MADE IN ITALY 2.0

Searching for the Characteristics of Contemporary Italian Fashion in the Context of Fashion Design Education in Italy

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Abstract

“Made in Italy” is a phenomenon widely researched in economic, historical and cultural studies (including fashion studies). The research about this topic mostly refers to the fast economic development in post-WWII Italy, in which fashion played a major role. My thesis, however, analyzes the “Made in Italy” concept in contemporary Italian fashion, which I refer to as “Made in Italy 2.0.” In order to understand how Italian style can be characterized today, I conducted interviews in five design schools in Italy located in the different fashion cities of the country: IED and Politecnico (Milan), IUAV (Venice), Polimoda and IED (Florence). I then analyzed my collected data and compared it to the characteristics of the “Made in Italy” fashion of the second half of the twentieth century discussed by various scholars, thus discovering what are the truly contemporary features of Italian fashion.

Keywords: contemporary Italian fashion, fashion design education in Italy, Made in Italy.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Italian fashion is among the top players in the industry, with some of the most well-known brands in the world. With few exceptions, these famous Italian brands (Versace, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada) were all established in the twentieth century. The lack of new internationally-recognized Italian brands undermines the seeming wellbeing of the industry. The international image of contemporary Italian fashion still relies on the brands of the “Made in Italy” success; however, these brands do not reflect the whole spectrum of the Italian fashion system today.

“Made in Italy” is a phenomenon widely studied in economic and fashion studies (e.g. Blim, 1990; White, 2000). Various authors analyze the topic from a socio-historical perspective, mapping the different factors that played a vital role in creating the success of Italian fashion industry after the Second World War. These publications often define Italian identity in fashion and name particular features of Italian design that in the past have made it distinguishably Italian (e.g. textiles, tailoring, craftsmanship, etc.). The majority of socio-historical research on “Made in Italy” does not analyze the Italian fashion system of the 21st century.

The second type of “Made in Italy” publications discuss the issues of contemporary Italian fashion design (e.g. Segre, 1999; Vaccari, 2012); however, the majority of academic output by Italian researchers is in Italian, and many authors stress the necessity of research about Italian fashion in English. One of the few books published in English is Maria Luisa Frisa's Italian Fashion Now (2011). Frisa is the director of the fashion design course at IUAV University of Venice, and in her book she presents young, lesser-known Italian brands. While putting them on the map, she avoids defining the contemporary idea of “Made in Italy,” leaving room for further discussion.

In my research I aim to bridge the gap between the two types of research done in the field of Italian design: instead of focusing on what has defined Italian fashion at the time of its emergence to the international scene in the 1950s, my thesis analyzes the current definition of “Made in Italy,” the so-called “Made in Italy 2.0” (I will discuss this term later). My thesis also contributes to the research about contemporary Italian design written in English, thus opening the topic to international discussion.

Coming from theoretical fashion studies, I would like to focus on the academic practitioners of fashion, namely the professors and students of fashion studies and design. I intend to conduct interviews at five Italian universities and to analyze them in order to determine how the future designers define Italian fashion. In this way my thesis will also contribute to the debate on fashion
education in Italy: recently (in the beginning of 2013), academic institutions that focus on teaching fashion and design in Italy have created the MISA organization (Associazione Italiana degli Studi di Moda), the purpose of which is to get fashion studies recognized as an academic discipline, as well as to create and discuss the ways in which fashion should be taught in higher education institutions in Italy.

My research question is therefore as follows: How is contemporary Italian fashion characterized by current students and scholars of fashion design at Italian higher education institutions? The purpose of this paper is to try to answer this question in order to outline the characteristics of the present-day fashion produced in Italy in comparison to the “Made in Italy” phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century. I hope to be able to capture and understand the fluid notions of what constitutes contemporary Italian fashion, how it is taught in the Italian academia and what effect the way it is taught has on the students and their future work.

The fact that I am not Italian myself is something that in my view adds value to my research – I speak the language and can therefore read Italian literature published on the topic, but as an outsider, I am impartial and possibly more objective. I do not come from one of the many competing fashion regions in Italy and my goal is not to promote any of them, rather evaluate their differences and similarities. As a fashion scholar I am new to this topic, which could be a downfall when it comes to not having the knowledge of all the scope of the available material. My research time for this project is rather limited, and while I do my best to acquaint myself with the literature written on the subject, I am by no means an expert in this field. However, I think it allows my thesis to have a fresh look on the topic, as some of the materials I choose would not be considered fundamental in “Made in Italy” writings. The new publications and interviews I rely on in my view add a fresh line of thought, which is very appropriate in the discussion of the “Made in Italy 2.0” phenomenon.

1.1 Literary Review

In order to establish a space for my research, I would like to discuss my topic in relation to the literature that has been written about it. First, I want to give an overview of specific characteristics of Italian fashion, i.e. what makes it “Italian”, the main events in its history, etc. Secondly, I want to focus on the trope of “Made in Italy” and discuss the characteristics of Italian style at the time when “Made in Italy” became a recognizable term. The third and final section analyzes the phenomenon of “Made in Italy 2.0” and the literature about contemporary Italian fashion.
1.1.1 Particularities of Italian Fashion

There is a scarcity of primary sources available for scholars who want to study Italian fashion businesses (White 2000, 5; Merlo 2011, 345-6; Segre 1999, 17). The fact that there are few sources is a characteristic of Italian fashion firms – the majority of them are private and have limited disclosure prerequisites and as they are relatively young, the law prevents public access to the company archives, and so the historical records are not available to scholars. The general course of Italian fashion history, however, is well known.

Italian fashion emerged on the international scene after WWII, when in a short period Italy has managed to go from economic devastation to the top three countries in the world of fashion (Steele 2003, 1). Many consider the series of fashion shows in Florence in 1951-52 the birth of Italian fashion (Steele 2003, 19; White 2000, 9). The first show in February 1951 was organized by Giovan Battista Giorgini who invited Roman couturiers and boutique designers (the sector just beneath the haute couture). The show was a success with the small crowd of American department store buyers and the press (including Women's Wear Daily), and the next show – organized in July of the same year – attracted hundreds of American and European buyers and members of the press.

Italy itself has played a role in promoting its fashion: the beauty of Italian cities, the warmth of the people (in contrast to the pretentious attitudes of the French during their fashion shows), the climate and food have contributed to the success of the shows, which were followed up by grand balls and social events (Steele 2003, 19-20). As one can see, the national identity has played a big part in creating an Italian identity in fashion: Segre has called this factor a “positive stereotype” of Italy (1999, 25). The stereotype, despite being “positive,” is built on the perceptions that other nations have of Italy; foreign outlook has had an instrumental value in constructing the image of “Made in Italy,” and I will return to this issue in the theoretical framework subchapter, where I discuss the construction of national identity.

In the second fashion show in Florence, designers from Turin, Rome, Milan and Florence were presented; the abundance of fashion cities in Italy caused rivalry as they all wanted to become the fashion capital. The competing cities staged fashion weeks at the same time in order to make the buyers decide which city to choose, which lead to a decrease in popularity among American buyers. The division was finally settled with the rise of Milan as the international capital of ready-to-wear, and the competing cities chose a specialization (Steele 2003, 20). Florence, with its nearby districts famous for producing leather garments (Steele 2003, 123), remained the home of accessories and boutique fashion. Rome stayed the capital of alta moda: “In a world transformed by youth culture, Rome remained an oasis of high style” (Steele 2003, 36). The divide of the fashion districts in Italy
is also seen in the vast amount of areas that specialize in a type of fabric and/or artisanship, ranging from the silk production in Como, knitwear in Treviso and Carpi, glass handicrafts in Veneto (Segre 2003, 122-4).

Milan has benefited from its industrial history, a strength in management and resources which allowed it to become not only the pret-a-porter capital of Italy, but of the fashion world in general (Merlo and Polese 2006). In the 60s, Italy was a strong producer in the industrial field and it made a major contribution to the way the post-war world looked by changing the traditional appearance of cars, buildings, interior design, architecture, and even men and women (Steele 2003, 25). The emergence of new consumption patterns and the individualistic ideologies of the 1960s have contributed to the demise of mass-produced fashion: high couture was replaced by the more economically available, yet not mass-produced Italian ready-to-wear (Merlo 2011). The opening of the American market to Europe after the war has also been very beneficial for the Italian fashion industry, and has helped to develop its unique style. In sharp contrast to strict and extravagant Parisian fashions, in the post-war period America has adopted a more rational, functional approach to fashion (Martin 1996) and it was looking for a similar modern and casual attitude from European suppliers. Italy was quick to recognize the new trend and provide the international market with more accessible fashion.

There is an undeniable connection between fashion and film, and another connection to America that the Italian fashion industry has profited from was its ties to Hollywood (Steele 2003, 29). Rome was at the centre of the film industry in Italy and provided a setting for many American movies, earning the name “Hollywood on the Tiber” (Steele 2003, 29). The New Look of the post-war was revisited in the movies about the Roman aristocracy's dolce vita, and the fashion produced by Roman couturiers (Emilio Schibert, Fontana sisters, etc.) was popularized by the American stars, such as Grace Kelly and Ava Gardner (Calefato 2006). Making wardrobes for the movies has brought awareness to the Roman labels, which were regarded prestigious due to their European status and Hollywood-style glamour (Steele 2003, 29). Italian film celebrities such as Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren also popularized Italian fashion abroad, and soon the evening and wedding dresses produced by the Roman couturiers were worn by Hollywood stars not only in movies but also in real life, contributing to the success of Italian fashion in America.

The 70s saw a new type of collaboration between designers and textile conglomerates that revolutionized Italian and international fashion industry: having a long history of producing the world's finest textiles, Italy has united textile production with design. The involvement of fashion designers such as Armani with textile producers such as GFT (Gruppo Finanzario Tessile) has played an important role in the development of the industry, as it allowed for innovations in textiles
and the change of marketing to use designer brands (Merlo 2011). Armani's business growth is representative of other Italian brands of the same time, but on a larger scale: the royalties from GFT provided him with means to take more control of his brand – he opened his own retail stores, increased the amount of his collections and product ranges, expanded abroad and bought his own factories. Armani was also among the first designers to create “white label” - cheaper diffusion collections (Armani Collezioni) that allowed him to permeate foreign markets, adapting the pricing and style to the local clientele (Potvin 2011, 279).

The 1970s also saw a change from “Made in Italy” to “Italian Look:” “The concept of 'Made in Italy,' hitherto the guarantee of fine materials, excellent workmanship and good taste [was replaced in the 1970s] with that of the 'Italian Look,' the status symbol of a new economic power, conscious of the social implications of fashion and with a decidedly international character” (Gianelli Buss cited in Steele 2003, 42). The “Italian Look” affected both menswear and womenswear: Italian suits of the 1960s with their tight trousers have “introduced sex and classlessness into men's wear” (Ehrman 2002, 140), and conveyed an air of modernity and sexuality. In addition to “feminizing menswear,” Italian designers such as Armani created menswear for women and, thus, revolutionized fashion: made men and women look more like each other (Steele 2003, 63).

The 80s in Italy saw an economical boom: the industrial development of the fashion system, the aestheticization of daily life and changes in social taste, which brought about the global conspicuous consumption, were paired with the creative genius of designers such as Gianni Versace, and contributed to the brand obsession and logo-mania of the 80s fashion. Italian big brands such as Moschino, Prada, Dolce&Gabbana, became the symbol of the fashion of the decade. In personal communication with the author (review of my thesis on March 21, 2014), fashion scholar Patrizia Calefato has noted that after the 1980s Italian fashion has been on a decline, surviving mostly on the memory of what “Made in Italy” had been before, and that it has now reached a crisis in the scenario of globalization. She also suggests that the two new aspects that need to be considered when discussing the current state of Italian fashion are the industry and the formation of education (Patrizia Calefato, pers. comm., March 21, 2014). As the majority of studies and literature produced on the topic of Italian fashion (even the titles used this far) focus on the industry, with this thesis I would like to shed light on the other aspect, namely the fashion education in Italy.

1.1.2 Made in Italy

The main characteristics that define Italian fashion derive from the traditions and events that
occurred in Italy throughout its history and from the more recent developments of the second half of the 20th century discussed in the previous subchapter. The strong presence of textile industry in the country's economy has aided the success of the Italian fashion industry, providing some of the best fabrics in the world for local designers and to the industry abroad: silk, cashmere, leather goods. Italian knitwear has come to prominence and bridged the gap between elegant formal wear and comfortable informal wear (White 2000, 75-128).

In addition to textiles, “Made in Italy” became famous for high-end ready-to-wear: on the one hand, the technological progress associated with industrialization has enabled garments to be produced on a large scale but with better quality than mass-produced items. Dubbed “aristocratic sportswear” (White 2000), Italian designs offered aesthetic quality in relation to price. On the other hand, a strong tradition of craftsmanship and hand-making has contributed to the luxury and excellence element that Italian fashion is famous for: embroidery, lace-making, handicrafts in wool and silk (Segre 2003, 121-2), impeccable sewing and superb tailoring (White 2000, 75-128). The combination of traditional artisanship and developing industry created a modern structure of production, both highly specialized and technological (Ferré cited in Segre 1999, 27). Italian industry was “inspired by the American (Fordist) manufacturing processes,” while still depending on “historic traditions which survived alongside the expansion of mass production” (White 2000, 131). The collaboration between the industry, design and artisanship are the foundations on which “Made in Italy” was built (Calefato 2006).

The emphasis on production, especially in the industrial city of Milan, is a strong characteristic of “Made in Italy,” and it sometimes overshadows the creative aspect of Italian design: “There are more really creative designers in Paris than in Italy, but Italian ready-to-wear has grown tremendously” (Norman Wechsler cited in Merlo and Polese 2006, 416). The practical aesthetic of Italian fashion, developed in the post-war years as an antidote to Parisian couture, catered to the more casual approach of the international audience, and it is one of the most prominent features of “Made in Italy.” Italian fashion is described as paired down and modern (Steele 2003, 23), practical, youthful, sporty, casual, easy, carefree, relaxed, comfortable, wearable, multi-functional (White 2000, 75-128). Italian clothes were “For real people – albeit rich people – to wear to real places” (Newsweek cited in Steele 2003, 59). Despite creating clothes for the everyday and seeming less creative than the Parisian couturiers, Italian designers managed to be innovative – the afore-mentioned “feminized” male suit made menswear more sexy; the youthful new designs created by Italian designers modernized international fashion; the collaboration between the textile companies and designers created new company structures and enabled innovation in textiles (handprinted fabrics, blends of fabrics like silk and nylon, coated, hi-tech, and
resinated fabrics described by Segre 2003, 124).

Other innovations in fashion promoted by “Made in Italy” were seen in the more casual style of ready-to-wear garments, in the use of unfamiliar colors and patterns and unexpected fabrics (light silk jersey, jersey wool), in simple shapes with eye-catching details (White 2000, 75-128). In addition to the historical developments, the national aesthetics have also played a role in creating the Italian identity in fashion: “Italian women dote on prints... Plain colors simply do not look well against the hot walls of italian cities” (White 2000, 120). Bringing colors and prints into vogue, “Made in Italy” added fun and eccentricity to the traditional characteristics of quality production and artisanship associated with Italian style. The combination of tradition and innovation has contributed to the emergence of a distinct Italian style: “Although italian fashion style drew upon the modern notion of casual sportswear [...], it developed the look on the basis of native traditions and approaches, enhanced by an injection of fresh contemporaneity” (White 2000, 131).

Besides history and aesthetics, other factors have contributed to the creation of “Made in Italy.” Segre cites sociocultural reasons such as Italian's love of everything beautiful: “the desire for aesthetics” (1999, 30) and the phenomenon of “bella figura” (1999, 25). There is a “tradition of beauty” – surrounded by the allure of Renaissance, the arts, paintings and architecture, Italians carry the beauty into their works (Francesco Alberoni cited in Segre 1999, 25). There are also structural reasons: Segre lists Italy's artisanal history and the close relationship between stilisti and the industry as factors of success of Italian fashion (1999, 27). The small scale of Italian fashion businesses has contributed to the social function of fashion: the trust that was built between the small boutiques and its clientele allowed for feedback, modifications, good service, and flexibility (Segre 1999, 28-30). Undoubtedly, this close relationship is not present in the large brands that developed in the Italian fashion scene and gained international success; however, historically it has contributed to the way Italian fashion has developed.

