

CRAFTING THE LOCAL

GIs, Jewelry, and Transformations in Valenza, Italy

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Abstract: This article examines the effects that GI (geographic indication) brands may have on the commodity producers who employ this marketing strategy. By analyzing the case of jewelry production in Valenza, Italy, and the creation of the DV brand, it demonstrates that GIs tend to impose new forms of production over the local milieu. Although based on a rhetoric about the maintenance of traditional practices, GIs enforce a techno-scientific approach over a techne-oriented understanding on the local level. Echoing Foucault's idea of disciplinary power, GIs and their regulation bodies thus become agents of a transformation of the local community and local production practice. This case suggests that these transformations of locale, which result in tension among market standards, brand regulation, and production due to the rhetoric of 'authenticity', should be reconsidered.

Keywords: authenticity, brands, jewelry, local production, regulation, traditionality, Valenza

Since the second half of the twentieth century, due to the progressive increase in the flow of exchanged goods on national and international levels, there has been a proliferation of brands certifying the geographic origins of every possible kind of product. In a crescendo of localism, following the experience of the 'made in' brands, which are intended to identify the nation where an object is manufactured, new brands began to be developed with the aim of making explicit the link between a product and a particular locality (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 122–130). Thus, the history of these brands, usually termed geographic indication brands (GIs), shows us that, rather than being antithetical, 'local' and 'global' are complementary categories that mutually imply one another (Wilk 1999). In particular, following the globalization of commerce, people discovered, and often invented, the local, its peculiarities and traditions, as in the case of Belize, studied by Wilk, or the Alpine communities, studied by



Grimaldi (1996). Through this process, and in order to cope with the challenge presented by global markets, individual producers and nation-states found, in their local natural and human landscapes, the resources to enhance their products. ‘Authenticity’, the link between a product and a particular community and/or parcel of land, has become a key factor in the creation of the commercial value of goods in contemporary markets (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 9–10). In this context, the capacity of a particular product to elicit an emotional response in buyers is increasingly important (Roberts 2006). Moreover, geographical typicality and traditionality are seen as emotion-raising features that can distinguish a product and potentially boost its sales, to the point that local producers, such as the cattle herders and cheese producers of Val Taleggio studied by Grasseni (2003: 275), can state: “I don’t sell my cheese because it’s good. I sell it saying, ‘Look at where we live, look at our landscape.’” In this respect, landscape and traditions become part of the products, features that are made recognizable through the establishment of a locally named brand.

A brand is thus created. As noted by Manning (2010), in past decades scholars have often explored the function and meaning of brands and, in particular, have studied the marketing strategies in which branding was (and is) employed. However, with but a few exceptions (e.g., Grasseni 2003; Ulin 1995), little has been said about the effect that the employment of a brand may have on local production. This article seeks to contribute in this direction.

To do so, drawing on my ethnographic studies of the Italian city of Valenza, I will consider the case of the DV brand,¹ a GI established in the mid-2000s that aimed to protect the jewelry production of the city. I intend to challenge the common assumption that depicts GIs as neutral tools that are able to preserve original products and forms of production. I will argue, echoing Foucault (1975), that GIs are transformative tools that impose a new model of production: they are the vectors of a profound transformation of local knowledge and practices that, following Heller (2007), molds local techne into a techno-scientific standard. In order to do so, I will analyze the history and effects of the DV brand on the local milieu and highlight how a GI, through the definition and enforcement of a production standard, can become a transformative tool for local production.

Brands and Production

Before going further, it may be worth clarifying what I refer to here as a ‘brand’, a term that has been given numerous definitions in the scholarship and public discourse over the last several decades (Manning 2010). Generally speaking, a brand is any sign (signature, stylized symbol, etc.) that distinguishes a product by naming it in a particular, original way, making the name of its producer explicit, and by certifying some peculiarity of its production. Thus, brands are transformational devices whose goal is “to create differences for products that were in danger of becoming as hard to tell apart as chunks of gravel” (Roberts 2006: 30). In other words, brands de-anonymize products and, in doing so, make

them appear unique and incomparable. In this process, “the semiotic apparatus of brand does not merely serve to locate objects as vendible goods with respect to purely economic imaginaries like the market, it also serves to locate them in terms of other cosmological systems, including the imaginative geographies of Orientalism, Occidentalism, and nationalism” (Manning and Uplisashvili 2007: 640). Brands are thus the key in a social process of linking products to an intangible sphere of images, values, memories, and emotions (Roberts 2006). It is due to this intrinsic communicative capacity that brands have become crucial elements of marketing strategies and advertising campaigns (cf. Arvidsson 2006; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Murphy 1992; Ries and Ries 2000; Roberts 2006). The objective is to increase the marketability and surplus value of products through the establishment of strong semantic relations between brands and specific images and concepts, such as ‘traditionality’ and ‘genuineness’. GIs are one example of branding used in these campaigns.

