perspectives are very much needed in our times to better tackle and address the grand challenges of our era. Everyone - scholars and practitioners - have the responsibility to provide creative and brave answers to such challenges and the original letter of Pope Francis triggered some valuable tentative answers which can be offered to the world. We hope that this editorial and the special issue can be a source of inspiration for scholars and practitioners, especially the youths, in order to offer new, rich and diverse perspectives toward a better life and a better world.

Acknowledgements

We want to thank Dr. Giorgia Nigri for her enthusiasm and assistance in setting up this special issue. We are also grateful to the Editors of the Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion – a special thank to Kathryn Pavlovich, Yochanan Altman, and Shay Tzafrir – for believing and supporting this project, as well as all the ad-hoc reviewers for their time and the valuable comments offered in the review process.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

Arena, M., Azzone, G., & Bengo, I. (2015). Performance measurement for social enterprises. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *26*, 649-672.

Ariely, D., Kamenica, E., & Prelec, D. (2008). Man's search for meaning: The case of Legos. J*ournal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *67*(3-4), 671-677.

Aristotle. (1980). *Nicomachean ethics*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Bakker, R. M., & McMullen, J. S. (2023). Inclusive entrepreneurship: A call for a shared theoretical conversation about unconventional entrepreneurs. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *38*(1), online first.

Battilana, J., & Lee, M. (2014). Advancing research on hybrid organizing–Insights from the study of social enterprises. *Academy of Management Annals*, *8*(1), 397-441.

Bazzichi, O. (2013). *Economia e scuola francescana*. Libreriauniversitaria. it ed..

Becchetti, L., Trovato, G., Londono, B., & David, A. (2009). Income, relational goods and happiness. *Applied Economics*, *43*(3), 273-290.

Bentham, J. (1789 [1823]). *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, London.

Beretta, S., & Maggioni, *M.* (2021). Introduction The Economy of Francesco: A Process More Than an Event. *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*, *129*(4), 343-350.

Bruni, L. (2004). *L'economia, la felicità e gli altri*. Roma, Città Nuova.

Bruni, L. (2022). *Capitalismo meridiano. Alle radici dello spirito mercantile tra religione e profitto*. Bologna, Il Mulino.

Bruni, L., & Stanca, L. (2008). Watching alone: Relational goods, television and happiness. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *65*(3-4), 50-528.

Bruni, L., & Zamagni, S. (2007). *Civil economy*. Oxford, Peter Lang.

Bulsei, G.L. (ed.). (2008). *Investire in coesione sociale: organizzazioni volontarie e politiche pubbliche*, Torino, Stampatori.

Carvalho, E., & Bicho, M. (2023). Social Entrepreneur Perceived Success by Integrating Cognitive Mapping and MCDA. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*.

Chatterjee, I., Shepherd, D. A., & Wincent, J. (2022). Women's entrepreneurship and well-being at the base of the pyramid. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *37*(4), online first.

Ciambotti, G. (2022). Businesses in transition: venturing for a better world through the light of the Economy of Francesco. *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*, 4, 397-414. DOI: 10.26350/000518_000079.

Ciambotti, G., & Pedrini, M. (2021). Hybrid harvesting strategies to overcome resource constraints: Evidence from social enterprises in Kenya. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *168*(3), 631-650.

Ciambotti, G., Zaccone, M. C., & Pedrini, M. (2022). Enabling bricolage in resource-constrained contexts: the role of sense of community and passion in African social entrepreneurs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, (ahead-of-print).

Cichos, K., Sobkowiak, J. A., Sadowski, R. F., Zbarachewicz, B., Zenderowski, R., & Dziekoński, S. (Eds.). (2021). *Sustainable Development Goals and the Catholic Church: catholic social teaching and the UN's Agenda 2030*. Routledge.

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Retrieved from: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery For Promoting Integral Human Development. (2018). *Oeconomicae et pecuniariae quaestiones*. Considerations for an ethical discernment regarding some aspects of the present economic-financial system.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20180106_oeconomicae-et-pecuniariae_en.html.

Cremers, K. J. M. (2021). When Are Market Decisions Morally Legitimate? In D. K. FINN (Ed.), *Business Ethics and Catholic Social Thought*, 203-220. Georgetown University Press.

Cremers, M. (2017). What corporate governance can learn from catholic social teaching. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *145*(4), 711-724.

Doherty, B., Haugh, H., & Lyon, F. (2014). Social enterprises as hybrid organizations: A review and research agenda. *International journal of management reviews*, *16*(4), 417-436.

