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Lynda DEMATTEO

### **Globalized Identities in the Fashion Trade**

Major international textile fairs play a leading role in the development of global fashion. These huge gatherings set in motion the production chains of goods and services in connection with this multi-billion-dollar industry. For three days each season, trade shows bring together the various actors of the global textile market, allowing manufacturers to assert their own distinctive features, showcase their innovations, and negotiate their positions in the sector. In 2005, with the help of their government, Italian textile industrialists managed to create a new international trade show, Milano Unica, which quickly became an important venue for shaping global trends, especially in male fashion. This ambitious initiative was launched at an important turning point: in January of that same year, global trade in textile products was liberalized. For the sector's European producers, it was the beginning of a difficult period: the European industries, long protected by quotas that limited the exports of emerging countries, now faced competition from Chinese exporters. Garment industries had long since been relocated to Asia. Outsourcing led to a transfer of technology that enabled Chinese industrialists to bridge the gaps generated by the English industrial revolution and recover their past prominence.<sup>1</sup> China is now the world's largest producer of textile products.

This evolution has compelled European fashion business executives to adopt new strategies: establish joint ventures with Chinese companies<sup>2</sup> and shift their focus to high-quality yarns and luxury fabrics. The men's luxury group Ermenegildo Zegna, which had supported the abolition of European quotas, then urged its Italian counterparts to start their own trade show to promote the Italy brand on the global scale.<sup>3</sup> The Piedmontese woolen weavers of Biella brought together all those who were able to obtain the famous "100% Made in Italy" label to promote Italian luxury fabrics among the great garment manufacturers all over the

world.<sup>4</sup> The Piedmontese are internationally recognized for the finesse of their fabrics made from the rarest wools. Although the raw materials come from different parts of the world, they are processed in mills in the Italian Alps. The territorial origin of the products is constantly highlighted, even if only the local industrial history serves to enhance their value.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, industrialists territorialize the weaving process to better globalize the Italy brand. Such a solution seems as paradoxical as the delicate situation they face: on the one hand, they make clothes produced through complex global value chains, while on the other hand, they must market the specifically Italian industrial and craft heritage that has made them famous throughout the world. Unlike Asian industrialists who seek to hide the realities of production,<sup>6</sup> Italians today tend to stage their industrial know-how in the fashion fairs to enhance the value of their products made locally.

According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, capitalism has a double polarity: it oscillates between deterritorialization (relocation of production) and reterritorialization (defense of national labels). The more the capitalist machine is subject to deterritorialization by the decoding and maximizing of the flows in order to extract the surplus value, the more its ancillary apparatuses are reterritorialized by absorbing a growing share of this surplus value.<sup>7</sup> The more contradictory, the better it works. Milano Unica meets this challenge by showcasing the roots of the Italian textile industry on a global scale.<sup>8</sup> It is smaller than other fairs, and its board intends to distinguish the Italian textile industry by the refined and constantly innovative character of its products; technical specificities and environmental concerns are enhanced to better capture the attention of designers who attend it.

Fairs have already been studied by sociologists<sup>9</sup>, geographers<sup>10</sup>, and anthropologists of business.<sup>11</sup> More recently, two Swedish anthropologists have explored what the ethnography of professional congresses and trade fairs could contribute to the understanding professional

spheres.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of their first observations, I will explain how Milano Unica contributes to shaping the global Italy brand<sup>13</sup> by promoting Italian textile heritage and know-how.

### **Fashion Trade Shows in the Global Textile Production Cycle**

Until now, anthropologists of globalization have not been very interested in trade shows, although Fernand Braudel studied the fairs of Troyes and Lyons.<sup>14</sup> The great fairs differ from markets in that they are distinct from everyday trade: a market is a local event held regularly in the same place; a fair, on the contrary, is a periodic form of exchange on a global scale. These temporary platforms produce globalization by connecting professionals from all over the world. Merchants have always been nomads: the major fairs are scheduled well in advance, with little or no flexibility in the timeline. It would be extremely difficult to modify this without generating tensions throughout the industry, as participants need to produce their collections and travel around the globe to present them. Geographers refer to this kind of system as a “cyclical cluster”.<sup>15</sup> It is through these professional meetings that the productive process is activated. In order to fully understand what is at stake, it is necessary to visit the different fairs that punctuate the production cycle: first, the production of threads (Filo), then the production of fabrics (Milano Unica), and finally, the production of clothing (Pitti Uomo). The items that compose a collection are very diverse, and the stylists discuss upstream with their suppliers, who will orient their own production according to the wishes they have expressed. Each year, the fabric manufacturers also go to the Pitti Uomo trade show—a highlight of men’s ready-to-wear—to get an idea of the current and upcoming trends in order to direct their own production according to the evolution of men’s fashion.

