

FEDERAZIONE MONDIALE DEI CLUB E CENTRI UNESCO (WFUCA)

Consiglio Esecutivo e Convegno Internazionale

“Il Linguaggio Universale della Musica e dell’Arte per un’Etica Globale”

Lucca e Firenze, 8-13 marzo 2013

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Ethic Values in Minor Arts: craftsmanship

Florence, 11 March 2013

1 - HISTORICAL SUMMARY ON MINOR ARTS

The meaning of “Minor Arts” has changed during the centuries, in relation with the meaning of “Major Art”.

If in the Middle Ages the Greater Arts were those of Wool and Silk, and other professional corporations, but always in the productive field, the Minor Arts were those with a smaller surplus value, with poorer raw materials or less manufacturing stages, but always related to production and manual skill.

In the Romantic Age the Major Art became that of sculptors and painters, Art with capital A, thereby Minor Arts were those in which productivity combined with an undeniable originality and style (which was as good as the one of the artists). The only difference was that in Minor Arts, the value of the product was not only aesthetic, but it was summed up with the value of the raw material (gold, silver, gems) and of the artisan’s labor. In fact, the “minority” of this art was given by this not “Romantic” blend, so it was somehow nullified and lessened.

Nowadays the manual skill and originality of the artisanal product, the difficulty of the required training, the lack of considerable maestri (masters) compared with the growing request of great value products, make the importance of these objects –reproduced but irreplaceable–unique and universally recognized. Thus, “Minor Art” is not a proper definition anymore, as it doesn’t represent the social consideration of this field.

It is better to talk about “artistic craftsmanship” or “profession of the arts”, definitions which better combine the manual skills with the high quality of the object, and sometimes reach the uniqueness of the art.

2 - THE STATE AND MINOR ARTS

The sector of artistic craftsmanship in Italy is not surveyed as one. ISTAT classifications combine these craftsmen with the industries of the same field, relating the expression of quality of the product to the used raw material: gold, silver, leather, paper, not noble metals, and so on. Some

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Italian Regions, which have the competence in this field, have tried to suggest an independent classification, with no satisfactory result.

Anyway, all those professions that act in the field of the applied aesthetics (architects, designers, landscape architects etc...) would be left out, although not in a merely entrepreneurial way.

Therefore no legislation or tailor-made treatment has been put up to date. The entrepreneur is alone on the global market, no matter the size of his company. If he makes it through without being absorbed by a more organized and well-structured trademark, it is almost always his worth, which he doesn't share with others.

3 - SIZE OF THE SECTOR

In Italy the companies of this field are about 40.000, plus 8.000 more conservation companies, which have the same value, and maybe bigger and more complex professional responsibilities.

The number of this manufacturing companies is not significant, if we consider that in Italy there are more than 5 million firms, they account for about 1% of the Italian entrepreneurial panorama.

4 - ETHICAL VALUES OF THE MANUFACTURING SCENE

In this secondary world, which is varied and complex, ethical values are undoubtedly at the core of the daily behaviour.

Firstly, as we're talking about individual enterprises or partnerships, the entrepreneur himself is burdened with all the hazards, and the responsibilities that sometimes can result in crisis and personal tragedies.

Secondly, the relationship with the employees and apprentices is as close as a family relationship, since it requires an extended training. The entrepreneur becomes a sort of father who hands down his knowledge heritage to his “children”, with no hesitation in engaging himself in this process.

The bond that builds the artisan business is the result of unmediated relationships which appeal on the values of self-engagement, education, self-improvement, passion and mutual respect.

Moreover, when the value of the product depends on the commitment, craftsmanship and uniqueness of the human capital, the relationship between the entrepreneur and his employees can't be limited to the mere man power and salary.

The future of the best apprentices will be to undertake more and more tasks and responsibilities that will turn the subordinate collaboration into the equal and self-engaging position of the associate.

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5 - THE REDEMPTION OF THE VALUES IN THE SECTOR

The global crisis of the last few years did undermine this sector, but it didn't jeopardize it.

