

Crafting Culture:
The importance of craftsmanship
for the world of the arts and the economy at large

Alternative title
Craftsculture: an international comparison
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June 2012¹

With the advance of the industrial age and the subsequent emergence of the knowledge economy, the crafts got marginalized in the economy. Traditional crafts were just that, traditional, therefore history and only interesting as part of (cultural) heritage. Utilitarian crafts (think of plumbers, housepainters, roofworkers, dental technicians and so on) continued to do their thing, but such work, at least that was the reigning impression, was intended for those who cannot do the intellectual work that a knowledge economy calls for. The educational systems in developed countries sanctified intellectual intelligence and looked down on manual skills. In the arts conceptual innovation had overtaken craftsmanship as the core competence.

All this is about to change. The creative economy increasingly calls for skills that are characteristic for craftsmanship. This shows in a trend in consumer culture that stresses authenticity and quality. Craftsmanship is to meet such preferences. Craftsmanship furthermore satisfies the need for meaningful work. Mastery provides a sense of self-worth. Politicians, therefore, are speaking about the importance of craftsmanship, and artists are reevaluating the craft in their work.

Richard Sennett gave the intellectual community a wake-up call with his book Craftsmen (2008). The book has drawn attention among artists and scholars and has redirected the discussion on what constitutes craftsmanship, the relationship between crafts and arts, the importance of craftsmanship for (local) economies, for work and identity, and on consumer culture.

Maybe because of Sennett's work I have been drawn into discussions about crafts and craftsmanship in the Netherlands. As a member of a platform for the craft economy I contributed to the advocacy of a restoration of the appreciation of craftsmanship in the Netherlands. We began to question how well the crafts in the Netherlands had fared compared to other countries. Is there something like a best practice? What can be learned from practices in other countries? A couple of craft organizations commissioned a research project.

This paper reports the findings of the research that we conducted at the Erasmus University. We explored the crafts sector in Japan, China, India, Italy, Germany and England. At first we tried to assess the economic significance of the crafts sector in each economy but quickly found out that because of inconsistent definitions and incomplete data the numbers would not reveal a great deal. A major challenge, therefore, was sorting out various definitions of craftsmanship and to come up with clear distinctions between skilled work, unskilled work, utilitarian crafts and creative crafts. (We found out that we were in need of a subsection that goes under the name cutting edge craftsmanship.) In order to do justice to the variation of practices and to create order we have constructed an ideal situation and then determined best practices.

The research has been an illuminating exercise. As researchers we got excited. The territory is relatively unexplored and in our search for information and relevant literature we hit upon interesting research topics (such as the traditional crafts as part of intangible heritage, the importance of a craft culture for the creative economy). The more we delved into the topic, the more convinced we got about the relevance. Whereas most

¹ The research for this paper was conducted by a team of cultural economists at the Erasmus university. The team consists of Priyatej Kotipalli (from India), Lili Jiang (from China), Dr. Anna Mignosa (from Italy) Prof. Dr. Kazuko Goto (from Japan) and Thora Fjeldsted (from Iceland) and is headed by myself.

of our colleagues in cultural economics are focusing on the economics of the arts, the crafts and in particular the creative crafts may become even more important for the creative economy than the arts. Then again, there is a significant overlap between the arts and the creative crafts.

I focus here on the part of the research that dealt with the creative crafts, yet I will need to include some of our findings concerning the utilitarian crafts.

General findings and conclusions:

Based on the individual reports on the various countries, our information on the situation of the creative crafts in the Netherlands, a series of interviews with creative craftspeople, and insights from cultural economics, we offer the following conclusions:

