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From the Good Factory towards a New Sustainable Post-war Social Order in Italy. The Remarkable "Utopian" Welfare Work Policies of Adriano Olivetti and His Typewriter Company in the 1950s**

Abstract

In this paper, welfare work at Olivetti, a former well-known Italian typewriter and office machines company, will be analysed. Welfare work at Olivetti had reached its peak in the 1950s. This was relatively late in comparison to other noteworthy enlightened welfare work initiatives in the industrialized West. The heyday of welfare work in Europe and the United States occurred during the period from 1880 until 1930. From World War II onwards, the extensive Olivetti welfare work programs were embedded in a deliberate and encompassing communitarian social philosophy. Adriano Olivetti's main objectives were twofold: to prevent worker alienation at the shopfloor level in his factories and to resolve political and social conflict in post-war Italy. This plan was to be carried out in a sustainable way by means of strengthening regional development. Within quite a short time span, the country underwent a rapid and intensive transformation from being a traditional agrarian society into one of the leading industrialized nations of Europe. A response will be provided to the question concerning to what extent Olivetti's experiment can be considered unique in comparison to other significant enlightened welfare work experiments that took place between 1880 and 1930. Finally, the topicality of the Olivetti experiment will be considered.

Keywords: corporate welfare work, industrial democracy, worker alienation, industrial novels, corporate social responsibility
(JEL: J53, J54, M12, M14, M54, Z13)

Introduction

Enlightened paternalistic welfare work is as old as the historical development of capitalism itself. It first received a substantial impetus in England during the industrial revolution by the end of the 18th century. Thereafter, welfare capitalism also spread rapidly across other industrializing countries, such as France, the United States and Germany. Welfare work can be defined as "anything for the comfort and

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improvement, intellectual and social, of the employees, over and above wages paid, which is not a necessity of the industry nor required by law" (Brandes, 1976, cit. in De Gier, 2016, p. 77). Welfare work usually may encompass a mixture of the following provisions: workman's housing, medical care, sickness payments, pensions, recreation and sports facilities, education, stock ownership, profit-sharing, social work, worker participation, and grievance procedures. Illustrative examples during the heyday of capitalism between 1870–1930 were Port Sunlight and Cadbury in the UK, Krupp and Siemens in Germany, the textile companies of Mulhouse and Schneider in France, and Pullman and Hershey in the US. Entrepreneurs had various reasons for introducing welfare work programs. These varied from merely economic to ethical reasons or a combination of both. For example, the bulky welfare work programs of the chocolate factories Cadbury and Hershey were strongly influenced by the Quaker background of its owners. An interesting example of company welfare work that was motivated by utopian-socialist principles was the welfare work of Godin at his stove factory in Guise, France. Jean-Baptiste Godin constructed for his workers the so-called social palace as a collective workmen's apartment building with all kinds of provisions such as a school, a theatre, a bandstand in the surrounding factory gardens and a swimming pool based on ideas of Fourier. Often, however, in many cases economic or labour-market motives were predominant (De Gier, 2016).

Although paternalistic company welfare work programs experienced serious regressions in many firms during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it was revived in specific situations and circumstances thereafter. In these cases, post-World War II corporate welfare work developed further on the basis of formerly existing welfare work programs. However, the nature of welfare work changed to some extent. For example, after the Second World War in various industrialised countries, the state took over former corporate welfare work responsibilities with respect to welfare, housing construction, education and health. On the other hand, corporate welfare work had been partly redesigned to pay more attention to new themes such as worker participation. In this context Italy, and even more in particular, the Olivetti typewriter and office machines company, formed a remarkable case in point (De Gier, 2018). Olivetti was founded by Adriano's father Camillo Olivetti in 1908. The company introduced Taylorism (scientific management-based work methods) and Fordism in the 1920s and 1930s in its factory in Ivrea near Turin, and after WWII, this was also applied to its new factory in Pozzuoli near Naples. These methods were embedded in extensive welfare work programs. From the moment that Adriano Olivetti assumed full command of the firm in 1932, industrial democracy became a major theme of welfare work in the firm until Adriano's early passing in 1960. In the years thereafter, the Olivetti Company gradually lost much of its economic and social momentum, and eventually, it lost its autonomous status in 2003, as it became part of the Telecom Italia group.

Research Question and Methodological Assumptions

In this paper, I analyse the heyday of welfare work at Olivetti between 1930–1960 under the aegis of Adriano Olivetti. Adriano, a reform-oriented engineer, and intellectual, not only introduced Taylorist and Fordist work methods, but he also established extensive welfare work programs in the company. Moreover, he actively developed both in word and writing, a related encompassing utopian social philosophy that undergirded his welfare work reforms. The question is to what extent welfare work at Olivetti has been unique in comparison with other significant enlightened welfare work experiments elsewhere before and after the Second World War? In other words, was Olivetti's welfare work between 1930 and 1960, and in particular during the 1950s, in line with previous welfare work initiatives that were carried out in other comparable enlightened industrial companies, or was it different and if so, in which way? Likewise, the question can be raised as to what extent the Olivetti experience still has relevance today or for future welfare work experiments at the company level. Are Adriano Olivetti's ideas still valid and can companies still learn from them today?

