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**WORKING AND FORGIVENESS BEHIND BARS:
GIOTTO IN THE DUE PALAZZI PRISON OF PADUA**

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WORKING AND FORGIVENESS BEHIND BARS:
GIOTTO IN THE DUE PALAZZI PRISON OF PADUA

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Percorsi di secondo welfare is committed to enhancing the common understanding of what has recently come to be known as “second welfare”. The term refers to a mix of social protection and social investment programmes which are not funded by the State, but provided instead by a wide range of economic and social actors, linked to territories and local communities. Through the collection and evaluation of new initiatives and best practices, the Observatory seeks to promote a “virtuous nesting” between first and second welfare, that will ultimately be able to tackle the challenges posed by the emergence of new social needs, and worsened by the present financial situation. The website www.secondowelfare.it collects the most significant “second welfare” experiences at mostly national but to some extent international levels, and attempts to spread them for purposes of evaluation and, hopefully, dissemination. Our research also seeks to build a strong conceptual framework for future reference.

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rehabilitation, criminal justice, prison system, social innovation

ABSTRACT

**WORKING AND FORGIVENESS BEHIND BARS:
GIOTTO IN THE DUE PALAZZI PRISON OF PADUA**

This paper focuses on programs implemented by the social cooperative *Giotto* within Padua's maximum-security prison. Since the 1990s the cooperative has provided training and job opportunities to hundreds of inmates within the *Due Palazzi* prison facility. The first part of the paper presents the history of the cooperative, as well as the work activities that it currently manages within the prison facility—among others, an award-winning bakery and the production of sophisticated bicycle prototypes. In the second section we review the best practices developed by the cooperative in the field of the rehabilitation of offenders. This part analyzes the main features and the assumptions behind the rehabilitative model applied by *Giotto's* staff. Finally, in the third section, based on semi-structured interviews with a sample of inmates currently employed by *Giotto*, we put forward a number of hypotheses concerning the effects of *Giotto's* programs. Interviewees attribute to their involvement with *Giotto* a large number of beneficial effects, from improvements in mental and physical health to personal development. We conclude with an invitation for further data collection and both quantitative and qualitative testing, in order to carefully measure the many social benefits that result from *Giotto's* innovative activities within the *Due Palazzi* facility.

FOREWORD

by Giovanni Maria Flick

One of the common tools used to seek a solution to the problems of prisons, including the problem of work, is recourse to the principle of subsidiarity, whether vertical subsidiarity—which operates between local and supra-local levels, moving from the municipal to the provincial, the regional, the federal, and the European levels—or horizontal subsidiarity. When faced by the risk of dysfunction attendant upon vertical subsidiarity (for example, decentralization and implementation of the tasks entrusted to regional bodies), we become aware of the importance of horizontal subsidiarity, or tasks of support and solidarity performed by citizens. The final paragraph of Article 118 of the Constitution begins by discussing vertical subsidiarity and concludes with reference to horizontal. The Constituent Assembly recognizes the right and duty of individuals and social entities to carry out activities that provide for and assist in the realization of fundamental human rights.

We live in a time where corruption and mismanagement of vertical subsidiarity is growing and becoming systemic; these abuses are, unfortunately, encroaching upon horizontal subsidiarity as well. We have burned through resources and energy developing subsidiarity poorly (absurd expenditures by Italian regional governments; the proliferation of bureaucratic restrictions; the inefficiency of regional centralism which instead of being eliminated is given precedence over that of the state; and finally corrupt manipulation of cooperative institutions intended to assist the weak and defenseless, such as prisoners and migrants). As we worry about the inefficiency of the systems of vertical subsidiarity to the point of risking throwing the baby out with the bathwater, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the other side of subsidiarity, the horizontal component which attempts to overcome the dichotomy between the “public” and a “private” seen only in terms of the market.

Such is the position occupied by the Giotto Social Cooperative of Padua, subject of this project commissioned by the Fetzer Foundation. Giotto’s case bears evident exemplary characteristics: a social enterprise cooperating with the public sector, combining entrepreneurship and social benefit with significant results, highlighted by the research, in terms of individual rehabilitation, reconstruction of families, and the reintegration of prisoners into the normal fabric of our community.

It is this example that demonstrates that we are used to thinking on one hand of the “public” sphere in terms of authority, rigidity, and oft-inefficient bureaucracy; and on the other of the “private” sphere in opposition to the state defined only by the market and profit and based only on contracts and exchanges.

Perhaps we have begun to understand that we must overcome this rigid counter-position between the state with its authoritarianism and the private sector with its profit-driven mindset. However, we have not yet been able to completely understand the enormous potential benefits of the third, voluntary sector; we have limited ourselves to considering the shortcomings of public welfare, the negative effects on self-sufficiency, without grasping the positive opportunities.

What are these opportunities? Today, it seems, we all agree that there is a strong need to promote a reality which lies beyond the logic and perspective of the state, the public. We have seen first hand the difficulties that occur when the state and the public sphere is the sole guardian of fundamental rights and is responsible for their implementation. This knowledge comes from long experience; we had begun to see the state’s deep problems in dealing with fundamental rights when, as in the case of the last war and the Holocaust, we became aware of the manner in which some states dealt with fundamental civil and political rights. The principle of humanitarian intervention has been unceasingly affirmed (and often misused) as the proper response by the international community to these tragedies. But now, with the crisis of the welfare state, we are experiencing first hand the state’s corresponding difficulty managing social rights; fundamental rights (both civil and political, and those of society) are indivisible.

The state has ceded sovereignty both upwards (towards the EU) and downwards (to local authorities), and now threatens to cede sovereignty also to the market and the democracy of profit margins. Our democracy now seems increasingly restricted by a number of economic laws. Therefore, in front of the shortcomings and weaknesses of the state when protecting fundamental civil and social rights, the need to look to horizontal subsidiarity rises to the forefront. This need is also born of the fact that vertical subsidiarity has not produced good effects in our country, for a series of well-documented reasons.

However, if the 20th century’s second half demonstrated the crisis of the state in protecting fundamental civil and social rights, this new century has begun with the crisis of the market. We were deluded into thinking that the private sphere (and therefore the market) was enough to guarantee fundamental rights. It was not so.

So how can we escape being caught between a rigid and inefficient public sector and a private sector motivated solely by profit? Between the state and the market?

One possible type of solution could be found in the rediscovery of the private-social sector and of the values of solidarity and proximity, of promoting pluralism.

The world of this third sector is essential partially because of the diversity of its components, of the professionals and structures who operate it: it is a rediscovery of solidarity. The final paragraph of Article 118 of the Constitution is a clear indication of this situation. However, we run the risk of simply paying lip service to volunteerism instead of seriously considering the fundamental structures underpinning it and thereby encouraging maximum development of its opportunities and resources.

Book V of the Civil Code devotes a very detailed series of statutes to regulating the societal bonds undertaken by businesses and the market. Instead, to regulate the associations, foundations, social enterprises and all the other structures through which the voluntary structure operates, there are hardly any provisions (just under twenty) in book I of the Code.

We need to re-elaborate an authority that defines and protects this sector. We need a legal framework like the one governing Parliament that delimits possible operations; that ensures benchmarks of efficiency and effectiveness; that ensures impartiality in the third sector's delivery of services; that ensures equality while respecting and protecting the freedom and spontaneity of this sector with all its diverse manifestations.

Until now, the third sector has always been characterized overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, by the tax breaks it receives, with piecemeal regulations that gave out small financial sops now at risk of elimination by spending reviews.

I believe that we must avoid the reabsorption of this amazing world into the public sector; we must guarantee the absence of rigidity, but we must at the same time avoid its absorption into the market, using among other things the aforementioned tax breaks. There are too many situations where business is carried out under the auspices of volunteerism in order to garner tax breaks, to escape the snares and constraints of the rules governing commercial enterprises, or to exploit work.

Giotto's example instead demonstrates that things believed impossible by many can be reconciled: a real example of the third sector that represents a business structure aimed at achieving quality processes and products, and as a result of this—rather than despite it—shows that it can be a part of achieving successful social action while also collaborating with the public sector. This is possible thanks to a network of relationships in which the social enterprise contributes to putting public and private, business and the penitentiary world in dialogue.

It has been asked if, in order to address the third sector's framework, we must amend the Constitution, which only refers to horizontal subsidiarity in the fourth paragraph of Article 118. Even this reference is almost accidental, merely deline-

ating the balance of legislative power between the State and the Regions. Some would have us rewrite the provisions of the Constitution, Article 5 for example, in order to make way for the new reality of the voluntary sector.

I am becoming increasingly convinced that we must reinterpret the Constitution before attempting to amend it; we must re-read it correctly, which will require us to implement many things that have not yet been achieved. For example, the Constitutional Court has proposed three basic recommendations for the voluntary sector. The first derives from a landmark ruling handed down in 1988 (number 396, on public institutions for welfare and charity); the second, perhaps even more fundamental, recommendation comes from a ruling in 1993 (number 500) and dealt with the voluntary sector proper, highlighting the value of solidarity and its autonomy, originality and nature as a vital means of participation in society; and the third is based on two rulings in 2003 concerning the foundations of the financial sector which thwarted those who wanted to return the voluntary to the public sphere.