1. We expect the creative crafts to play an increasingly important role in the economy of the future. They will do so because they meet the developing demand for quality, creativity and authenticity. And they provide the opportunity to talented people to exercise their skill and creativity and to make a good doing so.
2. The development of the creative crafts in the Netherlands, however, is seriously inhibited by a lack of resources, infrastructure, and most importantly an underdeveloped creative craft culture.
3. Although the expectation was that we would be able to deliver numbers on the economic significance of the creative craft sectors in various countries, we concluded that
 - a. definitions across countries vary too much to allow for meaningful comparisons
 - b. statistics in various countries are deficient
 - c. in particular the absolute numbers are not very meaningful.
4. To do justice to practices concerning the creative crafts it is important to look beyond the conditions of supply (the infrastructure, education and policies) and to look beyond the economics in a strict sense. We propose to consider the notion of **the craft culture** in general and the **creative craft culture** in particular.
5. With the notion of the creative craft culture we want to point at the values that express appreciation for creative work, quality, craftsmanship and the like. A vital creative crafts culture, as we encountered for example in Japan and the UK , includes interest by young people to aspire working in the creative crafts, the status of creative craftspeople, conversations about the work of creative craftspeople (expressed in publications, a community of critics and the like), the existence of a distinctive taste among consumers, and keen interest in the products of creative crafts.
6. Even though the Netherlands has a significant number of creative crafts people, they lack the prominence and status that they would have in a more vital and dynamic craft culture, as we perceive to exist in Japan and Italy. (We include a few interviews with creative craftspeople to illustrate their predicament.)
7. The development of a creative craft culture will not only provide more opportunities for creative talents but will add to the quality of life.
8. We think that the Netherlands would stand to benefit from a significant investment in its craft culture in general and its creative craft culture in particular.

In Japan, they are dealing with crafts as intangible cultural heritage and best individual craftsmen as national living treasure.

In UK, they have *The Crafts Council* as the national development agency is to make the best place to make, see, collect and learn about contemporary crafts.

In China, creative crafts have tended to cluster (such as *798 Art Zone*), build geographic concentrations of interconnected in large cities and regions for satisfy varied needs of people.

Victoria Albert museum make the strategic plan 2011-2015 for promoting knowledge to help people best appreciate crafts culture in creative economy. *The Crafts Council* also builds a strong economy and infrastructure for the development of crafts.

9. The Dutch can learn in particular from the creative craft culture that we found in Japan (*UK? China? The creative crafts enjoy a high standing in Japanese society. The creative craftspeople operate in a supportive environment and have a significant social status. Both countries have a strong infrastructure.
10. Italy provides interesting examples of how the associations and the institutions responsible for craft can play an important role in boosting the sector stimulating its development and evolution. It has to be noted that the best projects, in terms of effects, are those that involve the public and the private sector.
11. The Dutch can learn from the British who cherish their tradition in the creative crafts and publicly support the creative crafts with, among others, a prestigious centre at the Victoria Albert museum.
12. The Dutch may also learn from the way the Chinese and the Indian people cherish their traditional crafts.
13. Measures to bolster the creative craft culture usually aim at the supply side, and in particular at the educational policies. Such a focus is understandable, but we think more effort is needed to strengthen the appreciation of the creative arts, a public awareness of its qualities and of its price. The Netherlands is badly in need of a class of people with a distinctive taste. As good as the Dutch are in assessing the qualities of cars, wines, and vacations, as good they need to get in appreciating beautiful and well crafted things.
14. What would help is a more entrepreneurial attitude in the world of the creative crafts. They need to be more attuned to what others are able to appreciate and to able to educate the public about quality, design and creativity. Italy provides good examples with the Piedmont region recognition of "Craft excellence" and Lombardy "Excellence recognition". The attribution of a quality indicator is a fundamental step for boosting the sector.
15. The creative economy is an attention economy, implying that drawing attention to the values that one generates, is a major challenge. How will creative crafts people attract attention to their work? How do they counter the taste formation that commercial enterprises stimulate and foster an appreciation for creative and authentic products?
16. The attribution of a quality indicator is a fundamental step for boosting the sector. Clearly defining the values of craftsmen/craftsmanship and creating a quality framework signified with a visual representation would enable the population to participate in and hamper these values. Italy provides good examples with the Piedmont region recognition of "Craft excellence" and Lombardy "Excellence

recognition". Internationally, the "Slow Movement" and "Cradle-to-Cradle Framework" can serve as examples.

