



# AMONG WOOD-SHAVINGS AND LOOMS

Quality Arts & Crafts  
in the mountains in Friuli

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INIZIATIVA  
CONFINANZIATA DALL'UE  
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MINISTERO  
DELLE INFRASTRUTTURE  
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REGIONE AUTONOMA  
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

**PROGRAMME OF EUROPEAN INITIATIVE  
INTERREG III B – ALPINE SPACE**

**CRAFTS PROJECT**

**Cooperation among the Regions of the Alps to Forward Trans-sectorial  
and Trans-national synergies**

**Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia  
Central Directorate for agricultural, natural, forestry resources  
and for the mountain territories  
Unit for general, administrative affairs and for community policies**

**Study and analysis on traditional and typical alpine crafts,  
in order to recognise it as excellent quality crafts**

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AND LOOMS**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Final research report**

Acknowledgements  
**Antonio Angelo BAUSSANO**



## Thanks

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- SERMOBIL - Tolmezzo (UD)
- Carnica Arte Tessile Villa Santina (UD)
- TUFTING TAPPETI - Prato Carnico (UD)
- Tessitura artigiana di Sauris - Sauris (UD)
- De Antoni Carnia - Comeglians (UD)

*Antonio Angelo BAUSSANO*

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## Foreword

The traditional arts and crafts activities making up a key sector of the mountain economy of the different regions that form the alpine range still represent a real and proper wealth both in cultural and economic terms. This wealth, to be able to continue in the future, must take place through the creation of synergies with other strategic economic sectors of the mountain, and first of all with tourism.

Within the Programme of European Initiative Interreg III B – Alpine Space, the Unit for general, administrative affairs and for community policies of the Central Directorate for agricultural, natural, forestry resources and for the mountain territories, which boasts a wide experience in participation in European projects thanks to the elaboration and implementation of initiatives for the Alpine Space during the previous planning of the structural funds 1994/1999, has considered it important to present, as leading partner, the project CRAFTS (acronym for Cooperation among the Regions of the Alps to Forward trans-sector and trans-national synergies), which proposes interventions for the protection and valorisation of the Alpine crafts and for the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage of the “master craftsmen” through the creation of synergies with tourism in order to create a new professional profile - the tour-crafts operator.

According to the intervention methodology experimented by the Piedmont Region (Project partner), with the project (Piedmont Crafts Excellence), this research is part of the activities foreseen by the project CRAFTS as a survey carried out on an area of the regional mountain territory (Carnia area) which has as its objective the definition of methodologies and tools to identify and individualise the kinds of artistic, traditional, typical and innovative kinds of crafts, in the woodworking and textile sectors identified as highly important quality sectors of artisan activity at a local level, with the intention of attributing them a specific acknowledgement of quality and excellence.

The research carries out a historical analysis of the traditional activities linked to the woodworking and textile productions, which perfectly targets the evolution that these two sectors have had over the course of time.

The research is also a rich and important collection of information and data, regarding both quantity and quality, on the current artisan activities linked to the sectors taken into consideration, providing also interesting indications and ideas that are useful to orienting and supporting further interventions to support the artisan activities to be started off in the near future.

A hearty thanks to Mr. Baussano who very professionally and with great commitment performed the research which I hope will constitute an important document both for the definition of further projects involving trans-national cooperation and for the drawing up of regional regulations of the sector by which the typical artisan productions of the regional mountain territory may be qualified and certified.

*Marina BORTOTTO  
Director of the Unit for general,  
administrative affairs  
and for community policies*



The volume “Among wood-shavings and Looms”, in dealing with the complex themes that underlie the analysis of the different activities performed in the artisan sector, considers that, every time there is an opportunity to view, by chance or purposely, one of the many expressions of artistic, traditional, typical and innovative crafts having a high quality standard and belonging to a certain geographical area of our country, and our personal sensitivity has somehow been impressed, we feel a pleasant sensational fascination that peaks our curiosity, attracts and captures.

If, then, these expressions belong to the land and the places of our birth, they probably have the power to trigger much more intense and deeper emotions which draw their strength from the more personal inner life experiences, suddenly and unexpectedly awakened inside us from the perception of these stimuli, within which we find and recognise their intrinsic nature under form of affections, of shared values, of significant experiences and who knows what more.

We rediscover, all of a sudden, the indelible marks of the original impact that these stimuli left in our memory: sometimes, the suggestion we feel is so strong and intense that it brings to our consciousness the vigour or the softness of many a taste, other times the penetrating sensation of embracing or slightly perceived perfumes, and again the enchanted epiphany of particularly vivid and absorbing images, leaving us astonished.