Other characteristics that are used to describe Italian style are often cross-referenced: “elegance”, “easful grace” (White 2000, 75-128), “Italian elegance, founded on grace and balance” (Segre 1999, 25), “easy grace” (Steele 2003, 16) and “appearance of indifference created with utmost care” (White 2000, 118) – also known as sprezzatura, or making it look easy. Among other features that give Italian fashion its distinct “Italian-ness” are: “love for the product” (Segre 2003, 124), qualities of sexiness and seductiveness (Steele 2003, 16), luxury, status and aristocracy (Steele 2003, 91). Despite the seeming unity and homogeneity of the peculiarities that constitute “Made in Italy,” the term is also full of ambivalences: the afore-mentioned clash of tradition and innovation and the clash of aesthetics can be seen throughout Italian fashion: the Italian Look is “classically cut but not stodgy: innovative but never theatrical” (Newsweek cited in Steele 59); it is casual and
relaxed, yet luxurious and prestigious at the same time (Steele 2003, 60); its luxurious and aristocratic notions are, in turn, conflicted by the “cheap and chic” aesthetics of designers such as Moschino (Steele 2003, 77); the “understated elegance” celebrated in the North of the country is contradicted by the Southern “sex bomb” aspirations (Steele 2003, 112); the subtlety and simplicity of Armani’s designs are challenged by Versace's flamboyance (Steele 2003, 71).

Italy is a diverse country, with multiple fashion cities, districts, aesthetics and values, and its fashion identity is full of ambiguous meanings. Despite the rather homogeneous image that “Made in Italy” has, it does not include every aspect of Italian fashion. Paola Colaiacomo (2006) has discussed some of the developments of Italian design that were not incorporated into the mainstream image of “Made in Italy:” for example, the avant-garde innovations of the 1970s were not included in the industrial production processes, and as a result are not known internationally. The stereotypes that national identity is built on are not representative of the country, and I aim to include all the various characteristics of “Made in Italy 2.0” that I encounter during my research, creating a heterogenous image of the contemporary Italian fashion.

1.1.3 Made in Italy 2.0
I encountered the term “Made in Italy 2.0” in an article on Vogue.com by Kerry Olsen (2013), where in his interview, the Fiat-heir and entrepreneur Lapo Elkann says that Italy “currently is being reenergized by a surge of ambitious, young talent.” I decided to use the term “Made in Italy 2.0” to distinguish this more modern, up-to-date take on Italian fashion from the traditional view on “Made in Italy.”

A grandson of the style icon Gianni Agnelli, Elkann (whose nickname is “Lapo of Luxury”), is no stranger to fashion – he has been featured on numerous international best-dressed lists and owns “Independent Italia,” an eyewear and lifestyle label. Discussing Italian design, Lapo says: “I don’t want to judge or criticize the past, but we’re making our own road” (Olsen 2013). His own company creates customizable sunglasses that can be ordered in a vast number of combinations of colors, textures, prints, lenses, and engravings, making luxury “both personal and global” (Menkes 2007). The aim of the company is to blend “fashion and design, tradition and innovation,” while seeking to “update Made in Italy by revisiting the classic icons” and “to export the Italian style into a global world” (Italia Independent 2014). This vision of the new direction for Italian fashion is echoed by Segre, who says that a return to forgotten traditions, “a cultural homecoming” combined with research and innovation is what the Italian fashion industry needs for success: “a return to the future” (2003, 125-8).
“Italia Independent” often collaborates with various designers / personalities / companies (Karl Lagerfeld, fashion blogger Chiara Ferragni, students of IED Milano, football club Juventus, etc.), who come up with a capsule collection of sunglasses for the brand (see images). These collaborations contribute to the constantly evolving brand image of “Italia Independent,” and the idea of a flowing brand identity is a rather modern approach in design: instead of developing one strong trademark style, collaborations expose designers and companies to new ideas, allowing them to be flexible and adaptable (Gestalten 2014). As discussed earlier, “Made in Italy” was built on strong brand names, such as Armani, who contributed to the creation of global brand marketing, so this development is a new direction for the Italian fashion industry.

Elkann credits his vision to the Italian lifestyle – good quality raw materials and the possibility of customization is present even in the way Italians eat: “If you stop for lunch elsewhere in the world, you tend to eat a sandwich, and a bad one. Italy is unique for the style of life. I think everyone envies it a bit” (Olsen 2013). Other characteristic of Italian lifestyle that “Made in Italy 2.0” is based on, in Elkann's view, is quality production: “[Our] products in terms of design are the best in the world. [...] We have a big opportunity to do products of style and quality,” as long as it is actually “made” in Italy, and “not 90 percent in China and the zipper in Italy” (Elkann cited in Menkes 2007). In addition to these traditional values of quality materials, quality production and the possibility to change and customize (which was present in “Made in Italy” through close relationships of the stilista and their customers), Elkann adds modern ideas of products that are “unisex” (instead of “one target”), that are not “fashionable” (to escape the necessity to produce collections when the industry demands) or “seasonable” (rather, “evergreen”) (Menkes 2007). These qualities, as well as the discussed above innovation, technology and the flowing brand identity, make up the notion of contemporary Italian fashion, “Made in Italy 2.0.”

Similarly to Elkann, the editor-in-chief of Italian Vogue Franca Sozzani has named “a high degree of creativity and consistently high quality in making the clothes” as something that makes Italian fashion special (cited in Steele 2003, 117). Steele also sees the combination of traditional artisanship, innovation in design, and modern production technologies as intrinsically Italian, adding that the decentralization of Italian fashion districts, with highly skilled artisans found all over Italy, and the collaboration between manufacturing and design are the crucial components of the success of the contemporary Italian fashion industry (2003, 117). Despite these similar traits, Sozzani also said that there is no “Italian Look” anymore due to the globalization of fashion: “because people are more free, and they want to make their own choices” (cited in Steele 2003, 117). Instead, there are different looks – in Italy and all over the world. With my research, I attempt to verify if, indeed, there is no united “Italian” fashion today and if the afore-mentioned qualities
ascribed to “Made in Italy 2.0” are relevant in the fashion design education context.

To conclude my literature review, I would like to show how the literature I have discussed creates a space for my research. Taking the characteristics of Italian fashion discussed by scholars in the past, I can juxtapose my findings from fashion design schools in Italy in order to see which definitions of “Made in Italy” are still applied today and which have emerged recently and only apply to “Made in Italy 2.0.” When it comes to the current notions of Italian fashion expressed by Elkann, Steele and Sozzani, I would like to compare them to what students and professors say about the contemporary Italian fashion system in order to determine whether the qualities are in accordance with each other, so that a clear picture of “Made in Italy 2.0” can be created.

1.2 Previous Research

Alessandra Vaccari's book *La Moda nei Discorsi dei Designer* develops the designer discourse and seeks the meanings of fashion in the interviews with designers themselves. Vaccari explains that fashion designer discourse is prominent in the media, but not in academic writing due to the large amount of promotional texts by designers (2012, 7-12). Fashion theory has little critical input from designers, and the author encourages fashion scholars to include designers in their reflections (Vaccari 2012, 11). Vaccari analyzes the discourse of various international designers, and her suggestion for further research is developing the designer discourse within one nationality, for example Italian, seeing as the figure of fashion designer plays an important part of the history of Italian fashion (2012, 156).

Taking Vaccari's advice, I am searching for definitions of Italian fashion in the discourse of aspiring designers, even though I focus on the present, rather than the history of Italian fashion. My research is also different because I focus on the discourse produced by design students rather than working designers, in order to analyze how the education context affects the views of the participants: Vaccari includes public, creative and political ambience of designers, but their academic environment is out of focus. Also, Vaccari engages in secondary analysis of existing empirical data (she examines the interviews of designers that appeared in biographies, articles, blogs), while I conduct the interviews myself, thus eliminating a possible “double interpretation” (Kawamura 2011, 108), which moves the conclusions further away from the direct meaning of data.

Previous research also includes the following articles: Paolo Volonté’s “Social and Cultural Features of Fashion Design in Milan” (2012), where the the author interviews Milanese designers in order to determine how their environment (including education) affects their output, and
“Fashionable Quarters in the Postindustrial City: The Ticinese of Milan” by Laura Bovone (2005) where the factors that make a city district fashionable are examined. These articles search for the connection between the place (Milan) and its features and the fashion that is produced there; likewise, I want to find elements that constitute contemporary Italian fashion by analyzing the context in which it is produced. What makes my research distinct is that both of these articles focus on only one fashion district, while I analyze 3 different cities and 5 different universities within the same country.

One of the conclusions of Volontè's article was that social factors such as being born / studying design / working in a particular city influence the fashion designer's creative output (2012, 402, 427-8); my research takes this notion further and contrasts the backgrounds of various districts. Also, during the interviews for Volontè's article, designers were asked to define themselves and their roles, while I ask students and professors to define the industry. Another conclusion confirmed that designers working in Milan were influenced by the local tradition of preference of “somewhat conservative value of wearability over the radically innovative character of London, Belgian, or Japanese fashion” (2012, 428). It will be interesting to compare this to my own observations about Milanese students and also to interviewees from the other cities.

Finally, the most important book for my thesis is Maria Luisa Frisa's Italian Fashion Now, which aims to create “a manifesto that would lay out, despite all the differences, a project, a vision, as well as an identity, a common root” of the contemporary Italian fashion (2011, 9). Frisa discusses that after the “great protagonists” of “Made in Italy,” the Italian fashion industry has failed to stay up-to-date with the international tendencies and be one of its frontrunners, while at the same time keeping with the characteristics of the Italian design: “quality fabrics, perfect cuts, balanced volumes and a manufacturing process where care is taken over the smallest details that are then put to test of industrial production” (2011, 9). This view of stagnation is similar to Calefato's comment about the fact that Italian fashion industry has been living in the “memory” of the golden times of “Made in Italy” since the 1990s. In order to get out of the rut, Frisa suggests “to work on the roots and on the future of Italian fashion” (2011, 11). This echoes the visions of Elkann, Steele, and Sozzani, which I analyzed in the “Made in Italy 2.0” section: these authors also saw success in “returning to the future” – combining Italy's traditions of the past with innovation and technology.

For Frisa, what stands in between the joining of past and future is the present, which “appears to us as a kaleidoscopic image with a thousand facets” (2011, 11). The difficulty to systematize and make sense of the current situation in the Italian fashion industry hinders the possibility to assess and change its shortcomings, to redefine and reinterpret the outdated system. Frisa sees a need to bring the production and material sourcing of big companies back to Italy, and
educate designers that are flexible, that have the technical and sartorial know-how as well as the visionary capacity of a creative director. (2011, 13). *Italian Fashion Now* “represents a first attempt to identify with a critical and selective gaze the new breeding grounds of talents, the new centers of production and, above all, the galaxy of designers who are offering a kaleidoscopic, but also a rigorous vision of the new Italian fashion” (Frisa 2011, 19-20).

Following in the footsteps of Frisa's writing, I attempt to systematize and analyze the contemporary Italian fashion, which is instrumental in identifying its flaws and making a positive change. Frisa illustrates the individualistic approach of young, independent designers to contemporary Italian fashion, but does not analyze them or summarize their features in order to try understand and characterize Italian fashion today. That is what I attempt to do in the course of this research. How my thesis is different from Frisa's publication is that I interview scholars of fashion design rather than illustrate the work of working designers. I choose to do so because in my view the university is where the system starts, and where any real change can come from.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Inspired by Gabriele Monti's (from IUAV) guest lecture on the issues of contemporary Italian fashion, I wanted to use some of the theoretical framework he referred to, namely critical design, interaction design and design as storytelling, as a starting point for my research. Critical design is defined as “design that asks carefully crafted questions and makes us think,” the purpose of which is “to stimulate discussion and debate among designers, industry and the public” (Dunne and Raby 2001, 58). Dunne and Raby claim that in design studies, “more could be learnt from fine art where there is a history of critical strategies for asking questions through objects and stimulating debates in engaging ways” (2001). I wanted to use this line of thinking as the basis for my interviews, where I would ask design students to define what fashion is to them in order to try to understand the phenomenon of contemporary Italian fashion and also encourage their critical thinking towards it.

Using designer discourse in academical writing is not very popular, as discussed in relation to Vaccari's book *La Moda nei Discorsi dei Designer* in the Previous Research subchapter. In addition to the abundance of promotional texts Vaccari mentioned, a scholar of interaction design Thomas Erickson also thinks it is because “stories aren't very respectable. Stories are subjective. Stories are ambiguous. Stories are particular. They are at odds with the scientific drive towards objective, generalizable, repeatable findings. In spite of this – or, I will suggest, in part because of this – stories are of great value to the interaction designer” (1996). Erickson (1996) argues that stories (or in my case, interviews of design students) provide a valuable source for research because
they allow us to question and reinterpret the system; providing examples and issues from real life of people from different backgrounds, stories create a body of knowledge that is there for designers and scholars to analyze and question.

Critical design allows for researchers like me to bring to attention the issues that students and teachers of fashion design concern themselves with, for example the balance of business courses and education that encourages creativity. This is an important issue that both private and public universities in Italy debate, and as the industry demands get higher, it becomes harder for universities to teach students how to work with the company and the market and still retain their vision and creativity. Another issue is the amount of theoretical courses that a university program needs to have in order to keep the accreditation, and the amount of practical courses that are necessary to prepare students for the real working environment after their graduation. These matters will come up in my empirical discussion, and I hope to shed light on it through my analysis.

After having conducted the interviews, I have come to understand that the themes of globalization and construction of national identity are vital for the comprehension of the notion of Italian fashion today. Segre contemplates these issues in her article “National Identities and International Recognition:” the globalization processes have influenced the “geography of fashion” (2011, 269) in terms of relocation of production, which, in turn, has affected the relationship between “made in” and national identity in fashion (see image). If fashion is designed in Italy but produced in China, should it be considered Italian fashion? Is there such a thing as “Italian fashion” in the globalized contemporary industry, where the majority of brands have international creative teams? Maria Luisa Frisa has reflected on this issue in her article “How Italian, These French” (“Che Italiani, Questi Francesi” 2014), where she analyzes the international image of the contemporary fashion industry: the creative director of French Givenchy is Italian Riccardo Tisci, the Italian Gianfranco Ferrè was the creative director of Dior, and now it is the Belgian Raf Simons. Do these brands represent the aesthetic of their country of the country of their creative directors?

Fashion has an increasing role of an “ambassador” of a country (Segre 2011, 270), and yet it becomes more and more difficult to define what constitutes national identity in fashion. Design process could be one of the indicators of national identity: “Clearly the different European countries have a different taste in fashion or style, as well as a different attitude to clothes and fashion. The question is whether this is also based on a different design process” (Teunissen cited in Segre 2011, 268-9). However, the relocation of production associated with globalization has influenced the relationship between “made in” and national output (Segre 2011, 269). During my research, one of my aims is to find what makes Italian design students consider themselves Italian, which I could then generalize and use to depict an image of the Italian national identity in fashion.
Earlier I discussed the factors that contributed to the creation of Italian national identity, and one of them was the “positive stereotype” of Italy (Segre 1999, 25). The fact that national identity is built on stereotypes and not on reality is something that Barthes discusses in his essay “Rhetoric of the Image” (1977). In Barthes' view, “Italianicity” is not a representation of Italy, but a concentrated essence of everything that could be Italian (1977, 37). This “condensed essence” of Italian national identity is based on stereotypes, which is different from real “Italian-ness.” Anderson argues that national identity is an “imagined community,” because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1983, 6). National identity is thus something that is socially constructed and does not correspond to the reality of a national identity.

