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Institutions as Intangible Assets in the Evolution of Italian Fashion, 1950–2000

Research in fields ranging from classical sociology to fashion studies has depicted fashion as a highly institutionalized and centralized system. Although scholars have long relied on French fashion as the paradigmatic example for the industry, a growing scholarly interest in the institutions of Italian fashion has opened avenues for new research. To date, this has primarily highlighted the chaotic institutional framework of Italian fashion since the industry's inception in the 1950s, and it has done so in explicit contrast with the much tighter organization of the French *Chambre Syndicale*.¹

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1 Patricia H. Thornton and William Ocasio, "Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power in Organizations: Executive Succession in the Higher Education Publishing Industry, 1958–1990," *American Journal of Sociology*, CV (1999), 801–843; *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management*, s.v. "Institutional Logics," by Heather A. Haveman and Gillian Gualtieri, available at <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.013.137> (accessed December 12, 2023); Douglas C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York, 1990); Şevket Pamuk, "Institutional Change and the Longevity of Ottoman Empire, 1500–1800," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXXV (2004), 225–247; Oscar Gelderblom and Regina Grafe, "The Rise and Fall of the Merchant Guilds: Re-thinking the Comparative Study of Commercial Institutions in Premodern Europe," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XL (2010), 477–511. On the concept of fashion system, see Stefania Saviolo and Salvo Testa, *Strategic Management in the Fashion Companies* (Milan, 2002), 37–54; Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies* (Oxford, 2005), 47–55. Véronique Pouillard, *Paris to New York. The Transatlantic Fashion Industry in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2021). See also Michelle Jones, *London Couture and the Making of a Fashion Centre* (Cambridge, MA, 2022) on the wartime establishment of the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers, modelled after the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*, and its role in supporting the emergence of London as an internationally recognized fashion center in the 1930s and 1940s. Ivan Paris, "Fashion and Institutions: The AHA and the Ready-To-Wear Industry in Italy (1945–

These exhaustive analyses have provided an invaluable basis for facilitating comparison and interpretation rather than merely description. They have developed a better understanding of the logic behind the differences in institutional character and the key roles institutions played in the development of French and Italian fashion during the twentieth century. Our research seeks to further this discourse by examining how the trajectories of the fashion system and market outcomes in France and Italy related to their respective institutional contexts.

LITERATURE, APPROACH, AND METHOD In recent decades, fashion research, ranging from sociology and economics to modern history, has highlighted the key role that institutions, such as trade and professionals associations, have played in the emergence, legitimacy, and achievements of French couture. Kawamura specifically attributed modern fashion's origin to the institutionalization of the fashion system in France in 1868. The establishment of the Parisian trade association, the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne*, resulted in a highly centralized system. As the only institution dedicated to supporting and maintaining Paris' hegemony as the leading fashion capital, the *Chambre* defined, legitimized, promoted, and managed the creativity of French couturiers. Kawamura's seminal study introduced an institutional approach to fashion studies and positioned the French fashion system as the prototype for all other fashion systems.²

From a different perspective, Pouillard's research on the evolution of the Paris haute couture cluster into a global industry from the twentieth century to the present noted significant contributions by entrepreneurs, designers, and fashion institutions like the *Chambre*. Her study complemented the rich corpus of work focusing on the supportive and protective activities of the institutions that were so important in the development of French

1975)," *Enterprise & Society*, XXII (2021), 44–77; Gianluigi Di Giangirolamo, *Institutions for Fashion. Public and Private Intervention in Italy and France (1945–1965)* (Milan, 2021); Pinchera and Diego Rinallo, "The Emergence of Italy as a Fashion Country: Nation Branding and Collective Meaning Creation at Florence's Fashion Shows (1951–1965)," *Business History*, LXII (2020), 155–168; Merlo, "Camera nazionale della moda italiana (1958–1989)," in *idem* and Maria Natalina Trivisano (eds.), *Lo stile italiano nelle carte. Inventario dell'archivio storico della Camera nazionale della moda italiana (1958–1989)* (Rome, 2018), 1–31.