This paper is based on desk research that has made use of the existing, mainly Italian, literature that pertains to Adriano Olivetti and his company in the 1950s. It could be regarded as an attempt to synthesize this material. In addition, in September 2019, I visited the still-existing Olivetti site with factory buildings and residential areas in Ivrea, as well as the Olivetti Museum (The Olivetti industrial city has been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List) (Bonifazio & Scrivano, 2001; Peroni, 2018). As the Olivetti case will also be related to welfare work experiences elsewhere, this paper also contains some comparative elements.

First, the particular Italian economic and social context of welfare work capitalism will be examined. Subsequently, I will describe welfare work at Olivetti in further detail, as well as Adriano Olivetti's utopian ideas. In particular, the special role of supportive intellectuals will be discussed by paying attention to two popular Italian literary writers who worked for a time for the Olivetti company. Both authors wrote emblematic documentary industrial novels in which the Olivetti company and the working conditions at Olivetti were of central importance. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

The Italian Context of Welfare Work Capitalism in the 1950s

Welfare work in Italy was mainly introduced in the huge family-owned industries of the North, in the so-called industrial triangle between Turin, Genoa, and Milan during the first half of the 20th century. This occurred often in combination with the introduction of Taylorist (scientific management) and Fordist (assembly line)

work methods aimed at mass-production of consumer goods[1]. Within the wider Italian context, this region developed its own distinctive so-called "Turin Social Model". This model was based on several elements, implying a certain convergence between liberals and socialists, industrial democracy and the so-called Einaudian lesson of "bellezza della lotta" ("the beauty of struggle" (author's translation))[2]. Olivetti was not unique in the Piemonte region. Furthermore, the well-known Turin car producer Fiat introduced comparable extensive welfare work programmes, such as fair wages, workman's housing, sports activities, and holiday colonies for children. However, there was one striking difference between the two companies. Whereas Fiat with its so-called "linea Valetta" (Valletta was at that time CEO at Fiat) remained primarily a capitalist enterprise, which focused on making financial profits and as an extension that stemmed from the "passive" integration of its workers, Olivetti chose a different "utopian" communitarian approach which was mainly based on industrial democracy and active worker participation (Berta, 1978b, p. 547).

As regards the wider relevant context of welfare capitalism in Italy in the first half of the 20th century, it is important to realise that by the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, Italy was still an overwhelmingly agrarian society. In many aspects, it was also an underdeveloped country. As far as economic progress had been made, it remained restricted to the North and to such sectors as the automobile industry, electricity production and artificial fibre manufacturing. Only after WWII did the country discard its traditional economic protectionism and as a result, international trade started to bloom. In addition, Italy's participation in the Marshall Plan helped to create the so-called "Miracolo Economico" (Economic Boom) of the country by the end of the 1950s up until 1963. In this relatively short period, Italy succeeded in transforming its agrarian economy so that it soon became one of the most important competitive nations in post-war Europe. Key corporate players in this transition were not only Olivetti and Fiat, but also companies such as Eni (energy), Edison, Montecatini (synthetic fibres), and the electro domestic industry (Candy, Ignis, Zanussi) (Ginsborg, 1989, pp. 283–292). The economic boom caused a sizeable internal migration stream from the poorer agrarian South towards the wealthier industrialising North of Italy. On a large scale, former traditional agrarian workers had to transform themselves overnight into modern industrial workers. In many individual cases, this was a painful matter, causing feelings of social as well as psychological alienation (Ginsborg, 1989, pp. 283–343).

1 For more about the reception of Taylorism in Italy and other European industrialized countries in the 1920s, see Maier, 1970, pp. 27-61.

2 Giuseppe Berta, while referring to the renowned economist and the later to become (1948) President of Italy, Luigi Einaudi, he calls the presence of antagonisms and tensions as an essential driver for progress in Piemonte (Berta 1978a, p. 206).

Another relevant factor was the post-war euphoria felt by many intellectuals (writers, poets, scientists, and reformist entrepreneurs such as Adriano Olivetti) in response to the need to rehabilitate the morale of the nation after the political defeat of Mussolini's fascist regime. Once again, Turin, and in particular the renowned Turin publishing house Einaudi, became the epic centre of moral rearmament in Italy (Bonura, 1972, p. 25).

Welfare Work at Olivetti

From the onset, paternalistic welfare work had become an important issue for the Olivetti company to address. If a distinction can be made between traditional, authoritative paternalism on the one hand and modern, democratic paternalism, on the other hand, the welfare work at Olivetti definitely belongs to the latter (Ferrarottti & Gemelli 2015, loc. 226). First, the company's founder Camillo and later his son Adriano, who was born in 1901, travelled more than once to the United States to study modern American manufacturing techniques[3]. In 1925, Adriano stayed for six months in the United States and visited over one hundred factories, among which the Ford Motor Company and a number of typewriter companies. Enthusiastically, he called the workshops at Ford "un miracolo di organizzazione" (Peroni, 2018, p. 23). These techniques (Taylorist and Fordist work methods) were introduced in the firm when the company increased in size in the decades after its foundation with the intention to rationalize and boost productivity. At first sight, this may seem to be contradictory to Olivetti's welfare work philosophy, but in the 1920s and 1930s, both in the United States as well as in Europe, it was widely believed that the Americanization of production processes could significantly contribute to workers' welfare by enhancing their wages and purchasing power[4].