The implications of Article 118 are important: it favors autonomous initiatives undertaken by individuals and associations, and creating initiatives of solidarity in partnership with others. It is useful to remember also that Article 118 concerns citizens; however, the concept of the citizen is being challenged (as evidenced by the discrimination we see arising from a concept born as an expression of equality) by a reality in which the need for a level playing field for citizens and non-citizens, for migrant workers, asylum seekers and citizens alike, urges us to recognize fundamental human rights for all. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affords those rights to a person, not to a citizen.

All this points toward attributing great importance to horizontal subsidiarity, to connections, to the possibility of serious collaboration (not just as a political expediency) that can create a system through the third sector. This sector must be linked to vertical, institutional subsidiarity, but it must not be a hierarchical link with gradations of power. It is the choice, as evidenced by Giotto's case, of who is better adapted to confront problems by virtue of proximity.

In this context, we can better interpret Article 2 of the Constitution, which expresses so-called "social personalism": it is the expression of integral humanity outlined by Maritain which overrides both the liberal individualistic dimension and the collective dimension.

The voluntary sphere also helps us better understand Article 3 of the Constitution: achieving the full development of one's personality through the mechanisms of subsidiarity and solidarity. The Constitution guarantees each person the right to diversity as an expression of identity. How can we resolve the paradox, the contradiction between the principle of equality and the principle of the right to diversity? Through the equal dignity assured by solidarity, which aims to prevent

diversity from becoming a cause for inferiority and oppression; the third sector can do much to this end.

This allows us to better understand Article 27 of the Constitution in both its meanings—the goals of re-education and humaneness—in order to develop its full potential and give it the concreteness it deserves. The true security of a prison lies in an open door, a progressive educational process, and work both inside and outside of prison.

It would not be possible to approach alternatives to prison if not for a voluntary sector that often makes up for the deficiencies of vertical subsidiarity: that is, alleviating the burdens of local authorities in dealing with the concrete needs tied to creating alternative measures, by creating the necessary structures to support their implementation.

The voluntary sector, re-education, dignity and humanity in prison: voluntary work is a bridge (in both senses) between the island of prison and the society and reality that surround it. I believe that the voluntary sector is a fundamental key for reinterpreting the Constitution; for implementing it in terms of personalism, considering the person as an end and never as a means; for implementing it in terms of pluralism, considering the community—even the involuntary community, such as occurs in prison—as a way of mediating life together with solidarity and equal dignity.

Perhaps for this third way, we could attempt to overcome all that does not work in the public and private spheres: not in terms of their current nature, but by overcoming the mindset of the public-private dichotomy in order to reconcile diversity with solidarity as considerations of society.

The work of the voluntary sphere and of social enterprises for the quality of life in prison is one of their most concrete contributions and is essential in order to achieve—for the benefit of the weakest, most “diverse” and most marginalized (the inhabitants of the social wasteland that is today’s prison system)—the equal social dignity which serves as the basis for our shared lives under the Constitution. In hindsight, it is also a significant key to our security.

This research conducted on Giotto’s activities in the Padua penitentiary—the story of a concrete experience that has provided a chance for workforce integration to disadvantaged inmates—offers a key testimony of the task of social enterprise: of the ability to concretely achieve the objectives proposed by Articles 4 (on the right and obligation of all to work) and 27 (on the need for re-education and the human value of a sentence) of the Constitution; and of the possibility to obtain, even for the inmates who more than others have need of and right to it, the equal social dignity which Article 3 of the Constitution establishes as the primary objective of the Republic, and therefore of each one of us.

WORKING AND FORGIVENESS BEHIND BARS: GIOTTO IN THE DUE PALAZZI PRISON OF PADUA

1. GIOTTO IN THE DUE PALAZZI PRISON OF PADUA

Giotto is a social cooperative located in Padua, a city in the Veneto region of northern Italy. What began in the mid 1980s as a small enterprise created by a few friends from college has since offered opportunities for job placement to hundreds of vulnerable people in Italy, including alcoholics, prisoners, and those with mental and physical disabilities. The projects implemented by the Cooperative are varied, and include the provision of services such as catering, baking, landscape maintenance, cleaning, waste collection, reception, and call center operation.¹ In this paper, we will focus on one part of Giotto's activities: its work in the *Due Palazzi* maximum-security prison, where 140 of the 800 inmates are involved with the cooperative.

Section 1 will present an overview of Giotto, dealing with its history and organization, and particularly concerning its work in the Due Palazzi prison.

1.1. GIOTTO THROUGH THE YEARS

The Giotto Social Cooperative was created in 1986 by several recent graduates in Forest Sciences from the University of Padua, all friends keenly interested in the protection of the environment. The Cooperative's early activity dealt primarily with the design and maintenance of parks and gardens.

In 1990, Giotto took part in a competition organized by the Due Palazzi prison's administration to solicit proposals for the maintenance of the gardens around the prison. Their proposal envisioned offering the prisoners a chance to simultaneously work and learn a trade. The prison warden allowed them to begin their program

¹ Giotto is a social cooperative type B as regulated by Italian Act 381 (1991). As such, it integrates disadvantaged people into the labor market. According to the legal provision, the categories of disadvantaged targeted may include those with physical and mental disability, drug and alcohol addiction, developmental disorders and problems with the law.

with a gardening course. In 1998, the first “Teaching Park” was completed in the prison; the park served as a classroom for hands-on lessons in gardening.

In 2001 the Italian Parliament approves the so-called “Smuraglia Act”, which to this day provides tax reductions for companies that employ prisoners both inside corrections facilities and for external work. Just few weeks after the enactment of the Smuraglia Law, Giotto transformed an abandoned warehouse into an artisanal workshop for the production of paper-mache mannequins according to a traditional Tuscan technique. The workshop continued to employ inmates until 2008. Over the next few years the Cooperative was able to progressively expand its activities within Due Palazzi.

In 2004, Giotto was entrusted by the Department of Corrections with the management of the Due Palazzi prison’s food supply by operating the internal dining service, expanding a similar project the Cooperative had initiated the previous year in Rome. This was part of an experimental strategy implemented by the DOC on a national scale: ten prison facilities in the country delegated their dining services to non-profit organizations. As a part of the same project, Giotto—together with *Work Crossing*, another social cooperative—also opened a bakery inside the Due Palazzi, employing inmates from within the facility. This program, which saw the inmates hand-producing the Italian delicacy *panettone* and other baked goods, had a significant social impact and attracted a great deal of Italian and international publicity: the products annually take home some of the most prestigious awards in the culinary world.

Only a year later, Giotto opened a call center within the Due Palazzi prison, with the goal of providing a positive experience of professional growth for the inmates. The call center allowed Giotto to further diversify its activities and also to undertake new enterprises by facilitating the recruitment of new staff. The year 2005, in fact, also saw the opening of the Roncato luggage factory and the Morellato jewelry workshop, the latter of which operated until 2011. All these programs were officially inaugurated on November 7, 2005. This date represented the Cooperative’s first opportunity to show the public the work being done at Due Palazzi. Giotto’s activity within the prison facility was again enlarged in 2009 when, in collaboration with Infocert, a laboratory was created to produce and program smart cards and digitalize documents; meanwhile, a bicycle workshop was opened. The variety of options for workers was thus gradually increased in order to provide more adequate professional opportunities for a diverse group of prisoners.

Table 1 – Number of Giotto’s employees from Due Palazzi for each year, from 2001 to present

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
4	10	8	39	75	97	106	106	122	138	112	158	143	175

The development summarized above took place in a favorable regulatory context. The Smuraglia Act has already been mentioned; other provisions helped to ensure the place of social cooperatives like Giotto in the national economy at the same time that the government was pressured to take greater interest in creating work opportunities for prisoners.

Social cooperatives obtained legal status in 1991 with the passage of the Law on Social Cooperation (n. 381). Describing social cooperatives as a “new sector of the Italian cooperative system,” the new law included, as an objective, ensuring that social cooperatives enhance communities and promote human development through the hiring of disadvantaged persons and providing social services. At that time, Giotto took advantage of this legal reform and expanded its scope of action: it began to operate in areas such as cleaning, security, car parks, management, and waste collection.

At the end of the 1990s, prison conditions had finally become a concern of the Italian Government. The country was suffering from the effects of a dramatic failure of the penitential system, plagued by high rates of recidivism, ballooning costs, and a rapid increase in the number of prisoners overcrowding inadequate facilities. The situation was unsustainable in many ways but especially in terms of violations of prisoners’ social rights. The Government was thus pressured to take a direct interest in the situation of its prison system.

