

## The Meaning of the Made in Italy Changes in a Changing World

*Riccardo Giumelli*

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### **1. Author information**

Riccardo Giumelli, Department Culture e Civiltà, University of Verona (Italy)

### **2. Contact authors' email address**

riccardo.giumelli@univr.it

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# *The Meaning of Made in Italy Changes in a Changing World*

Riccardo Giumelli\*

Corresponding author:

Riccardo Giumelli

E-mail: [riccardo.giumelli@univr.it](mailto:riccardo.giumelli@univr.it)

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the possibility of a change in the widespread idea of 'Made in...?', which we all are familiar with, in relation to some values and an identity that remind us of the place where products are manufactured. In particular, we studied the case of Made in Italy, which, in the collective imagination, is connected to a production that comes from Italy according to the logic of a production characterized territorially. But in a world where the processes of globalisation, or rather of glocalisation, are deconstructing the fundamental paradigm of the nation-state and territoriality in favour of mobility, is it still possible to speak unequivocally of Made in Italy? In our paper we will discuss step by step how we are assisting in important cultural changes that can give new meaning to the globally recognized expression. We reflect on this issue starting from the most widespread theories and with reference to exemplary cases.

Keywords: Glocalisation, Italicity, Made in Italy

## **Introduction**

In this article we suggest some food for thought about the possibility of shifting the assumption of 'Made in...?' to the one of 'Made by...?'. As the starting point of our reflections, the question is: does Made in Italy still exist? This is not meant to be a provocative question, just a way to consider a reality which has already been felt beyond all the widespread opinions. The change is already on its way, in its various and multiple forms, even if nowadays we have no clear references or data that can be used to perceive and understand the

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\* Department Culture e Civiltà, University of Verona (Italy).

phenomenon. That's why we are using the old references also when they can only explain a part of the problem, without capturing the changes, which are transforming the meanings usually assigned to Made in Italy. This way of thinking inevitably imparts new perspectives on the relationship between Italy and the world. The main subject of focus is not only on the production – particularly the place of production – but on the consumers and their attitudes, values, and behaviours.

This means to enhance the 'Italy followers communities', which play an important part in the economic and cultural significance of Made in Italy and therefore able to provide a win-win link between Italy and the world. A link which may lead to proposals for it to be considered from a political point of view as well. In particular, 'the Italy followers communities' or 'Italici' as we used to call them, following Piero Bassetti's ideas, (Bassetti, 2015, 2008; Giumelli, 2010; D'Aquino; 2014), love Italian goods and for this reason they buy them or even, in some cases, produce them. All these products boast some values of the Italian culture, creating the so-called *Italian way of living*. There are various examples of some not so authentic Italian firms that produce and sell the *Italian way of living*, which we will discuss in depth later on.

We believe that attention to the complexity of the meaning of Made in Italy implies the idea of re-thinking it in connection with economic and political measures, 'in dealing in a coherent way,' with the 'policies for its promotion, development and protection in foreign markets' (Esposito, 2006: xix).

It is a funnel-shaped work, starting from the very general concepts – naturally paradigmatic – such as globalization, or better *glocalization*, in order to get, afterwards to a point of estimating the possibility of the changes, the impact on the identity of products, and on consumer attitudes in various countries where, for instance, Made in Italy is released or sold. We will use some fully, globally and trans-disciplinary acknowledged expertise, a set of data and examples which will objectify our analysis even if dealing with a strong sociological and cultural point of view.

This paper reflects the work I have produced as a member of the Advisory Board of Assocamerestero<sup>1</sup>, in which the theme of Made in Italy and

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<sup>1</sup> Assocamerestero is 'the Associazione of the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad'. It plays a constant role in strategic direction for the activities carried out by the Italian Chambers of Commerce in the world in support of the 'internationalisation of SMEs and the promotion of Made in Italy, through specific assistance, both on the organisational side and on the project itself. The international representation and institutional lobbying is supported by ongoing research collaborations with public and private entities and communications - intensive activities towards Italian stakeholders

the new meanings related to it, with respect to prospects and developments, has become an important subject of internal discussion. Although it has not on these occasions produced an official written text, the occasion has given rise to reflections and an awareness that cannot be left out, but which have the possibility of being developed in this paper (Giumelli, 2014b).

We do not expect to be exhaustive and complete, we aim to provide a hint of reflections that may require further discussions, and various kind of contributions – cultural, economic, business, sociology, and so on – which will give rise to a common consciousness of all global changes and the consequences also in our particular case of study. Therefore, we are dealing with an interpretative work where we also can meet experiences, practices, and established theoretical contexts.

### **1. From globalisation to glocalisation as a new basic paradigm**

Before we get to the specific points of contention, we want to start with some more general arguments. We are experiencing a ‘changeover of age’. These are the words with which Alberto Melucci (1998) – a famous Italian sociologist – described, at the end of the last century, a deep cultural change with implications for all aspects of daily life, micro and macro, and therefore comparable to only a few other changes in history. The historical framework in which we are living nowadays is one of globalization, or rather the glocalization, as we will see below. The interpretation of what we consider to be the transformation of an age arises from the evident, increasing global flow of people, goods, symbols, data, images, and so on, which are moving around the globe without major obstacles. It is the globalization of the free market that appeared after the fall of the Iron Curtain; it is the globalization of the new means of communication and transport; and it is the new direction of mankind.