National identity traditionally is defined through comparison – Segre argues that “Made in Italy” of the 1950s was “created” by the USA as a contrasting image of the Parisian fashion (2011, 268). This definition by what Italian fashion is not rather than what Italian fashion is (or “definition by negation”) brought me to consider the construction of the Other into my theoretical framework. In postcolonial discourse, the Other has been seen as a unity, rather than a person, stamped with generalized characteristics: an enemy, a half-wit, or a prospective convert to Christianity (Rive 1977, 66). Appearance is one of the main determinants in judging identity in Western culture (Arnold 2001, 3) and the difference in skin color, dress, and habits of the barbarous peoples have contributed to the creation of a division between “an 'us' and a 'them', each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident” (Edward Said cited in Taylor 2004, 13).

While colonial discourse is concerned with the indigenous people of the colonized lands, I think some of its notions are useful when discussing the construction of national identity within the Western world itself. Firstly, the Other can only be based on the knowledge of the self; the attempt of the colonizer to depict the colonized as fundamentally different was made with the aim of maintaining authority (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002, 102). This view is relatively common: for instance, Venn defines “essentializing of difference” as politically weakening (2006, 77-78). In the case of Italian national identity, it was built by the Americans by “essentializing” the difference between Italian and French fashion (according to Segre's argument above). Still, while the USA compared it to Parisian couture, it created the identity of Italian fashion based on the knowledge and needs of the Americans: privileging sportswear over high fashion, industrial production over made-to-measure. While Italy managed to find its DNA in high-quality pret-a-porter, superior textile production, etc., the international image of “Made in Italy” was created by an international audience, rather than Italians.

While constructing the Other is arguably easier from a distance, where the differences are
more notable and easier to pinpoint in comparison with Self (or another national identity), it might not present a true representation of a nation. This was one of the critiques of the V&A's 2014 exhibition on Italian fashion – the fact that there was no Italian curator involved in preparing it (Frisa 2014, *Corriere della Sera*). At a class with Enrico Quinto (one of the most important collectors of Italian fashion exhibits, some of which were borrowed by V&A) at IUAV in May 2014, where he discussed the V&A's exhibition, Quinto noted that while V&A provided a beautiful display, it was not truly reflexive and showed an old view of Italian fashion that looks at the economic boom in the post-war Italy.

The second notion of the postcolonial discourse that I would like to apply to my research is the fact that contrasting the Other with Self contributes to the belief that the opposing side is homogenous. Stuart Hall speculates that precisely because cultural identity is constructed within discourse, it is more the result of indicating dissimilarity and exclusion than “the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity – […] an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation” (2003, 4). This “fictive unity,” to use James Souter’s term (cited in Hall 2003, 16), is constructed by those who are in power for easier manipulation of the exploited group; however, it does not erase internal differences – instead of a homogenous Other, “the kaleidoscopic condition of blackness […] signifies a range of experiences” (Bailey and Hall cited in Grossberg 1996, 91). Similarly to this postcolonial condition, “Made in Italy” was also constructed as a clear-defined brand logo with distinct, well-known connotations. However, as discussed in the “Made in Italy” subchapter of my literary review, Italian fashion was full of ambivalences and some of its less mainstream characteristics were not incorporated into “Made in Italy” image.

Contemporary Italian fashion is also more of a “kaleidoscopic condition,” similar to that of blackness, rather than a homogenous system – Frisa describes it as a constellation, “a kaleidoscopic image with a thousand facets” (2011, 11). The construction of national identity in a globalized world, with all the available channels of information, imagery and inspirations, is a difficult task. In my research I aim to find out how both Italian and foreign fashion students and professors characterize contemporary Italian design, then contrast these notions with each other and with the image of “Made in Italy” that was created during the 20th century (and is still used today, for example at the exhibition of V&A). While my findings might not be a clearly defined, homogenous notion of what “Made in Italy 2.0” is, they strive to depict a more realistic picture of what Italian fashion is today, taking into account all of its heterogeneity.
1.4 Methodology

Inspired by my supervisor's article where she urges fashion scholars to take a more critical approach towards studying the fashion industry and to borrow methodologies from the social sciences (Wallenberg 2013, 143), I have decided to challenge myself and conduct a research where I collect my own data, rather than find it in the works of others. In my previous two theses I have only used methodologies of the humanities (literary, text and visual analysis), and even in fashion studies I have limited myself to analyzing images and discourses. The fashion industry has many problems and more work needs to be done in terms of now, today, the real people in the industry and the real issues – one should get out there into reality, investigate, then write about the results, instead of just analyzing images and studying the glamorous world of "haute couture", as I might have done in the past.

One of the benefits of a new discipline such as fashion studies is that it is not as contrived by the laws of its paradigm as a mature science and its flexibility allows for an interdisciplinary approach. My approach is interdisciplinary – I am going to perform an empirical research in order to collect the data from professors and students of fashion design and then I am going to analyze my data in terms of my chosen theory of critical design and national identity in fashion. I find both the theoretical and empirical components equally important and my goal is to have a balance between the two.

I want to study the way fashion is taught in five schools in Italy and I will spend around two weeks in each school, getting to know the academic institution, observing classes, and conducting interviews. After consulting with my hosting university in Italy (IUAV), I have chosen the five universities as follows: Politecnico and IED in Milan, IUAV in Venice, Polimoda and IED in Florence. In addition to other courses associated with fashion, all the five schools offer a graduate program in fashion design. In order to make my research consistent, I will focus only on this BA course and interview students and professors connected to this program and attend classes that are part of the BA course.

My methodology is qualitative empirical research comprising of two stages: data collection and data analysis. My methods include observation (class participation) and interviews in the context of higher education in the field of design and fashion studies in Italy. My materials comprise of the performed interviews, notes from observation and citations of lecturers that give

1 Initially my plan was to also visit the Academy of Costume and Fashion in Rome, but due to the difficulties in logistics as well as time and page limitations of my research, I have decided to leave out Rome. My decision was based on the fact that Rome is the centre of "alta moda", which does not epitomize Italian fashion and does not represent the development that the future of Italian fashion is taking.
classes. For the interviews I will choose academics and lecturers who teach at the chosen universities and current students – mainly students of the final year of the graduate courses, as at the time of the interview they have studied through the majority of the program and can provide a more informed opinion about their education. Also, students of the final year seem to have a clearer idea about who they are as designers and what fashion means to them. I will also interview other important individuals for my thesis, such as professors that have previously taught at one of the chosen universities and are currently teaching at a competitive institution, which allows them to compare different approaches, as well as people from the industry that have been involved with the teaching.

I will convey semi-structured interviews, which vary in length and depth (due to the amount of time the interviewees have). The interviewees will be a mix of Italians and international students and professors. I have compiled a list of questions that I will rely on to direct the course of the interview (found in Appendix 7), and they revolve around the idea of Italian national identity in fashion and the characteristics of contemporary Italian design. These questions will only constitute a base for the discussion – it is much more important for me to hear their opinion about the Italian fashion industry today and where they see their place in it, rather than get the answers to all of the questions.

All of the interviews, apart from my conversation with Michele Guazzone from IED Milano, will be recorded with the interviewees permission. I will inform the interviewees that their names and answers will be used in my thesis. To get hold of the voice memo recordings, please contact the author on maho9604@student.su.se.

1.5 Reflexivity and Delimitations

Data are not just there, they are a product of interpretation, and this interpretation depends on the values and background of the researcher (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, 12), and being aware of the influence of the researcher on the interpretation process is part of reflexive research. My academic background and interests determine my choice of theory, and my choice of methodologies and methods affect the research process and its outcome – what perspective I chose to look at the research question from and the specific paths for obtaining knowledge determine the kind of knowledge I receive and produce.

My academic background in literature studies has influenced me to choose the postcolonial theory in discussion of the national identity formation. This and other theoretical framework have influenced the angle of my research. My choice of fashion design universities and the people I
interviewed also determines the outcome of my research – had I picked other universities or students/professors, the data might have been affected. The choice of the universities I visited was made with the help of Gabriele Monti from IUAV, who has advised me about the status of different fashion education institutions. There are many fashion design schools in Italy, and the majority of them are private. I strive to have a balance of private and public universities, as well as represent the most influential design schools in Italy; however, my research is not representative of the whole fashion design education system in Italy. The fact that I choose to interview people involved in the fashion design education is a limitation in itself – being exposed to fashion, they have different views on contemporary Italian fashion and do not necessarily represent the view of general population of the country.

Another delimitation stems from the selection process of the interviewees: in order to avoid false interpretation, the interviews will be held in English, and this affects my choice of students and professors, as not everyone speaks English well enough to be comfortable to be interviewed. Some of the interviewees will be picked with the help of the university staff (due to the schedule of exams and projects that students are involved in, as well as the level of English), and my data is likely to vary from interviews that are the result of random sampling (the staff may have chosen students that in their view represent the university in the best light).

### 1.6 Thesis Outline

In the first chapter I provided an introduction to the topic of “Made in Italy” and explained the aim of my research. The next three chapters of my thesis focus on the data I collected from universities, and they are divided by geographical location: the second chapter deals with the universities in Milan, the third chapter focuses on the universities of Florence, and the forth chapter analyzes the data I gathered at the university of Venice. In these chapters, I provide information about the specific university: the sources of information I used, whether the university is public or private, how many students there are, how much the fees are (to determine how accessible it is), what programs (BA, etc.) they have, what are considered its strengths, how many foreign students they have, languages of instruction, etc. This allows me to compare the universities and draw some of the conclusions. These chapters are combine the description of the data with analysis, as I introduce the characteristics of “Made in Italy 2.0” and discuss the issues fashion education in Italy.

The analysis in these three chapters is grounded in data, and in the final chapter I connect my analysis with the theoretical framework and previous research discussed in introduction. Discussing my empirical findings in the view of critical design and the construction of national
identity allows me to draw conclusions about what makes Italian fashion “Italian,” how Italian national identity is constructed in the globalized world, and what is the direction that fashion design education and Italian fashion system should be taking for the future success of the Italian fashion industry.

Chapter 2. Milan

2.1 IED Milano

The following information about the university was gathered through an unrecorded interview with the coordinator of the fashion design course in IED Milano Michele Guazzone, who provided general information about the institution, an interview with professor of women's fashion design Paola Toscano (2014) and a student of the final year of the BA course in fashion design Sanna Eriksson (2014), information from the university's website, and on-site observation.

IED is a private university, with average annual fees of €10,000. The university offers different courses at various levels: advanced training (evening, summer, and 1-year courses), undergraduate (3 year), and masters courses – all in fields of design, fashion, visual communication and management. The university was established in 1966 as a design school, and design remains at its core today (the fashion design school of the Milan branch has approximately 300 students), even as the fashion courses (marketing, communications, styling, etc.) were added in the 1980s. The majority of the information below is focused on the 3-year fashion design course, the English counterpart of which has recently been accredited by the Westminster University.

As many private universities offer specialization courses and diplomas instead of Bachelor courses, the fact that the IED undergraduate design program is a validated degree has appeal for prospective students. The student I interviewed is Sanna Eriksson, a Swedish girl who came to Milan to study fashion design and at the time of the interview was in the final stages of completing the BA course at IED. For Eriksson, her studying for an accredited degree meant monetary support from the Swedish government, which influenced her decision when she was choosing a university (Eriksson 2014). Eriksson decided to come to Italy because she felt that there was not much choice of design schools in Sweden, whereas in Italy, where fashion is an established and strong industry, design schools are plentiful all over the country. This is something I have also noticed in Italy – fashion is taken very seriously here, as it is a business providing livelihood for a large sector of society. Fashion schools, magazines, websites do not look at fashion as something superficial, rather
as an organic part of modern life and economy. Students apply for courses in design despite the economic crisis, when programs in Arts and Humanities see fewer and fewer applicants. Surely there are many design graduates who struggle to find a job (and I will touch upon this point in more detail in the next chapter); nevertheless, students pursue their degree in design not as a hobby or as a creative outlet, but as a profession with many opportunities.

With many international students at IED, the majority of the courses are taught both in Italian and English. In order to graduate, the international students have to pass an Italian exam at the end of their studies and the Italian students have to pass an English test. I found this quite beneficial, because Italian students need English if they want to work internationally (and the lack of English was a concern of many Italian students I interviewed: for example at IUAV, where the whole program is taught only in Italian, despite the fact that many professors speak English as their mother tongue), and also international students that graduate from an Italian university should be able to work in Italy, which is still rather impossible without Italian, despite the globalization and internationalization of the industry. Foreign students at other private universities in Italy, like in Polimoda in Florence, have fewer chances of finding a job in Italy after having studied for a degree in design at an Italian university, because they do not speak the language: one student from Singapore I interviewed at Polimoda said she was looking for employment abroad precisely because she does not speak Italian (Tung 2014). While IED in Milan provides language courses for its students, the standard of these courses does not seem to be up to par with the intentions of providing students with Italian on a professional level. Eriksson (2014) has noted that she did not find Italian classes offered by the school very useful and she did not start speaking until the third year of her program, when she realized how important it was to speak Italian if she wanted to stay in Italy, so she learned it herself. While the motivation to get a job is a strong factor when studying a language, the intensity of the course might get in the way of devoting enough time to it. It was one of the student's thoughts on improving the course – she would like to have more time to study Italian and a better course to be offered by the university (Eriksson 2014).

Another course Eriksson would add is the industry language in English, which designers need when introducing their collection, creating their websites, writing about their brand (Eriksson 2014). This need for professional English was echoed by students at IUAV, where there used to be a course in the industry language (different from the courses aimed at improving the general knowledge of English), which unfortunately had to be taken out from the program after the educational reform – I will return to this when discussing the differences between private and public universities in Chapter 3. IED, being a private university, has more flexibility in terms of its curriculum, and students expect more practical, business-oriented courses from their program.
Eriksson has expressed a regret that her course was much more theoretical and not as hands-on as she hoped it would be: “Are we studying to be designers or fashion historians? Why should we write essays instead of making clothes?” (Eriksson 2014). She enjoyed learning about fashion history, but it is not something she wants to pay for – she wishes there was more focus on creating a collection sooner in the program: the last year of the program, where students were very involved with producing a collection, was the best in her opinion.

Many students do not make it to the last stage of the program where they get to design and produce their own collection, as many drop out after facing a much more theoretical program than they were expecting – including many of Eriksson’s classmates. In a way, it is a natural selection of those students who want to study fashion design seriously: sketching and picking fabrics might be a fun activity, but in my view producing a collection needs to come from a deeper place than just love for fashion – to be meaningful, it needs to reflect on social problems, it needs to refer to history, it needs to be inspired by greater things than fashion itself. Students that go past the first year of theoretical and skill-building classes, such as pattern-making, tailoring, semiotics, history of fashion (referred to by many students as boring), have more to say when they do get to produce a collection. Theoretical classes may not be something students of a private school desire to pay for; however, these courses enable IED to have an accredited BA course, which was a strong motivation for Eriksson herself to apply for the program in the first place.

The balance of theory and practice is one of the characteristics of IED in the view of Michele Guazzone, the coordinator of the fashion design program: when compared to other international and Italian schools of design, IED does not only focus on the practical aspects of the fashion industry, but also gives importance to theoretical courses. Another characteristic Guazzone mentioned addresses the practical features of education offered by IED and is something many private schools have in common: the fact that its teachers come from the industry, rather than academia, and they train students as if they were professionals already. The professor I interviewed (Paola Toscano) works full-time in the fashion industry as a womenswear designer, which enables her to teach about the reality of business in her class. While trying to push the students to express their best creativity and talent, she says she also stresses other, more practical, aspects, such as respecting deadlines, doing research when thinking about producing clothes – finding competitors, textiles, etc., as if they are working for a real brand (Toscano 2014). Toscano feels there needs to be a balance between creativity and reality in her course, because it's not just about being creative, it's about producing clothes that the industry demands.

This focus on practicality and functionality of fashion design was also noted by Guazzone as the third characteristic of IED. Guazzone pointed out that IED trains neither pattern-makers, nor
couturiers – graduate students are designers: creative individuals with practical skills and functional view of what they produce. Pret-a-porter is of course something Milan is famous for, so it is no surprise that design schools here focus on the creative, yet wearable fashion that put Milan (and Italy) on the world map of fashion. This emphasis on product and functionality is also strong in Politecnico (public University in Milan), which I will discuss in the next subchapter (2.2), but is not as strong in other cities I visited during fieldwork, as I will point out in Chapter 3 and 4.