Table 2 – For the past three years, the percentage of Giotto’s employees serving different kinds of sentences

	Years of conviction			
	0-10	>10/20	>20/30	Life
2012	38%	33%	13%	16%
2013	30%	35%	15%	20%
2014	28%	43%	13%	16%

The Smuraglia Act provided, through tax reductions, some of the resources necessary to fulfill the Italian constitutional dictate (art. 27) identifying re-education as the main aim of incarceration. Nonetheless, the Italian situation still is fraught with concern. Many observers have criticized the insufficient resources that have been invested to enact the provisions of the Smuraglia Act, while recognizing it as a step in the right direction. The Ministry of Justice estimated at the end of 2012 that prisons were operating at 42% over maximum capacity (resulting in 142 prisoners for every 100 allotted spots). In that year, only 3.45% of the 65,701 prisoners in the Italian penitentiary system were engaged in work.²

² This figure reflects the number of “true” jobs positing existing within the Italian Prison System. By this, we mean jobs paying a real wage, involving some form of training and of evaluation by employers. We do not believe, in fact, that the menial work activities usually available within prison facilities consti-

Giotto constitutes, then, an exceptional achievement in the Italian context: it is one of very few organizations and enterprises that have succeeded in providing employment for a sizable number of inmates. It employs prisoners still serving their sentences, and consequently allows them to acquire, maintain and increase professional skills and habits. It has seen remarkable success in achieving its goal of facilitating a process of genuine rehabilitation for the prison population of Due Palazzi.

In the following section, then, we will take a deeper look at Giotto's organization and activities inside the walls of Due Palazzi: how many people work there? What are they doing? How?

1.2. THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The Giotto Social Cooperative employs little more than 450 workers, of which about 40% can be considered “disadvantaged”;³ of these 450, at the time of this study 140 are Due Palazzi's inmates. These 140 represent nearly 16% of this prison facility's total population.

The Cafeteria, the Bakery, and Catering

The alimentary activities performed by Giotto in Due Palazzi include the preparation of breakfast, lunch, and dinner for all of the inmates, and the production of various goods for the external market, ranging from salads to various types of baked goods. The numbers of workers in each area (kitchen and bakery) are cited above; additionally, those in the bakery increase by 6 or 7 in the weeks leading up to Christmas to help produce seasonal delicacies. Prisoners' workweeks range from 24 to 36 hours, with variations depending upon diverse weekly needs.

In the prison's kitchen, Giotto's workers prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner for all the inmates, and also various food products for market sale. In the bakery, located in a different space and working independently from the kitchen, baked goods, including cookies, pastries, and various types of traditional Italian sweet cakes are produced.

This arrangement fulfills all of the conditions under which the incarcerated should work, as delineated by Italian Law 81/2008: mandatory training and developmental activities for all workers, provision of all materials and safety equipment necessary for work, and full disclosure of possible occupational risks and hazards, the last provided by accredited professionals in workplace safety. Additionally, the kitchen rigorously adheres to all applicable Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points regulations.

tute credible paths towards rehabilitation. These activities are generally discontinuous, non-paid (or only symbolically so), and offering no structured guidance to the workers.

³ Law 381 on Social Cooperation (1991): at least 30% of the workers at a social cooperative must be “disadvantaged” (see note 1) workers, and also members of the cooperative, if their condition permits it.

Giotto employs three professional chefs and three master bakers, who work alongside the inmates and two of the Cooperative's managers; these last supervise the entire culinary process. Other professionals—chefs and bakers—hold occasional professional development seminars. These workshops increase the prisoners' competency in their job, and at the same time allow them to see experts animated by passion for their work, the latter of which is considered by Giotto to be a useful stimulus in the rehabilitative process.

The quantitative output of these projects is quite impressive. The kitchen churns out 800 breakfasts, lunches, and dinners daily, while also supplying nearly 100,000 pounds of food for its catering clients annually. In 2014, the bakery produced over 295,000 pounds of baked goods, including 84,000 *panettoni* and 15,000 *colombe*, two particularly popular Italian pastries. Moreover, the bakery has consistently won acclaim for the quality of its fare, winning a number of prizes, most recently an award as the best Italian pastry shop of 2013.⁴

The Roncato Luggage Factory

Giotto's workshop to assemble parts for Roncato suitcases has operated inside Due Palazzi since 2005. All of the constituent pieces of high-quality luggage are completed within the workshop and then sent directly to Roncato's main factory, where they are then pieced together to create several distinct product lines.

The whole process is performed under rigorous quality control standards: the quality control is performed internally, with great results in terms of exceptional precision and little waste. Importantly, the method of production requires that inmates work in a highly cooperative fashion: since each has his own task that contributes to the final product, communication when resolving the inevitable manufacturing difficulties is vital and has led to a high-functioning and cohesive team in the workshop.

The Esperia Bicycle Workshop

Since 2009, Due Palazzi has been the location of a second manufacturing workshop run by Giotto, a bicycle manufacturing plant for the company Esperia. At the time of this study, almost 15 percent of Esperia's annual bicycle production—which totals 400,000 units—is assembled at Due Palazzi. The inmates in this shop produce a number of well-known and storied lines of bicycles for the company. The model being constructed changes every two or three days, and all are built with the most state-of-the-art techniques and technology. In fact, Giotto's workers even produce bicycle prototypes in the prison. European Union certification requirements are strenuously upheld, all the more because the finished cycles are sent directly to vendors from Due Palazzi. Even more than in the luggage workshop, the work here requires the greatest cooperation among the inmates and rigorous quality control.

⁴The competition was organized by the *Gastronauta Davide Paolini* with the collaboration of *Le Sinfonie di Agugiaro & Figna Molini*. 300 pastry shops around the country were included in a survey in which 27,000 voters took part. 4,478 of them voted for "Pasticceria Giotto".

“Business Key” and Digitalization

Infocert is a company specialized in creating and developing systems to digitalize document processes. These systems include document management, electronic storage, certified email, Enterprise Content Management, and digital signatures. Their work in this last area has resulted in the “Business Key,” a USB key that permits users to sign documents digitally and securely stores their personal data, all without requiring the installation of any software.

Giotto’s workers have been assembling these “Business Keys” in a Due Palazzi workshop since 2009, adapting them to the needs of individual clients. The modifications made in the workshop range from loading various software into the drives to personalizing the external design of the “keys” themselves. These “keys” make their way to the offices of chambers of commerce, professional associations, and prominent national organizations.

Giotto’s collaboration with Infocert also entails employing prisoners in the service of digitalizing paper documents. This work is carried out with the help of the most advanced technology available and results in accurate high-speed processing of any type of paper document.

The Call Centers

Working part-time, 54 inmates provide private call center services, both inbound (toll-free numbers and customer service) and outbound (customer satisfaction, telemarketing and telesales). One of their largest clients has been the electrical provider Illumia, for whom they not only provide welcome calls but also verify new contracts, check documentation, and address shortcomings of these first two (the “back office” service). Other clients past and present include the internet provider Fastweb, which routed its customer service traffic through the Due Palazzi call center, and the Padua Hospital, for which inmates now schedule medical appointments made throughout the institution.

For Illumia alone, call center workers made 4,000 welcome calls and processed 4,000 contracts per month in 2012, using software and training provided by the company. In 2014, Giotto’s call center averaged about 20,000 calls per month for the company.

The work of the inmates is often complex: technological competency is a requirement to operate the software, and particular clients’ needs may necessitate further expertise—for example, when serving patients at the hospital, inmates often need to bring their physiological knowledge into play to direct callers to the appropriate division. The call center is open for 10 hours daily.

These tasks necessitate serious and deliberate personal and professional formation, particularly as the inmates are required to reach outside prison walls and interact with extra-institutional clients directly. They must therefore demonstrate great flexibility, and to this end both they and the non-incarcerated working with them undergo special training in order to ensure successful operation of the call center. The accolades the call center receives from its clients show the importance of this work in helping prisoners develop their professional skills, workplace

acumen, and awareness. Illumia’s president Francesco Bernardi praised their performance, recognizing that welcome calls requires “a particular sensibility,” and that Giotto’s workers had provided a “positive experience” to all the clients of his company.

Table 3 – Number of workers and supervisors assigned to different activities at the time of this study

	Workers	Supervisors
Kitchen	19	3
Bakery	23	4
Call center	54	4
Luggage workshop	10	1
Bicycle workshop	19	2
USB key production	3	1

■ From an organization-wide standpoint, Giotto’s work with the inmates of Due Palazzi plays out on two broad fronts. Giotto’s role inside prison walls goes beyond simply providing jobs for some of the inmates. As mentioned above, the Cooperative has taken over some daily functions of the prison, most notably cafeteria service; additionally, it has assumed responsibility for the upkeep of the facilities and equipment needed for each of its projects.

Many of Giotto activities involve the commercialization of products for the external market: the guiding principle here is that all the products and services described above must be competitive on the market. Underlying this goal is the belief that work is beneficial not just to occupy the inmates. Instead, Giotto’s staff insists that the fact of producing valuable goods or services has an important role in rehabilitating the inmates. For them, the work done behind bars must equal or better than that done by outside enterprises.

In short, Giotto is a business capable of reconciling the objectives of economic growth, social equity in employment, and care for the person, satisfying both the requirements for producing marketable goods and services and the need of those normally excluded from the labor market for employment.

We have reported Giotto’s history as well as its present activities inside the Due Palazzi. In the Section 2 we will analyze how the Cooperative manages its personnel in the prison facility and hear from Giotto’s staff about best practices for the rehabilitation of inmates.