I started to examine the political issues related to the trade of luxury fabrics, especially with China, in 2015 as part of the joint project called POLITICO.<sup>16</sup> Our goal was to examine the relationship between the globalization process and governance by developing an

anthropology of unprecedented transformations in the links between economic and political issues. According to Arjun Appadurai, the link created when a product is exchanged is intrinsically political in that it produces the value embodied in such commodities. Luxury goods, and their deployment as signs, are political because their “principal use is rhetorical and social”.<sup>17</sup> Appadurai thus defends “methodological fetishism” to grasp how human actors encode things with various meanings according to the cultural context. In this light, we can say that commodities, like people, have social lives.<sup>18</sup>

Since 2005, the seasonal shows set up by Milano Unica have become commercial, high-profile society events. The goal was to assert the commercial importance of Italy in the high-end fabric sector. Milano Unica was faced with the global centrality acquired long ago by the Paris International Fair—*Première Vision*—which Italian industrialists went to every season to show their collections to French fashion designers and professionals from all around the world attracted by the Parisian scene of fashion.<sup>19</sup> The fourth Milano Unica chairman—the great cotton weaver from Bergamo, Silvio Albini—then created a Chinese edition in March 2012 and an American edition in July 2015. I was able to do this new fieldwork thanks to him, as he introduced me to the general manager of the fair, Massimo Mosiello. Milano Unica (the choice of the name is significant) has enabled the Italian textile industry to bond and to create a sense of national belonging by bringing together all the world-renowned regional trade fairs that showcased Italian luxury fabrics and accessories (*IdeaBiella*, *IdeaComo*, *Moda In*, *Shirt Avenue*, *Prato Expo*). The first time I met Massimo Mosiello, he explained that given the inner tensions, such a grouping was in itself a “miracle.” Thanks to him, I was able to attend four trade shows in Milan and two Shanghai editions in autumn 2015 and spring 2017.<sup>20</sup>



Milano Unica Shanghai, photo by the author, March 17, 2017.

The Italian pavilion of Milano Unica in Shanghai (see photo above) is part of the Chinese Intertextile fair, the biggest of the sector worldwide. It was set up thanks to the support of the Italian government, eager to develop trade with China. Milano Unica New York has encountered more difficulties. After only two seasons, the Italian industrialists realized that they could not afford to set up such a platform in Manhattan, and they finally returned to the American *Première Vision* show. However, this Italian business initiative has made the board of *Première Vision* anxious. The Italians are also trying to present their collections before the French do, which inevitably leads to tensions.<sup>21</sup> These defensive identity reactions are not

necessarily a good thing for the future of European textiles. Competition among Europeans is fierce in Shanghai, because the Chinese megacity is now destined to become the global textile hub. The board of *Première Vision* has already lost the game: they wanted to create a Chinese edition, but they did not succeed because the German group *Messe Frankfurt*, which oversees the entire business of fairs in China, collaborated with the Chinese to create *Intertextile*; it seems that German and French industrialists (ever entangled in their old continental grievances) were unable to imagine a common strategy in relation to the Chinese market. For lack of political support, the French textile industry is underrepresented in the Chinese fair today. Only about a dozen (among the strongest) entrepreneurs go there regularly. The management of these fairs is in itself an important business that allows countries to establish their commercial fame and to influence fashion on a global scale. At this level, private and national interests tend to overlap. Italy is certainly the European nation that has been most successful in the national investment in trade issues, specifically in relation to Asia. Italian entrepreneurs (with trade diplomacy support) have succeeded in establishing Italy as a luxury country in the Chinese imaginary.<sup>22</sup> In conjunction with the *Milan Expo 2015*, there were more than one hundred Italian industrialists, thanks to government subsidies. In 2016, there were approximately forty. It is not easy—even for the more prestigious European suppliers—to enter the Chinese market. Many of them are afraid of seeing their products counterfeited; they have given up going to Shanghai.