Globalization is not the phenomenon that – at least initially – many of us saw as ushering in a global homogenization, determined by global economic processes – a phenomenon referred to as *McDonaldisation* (Ritzer, 1993, 2012) or *globalism* (Beck, 1999, 2005). On the contrary, it is a polymorphous process, hardly verifiable, uneven, uncommonly, changing. Not as much homogenization but heterogenisation, “The complex cultures of our time are in a visible state of flux, and to consider them as “processes” would be just as natural as to consider them as “structures”. They are determined by the

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(media, institutions and companies). For more information see: [www.assocamerestero.it](http://www.assocamerestero.it).

change in microtime and macrotime (reversible changes) and not in whole or even in parts. There is a separate distribution, not only of meanings and their manifest forms, but also of the types of cultural processes' (Hannerz, 1992: 166).

Arjun Appadurai (1996, 2013) previewed a world where *McDonaldisation* was only a part of the process and not even exact. Supporting the paradigm of heterogenisation, Appadurai argues that the global cultural flows, when entering in other contexts, are never perfectly synchronized with the referential world that first gave life to those flows. Cultural models transferred from one area to another, once imported in different societies, always tend to be quickly *indigenised*.

The flows that transcend the national dimension take on new meanings. Appadurai, in his famous work *Modernity at large* (1996), suggests five factors that lead to the global exchange of ideas and information. These dimensions are like landscapes, fluid and constantly shifting, just as cultures are. Within each of these landscapes exist multiple realities, as an idea or image changes its context depending on the spectator and his particular imagery. So we have the *ethnoscape* (the flux of human beings, tourists, refugees, migrants, workers, global players), then the *technoscape* (the flux of technology, the speed through which information, signs, symbols and human being are moving constantly, without borders), the *finanscape*, (the flux of money, in every possible form; fast, impossible to follow and control, often mysterious), the *mediascapes* (the flow of information conveyed mainly by new media), and the *ideoscapes* (the flux of ideas, ideologies, cultural models link to politics). Each of these streams is a landscape that interacts with others in a particular cultural environment and historic moment, creating situations that are often diverse and contradictory.

Nevertheless, Appadurai is aware that the topic of cultural homogenization – even at a superficial level – has got a popular perception that still remains so strong that it could create a form of resistance at a local policy level. During the '90s, many cultural, political, and executive activities aimed to preserve local individuality and identity. Figuratively speaking, we shut our doors to the global flows because they bring with them a kind of disorder that may destabilize the arrangements and behaviours we acquired a long time ago. The nation-state is not able to manage these flows. This last issue fits in the broader topic about the deconstruction of the paradigm of the nation-state (Butler, Spivak, 2007; Reinhard, 2010). The nation-state shows his helplessness, raising more and more walls (Brown, 2010) in favour of new emerging social actors in the 'neo-medieval' age (Khanna, 2011): 'A weakening of the EU and its member states will strengthen other political actors such as cities, regions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As a result, state

borders will be fuzzier, political loyalties will be increasingly divided and administrative jurisdictions will overlap to a much greater extent. I call this phenomenon 'neo-medievalism' (Zielonka, 2014: xi).

It is in this very relationship that a friction arises between the local, the global, and the nation-state, so the transformation in action becomes very clear. On top of the negative point of view there's a positive one, which may complement the local and global in a practical way, like two ruthless, concurrent, interplaying tensions.

It was the sociologist Roland Robertson (1992, 1995) who first coined the word *glocalism* in the middle of the 90s. Some years after, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2005, 2013) developed its meaning, thus giving it great relevance. The idea was about the two situations not clashing but cooperating together. The trick is to make them work properly. We know, by the way, that this is expensive work.

The issue is that it is difficult to maintain control over these flows. It may be impossible to regulate them as they move at an extraordinary speed. They are a great number, and not all of them are reachable, verifiable. They are quite difficult to understand and, moreover, they raise the questions about who should take the responsibility and the power to control these flows and how legitimating this authority (Castells, 2009).

As highlighted by Wendy Grinswold (2004), communities are no longer characterised by just territory; rather, these communities overlap, stay side by side, and are often replaced by communities as a relational concept<sup>2</sup>. Identity can be held together not only geographically, but also by bonds defined by common interests and mutual support, which supersede the territorial ties and which are maintained by a global communications networks. It is clear that the collective relational identities use tools such as social networks. Everyone, given easy enough access, may participate in different communities of relationships simultaneously: football fans or fans of a particular team, but also a lover of British pop, golf, and of pipe collections. To belong to a territorial community has often meant only belonging to one community,

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<sup>2</sup> Rather than talk about the community, which refers to a concept clearly explained in classical studies of sociology, in particular those of Ferdinand Tönnies, which imply an idea of bonding, preferably territorially and especially in the local area, we should use the term collective identity. Also because the relational communities are changing and are not characterised, in most cases, by geographical proximity, where in the words of Tönnies (2002 [1887]: 64–65.): 'In community [Gemeinschaft] people remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors...whereas in society [Gesellschaft] they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors.' In other words, individuals in relational communities have little to do with the idea of community.

especially with respect to traditional societies, something that only changed through human mobility, which still requires effort and above all important economic and cultural capital. There is less and less correspondence between the territorial community and those relational collective identities. Piero Bassetti (2015) calls the relational community a community of feelings, because the idea of shared human feeling prevails and it does not depend on geographical position, but is rather configured by communications networks (Castells, 2009, 2010).

The *detrterritorialization* and the *virtualization* of the processes give rise to problems like the organization of the institutional authorities needed controlling the global processes, simply because it is unthinkable to delegate them to a board who has no nation-state behind it. On the other side, we are focusing on processes, on the mix-up of the changes of the most various actors involved, and just at the very moment in which the action is developing, it has no predictable consequences. David Held (1995) and John B. Thompson (1995) describe the problems of managing these kinds of situations through the strict link between democracy and the nation-state. In other words, it is difficult to find new glocal institutions able to manage problems related with postmodernity.