2. PRACTICES OF REHABILITATION

2.1. THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK AT DUE PALAZZI

Prisoners in Due Palazzi become candidates for employment with Giotto through two primary routes. Many interested inmates submit a written application for employment directly to the Cooperative, while a lesser number are invited to work by the prison's correctional officers and other DOC staff, generally on the grounds that employment would be beneficial for these individuals. All of these candidates come under consideration by Giotto's Social Office, which employs three psychologists to oversee the selection process.⁵

This process begins with an evaluation of whether the applicant fulfills the formal requirements to qualify for work, which includes an inquiry as to whether the prison's administration has any grounds to object to the application. Upon successful completion of this stage, the psychologists arrange individual meetings with each candidate, at which they attempt to answer the following questions: is the inmate a good fit for the Cooperative? Does he have the qualities to become a worker for Giotto, or does it seem, at least, that he could acquire them with time? Are the goals that he is setting for himself compatible with Giotto's way of working and ideals? These interviews typically last about forty-five minutes and are conducted in the sections where inmates' cells are located. Giotto's psychologists collect essential biographical data [see Appendix, # 1], and form a preliminary judgment concerning the suitability of the candidate for employment. Those who show the potential and the motivation to become part of the Cooperative then begin a nine-month training period.⁶

Giotto offers to those who have been selected a nine-month contract as "trainees."⁷ The training is almost entirely "on-the-job". First, inmates are assigned to their workplace, in one of the workshops described in the previous section; the Social Office seeks to place each worker in the site that most befits his abilities while giving him ample opportunity for personal and professional development. The trainee begins to work alongside a "mentor", who is usually an external employee. Giotto calls these mentors "from outside" shop masters (*maestri di bottega*): they are professionals with significant experience and specialized skills, and act as supervisors and teachers to the workers from Due Palazzi.

⁵ In this section we will focus on the selection and training processes as implemented by Giotto in the Due Palazzi. It is important to remember, though, that every single phase here described is carried out in coordination with all the actors operating within the Prison institution. During our interviews, Giotto staff has been keen on pointing out the high levels of trust and cooperation they have been able to achieve with the Prison administration.

⁶ It is important to remark here that most of the candidates screened and then employed by Giotto have had little or no previous work experience; many have very low levels of formal education, or are altogether illiterate; on the top of that, many inmates struggle with mental health problems, developed prior or during incarceration.

⁷ The training process is monitored by an external organization accredited by the regional government. Prisoners' pay rates during training are set in accordance with national laws.

For the first three months of the training period each prisoner's workday generally does not exceed four hours. Giotto imposes this limit in order to provide a more gradual transition from "normal" prison life to work.

During the training period, members of Giotto's Social Office meet every fifteen days with the staff in charge of production to evaluate the performance of the new workers. The productivity of each trainee is analyzed, along with his personal well being in the workplace: is he able to manage and respond well to criticism and supervision? Has he developed a good relationship with supervisors and peers? After one month, a document that synthesizes each judgment is redacted and archived for future reference [see Appendix, # 2].

Towards the end of the third month of training, the worker meets with the Social Office staff; together, they assess successes and difficulties experienced so far. A third evaluation takes place after the sixth month. The goal of the Cooperative is to reach a final judgment on the employability of the trainee as soon as possible along the process; data provided by Giotto show that about 90% of the inmates are offered full employment at the end of the training period.⁸

After the nine-month training period, the worker is either formally hired or given another chance to acquire the requisite abilities he is lacking through a new probationary contract that prolongs, for a specified amount of time, the observation period. Those who become full employees are assigned to one of Giotto's workplaces, based on those workplaces' needs and the skills of the new worker. The Social Office continues its relationship with each worker through periodic written evaluations. The scale on which workers are evaluated is broadly divided into three categories: personal autonomy, relational autonomy, and professional autonomy [see Appendix, # 3]. The Technical Office is also constantly involved in the workplace. Its members meet weekly with the supervisors of Giotto's various activities in Due Palazzi to discuss production objectives, quality control, and supply and form goals and plans for the upcoming week.

Workplace organization differs across the different workplaces in Due Palazzi, but generally includes two main elements: "teams" and "micro-teams" tasked with different parts of the production chain. Giotto's staff believes that this system fosters team building and a sense of belonging. They insist that inmates need to come to see each other as colleagues.

Giotto's warehouses and workshops are located in two separate areas on the ground floor of the prison, and each contains a cafeteria run by the Cooperative.⁹

⁸ It is important to remark here that most of the candidates screened and then employed by Giotto have had little or no previous work experience; many have very low levels of formal education, or are altogether illiterate; on the top of that, many inmates struggle with mental health problems, developed prior or during incarceration.

⁹ In Italian prisons, the norm is for meals to be eaten in cells and not in a common room, as provided by the Cooperative for its employees.

2.2. REHABILITATION THROUGH WORK: GIOTTO'S BEST PRACTICES

To understand Giotto's practices, we have conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews with the two psychologists employed by the Cooperative. As members of the Social Office, they play an important role throughout the selection and training processes for the new employees, and supervise them for the entire duration of their employment with the Cooperative. The meaning that the staff attaches to Giotto's practices greatly illuminates the practices themselves, while clarifying many of the organizational features we have described and establishing their connection with the mission and values of the Cooperative.

First, we asked the psychologists to explain the criteria that guide them in the selection process, and to identify what qualities they look for in a potential employee. In the first interview they conduct with inmates applying for work, for instance, what questions do they ask? What characterizes those who can become successful members of the cooperative?

They explained to us that since Giotto is a company operating in the market, the staff must take productivity and work performance into consideration when screening new employees. However, when asked to discuss the hiring process, they also stressed that taking productivity into consideration is only one part of their job. In fact, both opined that the most important variable they consider is the awareness that the candidate shows of his situation as someone who has been convicted of committing a crime. They are careful to select those who are explicitly or implicitly open to using the employment the Cooperative is offering as part of a path of social and moral rehabilitation. In their experience, those who have outstanding professional qualities but do not possess this attitude of openness will rarely succeed as members of Giotto. This theme has constantly re-surfaced during the interviews: the primary mission of the Cooperative is to provide inmates with support to begin on a path of genuine rehabilitation. The staff sees the recognition of a need for personal redemption, a desire to set his life on a new path, as a fundamental requirement for employment. We explored these concepts more in-depth in the second round of interviews we conducted with the two psychologists employed by Giotto. We specifically asked them to articulate and explain in greater detail the notion of openness to rehabilitation that, according to them, constitutes the main quality Giotto seeks in potential employees. We also wanted to hear more about how, in the practice, they have learnt to identify those who are endowed with this particular quality.

One of the interviewees explained to us how she now pays special attention to the way inmates present their life history. She sees that some people tend to narrate their past as determined by a series of external influences. They talk of their life as they had no ability to choose a non-criminal path. They recount how they were continually punished or victimized, or engulfed in a negative system. Some individuals, instead, interpret their story as not being predetermined: they still see the

possibility of creating a different path. Usually these inmates speak a great deal about the future, about their family, their connections, and look at their future as a project in the making. To mention another example, one of the psychologists also reported that, when asked about the reason for their conviction, many of the inmates she meets just cite the articles of the criminal code that they were convicted under, as if that constituted a meaningful and sufficient response to that question, while others are immediately more open to engage in a reflection upon what has led them into prison. She believes that individuals from the latter group, who see their conviction as a fact that can be openly discussed, are usually people who believe that the final word on what has happened has not yet been written. They have found inside themselves the energy to be able to confront “the new”.

When discussing the hiring process, thus, Social Office’s staff emphasized the dichotomies of predetermination versus non-predetermination, inflexible planning versus adaptability, and identification with the criminal model versus desire for redemption. They are convinced that if someone identifies very strongly with what he has done—perhaps because he maintains connections with that criminal atmosphere, and he is unwilling to build new ones—it will be difficult for him to find something useful or even desirable in the environment of the Cooperative. When meeting with potential employees they attempt to determine whether each individual is open to a rehabilitation process. This awareness may not be total, but a desire for rehabilitation or personal change needs to be present at least in some measure. Throughout our conversations, the psychologists insisted on the prime importance of the rehabilitative function of work: “employment with us is not only for professional growth, but first of all for personal growth” [*semi-structured interview*, August 10, 2014]. From their first meetings with the candidates, they strive to communicate to the prisoners a sense of agency and self-empowerment; in the course of the hiring interview this is done, for instance, by making clear to them that they will be judged solely on their present attitude and behavior. “I put no weight on what they have done, but instead on their personal characteristics”, explained one Social Office worker [*semi-structured interview*, August 10, 2014]. Their goal is that inmates will perceive Giotto’s job offer as a possibility to start rebuilding a new “story” for themselves, according to a different model.

The second set of questions we asked Social Office staff regarded the training process: what do they try to teach inmates during the training? What are the challenges they face most often in dealing with and evaluating the new employees? As we have explained above, inmates who are selected by the Social Office subsequently undergo a nine-month training period. Over the course of this time, both the Social and Technical Offices closely monitor the trainees. Giotto’s staff members meet periodically to evaluate their performance and behavior on the workplace.