Adriano officially started working in his father's factory in 1924, first as an unskilled worker and then subsequently from 1932 onwards as a managing director. It was Adriano Olivetti who particularly developed Olivetti's welfare work programs in a more sophisticated way. For example, workers received above average wages, and permanent employment was guaranteed. In addition, workman's housing, sickness benefits, medical provisions, pensions, educational provisions (including a kindergarten), a number of cultural provisions (including a library, theatre, concerts, cinema, courses, book presentations, lectures) were introduced. Also, leisure and sports provisions (including a factory library) etc. became part of Olivetti's welfare work[5]. Likewise, the company received the unique and active support of quite a number of renowned architects, social scientists, novelists, and artists, for example, the writers Paolo Volponi, Ottiero Ottieri and the poet Leonardo Sinisgalli. This all

3 See for his biography Ochetto 2015, and Maffioletti 2016.

4 See for an example Hughes 1989, pp. 184-294.

5 An ambitious circular dance hall, was designed by Figini and Pollini, but the plans never materialized (Bonifazio & Scrivano 2001, p. 25).

proved to serve as an indispensable component in carrying out Adriano Olivetti's welfare work policies. Two other social scientists worth mentioning in this respect are Franco Ferrarotti (a renowned Italian sociologist and at the time temporary personal counsellor of Adriano Olivetti[6]), who published several books and articles on Olivetti and his ideas (Ferrarotti, 2015; 2016) and the authoritative journalist Bruno Segre (Segre, 2015). Finally, a number of famous designers such as Carlo Scarpa and Ettore Sottsass also belonged to Adriano's extensive supportive network. Their primary role in regard to supporting the company was the contribution they made to constructing a "workers aristocracy" and a "class of managers" who were able "to develop through their quality of work" (author's translation of the Italian) (Peroni, 2018, p. 123).

One of Adriano Olivetti's main goals in regard to welfare work was to humanise the quality of work and the work conditions with the intention of preventing worker alienation. His final objective reached much farther. In the end, it was his intention to realize a state of "autonomia aziendale", which is a socialized autonomous enterprise, equally owned by both the management and the workers.

When seen from the viewpoint of corporate power, Adriano Olivetti could be considered as an idealistic "missionary" who aimed to create a configuration "in which mission and goal coincide. Decisions and actions were thus motivated above all by a desire to further the organization's mission – to preserve it, extend it, or perfect it" (Mintzberg, 1983, pp. 369–370). All of the organizational workers, including the company management, had to share the Olivetti-ideology regarding a socialised enterprise. At Olivetti, this ideology was mixed with bureaucratic control mechanisms inherent to the rationalization of the production process (scientific management and the assembly line). Another crucial element adhering to the Olivetti-ideology was the concept concerning "worker participatory democracy", which was introduced to the company in the form of works councils (see also Mintzberg,1983, table 27–1, p. 546).

With respect to understanding and combatting worker alienation, Adriano felt akin to the ideas propagated by the renowned French sociologist and philosopher Simone Weil. All in all, in close collaboration with intellectuals, Olivetti's greatest preoccupation was to prevent worker alienation by means of transforming the factory into human space and an inspiring working community (Diazzi & Tarabochia, 2019, p. 8).

Mastering worker alienation and creating an "autonomia aziendale" were not his only objectives. Inspired by the ideas of the French personalist philosophers Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier, Adriano Olivetti developed an encompassing reformist political and social philosophy, called "communitarism", in which the

6 Ferrarotti became Adriano's special counsellor regarding the development of communitarian politics.

firm and the region could become agents of change for the whole of Italy[7]. In the eyes of Adriano Olivetti, communitarism, in fact a sort of corporatism from below, was the only viable alternative for the wretched political and social situation Italy found itself in after the Second World War.

In order to be able to shape both welfare work in the company and social and political change in Italy, in 1948 Adriano Olivetti initiated a communitarian political movement ("Movimento di Comunità"), with its own journal ("Comunità") and publishing company ("Edizioni di Comunità").