Easterlin, R. A. (1974). Does economic growth improve the human lot? Some empirical evidence. In *Nations and Households in Economic Growth*, edited by David P. and Melvin W., 89–125. Palo Alto, CA., Stanford University Press.

Ebrahim, A., Battilana, J., & Mair, J. (2014). The governance of social enterprises: Mission drift and accountability challenges in hybrid organizations. *Research in organizational behavior*, *34*, 81-100.

Edmans, A. (2020). *Grow the pie: how great companies deliver both purpose and profit*. Cambridge University Press.

Ferraro, F., Etzion, D., & Gehman, J. (2015). Tackling grand challenges pragmatically: Robust action revisited. *Organization Studies*, *36*(3), 363-390.

Flammer, C., Hong, B., & Minor, D. (2019). Corporate governance and the rise of integrating corporate social responsibility criteria in executive compensation: Effectiveness and implications for firm outcomes. *Strategic Management Journal*, *40*(7), 1097–1122.

Fontrodona, J., & Sison, A. J. G. (2006). The nature of the firm, agency theory and shareholder theory: A critique from philosophical anthropology. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *66*(1), 33-42.

Gallenstein, R. A., Dougherty, J. P., & Jent, J. (2023). Achieving Inclusive Microfinance: Recommendations from Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Development Literature. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*.

Genovesi, A. (1962). *Autobiografia e lettere*. Universale Economia Feltrinelli, Milano (lAed. Milano, 1763).

George, G., Haas, M.R., McGahan, A. M., Schillebeeckx, S. J., & Tracey. P. (2021a). Purpose in the for-profit firm: A review and framework for management research. *Journal of Managemen*t. Online first.

George, G., McGahan, A. M., & Prabhu, J. (2012). Innovation for inclusive growth: Towards a theoretical framework and a research agenda. *Journal of management studies*, *49*(4), 661-683.

George, G., Merrill, R. K., & Schillebeeckx, S. J. (2021b). Digital sustainability and entrepreneurship: How digital innovations are helping tackle climate change and sustainable development. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *45*(5), 999-1027.

Gil-Barragan, J. M., López-Sánchez, M. J., & Aguilera-Castillo, A. (2023). Sustainability: The Role of Spiritual Capital, Transformational Leadership and Effectuation. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*.

Grant, A. M. (2008). Does intrinsic motivation fuel the prosocial fire? Motivational synergy in predicting persistence, performance, and productivity. *Journal of applied psychology*, *93*(1), 48.

Greenwood, R., & Scharfstein, D. S. (2012). How to make finance work. *Harvard Business Review*, 90, 104-110, https://hbr.org/2012/03/how-to-make-finance-work.

Gümüsay, A. A., Marti, E., Trittin-Ulbrich, H., & Wickert, C. (2022). How organizing matters for societal grand challenges. In *Organizing for Societal Grand Challenges*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Kay, J. (2016). O*ther People's Money*. Profile Books Limited.

Kim, A., Bansal, P., & Haugh, H. (2019). No time like the present: How a present time perspective can foster sustainable development. *Academy of Management Journal*, *62*(2), 607-634.

Lumpkin, G. T., & Bacq, S. (2019). Civic wealth creation: A new view of stakeholder engagement and societal impact. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *33*(4), 383-404.

Lumpkin, G. T., Bacq, S., & Pidduck, R. J. (2018). Where change happens: Community-level phenomena in social entrepreneurship research. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *56*(1), 24-50.

Mair, J., Wolf, M., & Seelos, C. (2016). Scaffolding: A process of transforming patterns of inequality in small-scale societies. *Academy of Management Journal*, *59*(6), 2021-2044.

Mayer, C. (2020). The Future of the Corporation and the Economics of Purpose. *Journal of Management* Studies, *58*(3), 887-901.

Morin, E. (2012). *La via. Per l'avvenire dell'umanità*, Milano, Cortina.

Nussbaum, M. (2002). *Giustizia sociale e dignità umana. Da individui a persone*, Bologna, il Mulino.

Phillips, W., Roehrich, J. K., Kapletia, D., & Alexander, E. (2022). Global value chain reconfiguration and COVID-19: Investigating the case for more resilient redistributed models of production. *California Management Review*, *64*(2), 71-96.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (2005). C*ompendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

Pope Benedict XVI. (2009). *Caritas in Veritate*. Retrieved from Caritas in veritate (June 29, 2009) | BENEDICT XVI (vatican.va).