Transnational flows are not always governable: finance, information, market, management of natural catastrophic events, terrorism or global climate. They require power to be in the hands of new organisations, which cannot govern by the nation-state. But the step appears unclear, painful and, for many, undesirable. The *in* and *out* flows from the local to the global are not motivated only by process of migration in a single foreign country, but they are more and more connoted by the concept of mobility, which increases the value of some factors linked to globalization:

- The immediacy in the sharing of experiences, know-how and life styles.
- The velocity in placing the goods and symbols into different contexts.
- The multiculturalism belonging to the professional and political characters who are running governments/companies.

Therefore, globalisation becomes an asset to be customised and localised using some instruments and elements that are set out by the local communities or by the community of relation. The sharing of these elements fixes the community, but does not make it static. This is the true and deepest aspect of globalization: the dynamic membership. This dynamic is characterized by the flexibility of identities – whether of individuals or



collectives. This process allows a distinction to be made between the territorial and the relational communities. In both traditional and modern societies, communities coincided. In the territorial community of the modern society, the boundaries of the State coincided with a sense of belonging, in order to create the sense of 'we'. In contrast, we are able to see in the postmodern society that the relational community could be created without the necessity of proximity. The relational community can be defined virtually and it proceeds through a network configuration. As the activities of 'community building' are more and more artificial, the question concerning governance becomes a central, both with respect to dealing with the opening of the processes and with the results.

Summing up, we can say that *glocalism* may become a resource, as it is a source of wide opportunities: relationships, business, know-how. It is the consequence of a condition of living. One can live with the tension of daily life on a regional or local basis, while interacting at the same time with what is going on at a global level. *Act locally, think globally*<sup>3</sup> is a common motto, which can summarize what we have described here above. We suggest acting locally but at the same time listening, thinking, and placing oneself as a global actor.

## 2. Made in Italy

### 2.1 *Made in Italy: a meaning in the process of being transformed. The challenge with deterritorialization, delocalization and deconstruction of the Nations-State.*

Dealing with the theoretical and conceptual basis of glocalism, it becomes necessary to go deeper into the subject. The first evident and daily aspect deals with thinking over carefully all the meanings usually assigned to Made in Italy. The question is: how can we rethink Made in Italy in a cultural context as well represented here?

Some time ago, reliable resources<sup>4</sup> – among which was the website of the Italian Foreign Office<sup>5</sup> – declared that Made in Italy, if in fact it was a real

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<sup>3</sup> The Association Globus et Locus in Milan, directed by Mr. Piero Bassetti, adopted his motto. The Association has published a Manifesto for Glocalism, a sort of vademecum to understand what glocalism is and how it will affect our day-to-day life. See the Manifesto for Glocalism at: ([http://www.globusetlocus.org/Chi\\_Siamo/CosÈ\\_Il\\_Glocalismo/Suggerimenti\\_bibliografici.kl](http://www.globusetlocus.org/Chi_Siamo/CosÈ_Il_Glocalismo/Suggerimenti_bibliografici.kl)).

<sup>4</sup> *Se Made in Italy fosse un brand sarebbe il terzo al mondo*, Il Sole 24 Ore, August 27, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Speech by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the meeting of the Asean countries, March 22, 2012,

brand, would be the 3rd most well known in the world after Coca Cola and Visa, quoting important research by KPMG (2011: 29)<sup>6</sup>. Over the past five years, this classification has changed, according to recent data analysed by different international reliable societies, such as Interbrand<sup>7</sup> (2015) and Eurobrand<sup>8</sup> (2015). Arguably, the best and most highly influential brands in our world today remain: Apple, Google and Coca Cola. Nevertheless, some different inquiries found that the brand Ferrari, in 2014, was the strongest and most powerful in the world<sup>9</sup>. Ferrari was particularly the first brand in the results which were listing (BSI) the 'brand strength index', or, in other words, the values strictly linked to the brand without any reference to the billing data. By the way, Apple is leading the general results list, the one that considers also the returns. In any case we cannot deny the tremendous diffusion and perception of Made in Italy worldwide.

The number of terms related to 'Made in Italy', when we calculate it using Google, is a fact immediately available, even if we must consider it only from a quantity point of view and, therefore, it is capable of being interpreted in many different ways. There are 540,000,000 terms; as a result, we can have a clearer idea of how extensive it is, particularly if we take a look to those terms related to the brand 'Made in China' (615,000,000) or those related to 'Made in USA' (1,330,000,000), which produce the most goods.

For a better understanding of how Made in Italy was born, it is necessary to look backwards. Originally the term was related to the manufacturing and industrial production made inside the state's boundaries. The meaning was born and developed in the 50s and 60s of last century together with the

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([http://www.esteri.it/mae/it/sala\\_stamp/a/archivionotizie/interventi/2012/03/2012\\_0322\\_terzi\\_asean.html](http://www.esteri.it/mae/it/sala_stamp/a/archivionotizie/interventi/2012/03/2012_0322_terzi_asean.html))

<sup>6</sup> KPMG is a leading company of consulting services in Italy (around 200 million euro in revenues, 12 locations, 1.300 professionals). The research analyses the prospects of Made in Italy for the Italian medium and small enterprises: 'Going Global. Internazionalizzazione ed evoluzione dei modelli di business Una priorità per le imprese italiane'. For more details see: (<https://www.kpmg.com/IT/it/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/Going-Global.pdf>). See for more details the results of another bit of research conducted by KPMG: *Made In Italy Works?* (2011), which analyses the trend 2006–2010 of Made in Italy in different countries in the world, the Italian brands that are most well-known, the research of 'made in Italy' in Google and on Youtube, <https://www.kpmg.com/IT/it/IssuesAndInsights/Events/Documents/KPMGFrancoMasera.pdf>,

<sup>7</sup> See: (<http://interbrand.com/best-brands/best-global-brands/2015/ranking/>).

<sup>8</sup> See (<http://www.eurobrand.cc>).