In order to be admitted to study fashion design at IED Milano, prospective students need to provide their portfolios, which do not need to be articulate – the quality of the sketches is not rigidly assessed, as this skill will be developed during course of the program, but portfolios need to show their owners' creativity and ideas. English test is also a part of the admission exam for international students. Students transferring from other universities directly into the second year of the program have a more strict evaluation in order to determine that they possess the same skills as the first year students. If only few skills are lacking (pattern making, tailoring, technical drawings, etc.), recovery courses are offered to fill the gaps in education. This possibility to join the second year of the program was also featured in the private school in Florence (Polimoda), but not in any public universities. This, again, points to the flexibility of private institutions, and maybe also to their willingness to accept more students at a later stage due to financial reasons, when some of the original freshmen have dropped out from the first year. The livelihood of public universities does not depend solely on tuition fees and they can therefore be more selective in their admission processes.

Having informally interviewed a few international students at IED (who come from all over the world – Mexico, Vietnam, Cyprus, Russia, Sweden, USA, etc.), I asked how their education in Italy has differed from their scholarly experience at home, and one of the benefits of the Italian education system was said to be fewer subjects at a time, which allowed them to focus on design and creativity. Theoretical classes at IED allow no more than 25 people per class and for practical workshops (“laboratorio”) the classes are divided into even smaller groups. Among the first year courses are a workshop in historical costume (from 18th century onwards), history of fashion (1950s onwards), digital prints, pattern making, projects for styling (photo lab where students have a chance to make their portfolio), and accessories workshop (see images) – not an in-depth focus, but there is an opportunity to graduate in accessories design.

After courses on basic skills in the first year, knitwear and textiles is the focus of the second year, and research is the focus in the third, where students learn how to articulate a collection. The final year students produce a book of 20-30 looks, which contains sketches, fabric cards, color cards, inspiration images, mood-boards. Once the portfolio is finished, students manufacture 6 out
of the 20-30 looks they sketched. Recently the final evaluation has become dual: the photographic portfolio and the produced garments are evaluated separately, in order to properly assess the quality of the manufacturing. The final year student Eriksson was very enthusiastic about producing her own collection, but was nervous that she would not be among the selected best that get to showcase their collection at the graduation fashion show, where many employers come to assess the talent. Due to bureaucratical differences in the English and the Italian versions of the Bachelor program, international students have less time to complete their collections than Italians, which Eriksson found unfair. Showing your designs to prospective employers is definitely a valuable experience for graduating students, and the fact that only the best students get to do it might seem unjust; however, it is representative of the highly competitive fashion industry. In Eriksson's (2014) own words, the desire to be selected makes her work even harder.

Eriksson showed me her portfolio, which she called very private: “Me in a book” (2014). This portfolio contains concepts, as well as textiles she made herself, her experiments with fabrics and colors. During classes throughout the 3-year program, she was able to explore who she is as a designer, and as a person; she said she was pushed to step outside her comfort zone in order to learn more about herself. I was present at one of such classes and I found them very inspiring. Students were asked to find their identity and their source of inspiration through a series of exercises, such as creating mood-boards on the following topics: “me in the mirror”, “me and the other”, “me and my body.” These tropes were explored through different angles and analyzed together with the teacher in order to see what space in the world the student (thinks s/he) occupies. Exploring self in terms of space, shape, taste, smell, texture, sound, color was akin to psychoanalysis, and students' choices of inspiration images were examined. For example, one student chose various pictures, many of which on close inspection resembled some sort of irregularities that were geometrical in their nature: a head that exploded with a perfect line of skyscrapers, an irregular surface of the moon with different size round craters. These keywords – irregular, geometrical – were then developed into her collection, translated by the student as rigid tailored shapes of garments with bursts of color.

Together with developing personal creativity, these exercises help construct a brand identity through finding recurrent motifs. A big part of this self-exploration is cultural background, for example when students had to explain what object they are in nature for the “me and my body” exercise, an American girl picked a mountain, which represented solitude – and also her native Colorado. National identity seemed to be a big part of the students' identities as designers, so I wanted to find out what “Italian-ness” represented in design. On IED's website, the link between the university's base in Milan and its connotations of “Made in Italy” is strongly voiced: “Milan is the home of Made in Italy, of design in its broadest sense of creative culture, ranging from the
decorative arts and industrial products to jewellery and food design. [---] It was in this cultural and
manufacturing context, so deeply rooted in the Made in Italy philosophy, yet so thoroughly
international in its mindset, that Francesco Morelli established the Istituto Europeo di Design in
1966” (IED Milan home page 2014); “Through time, it has become a 100% Made in Italy
international network of excellence” (IED international campus page 2014). Linking Made in Italy
to excellence, industrial products, creative culture and manufacturing, IED Milan offers these
aspects of design to their prospective students.

However, when asked directly about the national characteristics, the school staff did not
stress the Italian aspects of design. Guazzone said that the aesthetics of teachers themselves are
often not Italian, but they teach how they work in the Italian fashion industry and that might have an
influence on how the students work. Foreign students often bring a different perspective to the
creative process, and the end result is merged from different cultural backgrounds into something
contemporary, with fabrics and shapes that appeal to various types of customers (for example,
shapes influenced by the student's Syrian background made with Italian textiles). When I asked the
Italian professor about Italian fashion and what it represents, she also said she did not think there
was such a thing as “Italian design” anymore – you have references, but nowadays it is hard to
decide what is Italian and what is from somewhere else (Toscano 2014). For her, contemporary
fashion is a mixture of influences, and even China are influencing the Italian perspective. Her
Italian students are often not Italian in their inspiration – instead, they are influenced by the French
and English aesthetic. The most “Italian” in her course at the time was a Chinese girl, whose
projects have exhibited some Italian qualities. What those qualities are was a difficult thing for
Toscano to describe, and after some consideration she used the word “balance” to describe Italian
fashion best: balance between the colors, proportions (Toscano 2014). Italian fashion in her opinion
is never pushing – colors are like in Italian paintings, melted together, soft. She said that possibly it
has to do with the local mellow climate and relaxed lifestyle. Another characteristic Toscano noted
is that Italians are very conservative because everybody is judged and it is hard for people to
express themselves. In her view this doesn't happen in other countries and that is why she (and other
Italians in her opinion) find foreigners more interesting and look for work abroad.

Asking an international student provided additional characteristics: for Eriksson, a great
thing about studying fashion design in Italy was the focus on fabrics – it is not something she thinks
she would learn in Sweden, mixing textures and textiles and getting as involved with them as she
did (2014). Guazzone also pointed to the connection between textiles and the Italian design, noting
that the study of textiles and knitwear has a strong importance at IED, which also reflects the
characteristics of Milan and Italian fashion industry in general. Just as in Made in Italy of the late
20th century, textiles still play an important role in Italian design and design studies.

Eriksson also noted that Italian fashion has a clear separation of the masculine and the feminine styles (2014). In her native Sweden, one can wear whatever one wants (which echoes Toscano’s comment about Italian fashion being restricted and conservative), and in Italy womenswear is more feminine and defined. Eriksson also noted that people dress less casually here and pay more attention to their appearance, even men. This Italian quality might be linked to the aforementioned conservativeness: while casual means relaxed, formal means more normative and restricted; this way one Italian characteristic (conservativeness, judging others) produces another (more formal, thought through look).

Contrary to their rigid fashion style, Italians are quite relaxed in their lifestyle as Toscano mentioned, and for Eriksson it was difficult at first to adjust to the habits of teachers to be late to class and exams. By her third year she noticed that getting accustomed to these changes has affected her own personality: she feels less stressed, more relaxed, which comes out in her designs, making them harmonic and calm (Eriksson 2014). The Italian lifestyle has affected the young designer from Sweden, which draws me to conclude that the relaxed, laid back atmosphere of this country is directly linked to its design output.

2.2 Politecnico Milano

The following information about the university was gathered through information from the university's informational brochures (Ramonda 2010), on-site observation, an interview with Politecnico Milano's fellow researcher and contract professor Federica Vacca (2014), who is the tutor for the final design studio course and the final graduation project development of the fashion design program, and a graduate Politecnico student Miriam Corsini (2014), who has studied for both the Bachelor and the Master course in fashion design.

Politecnico Milano is a public university, which boasts Giorgio Armani among its alumni (Ramonda 2010, 3). The tuition fees are set by the government and, depending on the income of the family, vary from 300 to 3000 euros for the program, making it an accessible higher education. The faculty of design offers BA degree courses in industrial, communication, fashion and interior design. These four courses also continue into a Masters degree, and additional Masters courses in design and engineering, yacht and cruise vessel design, and product service systems design are offered by the faculty. I will mainly focus on the Bachelor course in fashion design, which offers 150 places each year, of which five are reserved for students outside the EU. The language of instruction at the BA
level is Italian, with some elective courses also available in English. The fashion design course at the MA level is taught in both Italian and English, and the university will soon change to teaching the Masters program only in English, due to the large international interest. Despite the fact that the Bachelor program is taught mostly in Italian, Politecnico has some international students also at this level, many of who come to Milan as exchange students.

The admission exam consists of a selective test on general education, and it is a strict procedure with a ranking placement that takes place only once a year (Ramonda 2010, 3). Already at the level of admissions, the difference between public and private schools is noticeable: firstly, students cannot apply to join the program at the second year; secondly, Politecnico does not examine the students' individual portfolios like IED, so it is more standardized and objective; and finally, the test is not a collection of sketches but a rigorous exam that distributes points in questions of mathematics, art, history, etc. The student I interviewed remembered how stiff the competition was to get into Politecnico, despite the large amount of places offered: the admissions exam was not something one prepared for a few weeks in advance, but needed to study hard all five years of high school to do well in (Corsini 2014). Once you are admitted, you continue this path of acquiring a broad education – the courses that constitute the degree vary from economics, to mathematics, to social sciences (Ramonda 2010, 17). Students need to pass these general courses to go to the next level, which, like the more theoretical courses in the first year at IED, resembles a selection process.

In the second year such courses as anthropology, computer graphics, technology are offered, and the final year is focused on the thesis, which consists of the theoretical part (a classic research paper to prepare the statement for the collection) and the practical part (collection itself). The professor I interviewed, Federica Vacca, is the tutor for the final collection, and her course in “meta-design” covers all the processes of development a collection, from inspiration up to the merchandizing plan. When talking about the students graduation projects, she stressed that the final presentation is not a fashion show: “Not like at IED!” (Vacca 2014). The glamorized side of the fashion industry is played down at this public university, which focuses more on the research and production that goes into making a collection.

Classes of the BA fashion design course at Politecnico are both theoretical and practical, but more emphasis is put on the projects, where the large group of students that enroll each year (150) is divided into smaller groups. These projects, or “laboratorio,” consist of various workshops in knitwear, photography, textiles, etc. (see images). The Politeca, or design knowledge centre with archives (books, documents, magazines, catalogues, materials and textiles), and a media centre (photos, videos, software), is also available to students. The fact that there is more emphasis on the projects, rather than theory, seems to be quite a recent movement: the graduate student Corsini
expressed a regret than not more of her courses were practical when she was studying, and she did not get to work on the mannequin in the first year, as current BA students do (2014).

As one of the biggest public universities in the country, the amenities Politecnico offers (laboratorios, Politeca) are remarkable; however, due to the large number of students they are not available to students whenever they wish to use them. This frustration was expressed by Sophia Crema, a former student of Politecnico, who left the program after one year and applied for the same BA program in fashion design at IUAV where I interviewed her (Crema and Ricci 2014). IUAV is also a public university (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4), but it is much smaller than Politecnico, where Crema felt like just a number – at IUAV she received more one-on-one time and feedback from the teachers (Crema and Ricci 2014). This difference from IUAV – having a large amount of students and providing a more standardized (and less personal) education – is one of the main characteristics of Politecnico. The second characteristic is shared by the two universities: being public, their curricula are set according to the governmental guidelines, and as a result, general education subjects mentioned earlier (social sciences, economics, art, history, etc.) constitute a part of the fashion design degree.

The fact that Politecnico is a public university was a motivator for Corsini: “It's a university – you get a degree” (2014), just like the fact that IED Milano provided an accredited degree was a incentive for Eriksson to apply to the private school. Politecnico was also an acceptable choice for Corsini's parents, who wanted her to become an architect – after the first year, which provides a foundation, students can still change their specialization. The professor I interviewed seemed to agree that the good reputation and long history of Politecnico (it has been one one of the most important universities for engineering and architecture in Italy) is one of its unique selling points (2014). According to Vacca, the course also provides an overview of fashion as a system instead of just focusing on fashion design (e.g., offers courses in retail design, product development, merchandizing, etc.), so graduates get to work in various areas of the industry: “As Politecnico is a public university, it is important that the program prepares students for the real job market, where real skills are required as opposed to just being creative” (Vacca 2014).

Politecnico's informational brochure states clearly that its approach to teaching fashion design is far from nurturing the stereotypical “genius creator;” rather, it is training the great Italian mastery in a team environment (Ramonda 2010, 16). This characteristic of Made in Italy – industrialism, production – that blossomed in the post-war Milan is still stressed at Politecnico. In the information Politecnico provides to its prospective students about the design faculty, Milan and its region Lombardy are promoted as the birthplace of the profession of design from the local crafts and industries in the beginning of the 20th century, prospering after the Second World War due to
“originality and influence” (Ramonda 2010, 1). The importance of industrial design (Politecnico was the first place in Italy where a degree in industrial design was offered, according to Ramonda 2010, 1) was also expressed by Vacca, who stressed that Politecnico is “not a fashion design school, but a design school” (2014).

The focus on the product, rather than individual creativity, is an important characteristic of Politecnico. Among its educational goals, Politecnico's degree in fashion design promotes the focus on the product and its functionality, to which the designer brings additional values of symbolism and culture (Ramonda 2010, 17). The student I interviewed said that during her studies at Politecnico, she was always asked to think about the function of her designs, about what it does for the customer. Corsini was one of the students that got to go to FIT in New York for one semester as part of the agreement that FIT and Politecnico have, and when I asked her about the identity of her home university, she compared many aspects of education between the two universities in order to identify what distinguished Politecnico. In Corsini's view, the approach at FIT was similar to private universities in Italy, where students are not asked to think about the cultural aspect of their designs, but rather encouraged to express their creativity (2014). This can be confirmed by my experience at IED Milano, where many students said the course has made them explore themselves as designers. Corsini echoes Vacca's comment about the fact that Politecnico prepares its students for the real job market: “Here it's a business. Fashion is work. [...] You need to research a collection, find an inspiration source, rationalize everything as a designer: [...] not just because it's fashion, but because it needs to have a purpose” (Corsini 2014).

The functionality of fashion is a trait of Made in Italy, and it still seems to be relevant today. The pret-a-porter style of design that brought Milan to the front line of the fashion world is something that Milan universities feel strongly about: even though they develop creativity at IED, it was pointed out that they do not train couturiers, but designers; Corsini has made the same distinction regarding Politecnico: “In America, you create a “stilista,” not a “progettista” (designer)” (2014). The difference in the type of designer the two universities produce lies not only in the focus on product (Politecnico) versus the focus on creativity (FIT), but also in the level of education students have: Corsini has noted that in America she felt she was more aware of the factors outside of fashion – art, history, architecture – that she related her designs to. While it might be connected to the level of education that Politecnico offers (as a public university), it might also be something that is characteristic of Italian education in general, even at a high school level.

As Corsini mentioned, the history and architecture Italians grow up with and learn about comes through in their designs, and while it was something so natural that she did not pay attention to while studying at Politecnico, at FIT Corsini realized that she is different from American
students. At Politecnico, they did not discuss “Italian-ness” of the designs they created and learned about, but at FIT her designs were called “Italian” by the American professors, and it was hard for Corsini to understand what makes them Italian. After thinking about it for a bit, she suggested that compared to her American classmates, who use a lot of fabric and like to drape soft silhouettes “like Donna Karan”, what made her designs different was simplicity and tailoring: “Italians like structure, defined shapes – like Armani” (Corsini 2014). This, together with elegance and minimalism, was what Corsini felt made her designs Italian.