2 Kawamura, *Fashion-ology*.

fashion. Not surprisingly then, historians have looked for the development of similar types of institutions in the Italian case. Yet their research reveals that the first attempt to institutionalize fashion in Italy—which dates to the Fascist era, specifically with the establishment of the Ente Nazionale della Moda—failed to foster “Italian elegance” through the dictatorship’s economic policy.³

Furthermore, conflicts between private and public fashion institutions were rife after the war even before Italian fashion gained international prominence in the early 1950s. These tensions intensified after the establishment of the new institution, the Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana (hereinafter Camera), in the early 1960s as the result of the competition among Turin, Florence, Milan, and Rome, each of which aspired to become the capital of Italian fashion. Thus, a complex process of defining and structuring the Italian fashion system preceded Milan’s ultimate rise as an international fashion hub.⁴

Recent research has provided differing approaches to understanding the landscape of Italian fashion institutions between 1945 and the mid-1970s. Economic historian Ivan Paris applied associationism and business interests as theoretical frameworks to study the Italian Clothing Industry Association (hereinafter AIIA). He analyzed the AIIA’s efforts to support and uphold the interests of the ready-to-wear sector from its origins in 1945 until its dissolution in 1975. The study highlights the AIIA’s inability to respond effectively to challenging economic, cultural, and productive contexts, especially within the “complicated and confused institutional” framework of the Italian fashion field, which was marked

3 Pouillard, *Paris to New York*; Didier Grumbach, *Histoire de la mode* (Paris, 1993); Alexandra Palmer, *Couture & Commerce: The Transatlantic Fashion Trade in the 1950s* (Vancouver, 2001); Valerie Steele (ed.), *Paris: Capital of Fashion* (London, 2019); Mary Lynn Stewart, *Dressing Modern Frenchwomen: Marketing Haute Couture, 1919–1939* (Baltimore, 2008); Dominique Veillon, *La mode sous l’Occupation* (Paris, 2001; orig. ed. 1990).

4 Sofia Gnoli, *La donna, l’eleganza, il fascismo. La moda italiana dalle origini all’Ente Italiano della Moda* (Catania, 2000); Cinzia Capalbo, *Storia della moda a Roma. Sarti, culture e stili di una capitale dal 1871 a oggi* (Rome, 2012); Merlo, “Camera nazionale della moda italiana”; Merlo and Francesca Polese, “Turning Fashion into Business: The Emergence of Milan as an International Fashion Hub,” *Business History Review*, LXXX (2006), 415–447; Paris, *Oggetti cuciti: l’abbigliamento pronto in Italia dal primo dopoguerra agli anni Settanta* (Milan, 2006), 188–191; Pinchera, *La moda in Italia e in Toscana dalle origini alla globalizzazione* (Venice, 2009); Pinchera and Rinallo, “The Emergence of Italy as a Fashion Country.”

by numerous bodies and organizations, and the weak involvement of the Camera.⁵

Di Giangiolamo's research, following a more traditional approach to fashion studies, focused on the dissimilarities between Italian and French institutional fashion contexts. It compared the policies and interventions of institutions in both countries' fashion sectors from the end of World War II to the mid-1960s. The examination of public and private institutions' different plans of action—one aimed at shaping and promoting the emerging Italian fashion system, and the other on preserving and capitalizing on the tradition and heritage of Parisian couture—helped to outline the different institutional perspectives and logics driving the process of identifying and structuring the two fashion systems.⁶

Notwithstanding the significant contributions of these studies, our knowledge of the institutional framework and evolution of Italian fashion remains fragmented. Scholars have predominantly adopted a country-centric perspective, leading to separate historical and economic analyses. This article expands the comparative analysis of French and Italian institutional fashion contexts through the end of the twentieth century as well as the characteristics, roles, and actions of major Italian fashion institutions. Following Kawamura's approach, we consider fashion as a socially constructed institutional system, and we analyze the Italian fashion institutions' evolution from the perspective of institutional logic theory to conceptualize its trajectory and compare it with the development of French fashion.

Institutional logic, which emerged in the 1990s from the theoretical framework of neo-institutionalism, highlights the crucial role of institutions, such as trade associations, in providing legitimacy and stability to an organizational field. According to Thornton and Ocasio, institutional logic refers to “the organizing principles and practice guidelines” that influence the beliefs and behaviors of organization participants through historical and cultural patterns, including material practices, values, and rules. The institutional logics within organizations may stem from societal levels—such as the state, market, religion, profession, and corporation—or at the organizational level, and they might overlap or contrast. This approach is pivotal in examining the emergence,

5 Paris, “Fashion and Institutions,” 69.

6 Di Giangiolamo, *Institutions for Fashion*.

development, and achievement of Italian fashion because it allows us to identify the varying institutional logics that fashion institutions and their actors have manifested and/or conveyed within the organizational field. Through comparison with France, we highlight institutions as intangible values in explaining divergences in fashion development paths.⁷

Data drawn from original records in the Camera's historical archive, official decrees from the *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, and the Italian Parliament's acts of the Chamber of Deputies enable us to reconstruct the complex institutional landscape of Italian fashion. Furthermore, specialized press articles from *Women's Wear Daily* and secondary literature help outline the evolution of French fashion.⁸