17. Creative crafts people and their supporters stand to benefit when they are able to tell their story well (as some already clearly do), and are able to seduce others to share in their creative energies and appreciation of beautiful things.
18. The Dutch can learn from Germany where organizations of Handwerk contribute to a crafts culture by creating spaces for craftsmen and crafts lovers to meet. The Europa market in Aachen is a great example in Germany. In the Indian context there are steps taken by the government to in the form of craft villages at urban centers to educate the metropolitan citizens about the rich heritage of Indian crafts.
19. Improvement in the organization of creative craftspeople is necessary to a) organize attention for creative crafts, b) develop internal control of quality, c) generate a system of support for creative craftspeople, d) manage procedures for the awarding of master titles.
20. Extension of the master title to a wide variety of disciplines in the creative crafts. The master title will help to a) promote a sense of quality, b) promote appreciation for the creative crafts, c) generate attention, d) stimulates the sharing of skills and knowledge.
21. Candidates for the master title should have at least the following qualifications: a) highly skilled, b) creative, c) entrepreneurial, d) good in presenting the work, e) ability to share the skills and the knowledge with apprentices.

The ideal situation

When we compare practices in creative craftsmanship across various countries, it is useful to do so with an ideal in mind. We present, therefore, first an ideal frame for the creative crafts before showing how the practices of the different country compare. We then will point out best practices, as well as bad examples.

We developed the ideal frame in hindsight, that is, after we examined practices in the various countries. So there is some circularity in our method. Even so, our purpose is a practical one. With the ideal more or less clear, and with well stated best practices, it is easier to determine what policy to follow, what the goals are, and what to do. And we may elicit a discussion about the ideal, for that would be constructive as well.

We have detected a strong and growing interest in different societies for craftsmanship. Let the rising tide raise all boats. Clearly defining the values of craftsmen/craftsmanship and creating a framework signified with a visual representation and used by qualified craftsmen would enable the population to participate in and hamper these values. Bridges between maker and user of this kind that might inspire are the Slow Movement, the Cradle-to-Cradle framework and the auteuristic (but important for film-making)

----Dogme95, manifesto

Definitions and statistics: the creative crafts versus other crafts and skills

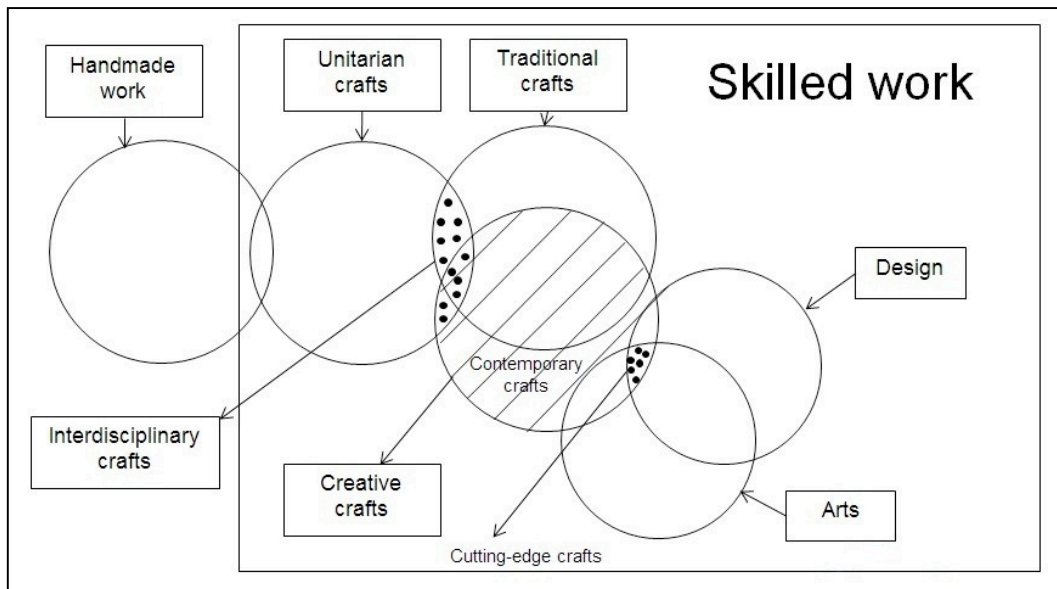


Figure 1 the definition of creative crafts versus other crafts and skills

Ideally, the definition of the craft and craftsmanship is clear and corresponds with the data gathering. Ideally, the following definitions apply [Figure 1].