If we overcome the enrapturing dimension of these experiences and we let ourselves go to a more peaceful pondering, we find the route along which these artistic expressions, often present in the same form they had ages ago, having the shape of valuable highly artistic hand-made objects or of simple typical products from ancient local traditions, have consolidated over time.

They represent the result of a particularly rich and diversified artisan “know-how”, keeper of typical connotations, characteristic of specific regional areas, jealously handed down, where possible, through the generations.

The identification of these autochthon and original features, which belong to the early his-

torical settlements in these places and that the analysis set out in the book coherently and decisively defines, has to take place respectfully within a precise cultural setting and their research has to be carried out within the rooted intertwining of customs, habits, recognisable ways of living, from a philological point of view, as fundamental elements leading to a precise regional identity.

The results of this know-how reflect a continuous evolution in which the skills and the knowledge of the Homo faber have become a tradition, which has developed through innovation. Part of this heritage has been deployed to design and implement new techniques and new hand-made products, part of it has been saved, rediscovered and valorised to bear witness to the wealth of values belonging to a culture: unfortunately this split did not take place randomly, nor foresightedly and many of these values have gone completely lost.

In more recent times, in order to limit the retrospective analysis to an accessible time span, the industrialization process immediately after the second world war to current times in some Italian regions, has definitely not been concerned with safeguarding and preserving this necessary balance.

The crafts sector has progressively and rapidly been impoverished following a systematic sacking of the heritage of physical, informational and human resources carried out by the large industries to feed their own organisations: to realise its vastness it is enough to think about the massive migrations from the South and the East of the country towards these regions, or from the valleys of the Alps to the industrial poles.

The activities that survived this process were forced to change and adapt to the new social and economic conditions of these areas: despite the efforts to survive, the crafts sector in the Alps, mostly the manufacture of quality and artistic products, with their traditional, typical often innovative characteristics has been forced to undergo the same rapid and progressive economic exclusion.

The proverbial qualities of determination and tenacity, lead the craftsmen to defend and renovate their activities, convinced that tradition and innovation could and had to co-existing and

find mutual support. This contributed to a new maturity and sensitivity both from the leaders of the regional economy and from the governors. In May 1997, the Piedmont Region issued Law n. 21 that sets out the “ Norms for the development and qualification of Crafts” with the intention of expressing a precise political willingness towards this important sector of the local economy, by using effective operative tools in order to facilitate its regulation and to plan its future development.

The lawmakers directed their very special attention to the activities carried out in the typical quality crafts sector by dedicating an entire section of the law to the subject matter (section VI of Chapter II).

These activities are taken into consideration with deep sensitivity and a marked interest in achieving two important objectives in this specific sector:

- safeguarding and protecting the century-old artistic, cultural, historical and technical heritage of the crafts tradition in Piedmont Region, which, despite the difficulties encountered during its evolution, has been preserved, handed down and valorised with continuity, tenacity and skills by the artisans, through the generations to current times;
- promoting initiatives to rediscover, consolidate and enliven the different aspects of this process, adapting it to the specific qualification and innovation expected by the current economic, social and technological context.

The law lays out the method and the tools to pursue these objectives, which principally need to implement, through relevant initiatives, a careful and precise re-organisation of the sector so as to then proceed to an in-depth evaluation and a strict selection of those crafts activities that privilege and enhance its specific quality.

The promotional, safeguarding and protection actions identified by the law express, as outlined above, a precise political intention of the Piedmont Region to support the sector, but also to create the basis and the operative conditions for its development.

Some of the problematic issues so far taken into consideration are those that shall be dealt with through targeted interventions, which the Interreg IIIB European Programme – Alpine

Space intends to implement with the CRAFTS Project in specific mountain areas.

The cultural heritage of these areas has been compromised and risks definitely disappearing for a series of concomitant reasons linked to the depopulation and to the radical social modifications, above all due to the rapid technological progress over the last fifty years.

The traditional activities that were the basis of the mountain economy have been almost completely abandoned and the gradual transformation of the crafts sector has triggered off a progressive process of obsolescence of the usual working methods and techniques.

This cultural heritage is in great danger: the artisan professionalism survives with very few Master craftsmen left, the generational turn over encounters great difficulties in re-establishing itself, the number of local crafts enterprises on the territory is slumping.

The CRAFTS Project intends to valorise the quality Alpine crafts through the creation of synergies with tourism in order to favour new forms of integration of the local economic resources and promote its development.

The commitment of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia is heading in the same direction. Through the Unit for general, administrative affairs and for community policies of the Central Directorate for agricultural, natural, forestry resources and for the mountain territories and following the intervention method experimented by the Piedmont Region with the project “Piedmont Crafts Excellence”, the region intends to carry out, in an area of its mountain region, Carnia, a targeted survey in the wood-working and textile fields, identified as crafts sectors of noteworthy local quality importance.