<sup>9</sup> È Ferrari il brand più forte, primato Apple per il valore, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, February 18, 2014.

economic miracle. In the beginning Made in Italy was above all a label given by the other European countries – particularly by France, Germany, and Great Britain – who wanted to make clear the origin of any non-domestic production.

The original idea of Made in Italy relates back to the so-called *country effect* (Codeluppi, 2011). To put this more simply, not only the place of production matters, but also the specific identity of a country and the consequences of the way the products are manufactured. In a certain way the idea of Made in ‘some place’ crystallise certain expectations regarding that particular State, linked to its culture, history and memory. The classic Italian products that are now sung of around the world are the three fabulous Fs: food, fashion and furniture. Codeluppi argues that Made in Italy arrived simultaneously with the birth of Italian fashion. The Italian economist Giacomo Becattini (1998, 2000) related the specific characteristics of the Made in Italy to those of the industrial districts, which characterized the economic and industrial development of Italy after the Second World War.

The economic miracle and the big and continuous socio-economic development of Italy until the 80s, gradually changed that specific meaning. From a pure geographical fact it has become a *brand*, able to evoke the feeling of ‘*savoir vivre, savoir être and savoir faire*’. This is how the *brand* has been assigned with merits and symbols everyone can identify with. But the Made in Italy is not just a fortuitous fact belonging to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; it is like that only historically and economically, but its cultural roots come from a distant past. The ease with which Made in Italy comes to evoke some different, deeper, deep-rooted cultural meanings, must not be seen as a spontaneous event. It deals with a wider and historically long-lasting interpretation of the cultural basis that gave birth and significance to itself. It comes from far-off times, from a long tradition of Italian culture, produced by a contamination and hybridization among culture, art, manufacturing skills, aesthetic sense, territory, *genius loci*, crafts, historical memories and so on...

In this time period, the art of living and business skill, particularly in the traditional fields, created a mix that was able to renew the meaning of Made in Italy. Many researchers have showed how Made in Italy is associated with typical values: quality, craftsmanship, creativity, lifestyle (Ferraresi, Mortara, Pomodoro, 2011). According to the study by KPMG,<sup>10</sup> foreigners usually associate the term Made in Italy with certain values, such as *appearance, beauty, luxury, wellbeing, passion, and creativity*. They do not consider some other factors, such as technology and innovation. Especially, for a foreigner, the Made in

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<sup>10</sup> Op. cit, 2011.

Italy means fashion, food, interior design products, while other important Italian exports, such as robotics and electronics, are not perceived.

In 2011, Carlo D'Asaro Biondo<sup>11</sup> conducted some research for KPMG in collaboration with Google,<sup>12</sup> which showed that the online searches of Made in Italy, from 2006 to 2010, grew steadily, while the terms most sought after have been cars, fashion, tourism and food<sup>13</sup>. As reported by Google research, the search for Made in Italy has grown by such a large margin that the same Google just assigned a dedicated portal<sup>14</sup> to these 'excellences' – this is a unique case in the world – an exclusive space for the Made in Italy in order to better promote it.

Recently, the other new economy's giant Amazon declared that Made in Italy, in the words of Francois Nuyts<sup>15</sup>, is the word most sought after in their search engine<sup>16</sup>. Amazon, sensing the great business that can potentially be gained, like Google, decided to open a store in Florence dedicated to the Made in Italy. Another piece of research promoted by the 'Club dell'Economia' (AA.VV., 2013b), in collaboration with Censis, based on the opinions of a representative sample of the Italian population, showed that for the 24.3% of the people interviewed, Made in Italy represented a strong international brand synonymous with taste, high quality, and beauty.

From research conducted by Assocamerestero (2006), an idea was conceived that new products did not only create a new Made in Italy, but also, and above all, through a different way of thinking in terms of business and market relationships. It is necessary to investigate and monitor periodically, from the inside out, the environment in which it is formed and moves, because the same ideas of globalisation and glocalisation create ample amount of relationships that are more intense and complex, thus causing a new and significant extension of the territorial impact, amending and expanding the networks of power and interregional relations. The research asserts that in order to '[sell] Made in Italy's products, it is necessary to sustain Made in Italy as philosophy and lifestyle'. To quote Sergio Mattarella, President of the Italian Republic: 'Made in Italy is not only a product to which the Italian

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<sup>11</sup> President Google Operations, South and Easter Europe, Middle East and Africa.

<sup>12</sup> See D'Asaro Biondo C., (2011), Il grande risveglio del Made in Italy, research conducted by KPMG in collaboration with Google. <https://www.kpmg.com/IT/it/IssuesAndInsights/ItalyWorks/Documents/GoogleCarloDAsaroBiondo.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Google internal data, Queries volume 2010 related to Auto, Fashion, Food, Travel 'Made in Italy' keywords. Analysis is limited to countries of analysis.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.eccellenzeindigitale.it/home>.

<sup>15</sup> Country Manager of Amazon for Italy and Spain.

<sup>16</sup> *Amazon: Made in Italy re delle ricerche web*, La Repubblica, October 5, 2015.

origin gives an additional competitive edge. It is a style... A taste... A mark that shows to the world our capacity, our intelligence, our environment, our work culture. And the world appreciates this style Italian<sup>17</sup>, words spoken on the occasion of the celebration of the “Giornata della Qualità Italia”, in 2015.

In order to clarify what Made in Italy is, we have pointed to a time review which starts from the remote roots of the concept. There is anyway a different kind of review, which considers globalization, where the processes of delocalization and re-localization are more and more frequent, a necessary element to put forward some new considerations.