In 1934 and 1939, new modernist four-story factory buildings designed by renowned Italian architects Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini, with large glass windows, were opened in Ivrea's Via Jervis[8]. Contrary to the traditional first redbrick factory building constructed when the company was founded by Adriano's father Camillo, the new factory buildings were strongly reminiscent of the modernist factory buildings built by the renowned American architect Albert Kahn. These buildings were constructed for the purpose of Henry Ford's automobile works (Hide Park and River Rouge) at the time and included certain elements of the "New Objectivity" Bauhaus architecture of the 1920s and 1930s. Figini and Pollini also designed the nursery school (1939–1941) and the important Social Services Centre-building (1954–1958)[9]. Figini and Pollini, as well as several other architects, designed the (modernist) residential area, Quartiere Castellamonte ("citta industriale"), to provide Olivetti's workers with apartments that had gardens and greenery in between. After some time, the apartments in the area were intentionally to become the private property of their inhabitants. One remarkable structure was the residential unit called "Talponia", which consisted of 82 dwellings on the west side of the factory premises overlooking the surrounding green hills and meadows. Designed as a half circle by the architects Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Oreglio d'Isola, the two-storey building has a total length of 300 meters. Apart from Castellamonte, the company constructed in collaboration with public housing associations, many workman's rental dwellings close to the factory and situated in the city of Ivrea, a number of three-storey apartments which were to house large families, as well as a limited number of separate apartments for managers, all located on the same

7 Another important inspirational source for Adriano Olivetti's communitarian thinking was Walther Rathenau, an important industrialist (the owner of AEG) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the German Weimar Republic. Rathenau published several sociological/philosophical books on a future ideal society (Berta 1978b, p. 560; also, De Gier 2018).

8 According to the famous modernist French architect, Le Corbusier, this was the most beautiful street in the world. Since July 2018, Via Jervis with the former Olivetti factory and the surrounding buildings have been inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO as Ivrea, "Industrial City of the 20th Century". For more on modern architecture in Ivrea, see: Bonifazio & Scrivano, 2001; and also: Peroni, 2018.

9 In addition, an impressive separate canteen building was designed by Ignazio Gardella and constructed between 1953-1959 in the style of the famous American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright.

premises within walking distance from the factory buildings. Alternatively, workers could borrow money from the company under favourable conditions to construct their own houses. In these cases, the company offered the support of renowned architects. In principle, all dwelling and factory design, as well as construction activities, had to dovetail with Adriano Olivetti's reform ideology of "autonomia aziendale". Nevertheless, given the fact that there were architectural differences between the dwellings (the apartments and houses) of the workers and managers, the aesthetics of the Olivettian architecture inevitably implied also symbolic elements used to replicate a more traditional bureaucratic power structure within the company. Overall, in line with the extensive welfare work programs, the modernist "New Objectivity style", which included factory buildings and residential areas as well as the skilfully designed Olivetti typewriters and office machines, were all meant to contribute to the welfare and well-being of all the Olivetti employees[10].

Adriano Olivetti's Communitarian Utopia: "Humana Civilitas"

In the Fall of 1943, in an attempt to evade Benito Mussolini's fascist regime, Adriano Olivetti left Italy for Switzerland (Champfèr, Engadin). There he started writing about his reformist political and social ideas[11]. He continued his writing efforts after WWII when Olivetti resumed the management of the firm. According to historian Davide Caddedu, there were three summarizing publications that are crucial for understanding Adriano's political and social utopia, and which can also be regarded as an alternative to, at that time sclerotic centralized political system in Italy, as well as the traditional power structure in capitalist enterprises. These include the following: "L'ordine politico delle Comunita", first printed in Switzerland in 1945 and later republished several times; "Societa Stato Comunita", a collection of writings published in 1952; and finally, "Citta dell'uomo", a collection of essays published in 1959 a few months before he died (Caddedu, 2012). The ideas included in these writings had already taken shape during the period between the two World Wars, when Adriano, just as his father, actively supported reformist third-way debates in Italy (Maffioletti, 2013, pp. 25–115).

The key-elements found in Adriano Olivetti's communitarian philosophy can be summarized in the following way. The ultimate goal was to create a new decentralized political, social and cultural order in Italy that was based on a vertical bottom-up structure of a number of autonomous but interlinked building blocks;

10 Historian Giuseppe Berta remarks in this respect: "Il fine estetico che l'architectura industriale doveva perseguire appariva strettamente correlato all'intento della restituzione della dignita culturale e civile, alla manualita del lavoro" (The esthetical goal of industrial architecture should be connected narrowly with the intention of restoring the cultural and civil dignity to labour and workers (author's translation) (Berta, 1978b, p. 562).

11 In particular L'ordine politico delle Comunità. This book contains Adriano Olivetti's principal ideas about social justice. It was published in Italy by his own publishing company Edizioni Di Comunità in 1946.

first the factory and the surrounding economically self-sufficient and culturally homogenous community, then the region(s), and finally at the level of the nation a federated community of autonomous regions. The factory as such constitutes a critical economic and cultural part of the community[12]. At all levels, experts had to be consulted. They should also play an important role in the legislature and the councils of the regional government, as well as in one of the legislative houses at the national level. Traditional political parties should no longer assume a decisive role in this structure. Olivetti himself speaks of the socialisation of Italy or "socializzare senza statizzare".