THE FRENCH INSTITUTIONAL PARADIGM In 1868, Charles Frederick Worth, the father of haute couture, and the clothing manufacturer Salé initiated the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture, des Confectionneurs et des Tailleurs pour Dame*. It was one of the first trade associations for French and Parisian employers to safeguard member interests and provide services. In its early years, this institution promoted French fashion, helped its members attend world fairs, and lobbied the central government on industry concerns.⁹

7 Paul J. Di Maggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review*, XLVIII (1983), 148; Richard W. Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1995); Thornton and Ocasio, "Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power in Organizations," 804; Scott et al., *Institutional Change and Health Care Organizations: From Professional Dominance to Managed Care* (Chicago, 2000), 170, 172; Marya L. Besharov and Wendy K. Smith, "Multiple Institutional Logics in Organizations: Explaining their Varied Nature and Implications," *Academy of Management Review*, XXXIX (2014), 364–381.

8 *WWD* is recognized as the most authoritative fashion trade journal. The *WWD* archive provides online access to issues and supplements published since 1910. Pouillard, *Paris to New York*, 46.

9 On the history and the role of the *Chambre*, see David Zajtmann, "L'organisation professionnelle comme source de légitimité: Le cas de la Fédération de la couture, du prêt-à-porter des couturiers et des créateurs de mode," *Mode de recherche*, XVI (2011), 1–17; Claire Lemerrier, "Looking for 'Industrial Confraternity': Small-Scale Industries and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Enterprise & Society*, X (2009), 304–334, after the abolition of guilds in 1791, trade associations were not allowed to be established in France until 1884; Guénolette Milleret, *Haute couture: Histoire de l'industrie de la création française des précurseurs à nos jours* (Paris, 2015), 42–44.

By 1911, the newly formed *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne* acknowledged haute couture's autonomy and creativity, distinguishing it from ready-made clothing. The *Chambre's* leadership was restricted to Parisian haute couture professionals, with a president elected annually from among the most representative members, such as the couturiers Georges Doeuillet and Jeanne Paquin. The *Chambre* advocated for its members' common good, representing and sponsoring "individual couture houses and Paris couturiers as a collective." It coordinated an official fashion show calendar and regulated foreign buyers' access to couture houses to prevent illegal copying.¹⁰

The *Chambre's* role in French fashion strengthened during the interwar period when public authorities—from the central government to the workers' unions—recognized it as the sole fashion industry organization. Its actions were crucial during the turmoil of the 1929 financial crisis, safeguarding French couture savoir-faire and business. It established a Couture high school, which continues to operate. The French Ministry of National Education recognized this three-year course of study providing technical and organizational training for female workers. The *Chambre* also focused on intellectual property rights and social issues, ranging from worker assistance to salary agreements.¹¹

Lucien Lelong's tenure as the *Chambre's* president during the Nazi occupation and in the aftermath of liberation was integral to the survival of the Parisian couture cluster and the French fashion system. Between 1943 and 1945, the term *haute couture* gained legal protection, and the *Chambre* was renamed the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne*. From 1945, with the inclusion of haute couture in the list of art and creation industries and crafts by a ministerial decree, the *Chambre* established new strict requirements and criteria for the designation of haute couture house membership, which emphasized their business' artistic and

10 Pouillard, "Managing Fashion Creativity: The History of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne* During the Interwar Period," *Investigaciones de Historia Económica-Economic History Research*, XII (2016), 77. The president was supported by a board comprising two vice-presidents, a secretary, a treasurer, and an auditor. Daniel Gorin, "The Haute Couture and How It Works," *WWD*, LXXVII (1948), 10; Palmer, *Couture & Commerce*, 14; Pinchera and Rinallo, "Marketplace Icon: The Fashion Show," *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, XXIV (2021), 482–484.