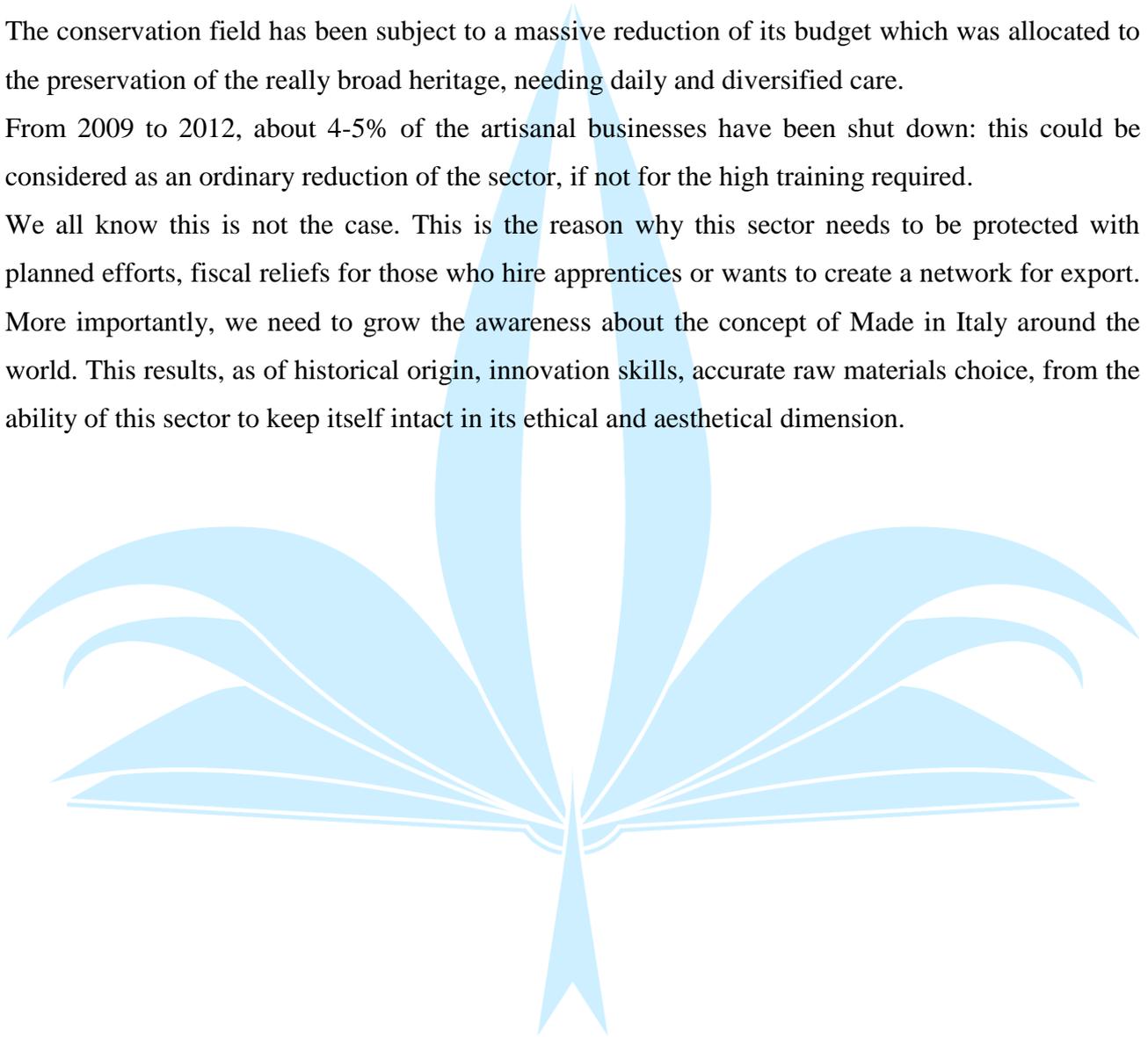
Small businesses with no connection to the foreign markets have failed or have been deeply affected by the fall of the internal demand.

The conservation field has been subject to a massive reduction of its budget which was allocated to the preservation of the really broad heritage, needing daily and diversified care.

From 2009 to 2012, about 4-5% of the artisanal businesses have been shut down: this could be considered as an ordinary reduction of the sector, if not for the high training required.

We all know this is not the case. This is the reason why this sector needs to be protected with planned efforts, fiscal reliefs for those who hire apprentices or wants to create a network for export.

More importantly, we need to grow the awareness about the concept of Made in Italy around the world. This results, as of historical origin, innovation skills, accurate raw materials choice, from the ability of this sector to keep itself intact in its ethical and aesthetical dimension.



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