Pope Francis. (2013). *Evangelii gaudium*. Retrieved from Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (24 November 2013) | Francis (vatican.va).

Pope Francis. (2014). A*ddress of his holiness Pope Francis to participants in the world congress of accountants*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141114_congresso-mondiale-commercialisti.html.

Pope Francis. (2015a). *Laudato Si*. Retrieved from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Pope Francis. (2015b). Meeting with authorities and the diplomatic corps. Address of his holiness Pope Francis. Apostolic journey of his holiness to Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151125_kenya-autorita.html.

Pope Francis. (2015c). Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations organization. Retrieved from: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150925_onu-visita.html.

Pope Francis. (2019). *Letter sent by the holy father for the event "Economy of Francesco"*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190501_giovani-imprenditori.html.

Pope Francis. (2020). *Fratelli Tutti***.** Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

Pope Francis. (2021). Video message of on the occasion of the second global event of "the Economy of Francesco" https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2021/documents/20211002-videomessaggio-economyoffrancesco.html.

Pope Francis. (2022). Address of his holiness Pope Francis Visit to Assisi for the event "Economy of Francesco". Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/september/documents/20220924-visita-assisi.html

Pope John Paul II. (1991). *Centesimus Annus*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html

Pope Leo XIII. (1891). *Rerum Novarum*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

Portulhak, H., & Pacheco, V. (2023). Public Value Creation by The Catholic Church in Brazil: Analysis Based on its Outputs and Outcomes. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*.

Rajan, R. G. (2011). Fault lines: How hidden fractures still threaten the world economy. *Princeton University Press*.

Rotondi, V., & Santori, P. (2023). Rethinking Economics Starting from the Commons. Towards an Economics of Francesco, *Springer Cham.*

Rotondi, V., Bruni, L., Crivelli, L., Mancuso, S., & Santori, P. (2022). In praise of the persona economica: listening to plants for a new economic paradigm. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *9*(1), 1-6.

Rozzoni, S., & Limata, P. (2022). T*he Economy of Francesco. Un glossario per riparare il linguaggio dell'economia*. Città Nuova.

Saebi, T., Foss, N. J., & Linder, S. (2019). Social entrepreneurship research: Past achievements and future promises. *Journal of Management*, *45*(1), 70-95.

Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency. *Academy of management Review*, *26*(2), 243-263.

Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. (1966). *Gaudium et Spes*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_it.html.

Shepherd, D. A., Parida, V., & Wincent, J. (2021). Entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation: the importance of health and children's education for slum entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *45*(2), 350-385.

Sison, A. J. G., & Fontrodona, J. (2012). The common good of the firm in the Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition. *Business ethics quarterly*, *22*(2), 211-246.

Sottini, A., & Ciambotti, G. (2020). Social Entrepreneurship Toward a Sustainable Peacebuilding. *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*, 1-11. Springer.

Sottini, A., Ciambotti, G., & Littlewood, D. (2022). Engaging symbiotic ecosystems to build community centred business models for the BoP: Evidence from small social enterprises in East Africa. *International Small Business Journal*, online first.

Sutter, C., Bruton, G. D., & Chen, J. (2019). Entrepreneurship as a solution to extreme poverty: A review and future research directions. *Journal of business venturing*, *34*(1), 197-214.

Theodoraki, C., Dana, L. P., & Caputo, A. (2022). Building sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems: A holistic approach. *Journal of Business Research*, *140*, 346-360.

Tondo, L. (2020, Mar 28). Pope's blessing in empty St Peter's Square watched by 11m on TV. The Guardian. Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/28/popes-blessing-in-empty-st-peters-square-watched-by-11m-on-tv

Uhlaner, C. J. (1989). Relational Goods and Participation: Incorporating Sociability into a Theory of Rational Action. *Public Choice. 62*(3): 253-285.

United Nations Development Program (2015). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Retrieved at: https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals

Viola, F. (2009). Non c'è carità senza giustizia, non c'è giustizia senza carità. In *Carità Globale, Commento alla Caritas in veritate*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma.

Yunus, M., Moingeon, B., & Lehmann-Ortega, L. (2010). Building social business models: Lessons from the Grameen experience. *Long range planning*, *43*(2-3), 308-325.

Zahra, S. A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D. O., & Shulman, J. M. (2009). A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges. *Journal of business venturing*, *24*(5), 519-532.