We asked the two psychologists from the Social Office to explain their understanding of the training: what do they expect inmates to learn in this period? How

do they assess success and failure? Both agreed that personal development is also at the center of training. In fact, they see this period as a possibility for the inmates to make a first step in the transition towards a different self-awareness. From a practical point of view, they emphasized the importance of encouraging every positive result attained by the trainee in the workplace. They believe that in order to engage in a path of genuine rehabilitation the individual needs to feel valued and trusted. The person begins to be built up by the skills that he has attained and by the awareness of specific successes that he has achieved, such as the number of bicycles he was able to assemble in one day without making a mistake, for instance. This is how someone who is in prison can start to believe again that he can make it. Many of the individuals who work with Giotto, in fact, are characterized by what one of our interviewees defined as a “very shattered self-image”. By this she meant the lack of a personal and professional continuum on which to base a solid self-image as worker and law-abiding citizen. Until incarceration, many of Giotto’s employees had found identity and respectability in criminal models. Giotto’s staff believes that their task, beginning during training, is to provide the employees with the tools they need in order to start on a path of self-transformation: “Work allows people to make a choice: it offers stimuli. In an environment so rich in stimuli, one can do nothing but accept them, integrate them into himself, and thus be transformed by them. Belonging to a group is the most powerful stimulus of all: in the workplace they meet friends with whom they speak about different things than what they spoke about in the cellblock. A lot is achieved by realizing that others trust you: you see that there are people who look at you and see certain things as constituting yourself, but these are not the things to which you were used to link your identity or your value. You therefore become aware that you are a person that can express himself even in a civil and communal context regulated by law. The importance of this realization can’t be overemphasized” [*semi-structured interview*, August 10, 2014].

During the training period the staff works to provide inmates with the basis of this experience. At the same time, they need to evaluate the responses that each individual gives to these stimuli and whether he is open to engage in such a path of personal change. The Social Office’s psychologists, thus, are particularly attentive to those behaviors and habits that might disclose the predisposition of the inmates in this regard. Prisoners, they explain, live according to a number of unwritten rules: there is an informal scale, for instance, that measures the severity of various crimes according to which some groups of prisoners simply do not associate with others. All of these unwritten rules tend to impede the personal transformation of those who continue to uphold them. The fact of refusing to sit next to a Giotto colleague at lunch break can be regarded as a sign that that person is still too immersed in the “prison mentality”. The goal, instead, is that each inmate sees his companion no longer as the prisoner from the sixth floor, but instead as a colleague with whom he can interact dispassionately. To be sure, our interviewees added, this is a complicated journey, but in the training period they look for signs showing that the inmate is actually motivated to engage in it.

Giotto is a social enterprise dedicated to rehabilitation and enhancing personal development. The staff regards encouraging personal transformation as its prime objective. The practices that Giotto has developed to manage its workers aim at fulfilling this main mission, while at the same time ensuring that high standards of productivity and efficiency are maintained in the workplace.

3. WORK “BEHIND BARS”: ITS EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

3.1. OVERVIEW OF THE SECTION

Giotto strives to place its workers in the circumstances most likely to allow them to embark on a path of genuine rehabilitation, a “new beginning”. Inmates are encouraged to cultivate a new self-image in opposition to the criminal model that they have built through previous life experiences. In the workplace they develop relationships with the staff and their colleagues and they meet both new peers and role models; in time, they come to see themselves as employees, individuals who work steadily for a legal wage, and find personal satisfaction and dignity in this new situation. This new self-image can constitute the basis for a successful transition back to civil society upon the conclusion of prison life.

In this section we analyze fifteen semi-structured interviews with inmates of Due Palazzi employed by Giotto. They describe the benefits that their engagement with the Cooperative has brought them; they also reflect on how employment behind bars has contributed to their personal growth and rehabilitation. Their answers allow us to proceed to a preliminary evaluation of the effects that Giotto has on the life of the inmates that it employs, as well as on their chances of successfully reintegrating into society after the end of their sentence. The interviews also suggest that Giotto’s activities in Due Palazzi might have positive externalities for the larger community of citizens as well as for the prison administration.

This section is organized as follows: after briefly discussing the data obtained from the interviews and the methods used to collect them, we present the main benefits that interviewees attribute to their engagement with Giotto. To facilitate the exposition, we have sorted these beneficial results into four categories: (a) *individual behavior & social habits*, (b) *skills & possibilities for the future*, (c) *dignity*, and (d) *personal development & self-image*. The final section of the section consists of a preliminary evaluation of Giotto’s practices: the goal is to generate some hypotheses concerning the effects of these practices, to suggest questions that should be taken on by further evaluations, and to encourage collection of more quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2. DATA & METHODS

The data consist of fifteen semi-structured interviews with Giotto's inmate employees; each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes. The following questions were asked:

1. Which values are you being taught through your work? Please give some examples.
2. What are the most important differences between normal prison life and your experience with the Cooperative?
3. What does the Cooperative offer you besides the possibility of spending the day outside of your cell?
4. What's the most important thing you've learned in the work you are doing?
5. How do you envision your future when you are released from prison?

We proceeded to a close textual analysis of the interviews, looking for patterns and paying particular attention to statements describing processes of personal change related to work. As argued above, we believe this approach provides a sound basis for future quantitative studies using randomized controls that should evaluate the results achieved by Giotto in terms of, for instance, a decrease in recidivism rates. Here we provide some hypotheses about the effects that Giotto's practices have on the re-integration of inmates into civil society, the management of the whole penitentiary, and the inmates' families.

Table 4 – The interviewees: some data

	Date of birth	Place of birth	Date of imprisonment	Length of sentence (years)	Prisoner's first incarceration?	At Giotto since:	Role at Giotto
# 1	1977	Albania	2006	10	Yes	2010	Bakery
# 2	1968	Jamaica	2005	12	Yes	2010	Kitchen
# 3	1952	Italy	2006	21	Yes	2009	Bakery
# 4	1970	Italy	2011	11	Yes	2012	Call center
# 5	1966	Italy	1998	Life	Yes	2007	Kitchen
# 6	1949	Czech Rep.	2011	11	No	2013	Call center
# 7	1965	Bosnia	2001	Life	Yes	2005	Bakery
# 8	1972	Italy	2002	24	Yes	2012	Call center
# 9	1966	Italy	1997	20	No	2012	Kitchen
# 10	1971	Italy	2005	15	Yes	2009	Call center
# 11	1981	Italy	2009	10	No	2012	Call center
#12	1958	Italy	2006	15	Yes	2009	Bicycle manuf.
# 13	1964	Italy	1995	Life	No	2012	Call center
# 14	1979	Italy	2003	17	Yes	2010	Call center
# 15	1985	China	2005	20	Yes	2007	Call center

3.3. THE BENEFITS OF WORK ACCORDING TO DUE PALAZZI'S INMATES

The inmates we interviewed attribute a plethora of diverse effects to work. We have created a simple typology in order to classify the beneficial effects of work at Giotto as the interviewees have identified them. We will illustrate each type through short quotes from our sample of interviews.

(a) Individual behavior & social habits

All respondents affirm that employment at Giotto has positively affected their daily routine in the prison facility. They cherish the possibility of spending several hours per day outside their section. That these hours are spent in a demanding activity requiring attention and involvement only increases the benefit they see. To this momentous change in the routine of prison life they attribute several consequences: first, they see important repercussion on their physical and mental health. Escaping from the boredom and inactivity of the cell block helps divert the disproportionate energy typically spent on negative thoughts and behaviors, often caused by feelings of hopelessness, which according to some interviewees results in a partial easing of the tension that typically permeates prison facilities.

Since I lived somewhat frantically in the past, I was always flying into a rage at first, but being here and having work to do with people, I'm learning to self-regulate. Before, I always wanted to lash out, either because of the environment I come from or the difficult social dynamics of the cellblock, but now thanks to this environment, to my co-workers, etc., I'm learning to reflect on things. I used to be very impulsive, but now I'm trying to be more thoughtful, hoping to succeed sometimes.

(Prisoners # 11)

Q. Can you describe how things were in prison before you started to work?

A. It was hard—I was locked in the whole day and only let out for four hours. Being in the cell wears you down. When you work, your head is free, free even in prison. You don't think about the walls, and if you think about it so many people on the outside are more imprisoned, their minds are more imprisoned than ours.

Q. Why?

A. Because the work makes it so. I start working early in the morning and finish in the evening—I take a shower, play cards with my friends, eat dinner, read a book, and the day is finished. You don't think about prison, you think about life moving forward.

(Prisoner # 2)

I used to work for Opera doing data entry. I also worked while in prison abroad, but Padua is the only place out of all the Italian prisons I've done time in where we have the possibility to not stay shut in our cells, the only place where you're not harassed by the authorities who themselves feel confined and if you're doing poorly, you have a negative effect on them. Here we have our places to work and we're the first to be calm. We go back up at six in the evening, take a shower and prepare dinner by ourselves, and then at 7:30 they lock us in and the day is over.