*Intertextile* is a gigantic trade show that brings together industrialists from all over the world and sanctions the hegemony of China in this industry. The measure of the recurring event is impressive: in the spring of 2015, the fair received 2,636 exhibitors (compared to 1,469 the previous year) from 24 countries, and saw 62,649 buyers from 88 countries (more than a 56 percent increase when compared to the previous year, when 40,214 visitors traveled to the show). The stands covered a total of 100,600 square meters (more than double the previous

year). When I visited the fair for the very first time, I did not anticipate it would take almost two hours to get out because of the queues that had formed just before closing. Dozens of agents are habitually mobilized to channel the flow of people leaving the huge Chinese structure.

In 2015, the Chairwoman of Chinese trade show, Ms. Wendy Wen, was very proud of having received so many Italian exhibitors.<sup>23</sup> Europeans occupy the most prestigious space in the Chinese fair. The Italian pavilion of Milano Unica (neatly aestheticized, as it is in Milan) claimed a special position on the global textile scene, based on three keywords: “Quality, authenticity, exclusivity.” Access to it remains strictly controlled: only Chinese professionals who have been invited by Italian industrialists can enter the area. This policy, aimed at countering industrial espionage, also has the effect of stirring the desire of designers.<sup>24</sup> Big Italian textile suppliers are currently trying to capture the profits of China’s economic emergence by positioning their exports in the market for high-end fashion products in China. The Chinese fashion industry is developing and moving upmarket.<sup>25</sup> For Milano Unica, participating in this development is important for the future of Italian textiles.





Milano Unica Portello, photo by the author, September 8, 2015.

### **Textile Fairs as “Tournaments of Values”**

The trade shows have developed in response to globalization and they play a very direct role in the process of fashion creation.<sup>26</sup> They are the places where the collective creative process can be seen in all its complexity because industrialists reveal the content of their production by deploying their new collections. Flagship products are displayed in the synthesis areas conceived by the fair’s artistic director and his team of designers. The fabrics are selected by an impartial style committee. The exhibitors send a sample on the basis of guidelines provided by the committee; then the fabrics selected are displayed in the same neutral way, without Milano Unica expressing any preference. Some exhibitors prefer not to send a number of their luxury products to ensure they remain exclusive; they therefore remain outside the selection

process. On the basis of the samples selected, the artistic director of Milano Unica will define the trends for the following year's season.

Studying trade shows offers many methodological advantages and enables one to collect a great deal of ethnographic data.<sup>27</sup> Brian Moeran and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen (2011) were the first anthropologists to undertake a systematic study of this kind of commercial event when they tried to identify the different functions of interest for the businessmen who invest in them. According to the anthropologists, fairs serve three main purposes: (re)configuring a professional field, ritualizing industrial practices, and functioning as a "tournament of values" (in the sense of Appadurai), where participants negotiate between different values to better cope with the commercial challenges of the moment.<sup>28</sup>

The participants carry values that they strive to defend to better assert themselves in their professional fields.<sup>29</sup> These values are never fixed attributes: they are the result of arbitration that is often unintelligible for the uninitiated.<sup>30</sup> The value is not intrinsic to the object: the preciousness of the fabrics is the result of a social construction during which various processes (selection of the raw materials, sophistication of weaving processes, respect for animals and for the environment, design, and marketing) are enhanced to arouse consumer desire. Most of the work undertaken by the luxury houses concerns the desirability of objects. How are values produced, negotiated, and traded at international fairs? What distinguishes the value of cultural products? These are the questions raised by Brian Moeran.<sup>31</sup>

The values of cultural goods are defined by complex combinations of cultural variables. Fairs are the places where these values are created. On this occasion, we can observe the creation of a symbolic exchange value in which several cultural values are considered: technical values (know-how), social values (prestige), situational values (rarity and authenticity), and the values of appreciation (aesthetics). Fabrics are not only products, they are also a language; industrialists do not only produce material goods, they construct sense<sup>32</sup>.