GIs are a particular typology of brand. When we think of brands in general, the first to come to mind are Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Ferrari, or other names that we can identify as corporate brands. Such brands are owned and exclusively used by firms to distinguish their products, creating a strong link between the products and their producers. In contrast, GIs link a product to a place rather than a producer. These types of brands are widely used in food production, for which purpose they were actually invented, primarily as a tool to protect local producers against foreign competition. GIs inform the customers of the particular manufacturing employed and the location of the production process within a defined geographical area (Bérard and Marchenay 2006). Thus, the semantization of a GI is based on the identification of a product (through the definition of a standard of production) and its localization (through the designation of a particular and exclusive area in which the product is manufactured). The arbitrariness of these processes is commonly silenced through the rhetoric of genuineness, traditionality, and local authenticity. Furthermore, in contrast with corporate brands, GIs are generally collective brands, owned by groups of firms, not just by one.

A significant proportion of the literature on brands is underpinned by the assumption that the brand owner (i.e., the legal entity that owns the brand) coincides with the brander (which can actually use the brand to distinguish its production) and, moreover, that it is the only commodity producer involved in the production. Unfortunately, this is an overall simplification that does not fit with the case of GIs. GIs are generally collective brands owned by consortiums of private entities (i.e., firms) and public institutions (i.e., state bodies). Any consortium is an independent legal entity, distinguished by its members. These consortiums are the brand owners, but typically they are neither branders nor commodity producers. They bestow the use of their brands to other firms, generally their members, which mark their products with the brands. These firms are branders and commodity producers; however, the branders may also outsource their production (or part of it) to other firms not entitled to use the brand. These latter firms are therefore commodity producers without being branders.

Regardless of the actual articulation of the network of actors, the use of a GI is generally regulated by protocols determined by the brand owner that define

the quality standards to be achieved if a firm intends to be entitled as a brander. Thus, if companies must adapt their manufacturing procedures to meet these standards, we can conclude that a GI becomes a transformative agent for local practices of production, making them tend toward an ideal, arbitrary standard despite the rhetoric of traditionality and authenticity that often accompanies this type of brand. As it emerged from my fieldwork, the case of the DV brand portrays this tendency well.

In Valenza

From December 2008 to April 2011, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Valenza, a city in northwestern Italy. Located about 100 kilometers southwest of Milan, Valenza is internationally known as one of the world's most important centers of jewelry production, in particular medium- and high-quality jewelry (cf. Bassano 2008; Gaggio 2007; Garofoli 2004; Lenti 2010). At the time of writing, about 900 jewelry firms operate in this city of 20,000 inhabitants (Bellini 2011), employing roughly 5,000 people. As these figures verify, the economic landscape of Valenza is dominated by the jewelry trade. This trade is carried out mainly by small firms (Paradiso 2008a, 2008b), although some large international corporations, such as Bulgari and Damiani, also have establishments in the city.

Thanks to the quality of manufacturing and design offered by local firms and the relative weakness of the Italian currency, from the 1970s onward Valenza became one of the world's largest centers of jewelry production and marketed its products to nations such as the US, Germany, and Japan (Paradiso 2009). During the last 30 years of the twentieth century, exports drove the growth of the city's economy, turning Valenza into one of the richest industrial areas in all of Italy (Maggiore 2010). In the 2000s, however, its growth came to a halt, and the city has endured the effects of a recession that still persists.

In autumn 2008, I started my ethnographic research in the city. It was aimed at studying the effects of this economic downturn and the change in the relationship between the city and its trade. The project involved 14 months of fieldwork, during which I employed participant observation of various goldsmiths' families, whose members are or were employed in the trade as workers or entrepreneurs. I also undertook direct observation of jewelry firms in order to witness the different phases through which the local economy is articulated as well as the ineffable quality of its daily practices. I thus had the opportunity to interact with the numerous actors engaged in this trade, such as goldsmiths, merchants, and entrepreneurs. I was often allowed to interview them, and fragments of these conversations are used here in support of my argument and narration.