Made in Italy was born as a concept linked to the Italian nation-state, but since the global flows are deconstructing the original concept of the state, giving rise to new social actors on the world scene, it is normal to ask some new and urgent questions: how do we make sense of Made in Italy if a larger part of the manufacturing is done abroad, in very different countries? What is it that defines Made in Italy: the intellectual property right? The juridical premises of the company? The place where a product has been created? According to this specific meaning, the intellectual property right has a location, which raises the question, above all, of how we shall recognize it? How should we consider the Italian brands, which have been acquired by foreign companies and vice versa? In the first group we have to remember: Perugina, Buitoni, Antica Gelateria del Corso, San Pellegrino, Invernizzi, Locatelli, Peroni, Parmalat, Gancia wines, Lamborghini, Gucci, and many others.

What else can be implied when brands and reference values remain those typical of Made in Italy, but everything else is in other hands? For instance, how can we define what is the new Fiat, the FCA? It is present in the whole world: factories are in Italy, in the USA, the legal offices are in the Netherlands and the fiscal ones are in London. It is the image of the crossbreeding between the two tensions – global and local – that is changing radically the identity – usually linked to a country – and becoming instead something totally new, which is hardly recognizable.

Let’s think of the great entrepreneurs, the highly famous designers who do not live in Italy permanently anymore. They are cosmopolitans, they create, they invent while living outside of the native boundaries; they live in some kind of crossover environments. And, moreover, we can talk about the productions made by the people of Italian origin, living outside of Italy, which are recalling the traditional and intrinsic values, as we said, of Made in Italy.

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<sup>17</sup> *Mattarella: imboccare una nuova strada*, AISE, April 27, 2015.

2.2. *Made in Italy and the Italian way of life: from the Made in... to the Made by ...?*

In the course of looking at this issue it is important to go back to the concept of Made in Italy. How was it born and what does it involve nowadays? Does there exist a Made in Italy community? Or rather, are there followers of the *Italian way of living*? And then what is – today – the consumption of Made in Italy? How can we set out clearly the production made in a specific location?

One of the most obvious questions, concerning the classic relationship between the production itself and the location of that production, runs into difficulties. There are of course some so-called *full Made in Italy* products, which are entirely produced in the same location. These items are communicating a clear sense of their belonging. However, worldwide, the trend is – as we know perfectly well – of delocalizing, looking for more profitable job markets or fiscal facilities. Dealing with the concept of Made in Italy, what is really difficult is to think through – in a rigorous way – that *'in'*. Which location is it pointing out? What is the meaning of pointing out a clear location? In the glocalist idea, the uniqueness of a place of production and its identity do not go missing, but can actually be enhanced. We look at products searching for a difference, distinctiveness. But the real matter is found in the difference between the place of production and what that product itself means. Very often the two of them do not match anymore. What do we mean by this?

A product, an idea, or anything else can no longer represent strictly a location; rather, they represent a combination of values of a cultural nature, which they bring about and which can be enhanced, showing themselves as priceless, because the market chooses them as they have the power of being competitive.

Today, the scenario appears dominated by economic forms of 'perception' in which the brands are, more often than not, perceived as higher than the products themselves. In this sense, it is critical that we spread awareness that Made in Italy should not only be recognised as a localised production in our country, but also that it is perceived as a whole product. This is what that product raises in the consumers' social imaginary. In other words, it is the symbolic power that a product evokes that determine its success, or lack of (KPMG, 2011: 29).

In the above-mentioned point, Assocamerestero's research is crystal clear – we must move from Made in Italy's products to Made in Italy's solutions. To put it in a different light, we must move from an economy of goods to an economy of Italian experiences, through culture and knowledge. Made in Italy should engage contemporary changes focusing on the image, or in other

words the perception of the consumers themselves or on the identity of the company and how it will market itself, rather than focusing solely on the protection of the product. To create and disseminate new expectations of a product that carries the label Made in Italy, setting new standards and styles of consumption, is not only a difficult task but it is often also difficult to arrange.

The real problem is to think that only Italian actors, primarily via politics or particular lobbies, can govern these images and identities. The process of globalisation introduces new social actors who are, in our case, not Italian, to be able to build new images and new brand identities. The reason is very simple: today's market has no boundaries. The market does not coincide with the nation-state. Furthermore, the processes of virtualisation determine the aggregations, as has been widely claimed, which transcend the link with the territory. From this point of view, what is actually representing Made in Italy is no more the location/Italy, but rather that special way of being, that world; in other words, the *Italian way of life*, which recalls a cultural identity. Instead of mentioning Made in Italy, it would be better to speak of *made by Italy*. These words seem to be not politically correct, we are fully aware of that, but at the same time, they reveal, in a more accurate way, the processes we are witnessing.

The economist Carlo Alberto Pratesi discussed a paper at the Italian Parliament which can help us to be clearer.<sup>18</sup> He defines the demand and offer of Made in Italy. The demand was represented by three targets. Firstly, the *Italians*, on account of their innate attitude to consume their own products. Then the *Italian community*, which now lives all around the world as expatriates, whether permanently or temporarily. The last target is the *followers*. Those who are not of Italian origin, nor have any real connection to the culture, other than a love and passion for the *Italian way of life*. The offer is divided in: *Italian companies* that sell Italian products that have been manufactured in Italy, *Italian companies* that sell products designed in Italy but that have been manufactured abroad, and Italian companies bought by foreign companies, foreign companies that sell products that seem Italian (*Italian sounding*). This scale of division shows the complexity of the matter and for this reason we can talk about the different kinds of Made in Italy; the full Made in Italy, meaning the product goes entirely from production to sale in Italy, the Made in Italy characterised by design, the Made in Italy produced by Italian companies

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<sup>18</sup> Pratesi C. A., *Come cambia il concetto di prodotto italiano. Nuove sfide per la promozione all'estero*, organized by Assocamerestero, June 18, 2014:

(<http://www.assocamerestero.it/default.asp?ln=&idtema=3&idtemacat=1&page=news&index=1&order=a1&categoria=112&paginazione=10&action=read&idnews=141>)

whose property is foreign, and products that give off an illusion of being connected with Italian values, or the Italian language (*Italian sounding*). Nowadays it is possible to define different kinds of Made in Italy because the original meaning is no longer able to fully explain the process in act. We are not confirming that Made in Italy no longer exists; rather, we are suggesting that this phenomenon is accompanied, if not surpassed, by others.