(Prisoner # 4)

Often, interviewees also mention how work has helped their social relationships. In the workplace they are forced to interact with prisoners from different sections: Giotto is a diverse environment, and individuals of different nationalities and ethnic communities have to collaborate in order to carry out assignments at work. Inmates need to cope with hostile feelings they might have towards certain of their peers; many claim to have become more open to developing relationships as a consequence of their experience at Giotto. They practice interpersonal skills and learn how to deal with colleagues by building professional relationships and all of this growth enables them to build a healthy community with one another.

Q. What is the most important thing that you have learned or are learning?

A. I can't say that there is one thing I am learning. I'm rediscovering what it means to live with other people.

(Prisoner # 3)

Q. In your opinion, why is life in the section so different from the workplace?

A. The atmosphere is different. Here we are employees of a Cooperative, everyone has their own task, and we try to help one another. The atmosphere changes everything.

(Prisoner # 5)

(b) Skills & possibilities for the future

Almost all interviewees indicate that the acquisition of professional skills is an important consequence of their employment at Giotto. The vast majority of inmates are engaged in a profession that they have never practiced before. Moreover, Giotto's commitment to excellence and the presence of experienced tutors in the various workshops mean that inmates can keep acquiring new skills for a long time after entering the Cooperative. Many also mention the development of so-called "soft skills" through their employment within Due Palazzi. We have already mentioned that the Cooperative's workers are challenged to be open to peers that they would not otherwise associate with; in the workplace they also learn to deal with supervisors, to take direction and criticism in a positive and constructive way, to work as a team and to be responsible for the tasks assigned. The acquisitions of both hard and soft skills help them to look to the future with greater confidence.

When I arrived here, I had already done nine years. I worked in other prisons too, but for the administration, and you're taught by another, older inmate. Here, instead, we're in contact with "civilians" and professionals; this is important. It's a different approach: they're teaching you a profession that you can then carry with you your whole life.

(Prisoner # 4)

Q. Have you learned or are you learning the importance of any values through your work?

A. Respect for hierarchy, respect of schedules, obligations, having to interact with others. Respecting a certain organizational structure. This experience of employment has also allowed me to relate to someone above me.

(Prisoner # 10)

(c) *Dignity*

Most interviewees report feelings of self-worth, self-respect, and a sense of self-efficacy as a consequence of their association with Giotto. These feelings are in marked contrast to the feelings of humiliation, contempt, and debasement that they otherwise attribute to imprisonment. Almost all the respondents mentioned at least once during the conversation that at Giotto they work on products of great quality and sophistication. Giotto, by creating a context in which they are recognized as persons with a contribution to make, enable them to feel appreciated for their abilities and respected.

Q. What new things did you discover upon joining or while working for the Cooperative?

A. I discovered activities that I didn't think were interesting, because I thought of call centers as pointless busywork, but instead I get a lot of satisfaction from it, and I didn't think, I didn't think that you could grow professionally by managing a call center. Every day, I have to interact with the manager of the Padua CUP (*Centro Unico di Prenotazione*, a service for booking appointments), with the manager of the Mestre CUP, I have to report to Bologna. Everything is linked to this activity. I didn't think that this world of call centers could be this interesting, it's not just a "good day", and a "thank you", you have to create the call list; we also call our clients for each activity. And every day I have to send daily reports to each of our clients. The operators are monitored—everything is monitored. If someone takes a break for 16 minutes when break time is 15 minutes, I tell him, because otherwise I'll be called on it. This morning we solved a general problem CUP and we had. We're logging 200 hours of work a week. It's a lot.

(Prisoner # 10)

Q. What new things did you discover upon joining or while working for the Cooperative?

A. At first in prison I worked in housekeeping, where no one supervised you, it wasn't real work.

Q. Why real?

A. They tell you to clean but not to do it well.

Q. According to you, is it important for work to have that characteristic?

A. You absolutely have to do it well, and working with the Cooperative, being employed just like on the outside, for one like me who's doing as much as ten years, when you get out you already know how to get control of things, whereas otherwise you would feel like you were on a different planet.

(Prisoner # 7)

Many interviewees put special emphasis on the financial autonomy that they have been able to acquire thanks to employment. For some this means being able to

lead a more autonomous existence in the cellblock. However, by far the most important consequence of receiving a regular paycheck is prisoners' ability to help their families outside the walls of Due Palazzi. Their employment at Giotto, they affirm, has radically improved their relationship with their loved ones: they all take pride in the fact that they are able to provide for them and no longer have to ask for necessities such as legal fees. They feel that they can fulfill their roles as fathers and husbands, resulting in a marked increase in self-respect. Relationships with their families are consequently ameliorated.

Q. What has changed in you since you started to work?

A. I have regained my dignity because even in an economic sense, I used to have other people support me since living in prison has a cost. Even if they don't need it at home, it's a beautiful thing to be able to send home 500, 600, or 1,000 euros a month. Even if they don't want it. I've regained my dignity. And now I've hired an attorney for a pre-determined period, I don't need to ask home for this but I pay for it myself.

(Prisoner # 10)

Initially, I was humiliated having to ask for or even just receive money from my family, but afterwards came the pride of being able to contribute to the family budget. I save a little bit, because when I get out and don't want to ask anyone for anything, if I have a few euros I know how to survive, but if I don't have anything I'm destitute and a future prisoner for life. You also need a lot of willpower, because when you get out there are two paths, and you know that one leads back to prison to give you the life you're living now, and the other brings you somewhere else. I say it like this because I have family nearby, but others don't, and what do they do? I also have to give credit to my family, my nieces and nephews, my sister, and my in-laws who have stayed with me for 16 years, and I can't tell them that now I'm getting out and going to make a mess of my life again, they'll tell me "But what did we stay with you for?"

(Prisoner # 5)

(d) Personal development and self-image

Some of the prisoners we interviewed interpret their experience at Giotto as the beginning of an important path of personal development. Six of our interviewees (prisoners # 1, 2, 5, 9, 11, 15) explicitly affirmed that working at Giotto led them to adopt a new spectrum of moral possibilities. This means not only new values according to which they intend to orient their future life; it also involves beginning to change their conception or image of themselves, both as an individual and in relation with others. This personal transformation inevitably has profound repercussions on how prisoners interpret their role in the community of citizens. Those who say they are following such a path do not downplay all the benefits derived from employment in prison that we have summarized thus far. However, they often spend more time describing the symbolic meaning that participating in work has for them. It can be said that they regard the material and emotional benefits that they receive from the employment at Giotto as instrumental for the achievement of further goals. At the workplace these men have built new meaningful relationships, and they have found the recognition they needed to grow a percep-

tion of themselves as workers, earning a legal wage. Their paycheck, thus, attains a symbolic as well as a material value. Some emphasize that the money they are receiving now is “clean”, or the fact that they are now paying taxes and this makes them proud to be productive members of the community. Most importantly, they can now be role models for their children, and transmit positive values to them.

Q. What does the Cooperative offer you besides the possibility of spending the day outside of your cell?

A. I leave my cell at 8:30 a.m. and until 6:30 in the evening I am not a prisoner, but an employee of the Cooperative and I interact with them as an employee. While in prison, you're not a person anymore, but an identification number and they treat you accordingly; you feel like an object. When I come [to the workshop], I'm an employee of Giotto and I'm treated accordingly—I might even have all of the privileges of their outside employees. For us, this is a very beautiful thing. When I arrive in the morning, I put on my shoes and I'm an employee. We do good work, I never expected to work in an office, I'd never done it before. These seem like little things, but for a prisoner it means a lot ... I have prison manners, but Giotto looks past the prisoner and their crimes, they believed in me ... I have to do this for my kids, to prove myself. Those who have met me have seen that there's a person behind my crime.

Q. What's the most important thing that Giotto gives you?

A. First off, very sincerely, work in prison means so much because each month I can send money home—I have a wife and three children. I'm 32 and got married early. I've been in prison ten years and initially my family had to work on my behalf, but now sending this money earned honestly, and telling my children that their father earned this money honestly, it's different. On the outside I never earned a paycheck, now I feel... I wouldn't say fulfilled, but that I have been given hope for the future.

(Prisoner # 11)

Q. Has any part of your self-image changed since you were incarcerated?

A. Before being arrested, I was irresponsible towards myself and especially towards others. Whenever someone said something to me to try to help me, I got angry and lashed out at whoever it was, even though I didn't lay hands on them. I realized that when they arrested me, prison became my salvation for many reasons. I haven't caused damage to anyone else, though when I was outside with my mindset, I drank a lot, did stupid things, lived a fast life, clubs, and I would get drunk, get behind the wheel, and drive around.

Q. Why?

A. Because I had money—not money earned by my own sweat, but easy money, dirty money that I'm ashamed to talk about still. The past is past, and I can't forget that but at the same time I can't dwell on it because my life has done an about-face.

(Prisoner # 1)

3.4. CONCLUSIONS: SOME HYPOTHESES ON GIOTTO'S EFFECTS

The interviews we have conducted show that the activities that Giotto performs within the walls of Due Palazzi affect the lives of the inmates in many ways. They

also suggest that the work of the Cooperative results in benefits for inmates, prison administration, and society as a whole. It can be argued that at least some of these results directly reduce the social costs of incarceration, and translate into economic advantages for the Italian state. Further analyses are needed to measure systematically the effects of Giotto's activities, and consequently quantify the costs and benefits of its work. The present report can orient future data collections: it has identified several important areas in which it can be expected Giotto's activities yield results that are socially meaningful.