Ideally, a community would consist of a number of small rural communities consisting of 500 to 5,000 inhabitants on the one hand and the larger secondary communities of 100,000 to150,000 inhabitants on the other hand[13]. He considered this size of the population as a human scale (Brilliant, 1993, p. 105) and believed that these communities were the organic cells of the regions. Within a community, the factory had a certain responsibility to the community. It is a "place of work where justice arises, where progress is dominant, where beauty is created and in the surroundings of which love … tolerance… have a real meaning" (Olivetti, 1952, p. 41; Brilliant, 1993, p. 106). What was fundamental to this ideology was that worker representation at the factory level should assume the form of organised voting power, as well as profit-sharing. In 1947, Olivetti introduced a management council ("Consiglio di Gestione"), a sort of works council which he presided over himself. This was followed by the creation of a yellow union the "Comunita di Fabbrica-Autonomia Aziendale" in 1955.

Within this context, Olivetti referred to comparable practical welfare work experiences at the firm level at Fiat's factory complex Mirafiori in Turin and to the Carl Zeiss Foundation in Jena (Germany) (Olivetti, 1945, pp. 24–26).

According to Adriano Olivetti, the new federated society in Italy should consist of autonomous regions with legislative and executive powers. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the regions should play an intermediary role between the state and the communities. This would guarantee a decentralised government system. In a nutshell, Adriano Olivetti did not only strive for a decentralized state system, but he also sought a balance between industry and agriculture with the intention "to return to man the lost harmony" between agriculture and industry:

12 Since about 10 percent of the 50,000 inhabitants of the Ivrea area were employed at Olivetti in the 1950s, the construction of community services in Ivrea, as well as the organization of the Community Movement, became intertwined with the welfare work programs at Olivetti (Bonifazio & Scrivano, 2003, p. 30).

13 Olivetti's practical translation of communitarism has some striking similarities with the ideal garden city of Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928). Just as Olivetti, Howard wanted to link the rural countryside with the upcoming new industrial towns by creating garden cities of a certain limited size (30,000 inhabitants at a maximum), surrounded by a network of smaller satellite cities (Howard, 1902).

"Un originale rapporto tra agricultura e industria è in solo capace di ridare all'uomo la perduta armonia" (cit. in Peroni, 2018, p. 136). In fact, Adriano Olivetti propagated the relatively wealthy and developed Canavese region in which Ivrea was located, and in which the Olivetti company played a dominant economic and social role, as it served as an exemplary case elsewhere in Italy, and particularly for the "Mezzogiorno" (the South of Italy). His personalist communitarian utopia may be considered as a 'third way' between liberalism and communism. Although mainly inspired by the ideas held by the renowned French philosophers of that time (Maritain, Mounier, Weil[14]), Adriano Olivetti's third-way thinking was not unique in Italy between the two World Wars. Viewed from the more liberal side, the renowned Italian philosophers Benedetto Croce and Piero Gobetti wanted to bridge individualism with social justice, whereas the philosopher Antonio Gramsci, with communist leanings also had similar intentions. Likewise, the anti-fascist intellectual Carlo Roselli proposed that the two opposite "trajectories" should be recombined into a "socialismo liberale" (Adelman, 2013, p. 117; Maffioletti, 2013).

In practice, Olivetti established community centres in Ivrea and the surrounding Canavese province from 1949 onwards. These centres deployed both cultural and educational activities, and they had libraries that the workers could lend books from. By 1956–1957, the Canavese region had 76 community centres. As of 1953, the Community Movement was listed as a political party at the local level and it participated with success in local elections. Adriano Olivettti himself was elected Mayor of Ivrea in 1956 (Brilliant, 1993, p. 108)[15]. Another significant initiative that Olivetti established, related to his political convictions and intentions, was supporting community development programmes in Italy during the mid-1950s. These included a rural-industrial development project in the Canavese and other community development projects in Sardinia, Sicily, the Abruzzo and the Molise (Brilliant, 1993, p. 109).

Volponi and Ottieri on Worker Alienation at Olivetti

One of Adriano Olivetti's major objectives was to humanise work within his company and, at the same time to create an external image of a company that was both culturally and artistically minded. In order to be able to realise this, in 1931, he created a department of Development and Publicity ("l'Ufficio Svilupo e Pubblicità"), which was initially managed by the renowned poet and engineer Leonardo Sinisgalli (1908–1981)[16]. Sinisgalli involved other writers, journalists and designers who took

14 All three French philosophers tried to close the gap between the contradictions that existed in those days regarding communism, Protestantism and Catholicism by propagating a third-way.

15 From 1958, the Community movement acted temporarily as a national political party and participated with limited success in the national elections (1 percent of all votes).

16 And also, in 1956, the "Ufficio Pubblicità e Stampa".

part in developing creative publicity campaigns as well as developing cultural events with the intention to develop "lo stile Olivetti" (Olivetti style). The factory library ("la biblioteca di fabbrica") occupied a special place in this context. Something that was also special was the fact that Adriano Olivetti employed two young literary writers, who were nicknamed the "artigiani industriali" and who after some time, published critical novels about the labour relations and working conditions within Olivetti. Just like Olivetti, both authors considered the Olivetti factory to be, in principle, a 'good factory'. However, in their "romanzi di fabbrica"[17], they disputed the adverse worker-control aspects of the company's welfare work system. The benefits of welfare work at Olivetti were at the same time "affected by a more subtle and ambiguous form of alienation in such a way that the "nanny factory" was perceived as a safe space, which impeded the development of political agency and class-consciousness" (Diazzi & Tarabochia, 2019, p. 14).