This article proposes an ethnographic approach to the study of a brand. This methodology has already been used to investigate the relationship between consumers and brands by exploring the *mise en discours* (Foucault 1976: 29) of brands in the life of customers (see, e.g., Miller 2001; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). However, in this instance, I will explore how a brand, through its regulations, has affected local production. Departing from a purely discursive level of

analysis, I will consider the actual practices through which this transformation took place and show that a brand does not just change intangible aspects of products, but also profoundly affects knowledge and practices of production. To do so, I will rely on an analysis of the official regulations of the brand, on a body of interviews, including those with executive officers of the DV consortium and jewelry producers, who, as branders or just as commodity producers, participated in the production of the DV jewelry, and on information collected during observations carried out in places of production. These data are used to inform an analysis of the regulations of the consortium and its effects on the milieu. Thus, this body of regulations, the process that brought about its formulation, and the effects that it had on Valenza firms are turned into an object of ethnographic inquiry in order to explore the performative tension between GI, market, producers, and production.

The DV Brand

DV is a GI that was officially launched in 2009 as a result of five years of work initiated by GAV, a prominent professional association of Valenza goldsmiths. The history of the brand began in 2004 (Zemide 2004), when GAV (2006: 71) launched a pilot study to assess the feasibility of the creation of a GI for Valenza products. On 20 June 2005, the results of this research were presented in a public meeting (ibid.: 18–19). Around 1,000 jewelry entrepreneurs participated in the event, full of expectations for this project. The public presentation contained only general information, but it highlighted the realistic possibility for the creation of a GI for Valenza, thanks to the existence of a distinguished, ongoing practice of jewelry production, rooted in two centuries of the city's history, and its specialization in handcrafted *gioielleria* (jewelry composed mainly of gemstones). To succeed in the creation of a GI, it was necessary to create a consortium of private and public institutions to enforce, advertise, and support both the brand and the definition of detailed regulations determining the precise characteristics that would certify Valenza jewelry.

In the following months, GAV, together with public institutions, worked to create a consortium of firms called the CDV. The consortium was founded in July 2007 by about 50 companies. In the following months, during which new firms joined the association, it started to draft the final regulations.² It took almost two years to complete the draft, which was based on the Italian and Piedmontese legislation on artisanal jewelry production.³ At the end of this process, the use of the brand was subordinated to a hierarchical management structure that will be analyzed below.

The consortium became fully operational in 2009, and the brand began to be employed by brand users to mark their products and advertise them. Today, the brand and its logo are gaining ground and becoming internationally known. Although it is difficult to assess the actual economic returns of this initiative, it is possible to interpret its early effects on the local production milieu through its history and the motivating forces that have encouraged jewelry firms as well

as private and public institutions to invest in this project since 2004. In the following section, I will give one such interpretation, starting with a more detailed presentation of the motivations that led to the creation of the DV brand.

Coping with Changes

To understand the reasons behind the institution of this brand, it is necessary to contextualize its origins within the broader economic scenario in which it was conceived and to highlight the challenges that Valenza jewelry producers tried to tackle with it. During this period, the history of Valenza was closely connected with the history of the rest of the Italian jewelry industry and the development of the international luxury market.

The creation of the DV brand is a consequence of changes that occurred in the 2000s in the national and international jewelry markets. This decade was characterized by a long recession for Valenza and the rest of the Italian jewelry industry, which was caused by the drop in national and international demand for jewelry. From 2001 to 2009, as the international market became less and less receptive to ‘made in Italy’ products, the Italian jewelry industry shrank by almost 65 percent, and export sales decreased by 47 percent (Gereffi et al. 2010: 5–6)—turns of events that affected Valenza profoundly (ibid.: 7; see also Paradiso 2008c: 1).

The debate over the reasons for this local and national plunge is still ongoing. While scholars such as Gereffi et al. (2010) tend to point toward competition from Asian jewelry industries as a possible reason for the Italian downturn, others (e.g. Catalani 2007) have proposed that the structure of Italian jewelry production, which is mainly based on small family enterprises, and the failure to develop effective marketing strategies have led to the marginalization of ‘made in Italy’ products. What emerges from this debate is that the recession should be looked on as the result of an intricate series of structural changes that have affected the jewelry market during the last decade. Out of these, the transformation of the global economy and the overall sense of insecurity that has marked the last several years (Attali 2009), in addition to a modification in the international demand for luxury goods, can be considered primary factors.

During the past decade, insecurity distinguished the behavior of investors, who tended to buy into shelter or strategic goods, such as seeds, oils, and noble metals. As a result, the cost of silver and gold quadrupled, while platinum almost tripled in value (Kitco 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). This boom had direct repercussions on jewelry made with precious alloys, escalating its price dramatically due to increases in the cost of materials. In the words of a Valenza jewelry trader: “The result of the last few years was crude and real. The cost even of the simplest machine-made gold armlet multiplied. In 2001, it cost 100 euros. Today it costs 500.”