11 "Paris École Supérieure de la Couture Now in Second Year Defines Scope of Purposes and Activities," *WWD* (1931), 4–5; Gorin, "The Haute Couture," 10.

symbolic values. The Chambre's relationship with public authorities strengthened, and its lobbying activity culminated in an assistance plan of financial subsidies for haute couture in the 1950s, new anticounterfeiting laws, and the recognition of authors' rights in applied arts.¹²

In the 1950s and the 1960s, the economic, social, and cultural changes and competition from international players like Italian fashion led to a downturn in the haute couture business. Nevertheless, the Chambre's interventions secured haute couture's legacy and paved the way for its transition to ready-to-wear. In 1973, the Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode (hereinafter French Federation) was established with the aim to recognize and organize the various sectors of the French fashion system. The French Federation included not only the original Chambre, but also the newly created Chambre Syndicale du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode and the Chambre Syndicale de la Mode Masculine. During Jacques Mouclier's twenty-five-year presidency in the 1980s and the 1990s, the Chambre undertook many reforms ranging from opening membership both to French and to foreign fashion designers to revising fashion show schedules and arrangements to modernize French fashion. The restructuring of the Chambre's school began with the establishment of the French Institute of Fashion in 1986, serving as a higher education institution for fashion management and a research center for the fashion and luxury industries. In the 1990s, an action program was launched to revamp haute couture's rules and statutes in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Finance to nurture young designers' businesses and renew the centralized system of French fashion by drawing on haute couture's heritage and reputation.¹³

12 On the role Lelong played in the survival of haute couture and the new criteria for the designation of haute couture house membership, see Veillon, *La mode sous l'Occupation*, 141–181; Pouillard, *Paris to New York*, 143–144. From 1952 to 1961 the “aid couture plan” supported the haute couture houses financially by covering 30–40% of the textile costs. Vincent Dubé-Sénécal, “Fashion, Industry and Diplomacy: Reframing Couture-Textile Relations in France, 1950s–1960s,” *Enterprise & Society*, XXIV (2023), 455–479.

13 Godfrey Deeny, “France to Study Couture Rules, Sets Industry Aid,” *WWD*, CLXII (1991), 13; *idem*, “New Rules Could Rejuvenate Couture,” *WWD*, CLXIII (1992), 26; “Proposals Completed to Ease Regulations for French Couture,” *WWD*, CLXIV (1992), 15; Deeny, “Nurturing the Next Wave,” *WWD*, CLXX (1995), 20. The haute couture reform was

ITALIAN FASHION'S INTERNATIONAL DEBUT AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION In 1951, Giovanni Battista Giorgini, a buyer who had previously exported handmade Tuscan products to the American market in the 1920s, organized the first collective Italian fashion show for dressmakers at his residence in Florence. He invited a few of the American department stores' major buyers (such as I. Magnin, B. Altman, Bergdorf Goodman, and Henry Morgan). The event was held just after the French fashion dates to entice American buyers already in Paris to prolong their stay in Europe. The plan was conceived to celebrate the Renaissance, evoking Italian artistic primacy in various forms, including paintings, drawings, and sculptures.

The debut show exceeded all expectations, enabling Giorgini to use Florence's Grand Hotel for his second show in 1951, where he presented 600 dresses. A year later, shows were also staged in the famous Florentine Palazzo Pitti's Sala Bianca, a venue that reinforced the tradition of Italian aesthetic culture rooted in the Renaissance. By accepting Giorgini's invitation, Italian fashion houses temporarily abandoned the practice of presenting their shows individually in their ateliers a few weeks after the French shows. This shift prevented the Italian fashion houses from slavishly adapting to new trends from the Parisian catwalks. The prominent American department store buyers at the Florentine shows welcomed Italian fashion as a rising star. Not surprisingly, fashion historians unanimously recognize the Sala Bianca as the birthplace of Italian fashion and Giorgini as its founding father.¹⁴

A decade of institutional effervescence followed the successful move in Florence. The first of the associations founded during this period was the Ente Italiano Moda (hereinafter Ente), established

completed in 2001. On the actions of the Chambre in this period, see Zajtmann, "L'organisation professionnelle comme source de légitimité," 14; *idem*, "Using a Professional Organization to Enhance Its Reputation. The Case of the Parisian Haute Couture. A Longitudinal Study (1973–2000)," Institut Français de la Mode research report, XVI (2011), 14–20. It is worth highlighting that Mouclier was both the president of the Chambre and the president of the French Federation.

14 Guido Vergani, "La Sala Bianca: Nascita della Moda Italiana," in Giannino Malossi (ed.), *La Sala Bianca: Nascita della moda italiana* (Milan, 1992), 23–86; Pinchera, *La moda in Italia e in Toscana*, 23–80; Pinchera and Rinallo, "The Emergence of Italy as a Fashion Country"; Sonnet Stanfill, "Anonymous Tastemakers: The Role of American Buyers in Establishing an Italian Fashion Industry, 1950–55," in Regina Blaszczyk and Pouillard (eds.), *European Fashion: The Creation of a Global Industry* (Manchester, 2018), 146–169; Lucia Savi, *A New History of "Made in Italy": Fashion and Textiles in Post-War Italy* (London, 2023), 16.