In 1955, Olivetti first employed Ottiero Ottieri (1924–2002), a writer who was interested in sociology and psychology, and then in 1956, he also employed Paolo Volponi (1924–1994), a nationally renowned novelist. Ottiero, a psychologist by training, was given a job as the personnel manager in the new office machines factory in the South (Pozzuoli) and later he published his experiences in his two Olivettian novels "Donnaruma all'asalto" (Ottieri 1959/2014) and "La linea gotica" (1963). Volponi was asked by Olivetti to manage the important Social Affairs department ("I Servizi Sociali Aziendale") at the Ivrea factory. Volponi, who was nicknamed "il romanziere sociologo", published a critical novel about his experiences in the company: "Memoriale" (Volponi, 1962/1974).

Volponi and Ottieri, just like Adriano Olivetti, were captivated by the problem of worker alienation[18]. Ottieri's industrial novel "Donnaruma all'asalto" (1959) is written as a personal diary of a fictive young company psychologist who carries out the psychological testing of potential factory workers in the new Pozzuoli plant[19]. One of the workers he tested was the semi-literate Antonio Donnaruma. He depicts a man, who in principle represents the traditional agrarian workforce, with a typical

17 Becoming a popular literary genre as "letteratura industriale" in Italy in the 1950-1960s. See Bigatti & Lupo, 2013. Also, Lupo, 2016.

18 Worker alienation is a form of social alienation 'which separates the individual from the products of his labour, from the process of work, from the fellowship of his mankind, and, ultimately, from himself' (cit. in Diazzi & Tarabochia, 2019, p. 3).

19 In addition, the 'La Linea Gotica' (1963) was written in a personal diary form as "quaderno aziendale". Just as Adriano Olivetti, Ottierri was greatly influenced by the French philosopher Simone Weil and her "Journal d'Usine", which was included in "La Condition Ouvrière" (Weil, 1951). According to Fioretti, Weil did not consider industry as a monster which had to be slain, but instead she regarded it as a system which can be applied to achieve social goals. As such, the diverse interests of both the employer and workers could be harmonized in a sort of third-way, such as industrial humanism. Furthermore, intellectuals could play an important role if they were to contribute to the realization of social goals from within the company instead of 'non-committed' outside observers (Weil 1937; Fioretti 2013, p. 113).

"disorderly" southern mentality, who is not accustomed to carrying out factory work in an orderly way. Donnaruma clearly experiences difficulties in trying to adapt to the bureaucratic rationale of the company. This results in psychological tension and feelings of uncertainty. The novel shows that in the context of rapid urbanization and the social uprooting of entire traditional families, new rationalized modes of working could easily cause feelings of alienation among workers. This was even the case at Olivetti, a rationalized enterprise embedded in extensive and encompassing welfare work programs undergirded by a clear complementary social philosophy. In practice, "Donnaruma all'asalto" turned out to become not only an industrial novel concerning Olivetti, but it was similarly a novel about the "Questione Meridionale", the social question concerning the large group of non-working poor in the South of Italy[20].

In the case of Volponi's novel, a similar problem is described. The protagonist Albino Saluggia, a pre-war Canavese farmer, returns to Italy after having been a German prisoner of war. Saluggia finds a job in the Olivetti factory in Ivrea, but he experiences serious problems in adapting to the modern rationalized factory context. As a consequence, he is not able to live a normal working life, whereas he had previously expected this would most likely be the case. Saluggia feels alienated in the "neurotic" work context and develops paranoid feelings towards the factory. After a period of sickness due to tuberculosis and a nervous breakdown, he develops a rebellious attitude towards the factory and he eventually ends up supporting a syndicalist factory strike. After that, Saluggia becomes marginalized within the factory context. In fact, Volponi critically assessed scientific management and the Fordist work system, which had been introduced at the time, not only at Olivetti but in many other Italian industrial enterprises (De Gier, 2018, pp. 179–218)[21].

20 By building the new Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli, the company's intention was to deliver a substantial contribution to solving the meridional problem. With the same intention, other new factories were also established in the South by other large industrial enterprises (Fiat, Ansaldo). However, in the end, these initiatives remained rather isolated, "cattedrali nel deserto" as they were only able to employ a relatively small fraction of the army of non-working poor (Fioretti, 2013, pp. 118-120).