However, the spending power of families in Europe and North America did not increase at the same rate as the price of precious metals (Baldini 2006). This meant that jewelry became a less affordable product than it was in the late

1990s. the principal markets for jewelry produced in Valenza, did not increase at the same rate as the price of gold, which meant that jewelry became less affordable than it was in the late 1990s. If we consider the US and its jewelry market more closely, as it is the world's largest national market for these products (Carcano et al. 2007; Gereffi et al. 2010), during the 2000s the American currency dramatically devalued against the euro. Within 10 years, the US dollar lost almost 75 percent of its exchange rate. This downturn, together with the increase in the cost of precious metals, resulted in a noticeable marginalization of Italian jewelry in US markets. The void was quickly filled with products made by other international contenders, such as India and China (Carcano et al. 2007). Asian products entered Europe through the same channels and conquered market quotas from Italian producers there as well (Gereffi et al. 2010).

Market fluctuations, the atmosphere of political and economic uncertainty, pressure from new contenders, the boom in precious metal prices, and the plunge in value of the American dollar are, hence, some of the elements that undermined the marketability of 'made in Italy' products. The demand for jewelry was further undermined by a change that has occurred in the international demand for luxury goods. In the US as well as in Europe, 'new' products, such as technological items or holiday packages, have largely replaced jewelry as gifts for anniversaries or special occasions (Fox 2009; Ikeda 2006; Ostapenko and Husic 2010). While in previous decades these events were celebrated with objects that were expected to last a long time, nowadays, for the same occasions, people prefer investing in technological goods (e.g., digital cameras, computers, smartphones) and holidays—products that involve a more participative use in comparison to traditional categories of luxury goods such as jewelry. This shift has resulted in the reduction of the marketability of jewelry.

To counter the social and economic transformations that have hampered the jewelry market, the GAV and private and public institutions responded by creating their own GI. This brand was directly aimed at enhancing the marketability of Valenza jewelry in different ways. Firstly, it was imagined as a way to add new value to jewelry. To do so, the promoters looked at the particularities of the local landscape, the history of its jewelry production, and the particular characteristics of its manufacture. These were seen as intangible objects that could empower Valenza jewelry. The brand was meant to commoditize these objects. A certain rhetoric—a narrative of traditionality and authenticity—was associated with the brand in the advertisement campaigns. In this way, the local heritage and production landscape were commodified into a qualitative aspect of jewelry and turned into a new source of value. Secondly, the brand meant to remedy the Italian and European laws concerning the use of the 'made in Italy' brand. In the case of non-food products, regulations permitted any firm whose registered office is located in Italy to brand its production as 'made in Italy', even though it was manufactured in other countries. This flaw allowed firms to delocalize their plants, moving them to other countries in order to lower their production costs, without losing the marketing potential afforded by the 'made in Italy' brand. Thus, the DV brand was meant to give local producers a factual means to certify the localization of their production

and, in this way, empower their ‘made in Italy-ness’. Finally, in a market where the genuineness of metal and stones is difficult to assess (cf. Walsh 2010), and where buyers and sellers are increasingly concerned with the transparency and ethics of production (Cotera Fretel and Ortiz Roca 2010),⁴ the presence of this brand was meant to guarantee a certain standard of manufacture.

To achieve these last two objectives, it was necessary to define the minimum quality standards that a product would have to meet in order to qualify for branding. This process, which took almost five years, started with the first broad definition of ‘typical’ Valenza jewelry, which was presented during the pilot study meeting in 2004. The result was an articulated body of regulations that govern the localization of the firms (CDV 2007a: art. 2, art. 3), the quality of the feedstock (CDV 2009), and the techniques employed for production (Regione Piemonte 2009). What emerged was a model certifying that production of the brand was bound to a precise geography and to defined modes of production.

Defining a Standard

The definition of a quality standard fixes boundaries, characteristics, and meanings in order to create a distinguishable product. These boundaries are established on a criterion of technical, rational quality (Appadurai 1986: 47), which Heller (2007: 604) calls ‘technoscience’. This idea of quality, however, diverges from another standard that Heller calls ‘*techne*’, which “represent[s] art’s practical application, as opposed to products of human invention produced through rational domains” (ibid.). In the context of a GI—where the standard is the model that any firm must follow to be allowed to associate its production with the brand and where the aim of the definition is to safeguard local products and *teche*, this process may be seen as a ‘technoscientization’ of these products and of *techne*. In fact, its goal is to reduce into (ac)countable parameters, usable in economic calculations, elements that the native community considers their traditions—that is, “a core set of traits handed down through succeeding generations ... [that] often identify and are identified with specific groups” (Allison 1997: 799).