In menswear, fabrics are usually associated with male virtues and leadership skills.<sup>33</sup> At the fair, they show their products and stage their values through sophisticated installations that one can admire in their stands. They don't just make deals, they assert their positions and brand identities through creativity and artistic sensitivity.<sup>34</sup> Observing what happens in the stands enables one to understand how commodities are culturally designed by trade agents.<sup>35</sup>

Moeran refers to Pierre Bourdieu to analyze the fairs in terms of field. Entrepreneurs make use of different forms of capital to construct their commodities and set their transaction prices. The diverse resources at stake could be material, social, ideological, or symbolic, and they are unevenly distributed within the Italian textile system. Some industrialists control more resources than others, and their prices are higher.<sup>36</sup> In that way, Milano Unica makes evident the hierarchy that prevails in the Italian textile sector. The location of the stands is not indifferent. Industrial clusters that have come together to form Milano Unica are always visible. The fair structures social spaces: among the textile manufacturers there are the nobles and the less noble;<sup>37</sup> this is especially true in Northern Italy, since the aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie merged at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

The "genetic code" of the company is an important part of the Italian entrepreneurial culture. Textile industries are generally family-run businesses (siblings usually share the leadership tasks) and filial respect toward the founder is continually reaffirmed.<sup>39</sup> These families' stories can eventually be the subject of monographs, which also enhance the prestige of their fashion brands.<sup>40</sup> The aristocratic ideology contributes to producing the market value of the fabrics, as well as the ceremonies surrounding the presentation of the collections.

The size of the stands, the interior design (more or less sought after, always in connection with the aesthetic DNA of the fashion houses), the number of people mobilized to welcome visitors, and the fame of the buyers who visit them: all these elements nourish the prestige of the great industrialists involved. For weaving professionals, the Loro Piana House

is at the top of the scale of values and a model to imitate for all operators. The famous Piedmontese brand selects the best wools; it has created a competition for breeders to continually improve the quality of the wool, and it has succeeded in manufacturing the most valuable of fabrics. Control over the entire production chain is the hallmark of excellence in textiles. Loro Piana refuses to advertise and also produces clothes for elite customers only. They are weaving purists and their production is a matter of luxury. In 2013, Loro Piana was bought by the LVMH group for 2 billion euros. The Piedmontese company is now directly managed by the son of Bernard Arnaud, who boasts about having bought the Chateau d'Yquem of Italian textile.<sup>41</sup>

Trade shows foster competitive and collaborative interactions throughout the whole sector. This temporary bringing together of people contributes to a sense of community: for a few days, participants have the opportunity to establish business relations with new trading partners, to acquire knowledge, and to establish continuity in a number of commercial relationships that are keys to their productive activity. During the fairs, the competitors exhibit their products together in the same space. In the areas of synthesis created by the fair's artistic director to exhibit the flagship fabrics for buyers, each competitor can see what the others have contributed or elaborated. They may thus choose to reorient their future production according to strong ideas they have identified among the other competitors. These professional meetings are not exempt from tensions. Gatekeepers filter the curious at the stands' entrances, and the most prestigious stands accept visitors on invitation only. Manufacturers nevertheless agree on the need to go beyond traditional commercial rivalries to "*fare sistema*" and promote the Italy Brand globally.<sup>42</sup> There are also very strong forms of solidarity between some companies. The weavers of Biella work in close cooperation and they dominate the Italian textile industry; the presidents of the fair generally come from this province. Thanks to this event, small producers benefit from the copresence of the leading luxury brands to boost their own image on a global

scale. The whole cultural environment of the fair contributes to producing the value of “Made in Italy”: this commercial platform creates the identity of the “100% Made in Italy” product through a sophisticated staging where each details counts: the site, the architecture of the stands, the uniforms of the hostesses, the Milanese coffee, the staging of fashion trends, and even the prestige of the chef who delights the guests.

### **Value and International Hierarchy**

Participating in all these shows represents a significant financial investment for the Italian companies that are trying to assert themselves on a global scale: they must finance the shipping of the products, the rental of the stand, the travel of staff members, hotel nights, restaurant meals, and entertainment for guests. Therefore, the economic benefits of these periodic encounters should at least be equal to the sums invested. However, they can benefit from government subsidies, aimed at developing exports in sectors that politicians consider to be strategic for the nation.<sup>43</sup> The national trade promotion agencies are also in attendance at these major international fairs—namely, Business France for French entrepreneurs, and the Italian Trade Agency for Italian entrepreneurs.<sup>44</sup>

Among the big textile industries, no one can escape these lavish exhibitions and receptions without disappearing from the scene: it is essential to stage activity during these fair days. Everyone seems very busy, and the appointments with foreign designers follow at a rapid pace, even though most of the sales have already been made upstream. Buyers get to know the major trends that emerge during the fair, then go to their suppliers to make last-minute orders to update their own collections. Participants try to get an idea of the changes in the market: they discuss with their regular customers, their partners, and even their competitors, and everybody readily makes comments on international news because political ups and downs influence business.