The division between the place of production and the product itself can be re-established precisely through the basic values that both production and product represent: the accuracy applied during the manufacturing, using a classic product, as it happens in the fashion sector – which is typical of Italian creativity – always producing a unique item. On the other side, we are not so much interested in knowing whether the product was conceived in New York or manufactured in Manila or Smirne. The location becomes a secondary question in comparison with the meaning represented by the product itself. We deal with the question of *governance*, as we have already indicated. The split that is more difficult to re-establish, however, is the wider idea of Made in Italy together with the topic concerning the communities' identity, and – more than ever – with the institutions representing them. In other words, the general identity that is more clearly recognizable is that of citizenship, particularly when it comes to a state, an identity which can be built through lawful institutions.

The deterritorialization of Made in Italy raises questions about *who* should take advantage from it, *what* should be preserved, and *who* should not be exploiting it. This *who* doesn't correspond to some particular 'people/citizens group' anymore; moreover, the institutions may interfere, but only in a limited way, together with other states, also if considering the limits coming from the tasks assignable with difficulties to a specific board. The state, for consensus reasons, can introduce some protectionist measures – always within some bounds – but cannot decide and control the global flows at will.

It will become clear that the meaning of Made in Italy is more and more separated from its territory and placed as a real *brand*. As it often happens, these labels – right or wrong – are due to some easy clichés or to some simplifications suggested by the hearsay, which we must consider anyway, as they determine the behaviours and the choices with respect to consumption. This is the reason why we must look at what happens to the brands purchased by foreigners, paying attention in a different way. We should not cry shame, as if we were losing part of our identity. The latest news,<sup>19</sup> according to research

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<sup>19</sup> *Più lavoro, fatturato e produttività: se il Made in Italy emigra, ci guadagna*, La Repubblica, February 9, 2014.



conducted by Prometeia<sup>20</sup> (2014), are showing the increases in sales and revenue (+2,8%), productivity (+1,4%), and jobs (+2%) on account of these firms, which are not altering the product identity nor the values involved, but on the contrary, they are managing and promoting them – with maximum efficiency – in a different way. In other words, these companies implement and support Made in Italy, which they are selling, because it is actually the same Made in Italy that sells well and wants to be sold.

Let's try to see what Made in Italy can evoke in comparison with what Made in China can do. Made in China, which is certainly winning from a quantity point of view, is losing from a quality perspective. It has become, in turn, a *brand* that evokes a lot of values and situations that are not perceived positively by the social imagination: it is cheap, there is little manufacturing accuracy, there is job exploitation, poor attention to security regulations with respect to the products (toys, knitwear, toxic cosmetics). In this case, as consumers, we have no other choice but to sadly think that: *'they do everything out there.'*

Summarizing what we have just said: Made in Italy still exists, but alongside with it there is a wider global phenomenon, which can be a great resource to be used because it is able to reach a greater number of consumers, to get greater financial support and so less restricted by the decisions of the political executive power.

### **3. Made in Italy, followers, and Italian sounding**

#### *3.1 The community aspects*

Inspired by the mentioned presentation by Pratesi and his reference to different targets, we focus on two 'communities': Made in Italy and *the Italian way of living*, even if they are recalling Italy, they must not necessarily be related because:

- The Made in Italy Community – in the Italian collective imagination – means a more or less international group, spread across many different countries; people/consumers who are bound to the product Made in Italy, which reminds them of Italian *savoir faire* (know-how). This specific

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<sup>20</sup> Prometeia in collaboration with ICE (Agency for the promotion abroad and the internationalization of Italian companies), 'L'impatto delle acquisizioni dall'estero sulla performance delle imprese italiane', 2014, (<http://www.ice.it/statistiche/Impatto%20delle%20acquisizioni%20dall'estero.pdf>).

community – even if bound to the *Italian way of living* as well – is strongly focused on the quality and authenticity of the Italian product;

- The followers of the *Italian way of living* are focused on an idea – produced by a direct or evoked experience – which puts the *Italian lifestyle* in the centre of their dynamic identity, attracted as they are by the Italian elegance, good food, artistic and imaginative spirit, creativity, comfortable life solutions, art and cultural entertainment, friendliness and elegant environment. For these *followers*, everything, which recalls or supports the *Italian way of living* – more or less anything that is really Italian or even produced in other countries – is absorbed by all the other symbols of this movable community. By drawing these distinctions, we should not deduce that one of them could be a preferable situation, but only that there is a question concerning the *governance* of this diversity. The distinguished element for both communities is that they are not closed, so they are not based on the value of *exclusivity*, they are absolutely open to some external urges and external symbols, through which they are simply creating a process of otherness and contamination instead of one of alternation.

### 3.2 Demand for Made in Italy, habitus, and social relations

Made in Italy is more and more coming to be defined, as we have previously said, as a community of relationships characterised by particular values, rather than being identified territorially. This way to consider the issue is paradigmatic of our postmodern contemporary dimension. In this sense, what Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*, can help us to get a better understanding of what is going on.

Bourdieu defines habitus as ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 53), which ‘functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions (Bourdieu, 1977: 83).’ Habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) is usually defined as one’s embodied disposition, which influences the actions that an individual take. The habitus refers to the physical embodiment of cultural and social capital, to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, attitudes that we possess due to our life experiences and to the process of socialisation. In other words, referring to Made in Italy, this is not only a geographic place, but a human ambience that can be learned, understood and lived by everyone.