in Turin in 1951 as a public institution legally recognized for protecting Italian fashion.¹⁵

Subsequently, Rome, Naples, Florence, and Venice established their own associations, which were mainly aimed at promoting fashion at the local level. In the 1950s, thirteen associations and more than thirty organizations, mainly industrial and artisanal committees, were formed. The last to be established was the Camera Sindacale della Moda Italiana, based in Rome. After its founding, it was inactive until 1962 when it was re-established as the Camera.¹⁶

The Ente and the Camera were similar in both structure and purpose—they even had the same manager, Amos Ciabattoni, who became secretary of the Rome Center of High Fashion in 1961 and served as the Camera's general secretary for ten years before taking up the same role at the Ente in the early 1970s. Both institutions collaborated on common initiatives, including the *Accordo Alta Moda Confezioni*, an agreement between the Camera's members and the clothing industry. Despite these similarities, the Ente and the Camera diverged in their approach to fashion. The Ente viewed fashion as a matter of public interest while the Camera represented private concerns.¹⁷

THE ENTE In 1932, Benito Mussolini established the Ente Autonomo per la Mostra Permanente Nazionale della Moda (hereinafter EAMNPM), a government institution tasked with overseeing the full cycle of fashion creation and production, including two biannual

15 Decree of the President of the Italian Republic, 17 Feb. 1951, 219, in *Gazzetta Ufficiale* [hereinafter *GU*], XCII, 20 Apr. 1951, 1210.

16 By-laws of the Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, the Centro Mediterraneo della Moda e dell'Artigianato, the Centro della Moda Italiana, and the Centro per l'Alta Moda Italiana, Camera Historical Archive (hereinafter the ASCNMI), Boxes 16, 17.

17 ASCNMI, Box 102-1. The Comitato Consultivo della Moda, which promoted the agreement, was established by the Ente and the Ministry of Trade and Industry in 1963. The committee's mandate was to define the parameters for public intervention and coordinate the fashion sector. The agreement determined the color trends for the 1970/1 autumn and winter seasons on the basis of the previous season's color charts provided by the Camera. Despite monetary incentives from the committee, none of the haute couture houses followed the committee's rules and regulations. This agreement represented the last attempt to foster collaboration and coordination at the industry level. Its failure opened the door for direct collaboration between fashion designers and companies. Documentation on the activities of the Comitato Consultivo della Moda can be found in ASCNMI, Box 85.

fashion shows in Turin.¹⁸ The 1929 crisis severely affected industrial Turin's economy, sparking intense debate about its economic prospects. Writer and journalist Umberto Notari questioned whether Turin should continue to be a predominantly industrial city. He proposed tourism and fashion as the bases for Turin's economic revival. Notari argued that Turin's tradition of elegance was unmatched in Italy and that it was the only city in the country that could compete with Paris by creating and launching Italian fashion. Although it was languishing, Turin's fashion industry still boasted workshops that enabled its clothing craftsmen to dress elegant Italian women, as they had done in the early twentieth century.¹⁹

The secretary of Turin's Fascist Federation, Andrea Gastaldi, enthusiastically supported Notari's ideas. Gastaldi broadened the scope of Turin's revival to include the entertainment (radio and cinema) and luxury food industries as well. He persuasively contrasted these industries with the "gigantic" and "bluffing" automotive and textile businesses, whose entrepreneurs he blamed for the entire urban economic crisis. Notably, these entrepreneurs were not strong supporters of fascism, unlike the artisans and small retailers.²⁰

The EAMNPM was established based on economic assessments that were influenced and somewhat distorted by political concerns to promote Italian fashion for propagandist purposes. At the time, Italian fashion was considered a matter of public interest and political control. The EAMNPM's transformation into the Ente Nazionale della Moda (hereinafter ENM) in 1935 moved the balance further toward political (rather than economic) interests. It came as no surprise that deputy Giovanni Vianino, president of the Turin Federation of Retailers and vice-president of the EAMNPM, was appointed president of the ENM. Vladimiro Rossini, a member of the National Institute for Export, which was established in 1926

18 Law 1618, 22 Dec. 1932, in *GU*, LXXIII, no. 297, 26 Dec. 1932, 5746–5747. On the links between fashion businesses and the fascist regime see Chiara Faggella, "'Not So Simple': Reassessing 1951, G. B. Giorgini and the Launch of Italian Fashion," unpub. Ph.D. diss., (Stockholm University, 2019).

19 Umberto Notari, "Nostra intervista," *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 9 Mar. 1932, quoted in Valeria Sgambati, "Il regime fascista a Torino," in Nicola Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino* (Turin, 1998), VIII, 241–242.