A collective story of the textile industry emerges during these meetings. Important political figures are also invited to express themselves on the economic trends in Italy, and especially in Lombardy. Storytelling tends to play an increasingly key role in these events.<sup>45</sup> Generally, the president of Milano Unica gives an overview of the global challenges awaiting the textile sector in the months ahead. The synthesis of his remarks is provided in several languages to the many journalists present. The digitalization of trade is at the heart of the concerns of all the industrialists. In this arena, China is already well ahead of the Americans and the Europeans. However, in July 2017, digital catalogs were already available in the exhibition areas of the Milano Unica trade show. Since February 2019, the [e-milanounica.it](http://e-milanounica.it) digital platform—created in collaboration with Pitti Uomo—has given a new virtual dimension to the fair.<sup>46</sup> This development enabled Milano Unica staff to deal easily with the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 while staying connected with Asian and American participants.

China and Hong Kong now represent a crucial market for Italian luxury fabrics, but competition from Chinese weavers is of great concern for the board of Milano Unica, which denies them access to the show because they are direct competitors: Italian industrialists must constantly innovate to maintain their leadership. They are anxious that their Chinese counterparts can learn about Western design, branding, and marketing. Among potential Asian countries that hope to participate, only Japan and Korea—because they produce specific, high-quality fabrics—are welcomed by Milano Unica. To face the Chinese competition, Italian professionals have bet on industrial heritage and sustainable fashion.

They are now striving to reterritorialize their production by promoting the family-run fabric mills. Today the Biella industrialists even compare their fabric production with high-quality viticulture. The purity of the Alpine water is presented as a determining factor in the quality of the fabrics. Sustainability has become the key argument both to define the specificity of their products and to attract foreign customers mindful of organic agriculture, the quality of

processes, and the purity of products.<sup>47</sup> Wool processing is a specific Piedmontese and European feature, but manufacturers surely must re-elaborate and enhance this natural product if they wish to survive: while the Chinese industrialists dominate the textile market in terms of quantity, the Italians want to continue to subjugate in terms of quality and innovation. Since 2017, the fifth president of Milano Unica, Ettore Botto Poala, has been developing innovative technical textiles made of wool: “follow the leadersheep.”<sup>48</sup> In this changing context, the Italians are trying to seduce a growing number of designers with environmental concerns, and they have made a real effort in the treatment of the water they use in the weaving process.<sup>49</sup>

This investment also makes marketing sense because clothing has always had the function of spiritually elevating human beings and making hierarchies of values visible.<sup>50</sup> In 2019, Biella presented its candidacy to UNESCO in order to become a creative city and the European reference district for the sustainability of the textile supply chain.<sup>51</sup> The Pistoletto Cittadellarte Fashion Foundation is a Biellese platform dedicated to artistic creation that strives to rethink textile products in response to environmental emergencies.<sup>52</sup> Michelangelo Pistoletto, one of the 100 most highly regarded artists in the world, collaborates with Piedmontese industrialists to reorient their creative work. He designed the symbol of the infinite durability of the “rewoolution” logo. Piedmontese industrialists are returning to materials that, in the past, were typically European: leather and fine wool. If they want to meet the desires of rich Chinese customers, they must go “back to their roots.” At the beginning of 2017, the Zegna group displayed these new values in a promotional video, which also echoes the new political trend.<sup>53</sup> Such discourse about roots—with images of the Piedmont mills—breaks with the focus of previous years on cosmopolitanism.

While international luxury brands have increased their efforts to enter the Chinese market in order to capture the rise in purchasing power, several Chinese companies are, in turn, investing in the luxury segment in order to offer clothing or accessories as worthy as the major

Western brands. They are trying to position themselves at the top end of the range by purchasing luxury fabrics woven in Italy, so they can label them “Made in Italy” and raise their prices. The valuation of Italian know-how differs according to the buyers: the “Made in Italy” luxury fabrics take on various meanings when they enter the production of clothes for historic French haute couture houses, such as Balmain and Hermès, or for emerging Chinese luxury brands like Nisiss, founded in 2006. The owner, Susan Chen, is building her own valuation strategy in collaboration with artists and scholars, enhancing visibility of her famous Italian suppliers (notably Loro Piana). Nisiss claims both its Chinese identity and a poetic approach to creation. Its Guangzhou-based designers refuse to refer to Western labels, preferring to highlight their own interiority: “Catching the ‘rhythm’ of nature, rather than reproducing replicas, has long been a key component, running through the development of Chinese art.”<sup>54</sup>