Skilled work is all the work that requires one or more skills the mastery of which require training and practice.

Clarification: Skilled work is the most comprising category (although in some countries its meaning is restricted to hand workers). It includes teachers, managers, carpenters, plumbers, dentists, civil servants, architects. Skilled workers include so-called professionals. The Dutch speak of `vakmanschap`. The idea is that there are professions that require training before people can practice in them. You need to train, study, go to school before you can call yourself a teacher, or a manager, or civil servant. Each profession has special characteristics, and requires distinctive skills. Teacher need to be on top of the material they teach, and they need pedagogical skills. They need to know how to convey what they know, and preferably be inspiring and emphatic as well.

Craftmanship involves the skilled working with the hands to create something of use for a purpose where the skills require training and usually continuous practice.

Clarification: the working with hands is critical. Carpenters, dentists, and quite a few artists qualify. Whether webdesigners qualify is up for discussion. Being skilled is important as well. Not everyone working with the hands count as a craftsman. Someone painting a room in the house, could call himself a housepainter but a craftsman he is not as he lacks the training and the continuous practice. Teachers may be skilled in their work, and may continuously practice teaching, but they are no craftspeople either as the working with their hands is not critical for what they are good at. A musician should count as he or she works with hands or other parts of the body, are highly skilled, and practice continuously. They create music for others to 'enjoy'. Dentists and surgeons are, according to this definition, craftsmen as well: they are highly skilled and they need to practice continuously with their hands in order to maintain their skill

Handworkers: includes all workers who work mainly with their hands.

Clarification: these workers consist of skilled and unskilled workers. Picking grapes and harvesting mushrooms constitute unskilled work as such work does not require much training.

In the Netherlands, *Dirk Jan Kortschot* as a Dutch hat maker, he made ‘een vouwhoed’ (a folded hat) which idea at that time almost seemed impossible to complete, but this is exactly the challenge Dirk loves. He is already working with 3D computer programs to design hats and it certain in a few years a printer is able to print a 3D model.

In Italy, *Giacomo Alessi* is a pottery maker. His strongest point is his capacity to elaborate and develop the traditional way of producing. As he puts it “I love tradition but I’m not traditional. I translate tradition into something new. I searched, gathered and re-invented in my own way the Baroque heritage. It makes my fantasy fly until everything becomes movement, human and animal spirit”. His works were at various exhibitions in Italian and foreign museums and galleries. He also participated to the last Venice Biennale of art, showing that a craftsman can be an artist.

In China, more and more cutting-edge crafts people build a new expression in their creation, and maximized show artistic values in creative crafts, for instance:

‘I am an artist, not a craftsman.

My creations have the unique style and characteristic, which contain a variety of ideology and expression. For an excellent art work, it has to be reflected artist’s personal feeling, attitude and behavior. In the same time, my creations also are arts, not commodity or crafts. I never care about the skilled technology in creation process. I would like to just pay attention to intrinsic connotations and spiritual world.

That is my creation aim.’

----Zanbin Peng, China (彭赞斌)

Utilitarian craftspeople: these people do work that meet the definition of craftsmanship, with the qualification that their work serves a concrete use that has a purpose other than the use itself.

Clarification: Critical is the addition: “serves a concrete use”. This is clear for plumbers, roofworkers, dental technicians. There will be plenty of contestable cases. A ceramic teapot can be put to use to serve tea; it can also be put on display for its design qualities. In the latter case the making of the teapot should be counted as creative craftsmanship.

Traditional craftspeople: these people are craftspeople who are making things that in their context are considered traditional.