The book widely illustrates the aspects that have characterised this initiative, both its cultural, scientific and methodological connotations as well as its operative phases.

For the first, the book provides contributions for the definition of the concept of “Quality Crafts” and for the research of the expression of the alpine cultural and tradition, especially in Carnia, through the wood and textile crafts.

Operationally, the book examines the activities carried out by a panel of artisan enterprises in

these two sectors, the artistic, traditional, typical and innovative qualities of the products manufactured, the market destination of their products and services, the actions to undertake for their support and development, their professional craftsmanship and the job market in Friuli Venezia Giulia, the young people's attitude to the activities in these sectors and their professional training.

We believe that each chapter in the book is particularly rich in useful indications to collect information, from different points of view, on the evaluations expressed, by the artisan enterprises involved in the initiative, on the current state of the sectors in which they operate, on the problems they suffer and on their future prospective.

We believe that the valuable suggestions that the company owners provide should be taken into due consideration so as to face and solve the most delicate, complex and often difficult issues which we interpret as an invitation to the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia to fully activate the regional norms on the subject (Regional Law n. 12/2002), to discipline and support quality crafts.

The conclusions contained in the book propose several suggestions to be pondered, which may orient and support, also from an operational point of view, the intervention plan to draw up in the immediate future, so as to be able to see, in the plan itself, the real political intention to finally operate in this direction.

The intention shall have to first of all be expressed in the individualisation of the objectives to be pursued in this specific sector and the tools to be used to coherently, timely and far-sightedly face the complex issues of the survey. A first approach, on which to evaluate the choices made, is the need to keep into due consideration and to conciliate, as has been well assessed, the extremely diversified expressions of the artisan culture (in managerial, organisational, technological and design terms), within the sectors and the enterprises surveyed.

In these latter, the production activities which intend to preserve a tradition that is particularly rich in values (artistic, historical, technical and more), which has consolidated over time and is locally deeply rooted, co-exist with other production activities that aim at research and experimentation in alternative activities,

markedly innovative and with connotations of development.

We have to foresee, even though we did not have any such interlocutors, that the framework of the quality crafts sector, in its artistic, traditional, typical and innovative aspects, has to be completed by the companies, which in a short term and owing to unfavourable dynamics, see their activity as compromised, threatened or precluded, because subjected to a rapid process of obsolescence.

Regarding the mountain traditions to safeguard or rediscover, for instance, a company owner interviewed during the survey involved us in his question as to whether in the near future the "gerle", typical local baskets, or the cutlery made from maple wood that his grandfather used to make during the winter months, would still have a market.

He had evidently, with this question, touched on a problematic issue common to the many disappearing crafts activities.

It is these different realities that the political intention needs to face in order to fix the objectives of the actions to undertake for innovation, preservation and recovery of the obsolescence.

We believe that these three concepts may be interesting and useful as they enable a direct and targeted action towards the problems linked with the need to introduce minor or greater changes in specific sectors (economic, educational, social etc) of the crafts activities.

It is worth remembering that every process of change, in order to be such, has the characteristic of continuity, despite the fact that its evolution may undergo greater or less acceleration or slowing down over time.

The systematic comparison between the objectives of innovation, maintaining and recovering obsolescence may allow a representation of its lines of development, a critical evaluation of results and, if necessary the possibility of making in itinere corrections.

On the other hand, according to the logic of operating through projects, all this is possible as long as the objectives are rigorously and explicitly described, so as to enable planning and arranging for interventions and observance of the impact that these determine on the different subjects involved in the change.

These considerations, that have so far had contents and form as their main subject, through which the political intentions of the Institution of the local government like the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia may take place, may be easily extended, in coherence to what has been stated so far and in the spirit of the CRAFTS Project, to the different aspects of quality crafts which have been taken into consideration during this survey.

As regards the quality of the manufactured products, considered under the artistic, traditional, typical and innovative profile, it must be stated that, alongside the activities carried out prevalently in the logic of maintaining (preservation of the original technical and productive processes, of the stylistic features of the products, of the raw materials used and so on), others emerge which are oriented to a deep innovation in the way of conceiving the new products and the new productive systems.

An example of this is the production of laminar wood carpentry, the manufacture of carpets and tapestry with the tufting method, the manufacture of special frames, the production of house linen with technologically advanced weaving systems, and the production of modern furniture for interior design.

In the restoration of wooden products, the phenomenon interests more specifically the intervention techniques and the materials used for this purpose.

The drawing up of the so-called “Production Rules”, instead of configurating them exclusively as a strict set of norms, necessary of course, which regulate the different sectors of the crafts activities, will have to reserve adequate space to include these innovations which represent the natural evolution of a local tradition which is luckily still active and rooted.