When I asked the professor about Italian national identity in design, she said that the same qualities that made the “Made in Italy” motto famous in the last century (quality, craftsmanship, elegance), are still internationally recognized as being Italian today (Vacca 2014). Italy, in Vacca's view, is still an important manufacturer (and as discussed above, production is an aspect that Politecnico devotes a lot of attention to in its program). There are other famous manufacturing countries today (Asia, Eastern Europe), but what distinguishes Italy is its market position in terms of quality – it still has the best product development for luxury brands, which has been enhanced by the intangible values that exist within the Italian attitude towards manufacturing and craftsmanship. Product manufacturing, and not necessarily creative direction, is the key feature of both Italian design and Politecnico's approach (Vacca 2014).

What makes contemporary Italian design stand out from its artisanal legacy is the combination of traditional craftsmanship with modern technology (Vacca 2014). At Politecnico, strong importance to technologies, processes and materials is given (Ramonda 2010, 17), and students get a chance to learn about advanced manufacturing and special engineering processes. During her Master's studies, Corsini chose a specialization in biotechnology, where she learned the complicated engineering techniques required to program a microchip and apply it to fabrics and garments. In addition to the more traditional qualities of Italian design, such as focus on functionality, high-level production, elegance, simplicity, tailoring, etc., the new notion of technology combined with craftsmanship could be considered one of the characteristics of “Made in Italy 2.0.”

**Chapter 3. Florence**

**3.1 Polimoda**

The following information about the university was gathered through an interview with the Assistant Dean and Head of the design department of Polimoda Patrick De Muynck (2014),
students of the final year of the undergraduate course in fashion design: two Italian students – Samantha Piras and Francesca Caserta (2014) and one international student Zhi Wei Tung (2014), information from the university's website, information USB provided by Polimoda, and on-site observation.

Polimoda is a private university of fashion design and marketing, with average annual fees of €9,500 for the undergraduate program in design. The design department offers 4-week summer courses, an introductory 10-week course, one-year foundation course, 3-year undergraduate course in fashion technology, 3-year undergraduate course in fashion design (the most important program, which constitutes about 65% of all students), another 3-year undergraduate program in footwear & accessories design, and a 9-month Masters course in collection design and shoe and bag collection design. Starting from the academic year 2014-2015, the undergraduate and Masters programs will be lengthened to 4 years (undergraduate) and 14 months (Masters). In the interview with the head of the design department it became clear that longer programs were introduced in order to better prepare students for the working field and offer them vital additional courses, for example in business and marketing: “Designers are expected to take care of figures and budgets” (De Muynck 2014). The need for courses that cultivate a business mind in addition to creativity was also expressed by the Italian students I interviewed at Polimoda, who have regretted that subjects on marketing in their 3-year program were only taught at the final year and they felt like it wasn't enough, as today's industry requires designers to know how to price and market their products (Piras and Caserta 2014).

Interestingly, the international student I interviewed was appreciative of the fact that Polimoda was less focused on the business aspect of design than creativity (Tung 2014). Zhi Wei Tung had previously studied in Singapore and found her program (in Apparel Design and Merchandizing) very commercial and sales-oriented: together with pattern-making and sewing, she learned about lead times, shipping costs and fabric sourcing. Classes about fashion design were closely linked with classes about selling, and after some time at that program she felt the need for a more in-depth, meaningful, creative course to explore herself as a designer/creator (Tung 2014). In her words, Polimoda has enabled her to find inspiration in historical garments, paintings, museums, and Florentine surroundings in general, which they had to study for their assignments. When thinking about her collection, Tung needed to illustrate a lot and express herself more, rather than just think of whether the garments would sell. When Zhi Wei Tung showed me one of her creations – an oversized glove she made when she was experimenting with leather – she commented: “It's not like I've studied hard to make gloves or whatever, I'm just trying, you know, for the heck of it”
(Tung 2014). This echoes with what the Milano Politecnico student (Corsini 2014) had mentioned about the approach of private schools in Italy – they nurture talent, focus on the developing the creative genius, whereas public universities make students think about the functionality of their designs, justifying their collections rather than simply expressing themselves.

The focus on the designer is one of main characteristics of Polimoda's approach, as De Muynck (2014) states: “We don't work on the product, we work on the individual.” This exploration of self is opposed to what the Milano Politecnico's motto seems to be – the focus on the product (Vacca 2014). While developing creativity can certainly produce great designers, unfortunately, as in every field, the very talented students are a minority; however, it is the majority that will be looking for a job after graduating. Polimoda's website (Polimoda: Undergraduate in Fashion Design 2014) offers the following employment opportunities for graduate students of the fashion design program: fashion designer, assistant designer, creative director, fashion stylist, trend researcher, fashion consultant, fashion illustrator, costume designer, fashion coordinator. De Muynck (2014) has said that while the placement of graduate students is very high (around 70%), the jobs are spread out in the whole fashion sector (as opposed to just fashion design), and that companies that the school works with closely appreciate the level of education that Polimoda students have. This strong foundation is, in De Muynck's view, another characteristic of Polimoda: no matter what program the students are studying for, they receive broad knowledge about the fashion system in general, which allows them to work in many areas of the industry. A foundation that leads to a wide range of employment is also something Politecnico prides itself in (Vacca 2014), so despite the difference in the focus on the product versus creativity, these universities have a common strategy in terms of providing their students with a broad education in the fashion system.

Historically, Tuscany is known for its artisan production of leather goods and is world-famous for its accessories and footwear, and even now the majority of international and Italian luxury brands produce their goods in Tuscany, which creates a strong need for skilled professionals in the accessories sector. As Polimoda is situated in the heart of Tuscany – Florence, it would seem logical to have a strong output of accessories and footwear designers to supply that demand; however, the interest in this program is weak among prospective students. The glamorous world of fashion design, on the other hand, attracts many hopeful students from different countries: the fashion design program at Polimoda is the most popular one, with about 90 students enrolling each year; whereas the undergraduate course in footwear and accessories design only attracts about 20 students a year, despite the huge demand in the industry.

While the program in footwear and accessories design may be less popular at Polimoda than it perhaps should be, the university still puts emphasis on the characteristically Tuscan crafts and
techniques in their design program. The President of Polimoda is Ferruccio Ferragamo - “a name that represents the best of fashion Made in Italy,” as it says in Polimoda's website (Polimoda: About Us 2014). The Ferragamo brand, internationally famous for luxury shoes and leather accessories, was a big part of the Made in Italy history. With its headquarters in Florence, Ferragamo connects Polimoda to the old Italian tradition of artisanship. De Muynck (2014) described the respect and knowledge of craft as one of the unique selling points of Polimoda, where students make garments and shoes by hand from scratch, mixing artisan techniques with avant-garde approaches: one student created a functioning shoe made only of paper. This mixture of traditional Italian and contemporary international influences seems to be another characteristic of Polimoda: while the President of the university is a famous Italian, the Dean of Polimoda is a famous Belgian in the fashion education field – Linda Loppa. Loppa has brought avant-garde teaching methods to Polimoda, which are advertised as one of the reasons to choose Polimoda, in addition to it being “a centre for Italian excellence” (Polimoda's informational USB).

The mixture of old traditions and new techniques is visible in the university itself – immersed in the historical setting of Villa Favard, Polimoda provides high-tech laboratories (see images). The courses offered at the university vary from fashion history to fabric and fibre technology and 3D design, and one course in particular demonstrates this blend of old and new at Polimoda: students need to search for historical patterns from fashion archives and recreate the garment respecting the patterns and techniques of the past; the next task is to redesign the garment, interpreting it in a contemporary way. Another project that connects tradition to a modern approach is for students to make a collection for a family (men, women, children, old, young, pregnant, etc.) and link it with a recent collection of a designer.

Combining different aspects of design is also traceable in the collaboration projects at Polimoda: students of accessories work together with students of design to make jewelry for the collections of the latter. Another collaboration students get to participate in is the H&M project, where they need to develop a children's collection following a brief from the client. The top 10 chosen by H&M get to then collaborate with the students of technology for design at Polimoda, who develop prototypes of the garments. Working in a team, listening to briefs, and getting feedback from real companies prepares students for the future working environment, and the close link to the business world is another characteristic of Polimoda. The university offers a scouting platform (Polimodatalent) that brings graduates, companies, and head hunters together. Another similar project is Business Links, which I got to witness – for a few days, head hunters from international companies come to Polimoda to assess the talent, have interviews for future internships and possible employment. Students seemed very prepared for this event, having thought
of their brand logo, collection concept, packaging, fonts, and having created their portfolios, business cards (see images) throughout their degree.

Polimoda's graduate students go on to intern and work for international brands (e.g., Givenchy, Phillip Lim); this orientation to the fashion world outside of Italy and making Polimoda more international has been the goal of Linda Loppa and Patrick De Muynck, who both come from Belgium. Today, over 65% of Polimoda's students are from outside Italy (the highest number of all the universities I have examined) and all the courses and programs are offered in English and Italian. Involving students from different backgrounds has created an open-mindedness and creativity, which, in De Muynck's view (2014), is representative of modern fashion companies – globalization and internationalization bring the mixing of nationalities, backgrounds, sources of inspiration and aesthetics together. Due to the low average level of English, Italy is still behind in this process (De Muynck 2014), and Polimoda is pioneering the globalization approach. Other universities, especially public ones where the language of instruction is almost always Italian even at a Master level, are less international and mixed; for this reason they might be better sources for my research, which aims to find what “Italian-ness” is in contemporary design. However, it is important to reflect what is currently happening in fashion education in Italy, and private universities with a large amount of international students have a strong presence in the field.

Polimoda students I interviewed, even the Italian ones, looked outside of Italy for inspiration and identification; when I asked them who they see themselves as designers, the student from Singapore said she likes quirky and child-like aesthetics and is not really inspired by Italian designers (Tung 2014), and the Italian students described their style as “very Céline” and “Thom Browne,” i.e. French and American inspired (Piras and Caserta 2014). When I asked them if there is anything in their work that could be seen as influenced by their Italian background, the students said that it could be their use of embroidery and crafts – this handmade Italian tradition is mixed with their international, contemporary inspirations.

Teachers at Polimoda also come from various backgrounds, and as groups of over 20 are divided, students get to meet many different teachers, who all judge their work collectively together with a jury. The admission exams procedure is similar to IED Milano: students provide a portfolio (not necessarily in fashion design, just something showing their ideas and creativity) and a motivation letter, in addition to practical tasks and an interview. Some students, like in IED, are accepted to the second year, if they have previously studied design – the student I interviewed (Zhi Wei Tung) joined the program in the second year, coming straight from her college in Singapore. This, again, demonstrates the flexibility of private schools, which also comes out in their accommodating curriculum – the programs are re-evaluated each year and changed “in-line with the
industry needs” (Polimoda corporate video 2013).

Changing the program according to the needs of the industry allows private schools to add necessary subjects. Students of fashion design at Polimoda have a course in terminology and garment analysis both in Italian and English that was missing for Eriksson at IED and that IUAV no longer offers due to the education reform. Another recent update in the curriculum at Polimoda is something I already mentioned earlier – the addition of fashion business and industry courses, which was desired from students (Piras and Caserta 2014), as the knowledge of marketing and merchandizing is expected from designers today. What is still missing from the program in the view of students I interviewed is more focus on textiles (Piras and Caserta 2014) and a stronger foundation in construction of garments (Tung 2013) – Tung has learned it from her previous education in Singapore, but has noticed that students at Polimoda often feel the need to learn more about how to construct patterns.

The possible lack of such defining Made in Italy characteristics as focus on construction and textiles, and the focus on creativity and avant-garde teaching methods instead, shows the less Italian and more international approach of Polimoda. De Muynck (2014) says that creativity is not the forte of Italian fashion: there is something strong and exceptional in Italian designs, but it is not necessarily creative; what makes the Made in Italy fashion so significant is the focus on “made” – the creative input can come from outside, but the quality production and artisanship are the reasons for the success of Italian designs: “Givenchy produces jewelry here. Prototypes of Vivienne Westwood are made in Prato” (De Muynck 2014). What other countries can produce only on a year's notice, Italians succeed at delivering when the production of some pieces is requested urgently for a show: “They won't sleep but they will do it. They take it as an honor” (De Muynck 2014). This involvement and passion comes out in other aspects of the Italian life (for example cooking), and De Muynck cites this “obsession” as another cause of the success of the Italian fashion industry.

Other features that contribute to the “Italian-ness” of fashion produced here are, in De Muynck's view, the exposure to inspirational cultural heritage, family ties (many companies, like Ferragamo, are passed from generation to generation, so all the efforts of the family go into making the business successful), the respect that artisans have in the business, and the close relationship between the public and the designer that gives way to feedback and the ability of changing and adapting to the client's needs. These positive aspects of the Italian way are something that Polimoda refers to when teaching their young designers, while also trying to teach them creativity and innovation.
3.2 IED Firenze

The following information about the university was gathered through information found on the Florence page of the IED website, an interview with the program coordinator and professor Annaluisa Franco (2014), who had previously taught at IUAV, and a conference on sustainable textiles, where IED presented their findings.

Examining IED Milano initially was not part of my research plan – firstly, because it is a unit of the IED chain, which I have visited in Milan, so their characteristics and values are similar; and secondly, because the Florence branch does not offer strictly a degree in fashion design. However, after I got the chance to interview Annaluisa Franco, I decided to include IED Firenze in my thesis. Franco's views on fashion education in Italy seemed very relevant to my topic, and the courses that the Florence branch of IED offers instead of fashion design reflect, in my view, a very important aspect of Made in Italy 2.0. Due to the fact that my visit at IED Firenze was unplanned and quite brief, I did not perform student interviews.

The structure of IED Firenze is similar to IED Milano, which I described in Chapter 2. The undergraduate courses offered in Florence are a 3-year program in fashion communication and a 3-year program in fashion design, with a specialization in shoes and accessories. Annaluisa Franco coordinates the fashion department at IED, and the reason there is no degree in fashion design in Florence is partly due to the fact that IED did not want to be in direct competition with Polimoda (as Florence is not a big city), and partly due to the fact that there is a very large number of fashion design students graduating in Italy each year, and the demand for fashion designers is not even closely as big. IED has a close relationship with companies, who students collaborate on projects with and do internships for, and they can reflect on what there is a need for in the industry – and in Franco's words (2014), in most part the need is not for fashion designers. De Muynck (2014) has also expressed that there is an imbalance of what the industry wants and what young people want to study: at Polimoda, only a small percent of students graduate in the much in-demand accessories design / technology degrees, while the majority opt for the fashion design program, after which they manage to get employment in the fashion industry, but often not as designers. The appeal of the design program to the student is understandable, but the reality is that it is rather difficult to be a successful one in the current system (Franco 2014).

What there is demand for in the industry is, as discussed earlier, students with a specific knowledge of design in accessories. Historically, Italy is known as the “maker” of luxury products, and production also seems to be a big part of “Made in Italy 2.0”: Vacca (2014) from Politecnico
Milano has stressed the role of Italy in producing quality garments for the higher segment of the market, and De Muynck (2014) from Polimoda has also mentioned that the strength of “Made in Italy” is the focus on “made.” Especially in Tuscany, where a lot of production of bags, shoes, belts for luxury brands is located, companies require employees who have the specific skills that go into making these luxury accessories. Florence is famous for its craftsmanship in leather goods, and IED Firenze try to connect what they teach – in this case, their program in accessories design – with the demand in the industry in this part of Italy. The accessories design course is taught in Italian, and the placement for students is really high – needless to say, the internships are directly related to their degree, which is often not the case for students of fashion design.

The other need in the industry that IED caters to with its undergraduate program is the need for new media experts (bloggers, communicators, promoters, content creators), who are capable of promoting a product to different markets. Due to the specifics of the new media and the global nature of the job, the degree in fashion communication at IED Firenze is taught in English, and in addition to Italians, it attracts students from all over the world, many of whom stay in Italy after graduation. Putting Italians in contact with international students often has a lot of resistance, at least in the beginning, and it is mostly due to the level of English that students have after graduating from secondary education (Franco 2014). This echoes what De Muynck (2014) has said about Italy and its resistance to internationalization, which is mostly based on the lack of knowledge of English. Students of the communications program focus on promotion and public relations studies, and the program aims to cultivate future employees that can look at the fashion system from the inside of the company and optimize it, proposing and promoting positive change that is vital for the survival and success of brands.