21 To what extent Adriano Olivetti appreciated these critical literary industrial novels about work and working conditions in his factories is not known exactly. Both novels were published just before and after Adriano Olivetti's premature death in 1960. Travelling by train to Switzerland just after the acquisition of the American Typewriter Company Underwood Adriano Olivetti got a heart attack. Recently American biographer Meryle Secrest claimed that Adriano Olivetti has not died a natural death, but more probably has been murdered by the CIA. The progressive political convictions of Adriano in the turbulent socio-political Italian context then as well as the strategic acquisition of Underwood by Olivetti, the position of IBM and the attempts to produce the world's first desktop computer would have played a significant role in this. However, Secrest doesn't deliver hard evidence of her claim (Secrest, 2019).

Uniqueness and Topicality of Adriano Olivetti's Welfare work Utopia

Three more specific questions will be dealt with here in order to formulate a full response to the questions regarding the uniqueness and topicality of Adriano Olivetti's welfare work utopia: (a) To what extent is the welfare work experiment at Olivetti comparable to other earlier significant welfare work experiments conducted elsewhere in the industrialised West in the period from 1880 to 1930? (b) How unique was Adriano's Olivetti welfare work policy in the 1950s if it were to be compared to the welfare work initiatives in other companies in Italy and abroad before and after the Second World War? And finally (c), Can something still be learned from the Olivetti experiment?

Throughout the history of industrial capitalism, the Olivetti company was not completely unique in that it was a combination of implementing welfare work reforms and the development and application of a supporting social and political philosophy. As contended, a considerable number of reformist entrepreneurs were more or less inspired and motivated by religious or secular-socialist principles during the early phases of capitalism. However, in comparison with other enlightened entrepreneurs, Olivetti's approach in the 1950s was certainly more original, given the active involvement of all the different external intellectuals and social scientists in both the company's welfare work and its wider community policies. The underlying intentions were to combat worker alienation as well as to "link industrial wealth with the creation of services for the community" (Bonifazio & Scrivano, 2001, p. 23).

If we were to compare Olivetti to other enlightened and ethically motivated entrepreneurs in the history of industrial capitalism, then one of the first examples which come to mind is Robert Owen. This entrepreneur and social reformer owned a cotton factory in New Lanark (Scotland) at the end of the 18th century. In addition, to building a factory village adjacent to the mills to benefit his workmen, Owen developed and published his well-known "Plan" (1817) for a more just society (Owen, 1991).

In addition, Jean-Baptiste André Godin, owner of a stove factory in the north of France at the end of the 19th century, not only introduced encompassing welfare work reforms in his factory based on ideas of French utopian-socialist thinker Fourier, but he published also extensively about his own social reform intentions (Godin, 1871/2018).

Practically in the same period, during the 1880s, the Dutch entrepreneur Jacobus Cornelis van Marken, owner of a newly-established yeast and spirit factory in Delft, near the Hague, introduced far-reaching social reforms in his factory. He also constructed the exemplary "Agnetapark", a romantic workmen's garden village with green lawns, ponds, and a bandstand in the park. Agnetapark also included a cooperative grocery, several schools and a community centre. Just like Adriano

Olivetti, he wanted to prevent possible social conflict (the so-called "Sociale Kwestie" ("Social or Labour Question")) at that time in the Netherlands (Van Marken, 1880, and 1881; Van der Mast, 2019).

Someone who is also worth rementioning within this context is Walther Rathenau. Rathenau was a German entrepreneur who later became the foreign secretary of the Weimar republic until his assassination in 1922. Just as Olivetti did, Rathenau introduced welfare work in his Berlin-based electro-technical company AEG, and he contracted talented architects to design the new factory buildings. The well-known Bauhaus architect (and designer) Peter Behrens designed the emblematic AEG Turbine factory in Berlin, as well as a number of highly modern and innovative apartment buildings to house the AEG-workmen and employees. Likewise, Rathenau was a strong advocate of third-way thinking in Germany. In this context, he developed the concept of "Gemeinwirtschaft" (Economic Commonwealth). This implied a classless, corporatist type of society as an alternative to industrial capitalism (Rathenau, 1917; De Gier, 2016, pp. 126–128; Maier, 1970, pp. 27–61).

All in all, welfare work reforms at Olivetti fit well into a long widespread tradition in which welfare work reforms in industrial factories were introduced in Europe and the United States. Indeed, Adriano Olivetti belongs to a select group of enlightened capitalist entrepreneurs whom all wished to contribute to broader societal goals in an effort to create a more just society. Comparable third-way thinking as an alternative to industrial capitalism, for example, had already been propagated in the 1880s by Van Marken and in the 1920s by Rathenau. What is so striking however, is that if one takes the entire historical period into account, it becomes apparent how these more sophisticated entrepreneurs emerged during a time of great emanating social conflict, such as that which occurred in Italy during the period between the two World Wars.