In other words, a process of certification tends to fix in place forms of knowledge that are in essence immutable and subject to continuous change, thus betraying to some extent the very characteristics of such knowledge (Nas 2002). However, it is also the very definition of ‘tradition’, in its emic and etic usage, that tends to objectify these flows into fixed forms. Although the rhetoric of tradition is profoundly linked to the objectification of knowledge into bounded forms, these are generally oral forms. Like ‘boundary objects’, their boundaries are far from being neat, and their substance maintains a degree of indefinability, which, in turn, is another characteristic of the object of tradition that makes it “both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites” (Star and Griesemer 1989: 392). The institution of a GI, however, brings forward a concrete process of objectification of local knowledge. Through

regulation, the characteristic degree of ambiguity of tradition is removed: the forms are now defined in figures and tables in order to make them reproducible. In this respect, this is a process of commoditization of tradition. As Oberholtzer (1995) shows, this process does not exclude a certain level of ‘invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), which involves a reinterpretation of previous knowledge and an adaptation to the needs of the market.

A similar process underpinned the definition of the quality standard of DV jewelry. In advertising materials (e.g., CDV 2010b) and in interviews conducted with branders, the quality standard was framed as a form of ‘codified tradition’. Faced with such widespread rhetoric, after two centuries of uninterrupted jewelry making in Valenza (cf. Lenti 2010), the question is not whether this production is actually the result of knowledge developed through the history of local craftsmanship, but how tradition is commoditized, how this new model interacts with existing ideals of production, and, finally, how this commoditized model can redirect local practices toward new forms of ‘traditionalized’ production.

A System of Control and Propagation

To answer these questions, it is necessary to explain the process through which the standard of production is enforced and propagated throughout the production milieu, that is, the system of control that underpins the use of the brand. This system spans three levels. Its head is the consortium itself, which is technically the brand owner and the only legal entity allowed to set the regulations concerning the use of the brand and its advertising strategies. The consortium is governed through two management bodies: the general assembly of the members and the executive committee. The assembly is the collegial body in which all the members of the consortium can participate, with full rights to vote and speak. The executive committee is an executive body whose members—a president, a chairperson, and deputies chosen by them to lead the association—are elected by the assembly. The executive committee directs the consortium in its everyday activities and can determine the guidelines for consortium regulations and marketing campaigns. However, to be put into effect, all of these policies must be approved by the general assembly, which can ask for revisions or reject proposed policies entirely.

Only firms that join the consortium are eligible to become branders, since membership is the first requirement for the use of the brand. However, these firms also need to guarantee a quality of manufacture that coincides with or exceeds the standard of production fixed by the regulations. Periodical inspection of the branders’ plants can be mandated by the consortium to verify the observance of these criteria.

Although these regulations limit access to the brand, they do not preclude the participation of other firms in the production of DV jewelry. Since, as Benzi and Fugagnoli (2004b) and Gereffi (2007) have noted, the city’s industry is fundamentally based on networking among different firms, it is quite common for branders to outsource part of their production to other, non-brander firms.

This practice is accepted (CDV 2009: art. a) as long as the manufacturing and final characteristics of the jewelry meet the consortium's standards. In this respect, among the various companies that collaborate on the production of DV jewelry, we can identify a group of firms that are only commodity producers, subordinated to the actual branders.

Thus, the use of the DV brand relies on a pyramidal power hierarchy. The apex of this structure is the consortium, which owns the brand and establishes and enforces the regulations of employment of the brand. Although these regulations allow firms to put forward proposals for the modification of consortium policy, any proposal must be accepted by a majority of the consortium's members to be effective. This is a condition that objectively limits the actual potential for a firm to modify the regulations and places the individual members of the consortium in a position subordinate to the body of rules that they had to accept in order to become part of the consortium.

Even more subordinate is the position held by the commodity producers that work as suppliers of the branders: they have to stay within the boundaries of the consortium rules, imposed on them by the branders, without the ability to modify their parameters. While the consortium holds a hegemonic position with respect to all the other actors in the hierarchy, it only exercises its control directly over the branders. As noted above, the consortium reserves the right to arrange periodical inspections of the branders' plants in order to verify that their products conform to the regulations. The consortium does not control the production network governed by each brander. In this case, it is the brander's responsibility to supervise the quality of work of its providers, since the brander is called to answer to the consortium for the quality of its entire branded production. In the event that the jewelry does not meet the required standards, the consortium can ask for the pieces to be destroyed and for the brander to be expelled from the consortium.

The following analysis of the regulations reveals a system of control—extending from the brand owner to the branders and from the branders to their suppliers—that is designed to preserve the value of the brand against any attempt at swindling. This system is also the main channel through which the quality standard of the DV brand is imposed over the city.