20 Andrea Gastaldi, "Della prosperità di Torino," *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 26 Mar. 1932, quoted in Sgambati, "Il regime fascista a Torino," 242.

to develop Italian foreign trade, was named general director. His appointment further emphasized the EAMNPM's original role and functions.²¹

The ENM aimed to regulate both women's and men's clothing and appearance to create a distinct Italian style with which Italians could identify. To this end, the entire fashion value chain needed to be under Italian control. However, when the League of Nations sanctioned Italy for its imperialistic politics, regulations became stricter, if not autarchic. To obtain the *Marca di Garanzia* (the ENM trademark introduced by Royal Decree in 1936), ateliers had to send the ENM a dossier of photos, a fashion plate, and a sample of a dress, fur, or accessory. If deemed suitable, the ENM authorized the atelier to use the ENM trademark, which certified the product's Italianness. The ENM also patented the models from which the garments had been reproduced.

The ENM took decisive steps, especially in the textiles and synthetic fibers sector, promoting their use in clothing manufacturing while adhering to the rules for obtaining the ENM trademark. To use fashion as a key avenue for reinforcing the nation's sense of self, the ENM also created powerful networks between the media and fashion businesses. The first edition of the magazine *Bellezza*, the official organ of Italian haute couture, was printed in Turin in 1941. The ENM was its patron, and Mussolini himself chose the title. However, the magazine's connection to the ENM went beyond patronage, featuring only models with the ENM trademark. Through the ENM's influence, fashion became a tool for engaging women in shaping a national identity. The ENM's propaganda activity included publishing the *Bollettino di informazioni*, a bi-monthly newsletter that included a theoretical-practical dress-making course as a supplement. Among the ENM's initiatives, the *Commentario dizionario italiano della moda* (1936), a dictionary with critical notes whose aim was to purge the language of fashion of all foreign terms, stands out as the first, and perhaps most interesting, attempt to trace the historical roots of Italianness.

21 The relationship between Rossini and the National Institute for Export was inferred from *Torino: Rassegna mensile della città*, XV (1932), 56. Regarding the change in the National Institute for Export's course of action, see Sara Nocentini, "L'Ice dalla ricostruzione agli anni '70. Appunti per una ricerca storica," in *Istituto per il Commercio Estero, L'Italia nell'economia internazionale. Rapporto ICE 2006-2007* (Rome, 2007), 524-529.

Yet the ENM's regulations faced major criticism. Both long-established, high-end fashion ateliers and anonymous tailor shops were issued the same trademark, leading to dissatisfaction among the ateliers, even though the tailor shops lacked the means to exploit fully the trademark's benefits. Although the ENM's regulations were ineffective and largely unapplied, they left a significant legacy for its successor, the Ente. Established in Turin in 1951, the Ente was a moral, apolitical, and public institution legally recognized as the protector and promoter of Italian fashion.²²

Like the ENM, the Ente was a regulatory agency established by ministerial decree and never directly organized promotional fashion activities. Instead, it supported fashion shows that other associations organized, including Giorgini's Florentine show and the international market fair of clothing SAMIA. According to Mira, Vladimiro Rossini may have developed the idea of organizing a fashion exposition in Turin, inspired by fashion journalist Mildred Kador. Kador, whom Rossini had met at the Sala Bianca fashion shows, noted American interest in Italian haute couture but also wanted to see clothes made accessible to all women. By early 1955, the SAMIA affirmed Turin's status as the capital of the Italian ready-to-wear industry. Within just five years, the number of buyers grew from just over 5,000 to more than 58,000, predominantly Italians, contrasting with the American-dominated buyer base in Florence and Rome.²³

The challenges that the Ente faced in acquiring an authoritative and leading position in the Italian fashion sector were evident from the outset. Although the official statute determined that the Ente had broad responsibilities, its scope was limited due to its inadequate financial resources and weak relationships with fashion

22 The Ente's accreditation as a public institution, legally recognized as the protector of Italian fashion, was strongly supported by local economic actors. The Turin Chamber of Commerce, embodying both commercial and industrial interests, alongside the Association of Manufacturers, endorsed the Ente's role, seeing it as beneficial to the textile industry, which was very important to Piedmont's economy and led to financial backing from the Ente. Count Dino Lora Totino of Cervinia (1900–1980), who hailed from an old family of wool manufacturers in Biella, an essential wool processing district in Piedmont, was fittingly appointed as the Ente's first president. Rossini served again as the general manager, remaining in office until November 1970 and playing a key role in the trajectory of both the Ente and Italian fashion.