Inmates declare that the engagement with the Cooperative has improved their routine within the prison facility; it also teaches them professional skills, facilitates solid relationships with family, and provides them with some of the material and intellectual resources necessary to successfully re-integrate into civil society upon release. The interviews also showed that for several prisoners—about a half of our sample—Giotto also represents the beginning of a process of radical personal transformation: some of Giotto's employees declare they have turned their back on the negative self-images that accompanied them during their criminal years, in order to re-orient themselves to a new system of values, and that they could not have done that without the supportive environment they found at the Cooperative.

From these statements, the interviews we have conducted with the staff and our personal observations at Due Palazzi, plus the research on the history and activities of Giotto, several hypotheses can be inferred concerning the benefits of Giotto's work.

First, it can be argued that Giotto—which employs about 20% of Due Palazzi's inmates—eases the job of the prison administration. All our interviewees declare that employment has had beneficial effects on their mental and physical health; they also affirm that it has encouraged them to cultivate positive social relationships with peers and that it defuses some of the tensions that otherwise pervade prison life. All this means that the prison administration can save on medical and disciplinary costs. Some of our interviewees explicitly connected unruly behavior with the stress and tension that derive from spending the entire day idly in the cellblock. Work, therefore, eases correctional officers' task of maintaining order within the facility.

Secondly, we should expect Giotto to have important effects on recidivism rates among its employees. All our interviewees declare that they feel more confident about their chances of successfully re-integrating into civil society upon release thanks to their experience with the Cooperative. Some mention the fact they have learned a profession that will allow them to find a job outside, others that they intend to conduct their life according to new values discovered in the workplace. Giotto provides its employees with both material and moral tools so that they can turn their back on criminal life once they have fulfilled their sentence. The fact that they are in constant contact with “civilians from outside”—a fact often

mentioned by interviewees—means their transition to civil society will be generally smoother and less traumatic from a psychological and emotional point of view. Given the economic cost of incarceration—each inmate costs more than 3,000 euros a month to the DOC, according to data from that department—any decrease in recidivism rate represents significant benefits for the Italian state’s budget.

Finally, interviewees unanimously declare that among the most important advantages of employment “behind bars” is the possibility of helping their families financially. Some also mention the fact that thanks to their job at Giotto they can now be positive role models for their children. The material costs of housing an inmate is only one of many factors contributing to the true social cost of incarceration; another is the repercussions that a prison sentence has on the inmate’s family. Relatives often face both material deprivation and emotional and psychological disruption. It is easy to imagine that the state will have to bear the many direct and indirect costs of this situation, in the short as well as in the long run. Employment at Giotto obviously cannot entirely solve the issue of the strain that families experience because of incarceration of one of the parents, with all its negative consequences. However, it surely reduces the impact of at least some of them: the interviews show in fact that inmates are able to maintain more solid relationships with their loved ones because of their engagement with Giotto. Once again, it can be argued that this translates into another positive externality and more savings for the state; perhaps more importantly, it would result in a less fractured and more loving society where families impacted by incarceration experience less alienation and are better able to maintain their place in their communities.

All these benefits would need to be rigorously tested by further studies. To begin with, the effects of Giotto’s practices on inmates should be quantified. This can be done by comparing individuals who have worked for a number of years in the Cooperative at Due Palazzi with inmates who remained unemployed during their imprisonment but who are otherwise similar to the first along relevant dimensions including age, criminal past, socio-economic condition, and psychological profile at the moment of incarceration. An alternative strategy would compare the personal history, both during and after imprisonment, and development of individuals who have worked for Giotto, with inmates who initially qualified for employment in the Cooperative but who did not end up working there for long because of some external occurrence—for example, being transferred to a different facility. These strategies would allow us to provide solid measurements of the effects that the Cooperative has on those who engage with it during incarceration, including but not limited to recidivism rates. On these bases, an analysis of the economic impact of Giotto could be carried out, starting with the areas that we have already identified: such study could determine how much the DOC saves thanks to the attenuation of unruly behavior among inmates working for Giotto; alternatively, we could measure the positive externalities of “employment behind bars” on different areas of the state’s budget, such as the education system or welfare, often having to deal with the consequences of incarceration on prisoners’ families.

We have concluded our analysis of Giotto's activities in the Due Palazzi by listening to what the inmates have to say on the Cooperative, and more particularly on the benefits of employment within a prison facility. Our interviewees largely confirm the importance of the practices described in the previous chapter. In many ways, their words represent a formidable endorsement of the power of love and forgiveness behind bars.

APPENDIX

Attachment # 1. *First Interview Form: filled out during first meeting with candidates for employment*

Interview Form

	Date _____
Last name:	Cell block: Side:
First name:	ID Number: Cell:
Date of birth:	Cellmate:
Place of birth:	Capability to switch: Floors:
Nationality:	
Level of Italian comprehension:	
Transfers and relocations:	
City:	
Address:	
Contact phone:	
Marital status:	
Driver's license:	
Level of education:	
Citizenship/residency status:	
Social assistant:	
Dept. of Corrections Office:	
Judge:	
Interview request date:	
Type of request:	

Work experience:		
Time:		
	Company	Position or competency
Courses attended in prison:		
Work experience inside prison:		
Work preference:		
Category of crime sentenced for:		
Years incarcerated:		
Release date:		
Privileges enjoyed:		
Expelled:	YES	NO
Prison disciplinary proceedings:	YES	NO
Family situation: (marital status, children, immediate family, other relatives; type, frequency, and quality of communication with relatives):		
Hobbies:		
<i>Attached: Documents, permission to work, degrees and certifications, Prison Educator Report, Dept. of Corrections Case Worker, text of interview</i>		

Additional:			
Law 196/03 Authorization			
<i>Having been properly informed in accordance with Law 196/03, with my signature below I hereby freely consent to the use and transmission of the personal data listed above and authorize the Cooperative to request from all relevant institutions certifications and documents attesting to my health status.</i>			
SIGNATURE			
Observations			
<i>Employee initials</i>			

Attachment # 2. *Evaluation of the new employee after one month of training*

Employee name:

Date:

TYPE OF EVALUATION

New employee

EMPLOYMENT QUALIFICATIONS

Indicate the personal and professional qualities which render the candidate suitable for this position

POSITIONS (c.f. Job Description Forms)

What duties is the employee fulfilling a month after beginning work?

DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITION AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Describe the place of work, conditions of work, and qualities and skills necessary to discharge the position's duties

DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF POSITION (c.f. Job Description Forms)

Indicate if this position requires: 1) Single elementary operations, 2) Generic sequence of operations or 3) Complex operations

TRAINING PERIOD

Indicate the necessary time to learn to fulfill the obligations of this position

RESULTS OF THE ONE-MONTH NEW EMPLOYEE EVALUATION

After one month of employment, we attest that...

SUCCESSIVE PERIODIC EVALUATIONS

Social Office

Date:

Signature:

Attachment # 3. *Form for the periodic evaluation of employees*

EMPLOYEE NAME _____ Date _____

Place of Work _____

Initial work agreement conditions:

Referrals
Employee name
e-mail tel.

Progress Report: January-June					
Judgement	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excel- lent
Ability to manage fatigue and stress	1	2	3	4	5
Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
Contribution to company productivity	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of work performance	1	2	3	4	5
Organization and autonomy	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to understand instructions	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to maintain the pace of work	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to use relevant equipment	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of technology and methods in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to self-assess performance	1	2	3	4	5
Interactions with peers	1	2	3	4	5
Interactions with supervisors	1	2	3	4	5

Understanding and respect of workplace rules and norms	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulties connected to the workplace environment					
SUMMARY	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Social and relational skills					
Autonomy					
Professional skills					
Notes					

Progress Report: July-December					
Judgement	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Ability to manage fatigue and stress	1	2	3	4	5
Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
Contribution to company productivity	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of work performance	1	2	3	4	5
Organization and autonomy	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to understand instructions	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to maintain the pace of work	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to use relevant equipment	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of technology and methods in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to self-assess performance	1	2	3	4	5
Interactions with peers	1	2	3	4	5
Interactions with supervisors	1	2	3	4	5

Understanding and respect of workplace rules and norms	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulties connected to the workplace environment					
SUMMARY	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Social and relational skills					
Autonomy					
Professional skills					
Notes					

Social Office

Date:

Signature:

AFTERWORD

by Adolfo Ceretti

In conclusion, we would like to advance several general judgments in order to reemphasize several passages and concepts, some previously discussed, that in our view are crucial to understanding the mission embraced by Giotto.