Authenticity through Cutting

Any GI is associated with a product and a way of production that is codified in a quality standard. This ideal model is considered by branders to be representative of a particular local territory and characterized by an exclusive bond with the land and the community of producers. However, this model is not a datum; instead, it is constructed by branders to embody what they believe to be 'authentically' local (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 10).

Strathern (1996) describes an industry (e.g., scientific research) as an extended network of people and knowledge. The ownership of a product—that is, the exclusive bond that links the artifact to its artificer—is based on *not* recognizing

the links in the network. In other words, in the achievement of the final product, the role that actors who are not the owners have played, as a result of their work and expertise, is not acknowledged (ibid.: 524). Thus, ownership results from ‘cutting the network’ that brought about the finished product.

Not dissimilarly, the definition of ‘authentic’ local production and, consequently, the fixing of a quality standard originate from cutting a relational network and excluding places, knowledge, and practices. The process follows two main steps: first, the bounding of a protected territory that is seen as the cradle of the tradition and, second, the restriction of materials and techniques employable in production. In Valenza, to make the DV brand meaningful, forms of production and materials were selected and turned into a canon of authenticity—the canon that was subsequently imposed on the local milieu through the system of control described above.

Cutting a Production Network

A first dimension of this process concerned the localization of production, that is, the definition of the geographical area protected by the brand. This decision, which was neither neutral nor straightforward, expressed a tension between globalization and localization that ended in a peculiar cut in a production network that extended far beyond the borders of Valenza

At the end of the nineteenth century, Valenza’s jewelry industry had begun to expand beyond the borders of the city to involve surrounding settlements across Piedmont and Lombardy within a radius of 10 kilometers. Over the course of the century, other, more distant cities also became involved in this business, as goldsmiths who had trained in Valenza opened firms in these locations. Finally, within the last 20 years, large Valenza firms set up new plants in other European countries (e.g., Romania) and Asia (e.g., Turkey and China). Although geographically remote, these businesses were fully integrated into the Valenza network. Now, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, Valenza’s jewelry industry appears as an impalpable web that extends across the borders of the city and beyond, connecting villages and cities and creating a globalized narration that involves Europe and Asia. In this large network, the brand was established by curtailing just a small patch.

The rhetoric of the GI is founded on the idea of authenticity that connects a product to a specific geographical region, which is described as the product’s authentic place of production. In the creation of intangible value for the commodity, a relation of inverse proportion is created between the expanse of the region and the prestige and value of that product. The DV brand does not escape from this logic, and in its actualization it offers a localistic response to the complexity of the articulation of the jewelry industry. Although the official rhetoric of the advertising campaign states that DV jewelry is ‘made in Valenza’, regulations allow access to the brand to the firms located in a larger area, ambiguously referred to as ‘the Valenza industrial district’. This wording draws on the definition given by Italian Law 317/91 (chap. 7, art. 36, com. 1), which is intended to support the development of small and medium enterprises. Since

the institution of this law in 1991, Valenza has been considered the center of a district that includes some neighboring villages; however, the extension of this network is debated (see Benzi and Fugagnoli 2004a).

During discussions over the drafting of the regulations, the consortium's members faced the complexity of this intricate network. The participants commonly recognized the problem of interconnection. In the search for an inclusive and, at the same time, exclusive definition of its territory, the members ended up using the locution 'industrial district'. To get around the limitation posed by the legal definition of this term, they also integrated in the regulations the possibility for any firm set up in the provinces of Alessandria and Pavia to be accepted *sub conditione* in the consortium once the other members had accepted its membership application. This decision was aimed at allowing all the firms localized in the proximity of Valenza (and integrated into its economic network) to join the consortium, while forbidding enterprises to market jewelry as 'made in Valenza' when their production is carried out abroad.

In the light of Tarde's ([1893] 1999) approach to identity and considering the words of my informants, it seems clear that the definition of 'district' is a definition of local identity that crosses the identitarian categorization based on 'to be' and 'to have'. On the one hand, it emphasizes the 'to have' of being part of a network to the point that the actual existence of an industrial district that encompasses Valenza and its neighboring villages may appear irrelevant. On the other hand, it cuts off the production network through the 'to be' claim of essence—the essence of a production that is located only in Italy and close to Valenza. In this ontological ambivalence, the formula of the industrial district diverges from the precision of legal definition and turns into an evocative, rather than assertive, definition of a sense of geographical proximity to and integration into Valenza.