23 Silvia Mira, *SAMIA. Un abito per tutte le donne: salone mercato internazionale dell'abbigliamento di Torino 1955–1978* (Turin, 2016).

professionals outside Turin. Other Italian fashion centers contested its authority and intervention. Under Furio Cicogna's leadership until the end of the 1950s, the Ente largely remained inactive. Dario Morelli, the succeeding commissioner, was tasked with reorganizing the institution and drafting a new statute.²⁴

The Ente resumed the ENM's publishing activity much later with the periodical *Ricerca e diffusione*, published between 1970 and 1972. This publication reflected the association's focus on in-depth research in the clothing and fashion sectors and the dissemination of knowledge.

The Ente formed the crux of public support for fashion, which was viewed as a vital economic and cultural field for the country's prosperity. The Ente received public funds to rejuvenate its activities and coordinate efforts across various fashion industry businesses and organizations. The organization believed that fashion was a matter of public interest. Its return to its previous activity, amid a lively political debate over its role and public funding in the early 1960s, coincided with the emergence of the Camera, a new institution representing fashion professionals' private interests.²⁵

THE CAMERA The Rome-based Camera Sindacale della Moda Italiana (hereinafter CSMI) was the last of the associations established in the 1950s and was backed by Giorgini and various couturiers from the fashion collection in Florence. The list of founders included well-known fashion designers like Maria Antonelli; Roberto Capucci; Princess Giovanna Caracciolo Ginetti; Alberto Fabiani and his wife, Simonetta Colonna Di Cesarò; Giovanni Cesare Guidi; Germana Marucelli; Emilio Federico Schuberth; and Jole Veneziani. Giorgini took on the role of president.²⁶

24 Paris, *Oggetti cuciti*, 243–244; Decree of the Prime Minister June 1, 1954, in *GU*, 95, no. 137, June 18, 1954, 1894; Decree of the Prime Minister, 23 June 1955, in *GU*, XCVI, no. 158, 12 July 1955, 2519.

25 In 1961, the Italian parliament debated the role of the Ente. This debate was opened by Emanuela Savio. Camera dei Deputati, *Atti parlamentari*, 27 Oct. 1961, 25713–25714. Until the mid-1960s, the Turin local authorities and entrepreneurs were the main providers of financial support for the Ente.

26 “Atto costitutivo della Camera sindacale della moda italiana,” 11 June 1958, ASCNMI, Box 1–2; Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Camera sindacale della moda italiana, 29 Sept. 1962, ASCNMI Box 2–1. A transcription of the latter notarial deed was published in Merlo and Trivisano (eds.), *Lo stile italiano nelle carte*, 413–420.

Women's Wear Daily (hereinafter *WWD*) reported that the CSMI's delayed establishment and long period of inactivity were due to the government's efforts to prevent the creation in Rome of a "useless duplication" of the Ente. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Foreign Trade Ministry insisted that the Ente was "the only national recognized agency for fashions in this country" and suggested relocating its headquarters from Turin to Rome. As *WWD* reported, such a move "would end the feud between Rome and Florence as to the seasonal fashion shows for foreign buyers. While Florence admittedly is best for trade showings in January and July as has been the custom, observers have pointed out Rome might be best for promotional showings for domestic and foreign markets." The prospect of Turin's banks refusing to provide funds if the Ente's headquarters were relocated put a stop to the plan. The conflict was not new; in 1955, it was reported that "the Rome Chamber of Commerce . . . petitioned the Government to move the Ente Nazionale della Moda of Turin, the only state agency for fashion, textile, and apparel industries, to the capital. . . . The Turin authorities are naturally reacting in support of the 'status quo,' claiming that Rome has only a few dressmakers with an exclusive clientele, while the Turin apparel industry 'clothes the Italian people' and, therefore, is the naturally accredited center for a national fashion agency."²⁷

The Camera was established as a private association, whose members included fashion designers; textile, clothing, and accessories manufacturers; local authorities like the provincial Chambers of Commerce; and fashion centers such as those based in Rome, Florence, Naples, and Venice. The Camera and the CSMI had the same goal of coordinating various initiatives to promote Italian fashion. They explicitly recognized the need for close collaboration between political institutions and private organizations representing industrial, artisan, commercial, and professional employers for effectively managing mutual interests and challenges. In line with the Camera's statutory objectives, the *Regolamento per la qualificazione e la classificazione delle attività di moda italiana* emphasized the goal of "achieving a systematic organization and thereby