Based on the previous successes of “Made in Italy”, Italian companies often have an old structure – what De Muynck (2014) called “very vertical” compared to the contemporary horizontal structure present in modern international brands, such as the Belgian Margiela – and a change is something that “Made in Italy 2.0” needs to deliver in order for the Italian fashion industry to continue its success. Sadly, due to the afore-mentioned low level of English and the conservativeness of the country, change is not often possible or welcome. Internationalization and globalization is easier achieved and taught at private universities, where professors and students often come from abroad. Change promoters in Italy are foreigners, and at IED these are the professors who teach about new media and new technologies, and students that are more open to learn new things (Franco 2014). Italian students are used to the old, more deductive, methods of studying, when new knowledge needed to be learned by heart rather than analyzed. Despite the initial resistance by the Italian students, in Franco's view those that embrace the new didactics are
often more successful than the foreign students. The talent, therefore, is innate to Italians, whether in the genes, cultural background, education they receive before university or inspirational surroundings they grow up with – something makes them stand out.

Franco herself considers herself both Italian and international, as she was born in Italy and has lived in different countries (Japan, USA) from a young age. Franco knows the Italian system very well, but also has a global perspective, having studied and worked both in Italy and abroad. Professors that come from the industry, as opposed to only from the academia, is, as I mentioned before, one of the biggest differences private and public universities have. Franco has worked in both public and private universities in Italy and thinks that public universities often have academics who do not know how the industry works and what the very current problems or needs are, while professionals who teach at private universities provide a good insight into the industry, in addition to sharing contacts and opportunities. At IED, the working situations are very realistic (similarly to other private universities IED Milano (Toscano 2014) and Polimoda (De Muynck 2014)), and students are provided with briefs, clients, and projects. Public universities provide a better general education, but often fail at putting the students' knowledge to practice (Franco 2014). This shortage of practical application was expressed by Corsini and Crema, when they discussed the spectacular laboratories Politecnico Milano offered and their discontent with the amount of time they got to spend in them (Corsini 2014, Crema and Ricci 2014).

The ability to provide students with knowledge and practical skills that are requested by the industry is the advantage of private schools, who can change their curricula more freely. Public universities need to comply with governmental standards in order to keep their accreditation, and are therefore less flexible. The good sides of a public university are the high level of education (often due to professors who come from academia rather than industry) and the more broad education, together with wider sociological implications of their degrees. When Franco was teaching at IUAV (the public university of Venice that will be discussed in the next chapter), the undergraduate degree of fashion design comprised of a vast number of subjects that students needed to pass in order to graduate (about 30 examinations in 3 years, which proved very intense for many students). After the education reform, 30% of subjects were taken out of the program: as public universities cannot cut the main philosophical courses that accredit for their university status, many business-oriented courses were cut, including English for fashion that Franco was teaching (the terminology course that students at IUAV expressed they were missing when they did their internships).

Courses such as terminology, marketing and merchandizing are very useful for future designers (confirmed by Piras and Caserta 2014, De Muynck 2014), but public universities often do
not have space for them in their curriculum. More and more students are looking at private education, which ensures a connection to the industry and in-demand courses. Private universities offer these business-oriented programs, but they, in turn, have to cut general education courses to ensure an adequate length of programs. The differences between public and private institutions are palpable, but as more courses become recognized by the education system in Italy, the programs are becoming more aligned, and education more standardized. For Franco, it is an interesting process, and she is trying to connect her experiences of teaching at public and private universities in order to take the best aspects of the education they offer and put it into the program she is creating at IED Firenze.

IED Firenze, like other private schools, might not be providing the most complete education possible, but at the end of it students get employed – and at this not something to be taken for granted, especially in the current economic situation in Italy. Considering the cost of private education, it is rewarding for students to see this investment pay off. The students also go on to promote change in companies, which is necessary for their long-term success, and the organizations that IED Firenze collaborates with know the program and are on the lookout for graduates – occasionally even sending their existing employees to complete their education at IED. This close relationship that IED has with the industry is one of its main characteristics, together with creating programs that cater to the industry's needs. Compared to IED Milano, the university here is not all about fashion design – it focuses on the local Tuscan tradition of craftsmanship (knitwear, leather goods) and promotes change in companies through their program in communications.

IED Firenze's website, where the university and the area are described to prospective students, refers to the important place that Tuscany has had in creating the “Made in Italy” concept, citing the following industrial areas located here: “the Leather district of Santa Croce, the Textile district in Prato, the Carrara Marble mines, the Crystal companies of Val d'Elsa, the Nautical industry of Versilia and the Cotto of Impruneta,” the production in all of which makes Tuscany “the heart of “Made in Italy” products” (IED Firenze homepage 2014). Through producing garments and accessories for luxury brands such as Gucci, Ferragamo, Roberto Cavalli, Emilio Pucci, Prada, etc., Tuscany continues the values of high quality and craftsmanship that “Made in Italy” became known for. What makes these characteristics part of “Made in Italy 2.0” is the additional emphasis on high technology and innovation: an integration of “the region's know-how with new technologies: a mix of “hand made” and insightful innovation” (IED Firenze homepage 2014).

The focus on technological advance can be seen everywhere on the university's premises (see images), and it was also the focus of the sustainable textiles conference that I took part in. For this conference, designers (including students from IED) have created garments from sustainable
fabrics, mainly Tuscan wool (see images). At the conference, IED professor Troy Nachtigall made a presentation on the progress of research on innovation in fabrics, the production of which is more sustainable than the existing methods (e.g., 3-D leather printing versus tanning leather that consumes too much water). According to his paper, fashion in general is still behind when it comes to sustainability in design, and Italy is even more behind compared to other countries when it comes to producing research in sustainability; however, in addition to education about new technologies, Italy can to learn from its own past in terms of using local natural fabrics and crafts in order to cater to the needs of the future and produce sustainable fashion (Nachtigall 2014).

When I asked Franco about the characteristics of contemporary Italian fashion, she said that it is a combination of on the one hand the traditional qualities (craftsmanship, leather, etc.), and on the other hand the new technologies (vegetable-tanned leather, 3-D printing, etc.) that describes “Made in Italy 2.0” best. This is similar to Polimoda’s view on where the present (and most importantly, the future) of Italian fashion industry is, as well as Politecnico Milano's (its focus on production and Corsini's project on engineering a chip for textiles). It is important to look forward while keeping the best from the past – keep the crafts and the quality level – but bring the sustainability and innovation aspect into the production processes, in order to fix the problems that exist in the current Italian fashion system: over-production of garments, excess waste (water pollution, even in promotion – paper), a problem of individualization in times of mass-production, etc. (Franco 2014).

Franco hopes that there will be a way of defining the new Italian fashion with those aspects in mind, rather than just pushing the aesthetics. With her program at IED Firenze, she is pursuing the change in the Italian mindset: a change in the attitude towards artisans – Italians are internationally known for their artisans, but in Italy artisans (as other manual workers) are treated as people who are not smart enough to have a university degree (Franco 2014). Many famous Italian designers (including Ferragamo) started off by working with their hands, so this perception of artisans seems ironic. Luckily, this attitude seems to be changing in recent years: artisans gain the respect they deserve, and studying to become one is not connected with a sense of sacrifice anymore.

Another change Franco is striving to achieve through the programs she coordinates at IED is the change in the structure of companies. As the world is becoming more and more globalized, any company with a website can promote their products throughout the world, and Italian brands see it as a loss rather than an opportunity (Franco 2014). Companies need employees who are aware of what is happening in the international world of fashion and can infiltrate some aspects of the globalization process into the brand. Changing a previously successful business model to a whole
new company structure is a risky and undesirable venture, but only this change will allow the companies to prosper in the future, and IED Firenze is heralding this change through its graduates.

With the new direction in teaching that IED Firenze is taking, it is sometimes difficult to communicate to students (the program attracts around 20 students per year, just like the Polimoda's less popular degrees in accessories design or technology) and also to companies that innovation and change are things that are vital to ensure the longevity and success of businesses. There needs to be more awareness about the fact that instead of the very attractive degree in fashion design, there are other possibilities to get an education and a much more likely employment, and to make a difference in the fashion industry – through learning about communications, new technologies and artisanship.

**Chapter 4. Venice IUAV**

The following information about IUAV was gathered through on-site observation, information from the university's website, an interview with a professor of fashion design Maria Bonifacic (2014), an interview with fashion and jewelry design professors Patrizia and Samanta Fiorenza (2014), an interview with the lecturer of web communications class Simone Sbarbati (2014 – in Italian), an interview with the final year fashion design BA students Marta Franceschini and Ilaria Cipriani (2014), and Sophia Crema and Alma Ricci (2014).

IUAV is a public university offering 5 undergraduate and 8 post-graduate programs in the fields of architecture, urban planning, and design. The fashion department is a rather small faculty, providing a program in fashion design at Bachelor (“Fashion and Multimedia Arts”) and Master (“Visual Arts and Fashion”) levels. Each year, 55 places are available for the BA course (5 of which are reserved for overseas students) and there are 20-25 students at the MA course, where students choose a specialization into accessories, knitwear, etc. The language of instruction is Italian and the vast majority of students are Italian. Some of the professors are from abroad (many of whom speak English as mother tongue) but they teach in Italian. Teaching some of the courses in English is something both students and professors have expressed the need for (many students go on international internships and even jobs, where they feel the lack of knowledge in general and professional English); however, due to the uneven level of English students have after graduating from high school (which was also a problem at IED Firenze and Polimoda), there is a concern that teaching in English at a university level would not work for everyone at this time.
As IUAV is a public university, the fees are determined by the government: they vary depending on the income of the student's family (as at Politecnico Milano) and are very accessible. The admissions exam is held once a year and consists of a general knowledge test (again, similarly to Politecnico Milano), an interview and a sketch that should demonstrate the student's ideas rather than skills. The Veneto region, where the university is located, is famous for family-run manufacturing, artisanship, production, and fashion entrepreneurship with over 700 years of experience (Not Just a Label 2014). Professors of fashion design and jewelry “laboratorio” I interviewed, sisters Patrizia and Samanta Fiorenza, are representatives of this fashion culture, with their atelier boutique in the heart of Venice (see images), where they design, produce and sell made-to-measure garments that are often produced using the local Venetian techniques and materials, like glass embroidery, antique lace and pearls (Venice Selection 2014). “Laboratorio's,” or practical workshops, are often taught by teachers who are working in the industry in parallel to teaching; another IUAV lecturer I interviewed, Simone Sbarbati, teaches a class in web communication while working as the editor-in-chief of Frizzifrizzi, an online magazine that provides a platform for young brands and designers.

Having a mix of academics and professionals is representative of IUAV: in addition to providing theoretical classes, practical and technical classes are a big part of their curriculum, and students start sewing from the very first semester. The project-based approach is one of the main characteristics of IUAV, and it is one of the most hands-on universities I have visited. The courses include concept design, history of fashion and architecture, economy, interpersonal communication (where themes of criticism and conflict are explored), and workshops in pattern-cutting, design (from underwear to outerwear – see image), textiles (where students get to know the weight, texture of different fabrics and create their own “portfolio” of weaves and threads – see image), accessories and jewelry (the only BA fashion design course in Italy that offers a specialization in both fashion and accessories (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014)). Students need to produce garments as part of the annual exams, and the final thesis is a 8-12 piece collection that is shown in Venice in July. The program teaches students to think in terms of space that the body occupies (one exercise was to invent new volumes for a jacket without it becoming a cape), to experiment with genres (for a workshop in accessories, students were asked to mix inspirations from the Arts and Crafts movement with the Bauhaus architectural aesthetics of clean lines and functionality), methods (for example, applying techniques for leather to silk) and fabrics (cruelty-free options, technology in textiles, etc.).

IUAV puts a lot of emphasis on the identity of the designer, and the various classes try to develop the point of view each student has. For example, the class in web communication teaches
them how to find the story behind their designs – whether there is some unique territorial or cultural context (e.g., a family of artisans or industrial city), or a special way their products are made (by hand / using a specific fabric, etc.) – and then how to communicate (and sell) their story, their brand to the media and customers. A dialogue form of teaching is practiced, where students are encouraged to voice their opinions and explain their visions: one professor called analyzing students sketches “part psychology, part artistic reading of their work” (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014) – this reminded me of the exercise at IED Milan, where students were exploring their own mood-boards in a psychoanalytical way, discovering who they are as designers in the process. In addition to developing a point of view, professors at IUAV also keep the practicality aspect in mind and stress the functionality of an object: for the accessories workshop, students experiment with different techniques and materials, but whatever they are creating, the product needs to retain its function – a bag needs to carry objects, regardless of how much design is put into it. This combination of functionality and focus on the identity of the designer is another characteristic of IUAV.

What makes IUAV different from other public universities, such as Politecnico Milano discussed earlier, is the conceptual approach they develop (as opposed to only the focus on the product) and also its small size. With a limited amount of students (55 versus Politecnico's 150), more attention and feedback is paid to each student's progress: a third year student Crema has noted that compared to Politecnico, where she had studied before applying to IUAV, she does not feel like just one of many students – IUAV feels like a family, where everyone knows each other (Crema and Ricci 2014). This might also have a downside, as one of the teaching assistants noted: coming straight from high school, students continue relying on the familiar atmosphere of the university instead of relying on themselves and becoming independent; close relationships with professors and other students provides a support system, but does not resemble the realistic working conditions that some of the other universities I visited strive to create.

The dichotomy between the academia and the industry is very much present at IUAV: while preparing students for future employment with courses in marketing, economics, communications, and with various projects and internship possibilities, IUAV (like other public universities) does not have a reciprocal relationship with the industry in terms of letting it dictate the content of its courses. At the seminar dedicated to the subject of teaching fashion organized by IUAV (see images), the question of the industry versus the academy was raised: often things taught by them contradict each other (IUAV focuses on developing the identity and quality of designers instead of providing fast, easy courses that cater to the industry's needs) and the aim was to raise the dialogue between didactics and business. While it is important to prepare students for the realities of the industry, it was pointed out that it is just as important not to become a slave to the market, but teach
the independence of the mind and cultivate the talent – which is what IUAV strives to do.

Seminars like these demonstrate the presence of research in the academia, which is different from research that students do for their collections and having theoretical courses that private universities provide. Universities like IUAV engage in studies about critical approaches in fashion, semiotics, curating – this research that students are exposed to make them think in a different manner. One of the projects the third year students were involved with when I was at IUAV was “Re-visioni” – an exhibition of garments by various designers from the private collection of the director of the design course Maria Luisa Frisa (see images), which was intended as a study collection that would allow students to examine the garments up-close, unlike in museums, where exhibits are guarded by protective glass (Spazio Punch 2014). Involvement in projects that allow students to analyze curating, as opposed to only creating products for a company, enriches their designs.

The different approach to teaching design produces different results, and Simone Sbarbati, who picks young design talents throughout Italy to be featured in his online magazine (frizzifrizzi.it), says that designers who launch their own brands are mostly from private schools (possibly due to them having more available resources to start their own companies); however, when students from public schools create their brands, they are often more interesting in terms of thinking outside the box and taking more risks (Sbarbati 2014). They are also less ready for the market (they tend to design what they feel they should be designing instead of what there is a need for in the market) and need more training in business and marketing, which is what public universities provide less of.

Professors Fiorenza, who lecture in fashion design and have their own atelier, say that teaching about the industry is very important – from accounting to running a business. And while their course includes the subjects of marketing, CV preparation, budgeting – it can only be an introduction to these topics, seeing as there is so much they need to teach their students in a limited period of time (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014). The need for more business-oriented courses was also expressed by students (Crema and Ricci), who had done their internships in America, where they learned about the importance of selling: even the most conceptual brands need to think about selling if they want to survive, and not thinking about the market is a problem of young Italian designers in the students' view: “Things are changing and we need to move along with the world and learn about selling” (Crema and Ricci 2014).