Clarification: Craftmanship usually evokes this group of people. In reality they constitute only a subset of the set of craftspeople. In the Netherlands these include people painting “Delft’s blue”, and classical musicians. They partly overlap with utilitarian craftspeople but are distinct for basing their work on traditional skills and practices.

Creative craftspeople: these people are craftspeople who are making unique object, each with a distinctive quality and expressing the creativity of the maker.

Clarification: the creativity is critical and distinguishes this group from the traditional and utilitarian craftspeople. Creative craftspeople work with their hand and are directly involved in the production of the products that they design. In that respect they are different from designers (who usually leave the execution to other craftspeople).

The work can be used (like hats, bags, cups and the like); often it serves as decoration, or is put on display.

The distinction with artists is not always clear. Some creative craftspeople have their work presented in arts galleries and art musea.

Likewise the distinction with cutting edge craftspeople is blurry.

Cutting edge crafts people are crafts people who are exploring new territory, developing new practices, and shaping a new genre of craft products.²

*Clarification: we see need for this group because of developments in technology and the emergence of new markets. In particular digital technology creates new opportunities. In addition we perceive craftspeople doing things that would qualify them as artists or designers. For example ** . (See the box on the side).*

The world of design includes graphic designers, architects and industrial designers.

Clarification: designers are skilled people as they need training and continuous practice to be good at what they are doing. They usually design and leave the making of things to others. This world overlaps with creative crafts as creative craftspeople design as well. The difference is that creative crafts people generalyl are working with their hand to make the things that they design.

² Consuming Craft: The Contemporary Craft Market in a Changing Economy, Crafts Council and Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2010)

The world of the arts includes all kinds of artists, such as visual artists, sculptors, writers, moviemakers, performance artists and digital artists.

Clarification: The difficult question is what qualifies as art and who, therefore, qualifies as artist. Some creative craftspeople may want to be considered as artists, and so do some designers. Our solution is to consider anyone an artist who is considered as such in the conversations that are called arts. The key, therefore, is to be part of the artistic conversation. You are not when you claim to be so yourself, but when other artists, critics, curators of museums or collectors take you seriously as an artist.

Ideally, data gathering occurs in accordance with these definitions.

The ideal education

Ideally, the education in creative crafts involves excellent creative crafts people sharing their knowledge and skills with apprentices. The mastering of certain skills requires years (see Sennett) and needs the supervision of a master.

Apprentices need to study usual subjects (such as material, techniques), but also need to learn about the social, cultural, and economic context of their future work. In addition they need to learn about running a small business, and about cultural entrepreneurship (how to deal with clients, how to make use of social media, how to tell your story, how to price the work and so on.)

The educational system ideally provides the institutions that awards titles, such as the master title, to promote and sustain quality

Master title

Creative crafts are about quality. In principle only those intimately involved in the process of crafting can judge quality. In the ideal world customers will trust the quality of crafts products when the quality is guaranteed.

One sign of quality is the awarding of the master title for the very best creative craft people in every discipline.

A master title should be preserved to those creative craftspeople that are

- a) highly skilled as judged by their peers
- b) innovative (proven ability to work on the cutting edge) as judged by their peers
- c) highly capable in promoting his or own work in particular and the creative crafts in general
- d) competent in sharing his or her knowledge and skills with apprentices.

The master title is awarded for a limited number of years. A year before expiration the master has to demonstrate that he or she still meets the criteria.

The guild in a modern form is responsible for the awarding of master title.

Ideal organizations

In order to guard quality, organize support groups, protect the interests nationally and internationally, to maintain international contacts, to organize fairs and the like, and to provide information and knowledge about creative crafts, the world of the creative crafts is organized in the form of modern guilds.

These guilds are ran by the craftspeople themselves, with the assistance of professionals in marketing, promotion, finance, international contacts, organization of fairs and other events.

To prevent a rigid insider's culture—the main objection against the old-fashioned guilds, the modern guilds have a board of trustees that includes prominent outsiders. This board has the explicit task to monitor the openness and innovativeness of the organization.

The ideal creative crafts culture

A creative crafts culture comprises all the shared values, experiences, stories, traditions, skills, knowledge, and institutions that are characteristic for the world of the creative crafts.