Thus, the sense of spatiality that underpins the DV brand is different from, and vaguer than, the one that sustains the agricultural GIs that are rooted and precisely bounded in the geography of a region (cf. Trevisan 2006). Because of this, it is less effective in shaping the geography of production and in sectioning the network. The importance of belonging to the network and the restriction on outsourcing have become a source of reflection for Valenza entrepreneurs. On the basis of DV regulations, they have had to face the question about the necessity and convenience of producing outside the district. Thus, while in the eyes of goldsmiths the brand represents a reason to modify their production practices, the brand itself can be seen as a factual agent of change that is modifying Valenza.

Cutting a Model of Production

Localization is just one of the issues tackled by the regulations. Most of this body of norms deals with the actual quality of the product—a crucial aspect of the brand (Roberts 2006). In all the advertising materials and press releases produced by the consortium (e.g., CDV 2010a), the word 'quality' often appears, and the project is portrayed as a search for the 'best quality'. The key, therefore,

is to understand how the consortium interprets quality and to which needs, and whose, it responds.

The regulations are the consortium's tool to guarantee the quality of its products. This is accomplished by enforcing a quality standard that is described through a detailed list of prescriptions and explanations about which materials and techniques are usable and which physical characteristics a product must have in order to be branded as DV. Altogether, these norms respond to two fundamental principles: traceability and measurability. All the materials and the techniques employed must be listed, as well as the actual origins of the feedstock. Moreover, the manufacturing, alloys, and gems must correspond to parameters listed in the regulations. The porosity of the metal's surface, the quality of welding, the cut of stones, the choice of metals and gems, the very techniques of production, all are subject to these regulations (CDV 2007a, 2007b, 2009) and must be traceable and traced, measurable and measured. These principles and the structure of these regulations respond to the precise needs of dealing with the international market. As previously mentioned, the 2000s brought forward a growing concern about ethical issues relating to the origins and manufacture of luxury items, which turned into a demand for greater transparency with regard to these products. It is this need that the regulations address directly in their institutionalization of transparency, providing customers with a detailed description of all the materials used for the manufacture of any branded piece of jewelry (Regione Piemonte 2009: 1–3).

At the same time, in the international jewelry industry, physical requirements for high-quality jewelry improved. Driven by the diffusion of new technologies (e.g., micro-laser welders) and the implementation of others (e.g., computer-aided design and manufacture, or CAD/CAM technologies), standards were raised. To cope with this change, the consortium set a similar standard and formalized it in the regulations, matching the standard used by international corporations for their productions. These high technological standards require the use of complex technologies that are not widespread and are often stigmatized in Valenza. Thus, to cope with the competition, market-defined requirements were accepted by the consortium's members and became its model of quality.

This move, which reflects the transformational capacity of the brand over the locale, did not fail to attract criticism from many goldsmiths in the city. Informants, in particular among commodity producers, agreed that the new standards contradicted local tradition, which was considered to lie in manual work. As many scholars (Gaggio 2007; Garofoli 2004; Lenti 2010; Lenti and Pugnetti 1974; Paradiso 2008a) have pointed out, jewelry production in Valenza is characterized by the lowest degree of mechanization compared with productions carried out in Vicenza and Arezzo. Although Valenza has followed the path of serialization and mechanization since the 1950s and it is not rare, today, to find machines in workshops that replace goldsmiths for particular phases of production, the identification of Valenza jewelry as the result of craftsmanship is still central to the city's image. In the last 50 years, this identification has been remarked in films (Orengo et al. 1964), art exhibitions (Lenti 2010; Molina and Manenti 1994), scientific studies (Lenti 2010;

Lenti and Pugnetti 1974), and narrative works (Bosco 2004). It has also been used by public institutions, such as the City Council and local schools, and by private enterprises (not only jewelry firms) to promote their services and productions as well as the Valenza area in general. The consortium itself uses the concept of craftsmanship to support its brand. In this respect, the images used to embody the authenticity of Valenza jewelry in advertisements placed in the *Valenza Gioielli* magazine are meaningful. Three photographs show the hands of an individual manually processing different phases of jewelry manufacturing: drawing, sawing, and chiseling (Regione Piemonte et al. 2010: 17).

In this respect, the Valenza goldsmith is represented as a creative and adroit practitioner who completes the entire cycle of jewelry production with manual skills, wits, and a few rudimentary tools, such as drills, files, and burins. The authenticity of local production is promoted as being embodied in this mastery. This imagery thus conveys a romantic ideal of the goldsmith as an artisan and artificer, echoing a tradition in scholarship rooted in the works of the nineteenth century (e.g., Morris 1888; Ruskin 1851) that placed artisanal, manual work above—and in opposition to—machine-made production.