While students have expressed a desire for more courses directed at selling, generally they think that their program at IUAV is very balanced: “Maybe it's better to start off being more creative and learn about business later. Others don't have enough of it, and interesting designs come from
[being taught to think about the concept first]” (Crema and Ricci 2014). The university teaches them to be good designers if they want to become one: compared to Politecnico Milano, Crema found that IUAV’s focus on creativity, rather than only creating a functional product for the real market, was more what she was expecting from studying design. In addition to developing creativity, IUAV also provides a large number of practical workshops where students learn about every little process of design, making numerous garments, from accessories to outerwear (Crema and Ricci 2014). The fact that IUAV teaches about the whole fashion system is something the students I interviewed appreciated – similarly to Politecnico Milano and Polimoda, IUAV provides a good foundation for working in different parts of the industry: creative, technical, media.

Crema and Ricci wish to work as designers, but the other students I interviewed did not consider themselves as strong in design as some of their classmates and said they would prefer to work in a different sphere of the fashion industry (Franceschini and Cipriani 2014). Due to their desire to work in fashion PR (Cipriani) and theoretical fashion media (Franceschini), they have appreciated the theoretical aspects of their degree – courses such as communications, psychology, semiotics. In fact, they would like to have more courses like that, and suggested to improve the program by adding elective courses – at the moment, all the students have to do the same exams in order to graduate, and students wish for more flexibility in the program (Franceschini and Cipriani 2014). The one thing they could choose was the field they did their internship in – Cipriani went to one of the biggest PR agencies in the world, Karla Otto PR in Paris, and Franceschini went to Vestoj – an influential academic fashion journal. Despite being less influenced by the fashion industry in terms of its curriculum and having fewer courses directed at the business side of fashion, IUAV still provides great contacts and projects for its students, ensuring they have vast possibilities to enter the professional field.

I have already touched upon the fact that many students who graduate with a degree in design do not end up working as fashion designers and the problem of imbalance between the amount of schools that offer a degree in fashion design in Italy and the amount of designers that there is a need for in the industry. Of course, many students go on to work internationally, but there is still a large amount of design scholars who study in Italy and stay in Italy after they graduate. Discussing the general issues of teaching design in Italian universities with IUAV professors (something that was the topic of the seminar I mentioned, and also of the MISA conference held at IUAV in November 2013, where many Italian fashion schools, including Polimoda, IED Milan, Politecnico Milano were represented), the problem of proliferation of fashion design programs available to students in Italy was mentioned by Fiorenza sisters: “5% of students actually have talent [at the entrance level]. Education system is so open that people come in without having gone
through selection processes” (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014).

Despite having a high competition and a difficult admission exam, even public schools take students with no prior knowledge in fashion. For Patrizia and Samanta Fiorenza, who themselves have studied in the UK (Central St.Martins University of the Arts and Chelsea School of Art and Design), the lack of a foundation course in Italy that aspiring students of fashion design need to complete before even applying to university is something they find odd. Without any knowledge in design structure or language or the basic skills, students need to study very intensely during their 3-year program. Another difference between the educating style in the UK and Italy is that the system in Italy is very old – instead of thinking, creating, analyzing, Italian students are used to learning by heart what the teacher says and reciting it back at the exam (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014). This deductive method is also something Franco (IED Firenze) mentioned – and IUAV professors agree with her opinion that when Italian students understand the new teaching approach, they produce results that are often better than students from other countries, where the education system is more modern: “Maybe because they're Italian – maybe anthropologists can explain why” (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014).

The Italian quality that contributes to producing amazing results under pressure is “sprezzatura” (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014) – making hard work seem effortless – which comes through when the students make a complicated design process seem seamless. Another Italian qualities the professors mentioned are balance and the feel for fabrics, which are learnt by the international students when they study and spend time in Italy (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014). Other than that, the professors do not think there is such a thing as “Italian” (or English, or French) fashion anymore – they prepare their students to work on an international platform, and the majority of big brands consist of designers of different nationalities. Even though they teach the the traditional craftsmanship skills during their course, Fiorenza says design has become very global, with inspiration sources available online from every corner of the world, rather than deriving only from the place around you. Students' references and choices come from various fashion centers – Northern Europe, Japan, Paris.

Patrizia and Samanta Fiorenza consider themselves both Italian and English: born and educated in England, they have Italian roots and their own designs reflect their Venetian and Abruzzese heritage: they use a lot of handwork, embroidery, leather crafts. These qualities are something they want Italian fashion to retain, and in their view, Italy is losing the know-how and skills of its artisans. Comparing Italy to France, artisanship is less respected in Italy as a vocation, and “professionals” who work in offices have become the modern aspiration. This echoes Franco's comment about the necessity of a new attitude towards artisans in Italy, who traditionally are
thought of as people that could not get good education. Sbarbati (2014) also sees the key to the success of Italian fashion in rediscovering its heritage of artisanship: keeping the know-how and applying modern techniques to it – not only in terms of technology in production, but also using new media to promote the products. Small producers and artisans need to get themselves noticed, so that designers who need their services know where to find them (Sbarbati 2014). This notion of renewing the company structures and expanding their presence online is something Franco at IED Firenze is striving to do with her program in fashion communication.

What is “Made in Italy 2.0” is not something that is easy to define for people I interviewed. Fiorenza questioned if it is about the “made in” - as big companies have moved the majority of their production abroad already during the 70s, garments physically “made in” Italy are the products of small, independent brands, whose production is not on a high enough level to make the move abroad cost-effective. These types of young, unestablished brands are the ones that Sbarbati researches for his online magazine, and the tendencies he sees within this “made in” Italy group is either the focus on local materials and historical garments, which are reinterpreted in a modern way (either using new techniques or new aesthetics), or using foreign inspirations but producing them with local, Italian fabrics and methods. These trends could be the considered characteristic of “Made in Italy 2.0.”

With international inspirations and clients that come from all over the world, fashion produced in Italy today is not as homogenous as it was at the start of “Made in Italy” (Sbarbati 2014). The globalization process brings the inevitable mixture of references and aesthetics; also with the new media it is harder to create one systematic view of the national fashion (Sbarbati 2014) – in the past, magazines introduced designers, and it was a more controlled process. With a plethora of online and print media in today's society, brands that do not get featured by the mainstream channels, find more alternative outlets and still get their message out there (they can even promote themselves online in a way they want to be perceived), contributing to the diverse image of the contemporary Italian fashion.

The heterogenous Italian style is something other interviewed people have referred to as well. Bonifacic (2014) called Italian style very regional: there is a Venetian style in Venice (for example, clothes that look worn – loose pants, bohemian look), and what people wear in the nearby Treviso is already different (tight, clean, pressed), which varies even more in Milan. People in separate regions wear certain clothes, colors more and in different combination. Color is also something Italians wear more than other nations (Bonifacic compares it to her native North America), and Italian men are not afraid to wear color, using color pallets that can be traced from the Renaissance (purples, yellows). Another aspect that Bonifacic could associate with Italian
fashion is their conservativeness (also mentioned earlier by Toscano, which comes out in the lack of rebellious clothing styles, exemplified by only one (and not very diffused) alternative street style in contrast to various street fashions of other European cities, and the adherence to the classic styles (such as the suit for men, which is worn not only to work or special occasions, but on a daily basis).

These differences pointed out by non-Italian Bonifacic (and some by half-English Fiorenza sisters, such as “sprezzatura,” balance, feel for fabrics) are more pronounced because of the foreign background of the interviewed people. When I asked Italian students about what makes them Italian, they all said that they do not consider their nationality when designing (Crema and Ricci 2014, Franceschini and Cipriani 2014). However, like Corsini from Politecnico Milano, they started feeling Italian when they went abroad on their internships – sometimes their work was called “very Italian” by foreigners, even when all they did was research: “People have perceptions: for some reason being Italian means you're great” (Crema and Ricci 2014). The “Italian-ness” comes from the other people and is only felt by Italians outside of Italy. This is something also discussed by Fiorenza: “Italian within Italy is not a thing – it becomes “Italian” when it is worn by other nationalities” (Fiorenza and Fiorenza 2014). What exists in Italy are the various regional styles, and not one unified national fashion.

When asked about what characterizes contemporary Italian fashion has, the students have referred to the famous aspects of “Made in Italy:” quality in textiles and manufacturing (Franceschini and Cipriani 2014), great fabrics, artisanship, and quality over quantity (Crema and Ricci 2014). In addition to these traditional views on Italian fashion, Crema and Ricci also added modern aspects – concept, research, and sensibility: “A designer is someone who has a very strong creative part. Abroad they usually don't have a concept behind a collection – you need to make clothes that are going to sell. Concept, mixed with artisanal aspect, characterizes Italian design” (Crema and Ricci 2014). Comparing Italian with American fashion during their internships, Crema and Ricci also recognized the weaknesses of the Italian way: as mentioned earlier, they learned that design needs to be more about selling, and also more democratic: “In Italy, fashion is still not for everybody” (Crema and Ricci 2014). According to the students, the idea of fashion itself is still old in Italy: equated to expensive brands, it is exclusive to high bourgeoisie. The need for keeping up with the changing world (democratizing fashion, adding the aspects of selling to conceptual designs) is something that the students feel very strongly about – dominated by older people, the Italian fashion industry requires new people, new methods, and new ideas. The young generation of students that I have interviewed all over Italy are the change that this country needs.
Chapter 5. Concluding Discussion

5.1 Universities: Geographical Specifics

The five universities I visited during my research have their own identities and values, but some have similar characteristics, which are determined either by their geographic location or their status as a private/public university. In Milan, the focus of universities is on teaching the functionality of fashion design: both IED Milan and Politecnico Milano stressed the importance of wearability and practicality of their students' output. IED emphasizes its connection to pret-a-porter and Politecnico focuses on industrial design, which connect both universities to Milan's fashion roots. This finding agrees with Volontè's conclusion in his study of features of fashion design in Milan: “The fashion designers interviewed [...] worked in continuity with the tradition of Milanese fashion, which has always privileged the somewhat conservative value of wearability over the radically innovative character of London, Belgian, or Japanese fashion.” (2012, 428). Identities of the universities I visited were closely linked to the geographic values of functionality and industrialism that are associated with Milan fashion. The universities differ from each other in other aspects; namely, IED devotes a lot of courses to developing students' creativity, while Politecnico focuses more on the product rather than the individual.

What distinguishes IED Milano from the other universities I visited is that students who study in Italian need to have English classes, and students who study in English need to have Italian classes. I think this is a step in the right direction for institutions of higher education in fashion in Italy – as the industry becomes more globalized, Italian designers need English, regardless whether they work in Italy or abroad, and international students that obtain their degree in Italy should be able to speak Italian, so that they have a possibility to find work in Italy after they graduate. The language courses that IED Milano offers are a strong point of the university; however, they should be brought to a better level in order for students to truly benefit from them.

Politecnico's difference from the majority of universities is the deglamorizing of fashion – there is no fashion show to display the graduation collections of students, and the university downplays its connection to fashion in general, putting more emphasis on industrial design. For professors at Politecnico, design is not about nurturing creativity, but about team environment and specific skills, which they develop through courses in technology and engineering. The student I interviewed found that her aesthetic was influenced by this approach of Politecnico's, and she compared her style to that of another Politecnico alumni – Giorgio Armani, calling it functional, simple, and classic. The link to industrial design and the focus on practicality of garments shows the
type of designers Politecnico produces: less focused on creativity, and more on production.

In Florence, both universities stress the importance of traditional Italian craftsmanship and skills, and offer a specialized program in accessories and footwear design. This links Polimoda and IED Firenze to the local Tuscan tradition of artisanship and production of leather goods. Having spent the majority of my stay in Italy in Florence, I can attest that craftsmanship is a big part of the local culture. Despite the globalization processes of the post-industrial society, there seems to be a revival in nationalism (Smith 1992, 55), and the celebration of traditional techniques and crafts in Tuscany reflects the area's booming production of leather goods and accessories for international luxury brands. Both universities in Florence, IED and Polimoda, promote this link to the Tuscan tradition by teaching the local know-how.

Another similarity the universities in Florence shared is their international approach: Polimoda, with the majority of its staff and students coming from abroad, implements avant-garde teaching methods; IED Firenze focuses on integrating globalization into Italy's fashion system with its education in new media communication. Florence has always been subject to international influence, having the biggest amount of foreign people living in Italy. Italian fashion was also born in Florence in 1951, and the choice of location for the first fashion show was not random: geographically, Florence is situated in a very strategic place in the middle of the country, with good connections to textile districts, buyers, and companies. Florentine boutique fashion connects the pret-a-porter styles of the North with the alta moda traditions of Rome. The mix of influences that is present at both universities is a reflection of the city's heritage.

Despite the similar attitudes Polimoda and IED Firenze have towards craftsmanship and globalization, the two universities adopt different approaches when it comes to didactics. What is unique to Polimoda is the focus on the individual, rather than the product, and the development of creativity in designers. What I also found interesting is how students from different courses (fashion technology, accessories, design) collaborate with each other for different projects. IED Firenze's specialization is their focus on sustainability and innovative technologies, combining traditional qualities (craftsmanship, leather, etc.) with new methods and techniques (vegetable-tanned leather, 3-D printing, etc.).

In Venice, there is also a strong connection to local traditions of textile production and

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1 Just as an example, in May 2014 the following events took place in Florence: fair of agricultural arts and crafts (lafierucola.org), annual artisan market that celebrates centuries-old techniques and modern innovations (www.artigianatopalazzo.it), Terranostra day when people can visit local farms and learn about the local artisanal techniques used in wineries, mills, barns, and cheese factories (http://www.turismo.intoscana.it/allthingstuscany/aroundtuscany/terranosta-day-rural-tuscany), annual perfumes fair where locally made candles, aromatic herbs extracts, fragrant plants, aromatherapy oils are sold (https://www.facebook.com/IProfumiDiBoboli), events of Artour Italia (www.artouritalia.it) that allow people to find and visit Tuscan artisans and learn about their creative processes, materials, techniques and styles.
artisanship, which is combined with the experimental techniques (using technology, blending fabrics and styles). What differentiates IUAV from other universities I visited is its project-based approach, which makes it one of the most hands-on teaching institutions. Other intrinsic characteristics of IUAV are its strong emphasis on research, the involvement of students in various non-business-related projects, such as curating and academic fashion writing, as well as developing the students' point of view as designers. While IED Milan and Polimoda in Florence also develop creativity and work on the identity of the designer, I found that IUAV focuses more on the conceptual approach that is visible in the collections produced by its students.

5.2 Public vs Private Universities

Having highlighted the geographical specifics of the schools I analyzed, I would like to now turn to the differences that appear between them as public and private universities. IED Milan, IED Firenze, and Polimoda are private institutions, and as such they have a much closer connection to the industry and focus on providing an in-depth education in business and marketing. Currently, designers are expected to not only be creative and have the necessary skills when it comes to sewing and pattern-making, but also to be able to market their product and know about the production and merchandizing processes. Having a more flexible curriculum allows private universities to adapt their programs to the needs of the industry: for example, include more courses on marketing, branding, industry language. The majority of the professors at private schools come from the industry, and having knowledge about what the current tendencies in the market are, they stress these aspects in their classes (trend forecasting, production deadlines, finding client type, etc.). Private universities also arrange various collaborations, projects, and internships with companies, which expose students to real conditions of the working environment, as well as provide them with necessary contacts.

Politecnico Milano and IUAV are both public universities, the advantages of which are lower fees and a generally higher level of education: professors from academia, rather than only industry, and state-controlled curriculum offer a broader education and wider implications for their degrees. While public universities also have internships and courses in marketing, due to the a wider scope of the education they offer as state universities and a more fixed curriculum, they cannot provide students with an extensive and in-depth knowledge of the industry. The lack of practical knowledge and an awareness of the need to sell was expressed by the students who I interviewed at IUAV, who wished that in addition to learning about creating conceptual design, they would also be taught about how to make it more sellable.
While teaching about real working conditions and the necessity to sell is important, the scholars at public universities argue that there is a danger of becoming enslaved by the industry's needs instead of educating young designers and cultivating independent thinking. Catering to the requirements of the businesses with various courses might prove beneficial to graduate students who look for jobs, but it also has its disadvantages. Companies want to get students who are ready for work, who have had some experience, so that they would not need much training and the work they produce would not be experiments. However, companies vary greatly in their needs (for example, the production processes at Gucci versus H&M) and it is impossible to teach every aspect of design within the 3-year degree. Many companies collaborate with universities to train students – businesses are very present in fashion schools (as shown by my observations at IED and Polimoda, for example) and they use the students to make something for their brand, while not providing much creativity and freedom (students often need to follow briefs like working designers and create products ready for the market).