A strong and vital creative crafts culture has the following characteristics

On the supply side

- Young people view the creative crafts as a career worth striving for
- Strong traditions of apprenticeship
- A strong sense of tradition,
- Recognition of the masters; fair and effective
- A strong sense of collegiality among creative craftspeople
- A spirit of creativity and innovativeness
- A strong appreciation of entrepreneurship
- A clear sense of mission (promoting and sustaining quality, contributing to a joyful and inspiring life)
- Core values clearly expressed in daily practice of craftspeople (commitment to skill and quality, innovation, collegiality and so on)

On the demand side

- an active and interested community of stakeholders
- a well developed distinctive taste for and appreciation of creative quality (usually implying the existence of an elite in the sense of people who are intimately acquainted with the world of creative crafts)
- willingness to pay
- Significant local demand as well as international interest (where international buyers do not crowd out local buyers)

Critical for a creative craft culture is the presence of strong intermediaries and intensive discussions of the works of creative crafts people. Intermediaries include modern guilds, special shops, experts, journalists, news papers, websites, scholarship, labs, fairs, capital cities (like Arnhem as fashion city and Eindhoven as creative design city) and so forth.

Creative crafts do not just come about because people make creative products but also because others are able to appreciate those products. Without an appreciative and critical public the creative crafts will fade and die. That is why we speak of co-creation: the creative crafts are a co-creation of makers, lovers and users.

That is also why we say that creative crafts are not just products but contributions to the conversation that constitutes creative crafts. When a Wouter van Baalen makes a design of silver he in a way contributes to the conversation about such designs. His success is first determined by the people who know, by the experts who can judge the quality, and then by others who pay attention to such judgment and are able and willing to pay the price.

Ideal policies

Ideally creative crafts come about spontaneously, as the outcome of social interactions. People meet people, young people meet creative craftspeople, or are confronted with their work, and decide to pursue a creative craft themselves. Creative craftspeople organize themselves; develop their techniques and skills in a stimulating, innovative, and competitive environment.

The most important contribution that governments can make is to stimulate a creative craft culture. Local governments can show their pride with the presence of master craftspeople in town, by giving opportunities to show the work and by commissioning work for their own use. The national government can organize, and provide support for, the education of creative crafts from early age on (including classes in elementary and higher education with the idea that students benefit from exploring their talents for working with their hands). We discern a trend in this direction: various museums in Europe (V&A in London, MAXXI in Rome, Museum Bellerive in Zurich, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) and the US have been organising exhibitions that focus on crafts to show how extraordinary they can be and how important it is to preserve them and let people know and learn about them

Best Practices

Here I gather the best practices as we detected them in the various countries that we considered.

Definitions and data gathering

In Japan, the UK and China the creative crafts are well documented and charted. In Germany the creative crafts are back stage compared to the utilitarian crafts. Data are less readily available in Italy and India where crafts are treated as part of small- and medium sized businesses rather than an economic category of its own. Creative crafts in Japan have a strong overlap with traditional crafts.

Education

In China, the educational system is divided into two distinct educational systems (school-based vocational education; pre-employment training and on the job training education). As to the education of creative crafts three principles apply: the training of craftsmen has take place by way of multi-channel and multi-level methods, by combining academic education and practice; by keeping 'creativity' at the core of the development of creative crafts.

In Germany, a notable strength of the approach to the education of craftspeople is that during the master-education craftsmen are schooled in all practical aspects of running an enterprise.

In Italy, education for the creative craft, as for craft in general, takes place at the school level: a professional school prepares students for the craft profession in the course of five years. There are specific education programs for the craft sector of three or four years organized at the regional level that aim at deepening the preparation of the students after the five years of professional school.

Because the authority over craft matters is decentralized and a regional matter, each region applies different rules and has introduced different institutions responsible for craft. As a result some regions put more emphasis on education programs devoted to the creative craft sectors than the others.