In respect to other welfare work initiatives that were launched during the Post-Second World War period, the Olivetti experiment appears to be somewhat more unique when compared to other industrial companies[22]. In many Western countries, the state became more active in the field of social policies, and as a consequence, the first welfare states emerged from the 1950s onward. These emerging

22 In this context, for example, the large Dutch light bulb and electronics company Philips should be mentioned as it resembled Olivetti with respect to its developmental history. Just like Olivetti, Philips was founded at the end of the 19th century / beginning 20th century in the at that time mainly agricultural Eindhoven region in the South of the Netherlands by two brothers, Gerard and Anton Philips. Soon Anton became the CEO. Inspired by German and American examples, he introduced a broad and encompassing welfare work package in the company from the onset until the Second World War. Then, his son Frits, gradually took over his responsibilities, finally becoming the CEO in 1962. Frits Philips, who was greatly influenced by the ideas of the American "Moral Rearmament Movement", tried to influence eventually, albeit with limited success, the post-war welfare work policies of the Philips company on the basis of his moral conviction (Blanken, 2002, pp. 22-29).

welfare states took over a substantial part of the former corporate welfare work programs. Given this fundamentally-changed political situation in many capitalist countries, Adriano Olivetti's welfare work utopia is quite remarkable and probably only fully comprehensible when placed within the more specific historic Italian context of overcoming the fascist past, the actual political power struggle between the communists, socialists and Christian democrats, the traditional economic and social backwardness of the South of Italy, as well as the rapid economic transformation in the post-war years from a mainly agrarian economy into an industrialized country. What Adriano Olivetti actually had in mind was a corporate as well as a corporatist alternative to the existing Italian society. In his utopia state-organized collective, social policies could not serve as a preferable alternative to his idealistic third way corporate-communitarian society.

What is also significant is that when formulating his utopia, Adriano Olivetti borrowed many aspects from pre-war welfare work initiatives, mainly in the United States and Weimar Germany, such as combining welfare work with factory architecture, the designing of products, and the introduction of American production methods (Taylorism and Fordism), which were all meant to benefit the workers. His initiatives were in line with the impact that the former "New Objectivity" had on avant-garde welfare work initiatives in America and Europe. He added the history of corporate welfare work to this, combined with his own close collaboration with Italian intellectuals, within as well as outside his company. This was all done with the intention of humanising the corporate culture at Olivetti, and at the same time, in an attempt to mitigate the dominant technical engineering culture of production.

What finally remains is the question of topicality in regard to Adriano's Olivetti's welfare work policies and his related communitarian ideas. After receiving initial wide public support for his reforms, first in his factory in Ivrea and subsequently, in the Canavese region and other parts of Italy, Olivetti's spiritual heritage gradually lost much of its attractiveness in the Italian industrial and socio-political context after his passing in 1960 (see also note 22). Moreover, his attempts to overcome worker alienation in his factories remained limited given, for example, the critical descriptions that can be found in the novels written by Ottieri and Volponi on the Olivetti factory and its legacy. Nevertheless, the publishing house established by Olivetti survived and it is currently in the process of publishing and propagating Adriano's collected writings. Beyond that, early intellectual advocates Bruno Segre and Franco Ferrarotti are still propagating Olivetti's ideas. In fact, the national TV network RAI recently broadcast a documentary on Olivetti's spiritual and material heritage. Therefore, although economical, political and social conditions have changed substantially in Italy, today some of Adriano Olivetti's utopian ideas are being revived, at least to some extent both in the corporate and/or societal context. Given the fact that Adriano Olivetti's spiritual heritage is in keeping with the long-standing tradition among European and American entrepreneurs who

shared utopian ideas, the topicality of Olivetti's ideas is not necessarily limited to Italy alone, and they could, in all likelihood, very well be applied elsewhere.

Summary and Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Adriano's Olivetti's company belongs to one of the most interesting, enlightening welfare work experiments in the entire history of industrial capitalism. The uniqueness of Olivetti's welfare work lies in the fact that Olivetti did not only introduce an extensive and encompassing welfare work program in his company, but he also undergirded his welfare work both in word and writing with a reform-oriented personalist social-political philosophy. Adriano Olivetti was guided by a combination of, and to some extent, conflicting principles regarding American rationalised production techniques and the ideas of French personalist philosophers pertaining to, among other things, how problems of worker alienation could be solved. Time and place were instrumental for his inspiring, accounting for both his successes as well as his failures. Post-war Italy had to overcome the undermining morale of the Mussolini regime. At the same time, a serious threat existed as there was a danger that a communist regime in Italy might be established during the immediate post-war period. The Italian communist party was extremely powerful then and it received firm backing from the leftist Italian intelligentsia. In sum, Olivetti's welfare work policies and related communitarianism could mainly be considered as a challenging third-way alternative, both to fascism and communism in Italy. On the other hand, Olivetti's heritage has a broader cross-border significance as it is perfectly in sync with an important group of enlightened entrepreneurs who connected their welfare work reforms with possible alternatives to industrial capitalism. Nowadays, it might still play a significant role in the discussion regarding possible alternatives for coping with the excesses of neo-liberalism, such as mitigating shareholder capitalism, the introduction of social responsibility, reinforcing worker participation as well as introducing alternative forms of direct democracy in society[23]. All in all, Adriano Olivetti's idealistic utopian thinking could still serve as a true source of inspiration for future welfare work initiatives.

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23 Webber 2018; Hall and Soskice 2003; Iversen and Soskice 2019.

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