As mentioned in my theoretical framework, the ideas of critical design are useful for this discussion. Interaction design promotes the role of designer as curator, instead of just creating a product that there is a need for in the industry. Products of interaction designers should impact the customers as a book or a film does, offering a reflexion on sociological issues and a conceptual approach. While private universities provide skills that the industry requires, it would be interesting to change the dynamics and make the industry learn from the unconventional, not business-oriented thinking of students. The lecturer in communications at IUAV I interviewed, Simone Sbarbati, told me about a company in a different sector than fashion that implements this approach. It is called Edica and it produces beautiful, alternative versions of the mundane household utilities such as cooker hoods. Instead of using interns as normal workforce, they finance artists to come to their work spaces and create products not intended for the market, but just to develop the thoughts of the employees. In this example, the company is changed by the artists, rather than the student is moulded by the company. Fashion is fixed on the product and the market; conceptual design that does not reach the customers can prove very inspirational for the brand, and it would be interesting to see what students could do using the know-how and the resources of big companies to create something different, rather than just follow a strict brief.

Students from public universities tend to have this more conceptual approach and outside-of-the-box ideas, but they are less prepared for the job market (Sbarbati 2014). Public schools should maybe learn from the private ones in terms of how to be business savvy, because students can't survive on creativity alone – they need to make a living. However, private universities can learn from public ones about the independence of creativity, and not becoming a slave to the
industry. The essay one of IUAV's students wrote for the international fashion writing competition MODECONNECT, with which she won the contest, sums up this notion that education should include both aspects of fashion design – that of being creative and that of being marketable: “We cannot forget that fashion is rooted into our culture primarily as an industry. Fashion must be the carefully balanced synthesis between the world of ideas and that of profit, not a hybrid switching its essence according to the situation” (Franceschini 2014).

5.3 Characteristics of “Made in Italy” that are still relevant for “Made in Italy 2.0”

I would like to discuss the characteristics of contemporary fashion that I have found during my research. It seems that the features of “Made in Italy” are still the foundations on which “Made in Italy 2.0” is built: the qualities I discussed in my literature review that constituted the Italian national identity in fashion during the second half of the 20th century were mentioned by the people I interviewed about the current Italian fashion. The importance of textiles and knitwear was emphasized in Milan and Venice, while in Florence there was a strong relationship to leather goods. Milan also has a pronounced connection to functional ready-to-wear and industrial production that put this city on the global map in terms of fashion: IED Milano expressed the belief that pret-a-porter, which Italy invented and is famous for, is the most important sector of contemporary fashion; Politecnico Milano stressed the importance of manufacturing to Italy's role in the fashion industry of the world – quality product development for luxury brands is what distinguishes Italy's market position.

Other characteristics of “Made in Italy” that are still applicable to “Made in Italy 2.0” are quality, craftsmanship, embroidery, handwork, elegance, use of color, sprezzatura (making style appear effortless), and excellence. In addition to these “innate” Italian qualities, other features were mentioned: balance between colors and proportions and feel for fabrics. These characteristics can be taught to other nations – it is something acquired, brought about by the relaxed Italian lifestyle (balance) as well as a detailed education (textiles). Italian fashion was said to have a more defined division between feminine and masculine garments and a more formal style, which is ironic because in the post-war period Italy was the one who introduced the more casual styles and blurred the lines between masculine and feminine fashion (e.g., Armani's suits discussed in the introduction). As contemporary fashion becomes more unisex and relaxed, Italian fashion seems to stand out. These features of Italian fashion were said to be connected to the conservativeness of society: students and professors felt that in Italy there is a social pressure to wear a certain type of clothes (for example, suits for men) and that wearing alternative fashion that best expresses your personality causes
5.4 Characteristics Specific to “Made in Italy 2.0”

The features that were only associated with “Made in Italy 2.0” are modern technology and innovation, which are combined with the traditional methods of production and artisanship. This echoes the characteristics Steele (2003) attributed to contemporary Italian design, which I mentioned in the “Made in Italy 2.0” subchapter of my literary review: the marriage of technological innovation and traditional craftsmanship, “the return to the future.” During my own research, I have discussed various ways in which this modernization comes through: advanced manufacturing and engineering processes, the use of biotechnology, microchips, sustainability, 3-D printing, fibre technology, etc. What is also a contemporary feature of Italian design is the abundance of sources of inspiration that come from all over the world, which are then combined with Italian fabrics and techniques to produce a very contemporary blend of cultures and influences.

Other modern aspects of Italian design included research, concept, and creativity. While the creative aspect was underplayed in “Made in Italy,” the majority of universities try to incorporate it into their vision of contemporary Italian design. An additional aspect that universities try to implement into Italian fashion system through their education is the use of new media and communications, which are an inevitable result of globalization and modernization. From learning about blogging, creating a successful website, communicating a brand, to online retailing and increasing visibility – these are all vital skills for modern designers all over the world, and Italy needs to be up-to-date with these trends in order to continue its success: fashion companies are looking for “digital talent: marketers with a tech background, ways to restructure teams to become more digitally savvy” (Friedlander 2014).

In addition to young independent designers, stepping in line with the digital era can also be beneficial to small artisans all around Italy. Freshly graduated designers produce limited-sized collections and cannot afford to have their production abroad, so increasing visibility of local manufacturers allows for effective collaborations. For example, Sbarbati (2014) mentioned a website in industrial design called Slowd (www.slowd.it), which creates a platform for designers to upload their projects to. The designs then reach all the artisans and craftsmen in Italy, who can download the design for a fee and manufacture it for their local clientele. The designs can be personalized according to the customer’s needs, and the necessary feedback can reach the designer, which is useful for the future – the traditional close relationship that Italian designers have historically had with their customers is revived with the help of modern technology. This platform
also stimulates the artisans – they make things they have never made before and they get new clients, who opt for a more contemporary design. Despite the expansion of online retail, not everything can be bought online and the majority of things are not modifiable – with this platform, people can order the garment that they like and have it altered to their desire. This way young designers reach their audience (which is often lost as they start working for other brands) and they get paid much more for their designs than they would in a company. Although such a platform does not yet exist for fashion, it is a brilliant idea that can be borrowed from a different industry. It would work in Italy because of the large amount of young designers that graduate each year and the diffusion of artisans throughout the country.

While some old aspects of Italian fashion need to be cherished (artisanship, know-how), other features that might have worked in the past but that are no longer an asset need to be changed. For example, company structures: Armani revolutionized the industry with his collaboration with textile conglomerates and “white labeling,” and the majority of companies have stuck to this successful model ever since. However, Armani himself was quick to adapt to the globalization processes: in 2007, he was the first designer in the world to show a live streaming his fashion show online (Vaccari 2012, 149). Other Italian companies need to follow suit in the digital era of today: “Only the development of immaterial resources (knowledge, design, information, logistics) can prevent the system's decline, enabling industrial districts specialized in traditional manufacturing industries to redefine their position within global commodity chains and balance the evolution of inward and outward activities taking place at local level” (Sammara and Belussi 2006, 560).

5.5 The Construction of Italian National Identity

In relation to my discussion of constructing national identity being similar to the construction of the Other in colonial discourse – creating an image by contrasting it with Self or another nation – I find that it is true that the characteristics of a nation are most visible when compared to a different experience. Interviewing foreign people who live in Italy has enriched my project as they have provided me with more detailed characteristics of contemporary Italian design – they still saw Italian national characteristics, such as the use of color, sprezzatura, definitions of gender in clothes, etc., while Italians often said that there is no such thing as “Italian” design anymore in a world full of international references. Both Italian teachers and students have said that the aesthetics and sources of inspiration come from all over the world, making it difficult to pinpoint what the Italian-ness of it is. Teachers did not stress the Italian aspects of design in their lectures and prepared their students for international job market, rather than only Italian, and students did not consider their
However, when faced with an opportunity to compare themselves to others (like going on international internships), Italian students have found it easier to identify the qualities that make them Italian: their use of embroidery and crafts, their reference to cultural background, their designing style (tailoring, minimalism, etc.). The surroundings Italians grow up with (the “bella figura” mentioned in the introduction) are so natural to them that it is not an obvious source of inspiration for them – even though it does influence their output. For foreign people, the Italian architecture, landscape, culture, are not part of everyday life and are easier to identify as Italian influences. For Italians, having the best fabrics in the world and the most treasured artisanal skills are the natural order, so it is difficult for them to see it as having a special impact on their designs. Within Italy, there is no “Italian” design – it becomes Italian when worn by other nationalities. Just like ragù is only referred to as “bolognese” sauce outside of Bologna, so does Italian design become “Italian” when looked at from a foreign perspective – whether by other nationalities or by Italians themselves when they go abroad.

Coming back to the question I raised in the discussion of my theoretical framework, namely what the concept of national identity is built on in a globalized world – inspiration sources or design processes, I would have to conclude that it is both. Inspiration sources, as I have mentioned in my discussion above, are more international; however, space and identity are still connected, and Italian inspirations come through in designers' work – albeit, to a lesser degree (and, perhaps, designers are less aware of it). Design processes also play a role constructing Italian-ness: quality, tailoring, crafts were still a big part of identification for students and professors. However, this relationship is only true for the design processes that physically occur in Italy.

Segre argues that the relocation of production has had an effect on the relationship between national creativity and the concept of “made in:” countries that have historically relied on production have suffered (for example, Ireland), while others that do not have a strong manufacturing past have benefitted from the postmodern mix of inspirations and creativity (like, for example, Iceland) (2011, 269). Because the majority of features that describe “Made in Italy” and “Made in Italy 2.0” are connected to the manufacturing processes (textiles, quality production, traditional techniques), the only way to maintain identity in the globalized world with a plethora of international references is through the “made” aspect – at least in Italy's case. Segre suggests that for local manufacturers it is “important not to oppose global and local, center and periphery, but to start a process to match the global context with the local identities” (2011, 269).

This leads me to argue that the true representatives of “Made in Italy 2.0” are independent designers and brands that make their garments in Italy due to low volumes of production or their
ethics. Producing in Italy also keeps the small manufacturers and craftsmen in business in the
traditional artisanal regions of Veneto, Tuscany, etc., who have been left without a livelihood since
the big companies moved their production elsewhere. Large companies that have their production
abroad do not contribute to what makes Italian design unique (its production processes) or to the
future success of Italian fashion that depends on these qualities.

Having said earlier that Italian national identity in fashion is better constructed by Italians
abroad and foreigners, I need to clarify that the foreigners that can contribute to the realistic
representation of Italy are the ones that have had a relationship with the country and know the
Italian lifestyle well. The image of Italian fashion that is constructed by other nationalities is still an
old representation of “Made in Italy”– I have discussed this in relation to the V&A exhibition on
Italian fashion. Small Italian brands that represent the current state of the industry are not known
abroad: they are found in shops (mostly in Japan), but not in the media (Sbarbati 2014). Therefore it
is the big brands, mostly of the old “Made in Italy” fame, that flood the international media: the
brands that are constantly featured on the red carpet are Armani, Gucci, Prada, Versace.

Rachel Zoe, one of the most famous stylists in Hollywood has said about Italian fashion:
“The fashion world really looks to Milan for setting trends and just sending some of the most
luxurious, incredible things down the runway season after season. There is a sexiness about it, but
also this unbelievable luxury that comes out in the clothes” (The Rachel Zoe Project 2010). Sexiness and luxury are examples of the values that best describe “Made in Italy,” rather than
“Made in Italy 2.0.” And again, it is a homogenous picture that does not depict the full complexity
of Italy's national identity in fashion. Even in foreign fiction and movies Italian style stands for
luxury and exclusivity, for example The Devil Wears Prada. Italy's old relationship with Hollywood
is still alive – not through movies filmed in Italy or Italian movies like it was in the days of
“Hollywood on Tiber,” but mostly through the relationship between the Hollywood's elite and the
big Italian design houses, and this relationship does not fully represent contemporary Italian
fashion.

5.6 Final Conclusions and Further Research

To conclude, the notion of modern Italian fashion is a heterogenous phenomenon – the five
universities I have analyzed have their own identities despite some similarities that unite them either
geographically or by their status of public or private, and each had something different to add to the
image of “Made in Italy 2.0.” My contribution to the fashion education in Italy is presenting the
various teaching techniques and identities that the universities I visited have, which allows to create
a discourse about the way fashion is and should be taught in Italy.

My findings correspond to Maria Luisa Frisa’s description of modern Italian fashion system as a constellation, kaleidoscopic and fragmented. However, in the frame of my research I have attempted to systematize a part of it, and put one piece of the puzzle that constitutes contemporary Italian fashion in place – and that is my contribution to fashion theory. The ability to systematize and understand the contemporary notion of Italian fashion allows to see its shortcomings and promote change.

By finding and analyzing the characteristics of “Made in Italy 2.0” I have created academic discourse about this topic, and my thesis also contributes to the academic output about contemporary Italian fashion produced in English, which brings international awareness to this subject.

Although I briefly stated my understanding of the image that contemporary Italian fashion has abroad, this is not a product of thorough analysis, and my suggestion for further research is to see how Italy is viewed abroad and compare it with my findings. Also, contemporary Italian national identity in fashion could be studied from a different perspective – not in the context of universities, but for example analyzing street style. This would provide an interesting supplement to the image of “Made in Italy 2.0.”
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Appendix 1: Images from Introduction

Examples of collaborations between Italia Independent and fashion blogger Chiara Ferragni (The Blonde Salad) and students if IED Milano.

An example of the confusion that globalization brings about when it comes to “Made in” - all the languages apart from Russian on the label say “Made in China,” while the Russian text reads: “Made in Italy.”
Appendix 2: Images IED Milano

Jewelry “laboratorio” at IED, where students get to sketch, render, melt metals, and finally make their own jewelry.

Images are the intellectual property of Veronika Shiliaeva, a student of jewelry design at IED Milan. For more, visit her Instagram account (http://instagram.com/migrant) or her website, http://www.shiliaeva.com.
Appendix 3: Images Politecnico Milano

“Laboratorio’s” at Politecnico, where students can drape their designs on the mannequins, create knitwear, use the photo studio for producing their portfolios, and get to know textiles.
Appendix 4: Images Polimoda

The Villa Favard premises of Polimoda unite history with technological advancement. Below are presented the business cards of the final year students that I interviewed.
Appendix 5: Images IED Firenze

Examples of work produced by IED students:

- posters exhibited on the university's premises (top left and bottom two) describing projects of wearable technology (interactive hat), and textile innovation (seamless knitwear);
- garments presented at the conference for sustainable fabrics (top right), for which the students came up with creative use of natural Tuscan wool.
Appendix 6: Images IUAV

The boutique atelier of Patrizia and Samanta Fiorenza, who teach at IUAV in addition to running their business in Venice.

An example of garments students create; a portfolio of threads from the textiles workshop.
The seminar “To Teach Fashion Design” held by IUAV.

Re-Visioni, an exhibition of a study collection by IUAV at Spazio Punch, Venice.
Appendix 7: Interview Questions

The questions that constituted the base for my interviews:

- What does 'Made in Italy' mean to you?
- How would you describe contemporary “Italian fashion”? Are these features different from the traditional characteristics of “Made in Italy”?
- Have you worked / studied abroad? Did you notice the difference in approaches compared to Italy? Is it important to get experience abroad? Where? Would you come back to Italy?
- How do you think Italian fashion is perceived abroad?
- Do you consider yourself an Italian designer? What makes you Italian? Would you still consider yourself an Italian designer if you worked for a French brand, for example? Why?
- Have you discussed with your teachers / students what Italian fashion is or should be?
- How did you choose the university you are studying at? What makes your university different from other institutions in Italy that teach fashion design?
- How should fashion be taught in Italy? Should theory be included in design studies?
- What would you change about your course?
- What traits should Italian fashion focus on for a successful future of the industry?
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