Although Chinese producers are now predominant in the textile sector, the prestige of the old European brands remains intact. Chinese companies still need to refer to Europe in order to sell their products on their own market. However, since January 2019, the Biella industrialists have had to deal with the opening of the first Chinese wool spinning mill in the area: Xinao Textiles Europe, a subsidiary of the same name registered in Shanghai.<sup>55</sup> It is probably too simplistic and unfair to accuse the Chinese garment manufacturers of copying—Italian manufacturers sell their fabrics to them, and so they can subsequently use the Italian label. The Chinese designers want to show that their creations were manufactured with fine Italian fabrics, and use the “Made in Italy” label as a sign of value on their own market. In that way, they produce Italo-Chinese clothes and try in some cases to appear as Italian brands in order to sell them at higher prices. This is typically the strategy of the Chinese brand Giada, which strives to pass as Italian in the eyes of Chinese consumers to the great displeasure of Italian businessmen.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, Giada’s owners do the opposite of what was done by the famous Italian brands when they relocated garment manufacturing to China. It is actually quite



ironic: Italian entrepreneurs go to China in order to produce clothes at a lower cost while the Chinese rely on Italian suppliers to create their own luxury brands. French designers do not need to display the brand “Made in Italy” on their creations; instead, they tend to hide it. For their part, the Chinese need to do so to assert the high level of their nascent fashion houses. Such kinds of business practices highlight the value hierarchy among companies that have made the history of global fashion and newcomers.

In the global fashion sphere, boundaries are totally blurred and artificially recreated for business purposes. The borders can thus be reaffirmed in different ways depending on the hierarchy of values and trading partners. Many Italian and Chinese observers are shocked by these trade realities, but it is quite normal for fashion professionals who evolve in a global world and create hybrid fashion styles.<sup>57</sup> Actually, Italian and Chinese industrialists are increasing their profit margins by working together: one by relocating garment manufacturing, the others by recreating Italian brands in their own markets. This unprecedented situation of interdependence leads them to produce and reproduce a national brand in an increasingly fabricated way, regardless of the affiliations of the designers and workers. Creators are circulating from one brand to another, reinterpreting the different heritages of the fashion houses; meanwhile, industrialists are increasingly mobilizing national symbols on the global scene to assert the value of the flagship products they merchandise. However, the completely off-ground nature of these globalized identities worries their own producers. In order to strengthen the prestige of their products, manufacturers must anchor the process of fabrication in an area with a rich industrial history. As nothing ties the looms to the ground, the Alps’ water quality is recognized as an essential part of the weaving process. Environmental quality and sustainability then become key elements of value-creation. In that way, Milano Unica also exemplifies how a global platform can also contribute to the deglobalization of the textile industry in a context of environmental crisis.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>. The brightest fibers available—cotton and silk—were originally Indian and Chinese specialties. Before colonization, the predominant materials in Europe were linen, wool, and leather.
- <sup>2</sup>. Lisa Rofel and Sylvia J. Yanagisako, *Fabricating Transnational Capitalism: A Collaborative Ethnography of Italian-Chinese Global Fashion*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).
- <sup>3</sup>. John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Melissa Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- <sup>4</sup>. Until 1999, a product that was merely finished in Italy could be labeled “Made in Italy,” which facilitated outsourcing. However, little by little the Italians have restricted this definition in order to protect their industries. Since 2009, Italian law no. 135 stipulates that only products *entirely* made in Italy can display the label “Made in Italy,” “100% Made in Italy,” or “100% Italia.” Any infringement is now punishable by law. The definition of “Made in Italy” has since become the most restrictive in the world.
- <sup>5</sup>. Mechanical industrialists producing weaving looms left Italy to China in 2005. Miro Radici (CEO of Itema-Radici, the worldwide sector leader) explained to *Time Magazine* that to remain the first sector leader, he had to work in China: it is a way to reduce its production costs, but also to stay closer to his new Chinese buyers (Bumpel, Peter. “Twilight in Italy.” *Time Magazine*, December 5, 2005).
- <sup>6</sup>. Tereza Kuldová, “Traversing Trade Fairs and Fashion Weeks: On Dependence and Disavowal in the Indian Fashion Industry.” In *Ethnographies of Conferences and Trade Fairs: Shaping Industries, Creating Professionals*, edited by Hege Høyer Leivestad and Annette Nyqvist, (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 147–69.
- <sup>7</sup>. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1983. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 35.
- <sup>8</sup>. Melissa Aronczyk and Devon Powers, *Blowing Up the Brand: Critical Perspectives on Promotional Culture*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).
- <sup>9</sup>. Patrik Aspers and Lise Skov, “Encounters in the Global Fashion Business: Afterwords.” *Current Sociology* 54, n°5 (2006): 802–19; Skov, Lise, “The Role of Trade Fairs in the Global Fashion Business.” *Current Sociology* 54, n°5 (2006): 764–83.
- <sup>10</sup>. Dominic Power and Johan Jansson, “Cyclical Clusters in Global Circuits: Overlapping Spaces and Furniture Industry Trade Fairs.” *Economic Geography*. 84 n°4 (2008): 423–48.
- <sup>11</sup>. Brian Moeran and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen, eds., *Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries: Fairs, Festivals and Competitive Events*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- <sup>12</sup>. Hege Høyer Leivestad and Anette Nyqvist, eds., *Ethnographies of Conferences and Trade Fairs: Shaping Industries, Creating Professionals*, (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
- <sup>13</sup>. Eugenia Paulicelli, “Fashion: The Cultural Economy of Made in Italy.” *Fashion Practice* 6, n°2 (2014): 155–74; “Italian Fashion: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20, n°1 (2015): 1–9.
- <sup>14</sup>. Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, (London: William Collins, 1982).
- <sup>15</sup>. Power and Jansson, *Economic Geography*.