The application of the consortium standard was perceived by my informants as challenging this paradigm and depriving it of its meaning. Although the mechanization implicitly promoted by the consortium was not leading to the transformation of small-scale production into a form of automated mass production (cf. CDV 2007b), goldsmiths saw in the advent of these new technologies a shift of importance from their manual skills to the machine. Hence, mechanization appeared as a new force that was imposing changes to their way of working, compelling them to leave behind a model of production that they had embodied, inherited, and supported. This force proved to be decisive because, to branders and commodity producers, to resist would have meant to lose customers, to be marginalized, and, in a context of general insecurity, to risk having to close their workshops. This economic relevance may have been at the basis of the politicization of crafts in Valenza (Adamson 2010: 585–587).

In the past few years, a growing number of goldsmiths have attended sessions offered by private and public institutions, such as Foral, a local training school, to learn new skills such as the use of CAD/CAM. Plus, the sale of new machinery has not decreased despite the city's and jewelry industry's economic crisis. The production landscape is slowly absorbing these new technologies and techniques, which are becoming part of the goldsmiths' *techne*—that is, their traditions.

Conclusion

This article does not call into question the quality of DV jewelry, which is an indisputably high-standard product by any techno-scientific perspective, or the history of craftsmanship that DV products attest to. Instead, its aim is to disclose the transformations and tensions that lie beyond the rhetoric of authenticity that characterizes this brand as well as other GIs. In this respect,

I intended to show that GIs are not innocuous elements in a production landscape. In past years, other anthropologists have shed light on different aspects of this process. For example, Ulin (1995) demonstrated that the creation of a GI for Bordeaux wine led to a redefinition of the production landscape, while Grasseni (2003) showed that the institution of a GI affected the milieu of Val Taleggio by encouraging producers to learn new skills concerning making and packing their cheese. My research has identified a further element: the strategic role that regulations play in triggering and, to some extent, determining this transformation.

As Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) have recently pointed out, in the last 20 years, local knowledge and practices have become the basis of a growing industry, what they term 'Ethnicity, Inc.'. In this business, ethnic traits and local traditions are emphasized to distinguish local productions and make them exclusive, unique, and thus luxury goods (Appadurai 1986: 44). The employment of GIs is one of the strategies that are integral to this particular form of commodification.

Foucault (1975) argued that law represents a system of control and subordination that provides a social mechanism that pushes individuals to conform to a specific archetype. Where for Foucault this archetype is the model of the 'normal' citizen, here, in terms of the regulations, it is a model of jewelry production and therefore of goldsmiths. In fact, we have noticed that the consortium regulations have led all the firms involved in the production of DV jewelry to adapt to a model of production, a quality standard, fixed by the members of the consortium on the basis of market standards.

By adapting to this model of production, learning new skills, buying new tools, and using new technologies, Valenza goldsmiths end up modifying their practices in accordance with the model. They adapt what might be considered their 'traditional Valenza goldsmithing' to a new model that reflects the needs of the globalized market. This game of trading traditions and authenticity follows the cycle of adjustments between local culture and the market that underpins Ethnicity, Inc. (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 18–21). While the local is made into a commodity for the global, molding local techne-oriented knowledge into techno-scientific standards, the global is made local and becomes a craft, a techne to be resold to the global market.

Reconsidering this dynamic in the light of the ethnography, it leads to two final remarks about the concept of space and knowledge that underpins GIs. While GIs are founded on an idea of the local as a detached and detachable reality from the global, the insolvable interconnection of these two dimensions is evident. In Valenza, where the local is described on the basis of an evocative sense of geographical proximity, as well as in the cases of agricultural GIs, where it is based on physical borders, this interconnection discloses the profoundly political nature of any definition of the term 'local'. It also encourages us not to take for granted the existence of such a space but instead to interrogate the mechanism through which it is established and enacted.

Moreover, and in conclusion, even though GIs are intended to preserve local production knowledge in a way that would freeze the continuous change of

local culture into pure forms of authenticity, in determining these forms they actually become agents of change (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Thus, in a modern world that is apprehensive about the disappearance of local heritage, it remains to be explored whether alternative strategies may succeed where GIs appear to fail.

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Notes

1. Abiding by the current “Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice” of the Association of Social Anthropologist of the UK and Ireland, in this article the actual brand name is substituted with a fictitious one. In the same vein, all names of firms and informants quoted in the article are anonymized.
2. The public institutions and private firms that joined with the GAV to form the consortium can be found in CDV (2010b).
3. With regard to the legislation involved, see DGR No. 57-3700, LR 1/2009, and Regione Piemonte (2009).
4. For more on fair trade as it applies to jewelry production, see Macfarlane et al. (2003).

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