As in China Italy has additional programs for pre-employment training and on the job training for the creative craft. The law regulates *apprenticeship contracts*, a special type of contract including education next to the normal work relationship between the employer and the employees. The rules differ slightly from one region to the other.

In India the education is decentralized and is dependent on the age old Master- apprenticeship system. There is no formal qualification that proclaims the person to be craftsmen. The system is that that of mutual recognition of the skill of the artisan with his/her craft at the places of their specialization or clusters.

Master title

In Japan, national and local government designate craftsmen (they don't speak of 'master', but of 'traditional craftsman'). Furthermore, they consider the best individual craftsmen as National living treasure. This policy is not merely to award individuals, but also to appreciate skills and techniques. China and South Korea have imitated this practice. It is worth mentioning that the designation of craftsman has no bearing on their income; only being considered part the national living treasure system is a guarantee for a high income.

China has the extremely orderly and organizational 'Master title' selection system. They put forward the 'Master title' at different levels (national-level; provincial-level; municipal-level). Craftsmanship ability is considered extremely important regardless of academic certificates and the like..

In Germany, 'Master title' is at the center of the organization of crafts. It denotes participation in the crafts through education and implies certification of quality. The distinction enables consumers to opt-in a crafts culture. There is resistance against standardization of qualities as the belief prevails that quality is created and insured by the craftsmen, their education, the community and the process of their work.

In Italy, in Tuscany, the project “CreAzioni Giovani” is an interesting attempt to promote young craftsmen capable of using innovation and research for their production.

A study about craft in Florence emphasizes the potential of artistic crafts and the need to mix traditional craft skills with new technologies.

In Lombardy, the regional office for Industry, Craft, Construction and Cooperation foresees a specific “Excellence recognition” for those craft enterprises “capable of preserving and transmitting traditional craft combining it with technological skills” (Regione Lombardia, 2012).

In China, there have 23 craft associations, and 11 crafts societies. (*China Crafts & Arts Association* is national non-profit organization, which established in Nov. 1988 to support the effective protection of Chinese crafts and arts, to facilitate the thriving of the crafts industry in China)

In Italy, those who finish the professional schools become craftsmen: they do not get a specific title. Some regions (Tuscany, Trentino, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Marche) introduced the title of master craftsman with specific laws. In these cases the title is not automatically granted; some requisites are necessary to obtain it (in general: age, experience, prizes in the sector, capacity of teaching the skills to others).

The Lazio regions introduced a specific educational path to get the title of ‘craft master’.

In Sicily, the region established the figure of ‘living human treasures’ and since 2006 eighteen people have obtained this recognition. All of them (except one) are craftsmen specialized in traditional creative crafts such as pottery making, goldsmith, lace making, book binding, etc.

India recognizes the ability of individual craftsmen with the title of master craftsman. The individual who gets this title is supposed to have mastered the skill of the crafts and is often a predominant expert in the field and has the ability to transmit the craft to the next generation. Given the rooting of Indian crafts in the traditions of cast system the title also serves the purpose of awarding a new status to the crafts people.

Organization

In China, the organization of creative crafts has a pyramidal structure. Two departments of *The State Council of China* (ministry of finance and ministry of culture) head this pyramid; they are in charge of all affairs and activities in the development of creative craft. In addition to comprehensiveness organizations of creative crafts, there also have many particular organizations, which focus on one crafts sort, such as jewelry, ceramics, paper-cut, embroidery.

In Germany, the crafts have long been controlled within the organizations of Handwerk (utilitarian crafts). These organization were clear about the values of the crafts what allowed them to be forward-looking – by having clearly defined values for which they stand, it seems they manage to adapt quite effectively and successfully without endangering the core of their work. Policy-making on national and EU level is continuously monitored in order to assess possible implications for the crafts and they actively engage with policy-makers for lobbying.

In Italy, the Ministry of economic development has the main competence concerning the organization of the craft system. However, as mentioned above, competences have been devolved to the regions and each of them has chosen the type of institution responsible for craft matters. In general, regional boards (assessorati) are responsible for this sector. Normally, they do not deal only with craft but with a combination of subjects (industry, commerce, tourism). In some regions, however, there is a specific office responsible for craft within these boards.