- <sup>16</sup>. The international consortium POLITICO, “The Political Life of Commodities,” was carried out by the Norbert Elias Centre in Marseille (<https://anr.fr/Projet-ANR-14-CE29-0006>).
- <sup>17</sup>. Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 3–63. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 38.
- <sup>18</sup>. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, 3.
- <sup>19</sup>. In 1973, fifteen weavers from Lyon decided to present their collections together at the *Centre International du Textile* in Paris. Three years later, they were able to consult each other to offer buyers a synthesis of trends; this enabled them to structure the market and limit uncertainty. They were soon joined by other professionals and Première Vision rapidly became international, attracting textile manufacturers and designers from all over the world to Paris (cf. Patrik Aspers and Asaf Darrf, “Trade Shows and the Creation of Market and Industry.” *Sociological Review* 59, n°4 (2011): 758–78.
- <sup>20</sup>. <https://www.milanounica.it/mosaic/it/milano-unica-shanghai>.
- <sup>21</sup>. In an interview by *La Spola*, the president of Milano Unica reported on the commercial frictions between Italian and French industrialists on the conjunction of the fair dates of July 2016. Since then, many Italian suppliers have decided to give up Première Vision to participate only in Milano Unica (Matteo Grazzini, “Erocle Botto Poala: ‘Non diro’ mai o noi o loro.” *La Spola*, February 18, 2016. <https://www.laspola.com/ettore-botto-poala-non-diro-mai-o-noi-o-loro/>).
- <sup>22</sup>. Lynda Dematteo, “Italy as a Luxury Brand for Chinese Consumers: Global Promotion and Inner Discontents.” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10, n°1 (2020): 99–119.
- <sup>23</sup>. <https://indiantextilejournal.com/intertextile-shanghai-a-bigger-success/>.
- <sup>24</sup>. Hazel Clark, “Chinese Fashion Designers: Becoming International.” In *Fashion in Multiple Chinas*, edited by Wessie Ling and Simona Segre Reinach, (London: I. B. Tauris 2018), 199–220.
- <sup>25</sup>. Sabine Chrétien-Ichikawa, “Shanghai: A Creative Fashion System Under Construction.” *China Perspectives*, no. 3 (2015): 33–41.
- <sup>26</sup>. Patrik Aspers, *Orderly Fashion: A Sociology of Markets*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- <sup>27</sup>. Joseph Lampel and Alan D. Meyern, “Field-Configuring Events as Structuring Mechanisms: How Conferences, Ceremonies, and Trade Shows Constitute New Technologies, Industries, and Markets.” *Journal of Management Studies* 45, n°6 (2008): 1025–35.
- <sup>28</sup>. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, 21.
- <sup>29</sup>. Narasimhan Anand and Brittany C. Jones, “Tournament Rituals, Category Dynamics, and Field Configuration: The Case of the Booker Prize.” *Journal of Management Studies* 45 n°6 (2008): 1036–60.
- <sup>30</sup>. Ariane Berthoin-Antal, Michael Hutter and David Stark, *Moments of Valuation: Exploring Sites of Dissonance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015).
- <sup>31</sup>. Brian Moeran, *The Business of Creativity: Toward an Anthropology of Worth*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2003); Brian Moeran and B. T. Christensen, eds., *Exploring Creativity: Evaluative Practices in Innovation, Design and the Arts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- <sup>32</sup>. Jean Baudrillard, *L’échange symbolique ou la mort*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).
- <sup>33</sup>. Andrea Balestri and Marco Ricchetti, “Manufacturing Men’s Wear: Masculine Identity in the Structure of the Fashion Industry.” In *Material Man*, ed. Giannino Malossi (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 52–63.