In one of his most important works, *Distinction*, Bourdieu shows us how social class positions can influence our ‘taste’ for cultural objects such as art, food, and clothing. In other words, our aesthetic sensibilities are shaped

by the culturally ingrained habitus. His field of research was mainly the French context. He built the distinctions of habitus on the basis of cultural and socio-economic differences of a vertical nature, the upper classes leading down to the lower. In contrast to the French context, in Italy we could, with all due caution, adopt an interpretation that is more horizontal and transverse, which can determine tastes, attitudes and behaviours. This typical habitus favoured, over time, the values and the definition of the brand Made in Italy. In the words of Ferrarese, Mortara e Pomodoro (2011), 'Made in Italy is not a class habitus, *à la Bourdieu*, but rather a territorial and historical habitus whose the agglutinating element is precisely the taste' (128).

Talking about this specific field, how much space is there left for any definition or redefinition of the purchasing demand for Made in Italy? In which way are Made in Italy or the communities of Italian followers affected by this process of purchasing? How does this process reveal and settle itself in the different communities? Made in Italy is an elaborate product, whose value is due to a larger presence of a well-established knowledge and learning procedure, as a result of some specific processes carried out inside the local situations or in some structured production system, where it is possible to achieve certain complex cognitive experiences. An elaborate product is something excellent for Made in Italy, because we can find in it many components of different natures, recalling many different forms of production, of cultural and territorial contiguity. The Made in Italy product reflects its existing territorial relationships, the know-how learned over time, and the human capital and symbols that were created with the help of continuous action by local networks a long time ago.

However, this is a product requiring the opening of a social process for purchasing abroad as well – a process which is able to give value to these features – enclosing them within the various movable communities.

More precisely – simplifying extremely – it is possible to spot:

- A functional component aiming basically to satisfy the practical aspects and the solutions for some specific needs, such as feeding, dressing up, producing a specific object, and so on.
- An emotive component connected with intricate factors of a cultural nature and often with the ability to evoke specific places and images, and sounds and tastes as well.

Both these elements work together setting out the peculiarity of the product and it is their working that realizes the uninterrupted process of innovation. However, the second contribution has increased over the years and brings back the need for a production that has to be enclosed in a more elaborate system of local and global relationships.

At the heart of Made in Italy there is a complex process of practical and social reproduction, which recalls the communities described above, a process that is expanding from the production place to the consumption place. A further aspect is appearing, which is of a relational nature, meant as a resource. We are talking about the 'social capital', so to speak, that we bring about as consumers, and it deals with the quality and the quantity of the relationships between offer, demand, territories, and individual and collective experience (Esposito, 2006, 2010).

In the logic of glocalization, these aspects of relationships are not always related, but not denied. We need to redo the analysis of the demand for these goods, as the heart of the process of the consumption is not represented by single goods, but by certain elaborate economic goods that 'are produced' by the consumers/users themselves. The same purchased goods are contributing to forming these elaborate economic goods, as well as the time for transforming and supplying the 'overall human capital' by the purchaser. This is the result of the personal capital (education/culture) – including the consumptions and the past experiences – together with the social capital, which is referring to the influences on the consumption choices of all those people with whom it is possible to get in touch through the consumers' relationship network. Therefore, Made in Italy is emerging as a complex social subject of production/consumption – in which various factors are involved – allowing it to get back the active role developed by subjective elements, personal conditioning, values, cultural context, educational system, etc.

The '*stock*' of consumer capital built up for the good of Made in Italy affects the upcoming consumption as well. The present demand is connecting with the experience factors, creating a sort of dependence on the current consumption compared to the upcoming one, so that the increase in the present consumption of goods involves also an increase in its future demand, because it is contributing to boosting the 'consumption capital' and making consumer goods more reasonable. This means that the demand for Made in Italy depends on the ability to influence the '*social consumption capital*' of these fellows who are in some way inclined – as they belong to 'italics' communities – to purchase those goods. It depends on a relational and decoding approach between local and foreign contexts and on an intricate action of cultural promotion and communication, considering all forms of hybridization with the local cultures, and influencing the demand of Made in Italy.

### *3.3 The Italian sounding*

Made in Italy is often associated with *Italian sounding*, which is generally blamed for its negative connotation: Italian sounding being seen as something

fraudulent<sup>21</sup> (AA.VV. 2013a). Italian sounding is seen as a false copy of what it passes itself off as – a genuinely Italian product, not just something that sounds Italian. However, the situation appears to be more complex. We are aware that frauds exist: when a product is passed off as if it were exactly another one, taking its place, stealing the other's peculiar identity. But when a product shows itself as a hybrid, something new which is born in particular conditions and does not want to take the place of the original item, but just be inspired by it, what kind of meaning should we give to such a situation? For instance, how can we comment on the production of a cheese made by Italians expatriates in the USA, who have taken with them some specific expertise, because they had already produced that cheese while they were in Italy and now they can optimize costs with the help of local products and local machines, giving birth to the *Parmesan* instead of the *Parmigiano* or something else? Are we talking about the same thing or do these products have a different interpretative positioning? To what extent are they competitors?