These connotations also reflect in the market positions respectively held: the first are set in micro-niches (local) within which it is still possible to avoid the more relevant competition pressures, whereas the second ones try to establish themselves and/or to consolidate their presence on the domestic market, without neglecting the opportunities (unfortunately very few) offered by the international market.

In both cases, the positions have been recently conquered or maintained for entire generations with great energy by the artisan companies, which, in this stage of announced change, must be materially aided.

In the different sectors and compartments of quality crafts, the debate opened on its future, which sees the confrontation of operators, scholars and experts in numerous disciplines, underlines more and more often that promoting means informing and training.

Training the customers on the differences between one type of working and another, between the use of one material and another, between the skills and the expertise of a craftsman and another: explaining that it is not possible to expect products of a certain value at lower conditions than those of mass produced goods. Still today, a meaning of the term “crafts” almost exclusively concerns produced goods, as long as they are hand-made and a second meaning, which is attributed to the hand-made product, seems to refer to the fact that machines produce more perfect goods.

A difference which is not accidental is that, in examining old crafts articles, there is a recognition of such a careful and attentive manuality which is technically present, to such an extent that it produces the effect of a machine worked piece, whereas in the modern crafts its use tends to produce the effect of a handmade article as requested by the market.

In the first case, the result of the real crafts production is a unique piece, whereas in the industrial production the unique piece or prototype is flattened out by mass production.

As regards the tools and machines employed, in one, hand making, extending a few specialised functions, enhances the craftsman’s aptitudes and skills, in the other, the uncertainties and the coarseness of machine-produced goods tend to enhance the lack of skill and capability.

In both cases, with the same roughness, the positive and the negative effects of those “crafts signs” are achieved, which hand-working still manages to evoke and impress on the piece.

This is nothing but simulation, an attempt of imitating that industrial production extends to the machine-made product, performing finish-

ings that look hand-made and increase the cost of the article.

The operation is easy because the customer, who once used to go the craftsman's workshop and could make the opportune verifications, now, before the finished object, is not able to distinguish the working cycle of a "unique" piece from the "mass produced" article.

Forgery is much more evident when some "manual" interventions are carried out, such as corrective actions, so as to make an industrial product look hand-made.

This means that promotional actions to undertake in order to support and develop the crafts articles must be distinguished according to their quality and innovative characteristics, recognisable by the added value that the companies could gain, by providing targeted services (commercial promotion, marketing, technical assistance, documentation, etc).

From this point of view, alongside high-class events, periodically proposed and continuously improved, it is necessary to organise and experiment targeted events which aim at exhibiting the quality crafts of Friuli Venezia Giulia on larger markets, so that it may be recognised and distinguished among other goods for its unrepeatable and exclusive features.

Besides, the promotion of crafts in the sectors taken into consideration, will manifest all its

information and educational potential in the initiatives set up to orient and professionally train the new generation.

It is necessary to awaken in the young people and in their families a new interest in the values of the crafts culture, which have been ignored for too long with an unexplainable and guilty carelessness intrinsic in the educational system. Professional upgrading is also part of the training interventions for craftsmen, which, according to the logic of their training and continuous re-qualification, should allow them to access courses on technical specialisation, in line with the progress of innovation.

Investing in human resources expresses a political willingness that is fully aware and fully trusts the improvement and development of its potential, but to achieve these outcomes it is necessary to be able to set up a reliable training system, capable of identifying and meeting the need for knowledge.

The thesis, according to which the development of a territory must be the result of a process of integration of all the economic resources present, is widely shared, but it presupposes the indispensable fact that it is the competence and the intention of Homo oeconomicus that must be able to identify, combine and use them if he has been trained to do so, in respect of the territory itself and of its inhabitants.



## Biographical note

Antonio Angelo BAUSSANO, psychologist, is a self-employed professional who exercises his activity as a researcher, in the economic and social fields, dedicating special attention to the themes of work organisation, employment and contributing, among other things, to the foundation of the Observatory of the job market in the Piedmont Region.

He is an advisor in the field of development and training of human resources, in problems arising from different models of entrepreneurship in artisan and industrial activities, and in design and implementation of specific interventions, laid forth by public and private

Organisations: topics discussed, studied in-depth and collected in a vast bibliography.

He has been collaborating for a few years with the Piedmont Region for the implementation of the Project “Crafts Excellence”, and more recently, the Project CRAFTS, inserted in the Programme of European Initiative Interreg III B – Alpine Space, which sees the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia as leader partner: within this project, he performs the task of coordinating the partners scientifically and methodologically, on the themes of quality crafts and professional training of craftsmen.

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