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- <sup>34</sup>. Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, “Between Art and Commerce: London Fashion Week as Trade Fair and Fashion Spectacle,” in *Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries: Fairs, Festivals and Competitive Events*, eds. Brian Moeran and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011), 249–69.
- <sup>35</sup>. Paul Du Gay and Michael Prykel, *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*, (London: Sages 2002).
- <sup>36</sup>. Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen, *Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries*.
- <sup>37</sup>. Aspers and Skov, *Current Sociology*, 54, n°5.
- <sup>38</sup>. Andrea Colli and Elisabetta Merlo, “Family Business and Luxury Business in Italy (1950–2000).” *Entreprises et Histoire* 46, n°1 (2007): 113–24.
- <sup>39</sup>. Sylvia Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital: Family Firms in Italy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2002).
- <sup>40</sup>. Philippe Blache, “Luxury Business, Family Prestige and Cultural Reasons in the Production of Organisational Beliefs: The Local Case of Biella Industrial Leadership.” *Entrepreneurial Practice Review* 3, n°1 (2013) : 37–54.
- <sup>41</sup>. Frédéric Martin-Bernard, “Loro Piana, le luxe en filature.” *Le Figaro*, December 6, 2014. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/mode-homme/2014/12/06/30007-20141206ARTFIG00006-loro-piana-le-luxe-en-filature.php>
- <sup>42</sup>. Italian politicians and businessmen use the expression “*fare sistema*” to designate their coordinated efforts to boost their companies and the national brand. This locution also works as a watchword to better cope with globalization.
- <sup>43</sup>. David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).
- <sup>44</sup>. In Milan, French and Italian trade diplomacy occupy the same building: the prestigious Palazzo delle Stelline, corso Magenta.
- <sup>45</sup>. Milano Unica even recruited a professional storyteller in the spring of 2017.
- <sup>46</sup>. <https://www.milanounica.it/it>.
- <sup>47</sup>. Francesca Romana Rinaldi, *Fashion Industry 2030: Reshaping the Future through Sustainability and Responsible Innovation*, (Milan: Bocconi University Press, 2019); Francesca Romana Rinaldi and Salvo Testa, *L’impresa moda responsabile: Integrare etica ed estetica nella filiera (Cultura di impresa)*, (Milan: EGEA, 2013).
- <sup>48</sup>. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2slX8IvIsM>.
- <sup>49</sup>. Prato and Biella apply the rules of the Greenpeace Detox Protocol and ZHDC (Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals): <https://www.greenpeace.fr/detox-catwalk/>
- <sup>50</sup>. Jane Schneider, “From Potlatch to Wal-Mart: Courtly and Capitalist Hierarchies through Dress,” in *The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity, and Globalization*, eds. Eugenia Paulicelli and Hazel Clark, (London: Routledge, 2009), 11–27.
- <sup>51</sup>. Guabello is the weaving mill where the green textile of Biella was born: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-3LUj4HDkQ>.
- <sup>52</sup>. Edgar Morin and Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Impliquons-nous* (Paris: Acte Sud, 2015).
- <sup>53</sup>. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GywevQuglwo>.
- <sup>54</sup>. <http://www.nisiss.com>.
- <sup>55</sup>. Carlo Andrea Finotto, “Tessile, a Biella la prima filatura cinese: Così il distretto è cambiato in dieci anni,” *Il Sole 24 Ore*, January 30, 2019. <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/tessile-biella-prima-filatura-cinese-cosi-distretto-e-cambiato-dieci-anni-AFH0PjC>
- <sup>56</sup>. <https://dev.giada.com>.
- <sup>57</sup>. Simona Segre Reinach, *Un mondo di mode: Il vestire globalizzato*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2011).