The thing is that the Italian state cannot interfere in stopping people from doing business in other countries and, in any case, the counterfeiting is not so clear. Then, how should we determine the identity of a product? Let us think of all those products that are recalling our language: *Freddocino*, *Frappuccino*, *Cafriccio*, *Mocaccino* when dealing with a coffee, rather than *Soffatelli*, *Pastachetti* with pasta. We could give so many examples. This is something new that wants to recall a new world of values. An interesting example of *Italian sounding* is Caffè Nero. As the site reports, 'Caffè Nero is a European coffee house brand specialising in the creation of high quality Italian coffee. Our philosophy is really very simple: Premium Italian coffee. A warm and welcoming atmosphere. Good food and great personal service.'<sup>22</sup> Franchises display imagery of Italian people, Italian places and they, of course, sell Italian coffee, yet the company is, in fact, English.<sup>23</sup>

Alternatively, there are cases of Italian companies that use symbols taken from other countries. Such as *Napapijri*,<sup>24</sup> the Finnish for 'polar circle', with the Norwegian flag as a logo. A concept born in Italy that is now in the hands

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<sup>21</sup>See: (<http://www.uibm.gov.it/index.php/la-proprietà-industriale/utilità-pi/servizi-prop-ind/contrasto-all-italian-sounding>)

<sup>22</sup> See ([www.caffenero.co.uk/default.aspx](http://www.caffenero.co.uk/default.aspx)).

<sup>23</sup> The section History says: 'Gerry Ford founded Caffè Nero in 1997, his aim was to bring a premium, continental-style café to Great Britain. He wanted it to be authentically Italian, serving premium espresso-based coffee, fresh high quality food, and a neighbourhood gathering spot.'

<sup>24</sup> See (<http://www.napapijri.com/it/>).

of an American company. An interesting study would be to analyse consumer perception of this Italian/Norwegian/American brand. Another interesting case of Italian sounding products is that of Lioni Lattacini, producer of fresh, authentic mozzarella. After generations of producing the product in Italy, went on to produce the product in the United States, using the new equipment and technology that is available today in order to improve the efficiency of the cheese making. It is the paradigmatic story of Giuseppe and Salvatore Salzarulo. Giuseppe Salzarulo arrived in America in 1966, coming from Lioni, Campania, a small town in the south of Italy. Although his family had been producing mozzarella for five generations in Italy, Giuseppe had no intention of following in their footsteps. He met his mother and brothers in Brooklyn, N.Y, worked in his brothers shop just trying to make ends meet selling imported pasta to small stores around New York. Amongst other various products, he sold fresh mozzarella. However, the quality was not quite up to standard and he had a realisation: 'I can do better!'. And so, he began to produce the mozzarella himself.

Circa 1980, Giuseppe's nephew, Salvatore Salzarulo, joined him in New York, following an earthquake that devastated the Salzarulo's hometown of Irpinia. With Giuseppe's years of experience and help from Salvatore, they formed Lioni Lattacini Inc., specialising in fresh mozzarella produce. The business grew mostly on word-of-mouth and the company now makes over 40 different fresh mozzarella products in various shapes and sizes; fresh ricotta, Burrata, bocconcini and modern inventions such as the mozzarella Roll with Pepperoni (Jackson, 2012). The colours of the packaging are the three colours of the Italian flag.

There are many other cases, some described in Jackson's book: Salvatore Bklyn Ricotta, Gioia Burrata, Taleme cheese. Salvatore Bklyn Ricotta's case, in particular, is extremely interesting. Born in Tuscany some years ago, 'When Betsy Devine and Rachel Marks tasted the ricotta made by Tuscan enoteca owner Salvatore Farina, it launched a friendship that led to their education in the art of cheese making and, eventually, to their own ricotta company named after him, Salvatore Bklyn'<sup>25</sup>. Betsy and Rachel are not Italian-American and nor are they of any Italian ancestry, in fact. They did, however, adore the *Italian way of life* and wanted to sell it. Are they *Italian Sounding*? Are they false? What are they?

To change geographical area, we can mention Panzani in France. As the site reports, the founder was a gentleman called Giovanni Ubaldo Panzani, born in Italy in 1911. He became French Jean Panzani in 1929. Within this

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<sup>25</sup> See more at: (<http://www.salvatorebklyn.com/press/food-artisans-salvatore-bklyn/?lb#sthash.sFjpi3cj.dpuf>) June 6, 2011 // SERIOUS EATS: NEW YORK

same case, Giovanni Panzani began working with his father, a pasta manufacturer, using skills he had gained back in Italy before emigrating. Panzani pasta conjures up the image of Italy in the consumers mind – the logos, colours and, of course, the name. The French think that this is Italian pasta, the Italians have other ideas. So what is it? The perception is critical. Pasta Panzani was manufactured in the area of Lione; thus on French soil. It is perceived as Made in Italy but it is not Made in Italy.

What we are saying is that, in a world of free markets, which is increasingly global/glocal, together with the original concept of Made in Italy, linked to the territory, we should put those concepts thought as *Italian way of living*, an idea that so many non-Italian people can think of, pull up and sell very well. Therefore, there is a hybrid world, going beyond the old categories of Made in Italy, which should have a greater cultural significance for the Italian firms. It could be very important to set up new economic policies and internal cooperation both in Italy and in other countries, particularly if we want to safeguard the Made in Italy brand; first of all from fraud, and give it a greater visibility, as ‘the original guardian’ of the selling of the *Italian way of life*.

Moreover, it should necessarily be a collaboration between foreign and Italian companies, which could supply Italian products that are truly Made in Italy. We know perfectly well that Made in Italy sells and has a large worldwide market. The brand can also be supported by the global diaspora (Bassetti 2010, 2015; Giumelli 2010, 2014a) of Italians around the whole world – the size of which only few other countries can match – people that promote both the production and the consumption of goods bearing that brand. Briefly, we think that protecting too much the concept of Made in Italy could result in some business opportunities being lost. It is important to be aware of this particular world, which stands on the threshold between the boundaries. This is the reason why the Full Made in Italy product may be found in Paradise, the *Freddocino* seems to live in Purgatory. On the other hand, our lives resemble more and more a Purgatory. Paradise is elsewhere.

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