Giotto must be credited with introducing and developing significant transformations affecting first of all those directly involved with the Cooperative's projects, but further and more generally impacting the model by which these individuals are reintroduced into the workforce. Specifically, the changes effected on an individual level manifest partly in the sphere of the self—the reflective ability and moral reasoning exhibited by the inmates employed by the Cooperative (see “The Benefits of Work According to Due Palazzi's Inmates”, above), and partly in the skills and knowledge the prisoners gain from their work. Giotto's operational model has additionally initiated a system poised to achieve interesting effects in reducing recidivism rates. We will therefore analyze some of the results of this approach in light of the questions suggested by the Fetzer Institute.

(a) On damaged lives and regaining a positive self-image

Those serving a sentence for a crime encounter on a daily basis words and actions of contempt intended to humiliate and vilify them. To these hardships are added those resulting from the constraints imposed by living in a totalitarian institution, which with its policies of dehumanization is by definition incapable of supporting prisoners in developing a genuine sense of guilt or any other attendant understanding. These small experiences of alienation from the world are interwoven with the tragic moral and material conditions present inside penitentiaries, wounding and incapacitating those who experience them. In such a context, prisoners are impeded from developing a positive self-image, from being able to reference a concrete ideal of a constructive life, from experiencing self-actualization, and from perceiving themselves as individuals prized for their specific qualities and abilities.

Giotto's activity represents a small revolution, whereby social and professional contexts are created for every prisoner to find their value, their own way of life,

their own dignity and thereby be honored, valued and respected. They can be rediscovered as persons capable of making a contribution.

(b) Undoing the perception of living a fragile and isolated life

The analysis of the interviews has convinced the author that the prisoners create rich personal and professional relationships with the Cooperative's administrators, allowing for personal journeys that transcend Giotto's explicit objectives.

From the prisoners' statements and from what we know directly of penitentiary life, a tragic fear of being left to face the risks associated with leading fragile and isolated lives is a daily experience. This is true all the more so in Italian prisons, where to this day more than 80% of inmates serve their sentence confined to a few square meters, unable to work or undertake other activity. From this context many prisoners begin to feel that isolation, fragility and vulnerability can only be alleviated by returning to committing crimes.

As previously detailed, Giotto's primary task is to build its employees into a tight-knit network of trusting relationships, a network that can stop the vicious cycle that condemns prisoners to indifference and distrust, but also hatred and violence, all of which are too common in the lives of those who commit crimes.

Those who engage with Giotto are helped to reflect on the fear born from vulnerability, and to open up to new emotional ties, new links of reciprocity, and new types of social relationships. All this stems from the inmates being considered and treated as "on the same level" as all others, which, since prisoners and other citizens all share the status of human beings, allows them to feel respected.

(c) Equality, respect and individual skills

Therefore, *equality* is the central principle behind Giotto's mission. Equality, practiced on a day-to-day basis, is able to generate respect. Giotto's idea of equality prizes the respect owed to all humans regardless of their particular characteristics, of their actions, of the gifts they have, or of the esteem they enjoy.

Imprisoned individuals with criminal personal histories shall come into conflict again with the law and the institutions of authority, unless they can encounter persons able to find and nurture both respect for themselves and others and specific skills and abilities at work. These two effects are, in fact, inseparable.

My research in the field has convinced me that to give those sentenced to imprisonment some hope for a non-criminal future, the psychological understanding of gifts and gratitude must be nurtured. At Giotto, this is manifested in the possibility

of learning and developing individual skills and social abilities; that is, “skills” unknown by many to this point: performing an assignment, a job, and a profession. On the effectiveness with which this objective is achieved this report has already said much, and we will not repeat what has been written above.

(d) Self-forgiveness by the force of an example

The premise under consideration is that every single person can *change*, turning their back on the negative self-images that accompanied them during their criminal years, in order to re-orient themselves to a new system of values, performing introspective evaluations and acquiring previously unfamiliar skills and abilities.

In the prison context and outside, facing the darkest sides of one’s life and understanding that there are other ways out than returning to crime requires that one be accompanied to interpret one’s own turning points, the most painful and private biographical experiences. These are moments that concern one’s past, one’s present and one’s future. The support given in these circumstances must be able to create new, non-criminal values that can be assimilated during the process of rehabilitation. Essentially, the task is to begin a new chapter in one’s life.

This is the task that Giotto has knowingly taken on along with that of employer: accompanying the prisoners in defining their personal journey between the “here and now” (their image of being a prisoner convicted of a crime) and the “where in however many years”, a future still poorly defined but clearly in their sights (being a person able to respect himself, others and the rules of civil society).

This journey, for all the difficulty it presents, represents a unique opportunity for those undertaking it: beginning to progressively (re)build self-image, both personal and public, as a member of a social cooperative. Additionally, this is the path by which the inmates involved in the project can encounter the idea of self-forgiveness.

If forgiveness is to be understood, essentially, as a virtue of the individual, it must be added that it is also intended to act as part of a universal morality intended to break the cycle of violence and restore reciprocity with those who committed criminal acts. The author is convinced, however, that forgiveness is not a “magic word” that, once uttered forever, transforms the relationship between pardoners and pardoned. Instead, forgiveness represents an end to silence, a liberation of memory allowing for the recognition of a path that was until that point too painful to mention.

Therefore, to forgive oneself and the evil that one has done it is necessary to reflect, to question oneself, carrying out an internal conversation. This is the only

way to be able to admit an error and subsequently tell oneself “I can begin again.” It is impossible to do this in the isolation of one’s cell.

Giotto, through providing the force of an example and spaces for listening and processing the existential problems of prisoners, demonstrates the feasibility of this journey.

(e) Lowering recidivism and the costs of justice and welfare

If it is credible but premature to state that Giotto’s policies lower the recidivism rate of its employees (see Section 3), it is not rash at all to think that the Cooperative’s results could emulate those obtained by similar social enterprises from around the world—provided that adequate financial support for Giotto’s projects can be maintained. One such similar social enterprise is *El Sistema*, created and built in Venezuela by Maestro José Antonio Abreu and since replicated in many other countries.

El Sistema’s origins reach back a few decades to a garage in Candelaria, one of the most impoverished neighborhoods of Caracas, in 1975. Maestro Abreu gave instruments to eleven children and began to teach them music. Eventually, the relationships born in that garage gave birth to the National Network of Youth and Children’s Orchestras of Venezuela, better known as *El Sistema*.

Abreu’s intuition was to deal with the problem of urban suffering and crime not by using a system of charity and assistance, but instead by providing people with skills, as Giotto has done and is doing. The Maestro quickly identified the orchestra as a microcosm of an ideal society, a perfect place to offer equality of opportunities, and a road to existential redemption for the most impoverished and miserable neighborhoods. Today, thanks to his system, teenagers addicted to crack cocaine, child prostitutes and youth affiliated with dangerous street gangs are being tasked with studying and playing Beethoven’s symphonies.

El Sistema works with more than 350,000 youth in Venezuela alone; nearly 90 percent of these come from poor or marginalized families. It works through music, because music can be an instrument to facilitate the social integration of various groups of Venezuela’s population. One hundred and twenty orchestras for youth, nearly a hundred for children between four and six years, and a vast number of choirs comprise *El Sistema*’s reach today.

The Inter-American Development Bank, a financial backer of the project, describes it as a program that serves “poor and vulnerable communities” and that is “committed to reducing poverty rates and allowing an ever greater number of young people to rise above marginalization.” *El Sistema* consequently augments the earning potential of youth due to their acquired musical talents—gains that

otherwise would not exist. The Bank believes that benefits are both individual, to be found in the “psychological development of youth”, and social, consisting of reduction in dropout rates and juvenile violence, thereby lowering crime rates in affected communities.* According to the results of an analysis of the Bank’s Research Department, these social benefits have accrued at the rate of \$1.68 for each dollar invested.**

Abreu’s organization has therefore helped alleviate an entrenched problem, achieving a reduction in crime by giving the ability for development of individual skills, transforming relationships and building the foundation for happy lives with children. We believe that the strength of Giotto’s organizational structure and planning skills, while applied to a different social vision, enable them to achieve equally lofty goals.

The model of employing prisoners, as demonstrated, allows for deep relationships between outside employees of the Cooperative and prisoners. Giotto therefore offers a concrete and attractive alternative to the repressive forms of control that, upon releasing inmates from a period of isolation, returns them bitter and withdrawn from society, reinforced in their attitude by a negative self-image. Giotto encounters those whose trajectory seems to inevitably destine them for the ranks of organized crime, to a life outside of society. However, Giotto denies this inevitability, restoring to men, women, and youth the possibility of encountering beauty in the world.

* D. Dresdoff, “IDB Approves \$8 millions for Venezuelan Youth Orchestras. Program Designed to Improve the Lives of Low-income Children”, Inter-American Development Bank, 1997, in <http://www.iadb.org/exr/PRESNA/1997/cp26397e.htm>. Cfr. also D. Hollinger, “Tocar y Luchar—To Play and to Fight. The Venezuelan System that Produced LA’s Next Great Conductor”, *California Music Educators Magazine*, 2007.

** J. Cuesta, “Music to My Ears: The (Many) Socio-Economic Benefits of Music Training Programs”, Inter-American Development Bank Research Department, 2008, in <http://www.laphil.com/sites/default/files/media/pdfs/shared/education/yola/iadb-research.pdf>.