In India, the craft sector is organized across ministries, the most dominant of which is the Ministry of Textile which delegates its duties to the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handloom)’Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicraft). Apart from this there is a range of Financial Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations that provide forward and backward linkages to the craftsmen.

Policies

In China, the emphasis of policy is on ‘core technology’, which means that the Chinese do not only want to rely on their traditional culture but also want to import advanced knowledge and modern equipment in the development of creative crafts. Thus, in 1997, *Regulations for the protection of the traditional arts and handicrafts* was published, which define what traditional crafts culture is and formulate how to protect craftsmanship. Subsequently, Beijing (2002), Shanghai (2001), Jiangsu (1997), Guangdong (2004), Hebei (2005), Zhejiang (2000), Anhui (2011), Sichuan (2004), Chongqing (2005) also issued relevant management rules. Furthermore, Chinese government published *The 11th Five Year Plans for the development of cultural program* in 2006 to start to pay attention to the creative industry, try to add new fresh blood (‘creativity’) into crafts. In the same time, they build related political mechanisms to develop and organize the innovation system and dynamic clusters by attracting and retaining talent in creative crafts.

In Italy, the decentralization of power to the regions led to a rather varied range of policies aiming at supporting and favoring the development of the craft sector. The way these policies are designed and implemented differs a lot among regions. Moreover, many regions inserted specific programs to reach these aims.

In India, the Government of Indian Plans for the Village and Small Industries and Small Scale industries which the creative crafts form a part of under the Five Year plans. There is a strong incentive given for exports and so the policies are encouraging the crafts that can be exported. In addition it implements welfare programs to support craftsmen.

Creative Crafts Culture

In UK organizations for creative and cultural skills identified in 2009 the need to map the creative craft sector in the UK and submitted a plan for its future in a report titled *The Craft Blueprint*³. They observe that the ambition of the craft sector is growing with an increasing need for support at various levels as a consequence. They plead for an expansion of the entry points, enhancement of leadership, professional development and business support within the sector. The report also signals the need to reinvigorate craft education at schools to produce a generation of Britons who know their crafts and are more sensitive towards their wellbeing.

In China, creative crafts are intended to sustain the special qualities of Chinese traditional culture, which include humanity, harmony and symbolization. At the same time, ‘core technology’ and ‘culture-based creativity’ also play important roles in the development and innovation of creative crafts.

Crafts in India exhibit the virtues of minimal waste, harmless production natural material and the all-important handmade production which humanizes consumption of the craft project as opposed to mass production in the industrial process. The Indian government sees in the crafts an important counterpoint for what modern industrialization does for work and consumption, India has now several craft villages in urban centers with as a purpose to educate the metropolitan citizens about the rich heritage of Indian crafts.

In Italy, sustenance of creative craft is threatened because of decreasing number of apprentices. The recognition of human living treasures in Sicily might be a best practice to follow in the other regions to ensure the survival of traditional creative craft that risk to be forgotten.

In Italy, the Lombardy region organizes “Artigianoinfiera”, one of the biggest craft fair in the world. The participation of the region is a clear sign of its effort in sustaining craft and its development

³ *The Craft Blue Print, A work force development Plan, for craft in the U.K, Creative& Cultural Skills (2009)*

In Germany, the skills and knowledge already inherent in the utilitarian and traditional crafts are further developed through processes of creativity and individual expression. Creative crafts-objects can be recognized as the work of a particular craftsman/woman because of the content and style. Each piece is unique.

In Japan too, there are several craft centers where it is possible to find and learn about the craft from the various regions of the country.

Intangible values

Crafts are deeply embedded in the culture and are endowed with a multitude of intangible values. In India, for example, people and organizations involved in the crafts frequently refer to a set of values, such as traditional wisdom, harmless production, minimal waste, natural material, emotional needs, humanizing consumption, dexterity. This suggests that Indian crafts culture clearly promotes and nourishes a set of values alongside and beyond the economic values that are being generated (in the form of income). We found similar practices in Japan and China.

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