27 "Italy Government Weighs Fashion Agency Relocation," *WWD*, CIV (1962), 27; "Turin Apparel Trades Act to Hold Status as Italian Fashion Agency," *WWD*, XCI (1955), 74.

controlling the fashion sector's work activities." To this end, the *Regolamento* introduced trade registers for haute couture houses, fashion tailors, boutique fashion creators, garment manufacturers, furriers, fashion houses, and fashion accessory businesses and also stipulated the conditions that professionals had to meet to be included in these categories.²⁸

The Camera's statute was almost identical to the Chambre's original one. The strong similarities between the French and Italian institutions' statutes and rules, as well as their names, indicate that, at the beginning of the 1960s, the Chambre served as a model for organizing, coordinating, and regulating a wide variety of fashion-related activities, including training workers, marketing accessories and clothing, manufacturing, branding, advertising fashion, and showing it on catwalks.²⁹

Throughout the 1960s and beyond, the coordination of the fashion show schedule and the equally complex task of classifying and regulating the increasingly multifaceted world of fashion sparked controversies. In 1965, a nationally coordinated fashion show calendar was drawn up to prevent fashion in different Italian cities from overlapping.³⁰

The agreement lasted until 1967, when the Camera decided to separate the management of the Florentine fashion show calendar from the organization of the Roman fashion shows, thereby creating a unified calendar for both events. The new agreement distinguished high fashion from boutique and knitwear, allocated the respective fashion shows to Rome and Florence, and regulated admission requirements. The MITAM textile fair in Milan and the SAMIA ready-made clothing fair in Turin complemented the Italian fashion show lineup. Despite most of the fashion houses supporting the change, the Ente opposed it, which caused bewilderment among buyers and the foreign press. Eleonora

28 Statute, 1962, ASCNMI, Box 3. Transcriptions of the by-law and the *Regolamento per la qualificazione e la classificazione delle attività di moda italiana* were published in Merlo and Trivisano (eds.), *Lo stile italiano nelle carte*, 421–438.

29 Transcription of the French Chambre's statutes, ASCNMI, Box 1–1.

30 Minutes of the meeting of the high fashion houses that show their collections at the Palazzo Pitti, 22 Feb. 1964, ASCNMI, Box 16–5; Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors of the Centro Romano Alta Moda Italiana, 22 Mar. 1965, Box 17–1; Agreement between the Roman and the Florentine fashion centers, 1 Nov. 1965, Box 107–13.

Carter, editorial director of the British magazine *Woman*, was rather skeptical, writing to Rudi Crespi:

I have been slow in answering your letter because I felt that I should make a poll of those journalists whose opinions would be of use to you in deciding about the April/October showings in Florence. I did not consult either *Vogue* or *Harpers* who have their own offices in Rome. Yet, according to the *Queen*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, and the *Express*, the girls are fairly unanimous in doubting that anyone would be able to get to Italy four times a year. I am afraid I concur with this view. If they were forced to choose, they would probably sample the Pitti one season and the Rome couture the next.

Both the prospect of traveling to Italy several times a year and the inconvenience that Florence entailed discouraged foreign journalists. “Although we all appreciate the magnificent work that Giorgini did,” the letter concluded, “the fact is that Florence is a chore to get to.”³¹

Primary sources from the Camera’s archive reveal that the coordination of the fashion show calendar and classifying and regulating admission requirements remained central to Camera’s history. The coordination was chiefly about its internal relationships, and collaboration involved its interactions with the public and private actors, which have varying aims and roles and sought to capitalize on the successful outcomes of Giorgini’s 1951 initiative.

In 1964, the Camera reached an agreement regarding collaboration with Rhodiatocce, one of Italy’s largest producers of artificial fibers. The agreement included the granting of a non-returnable annual financial contribution of 50 million lire to the Camera. In return, the couture houses predominantly had to use fabrics made from Rhodiatocce fibers for their creations, with the company guaranteeing its fabrics’ novelty, originality, and high quality. In addition, Rhodiatocce also reserved the right to decide how the fabrics would be distributed among the summer and winter

31 Eleonora Carter to Rudi Crespi, 22 Sept. 1966, ASCNMI, Box 16-6; Press release, 2 Aug. 1968, ASCNMI, Box 16-6, in which the Florentine Centre for Fashion announced the election of Franco Tancredi as its president and the ratification of the revised agreement.

collections and which materials the various houses would use. Although the fashion houses retained ownership of their dress designs, Rhodiatoce could have them photographed for advertising purposes. Furthermore, all the photo captions had to include the name of the fabric used (rhodia, nylon, terital, and so on).³²

Before this arrangement, industry collaborations were typically between individual companies and designers. Now, with Rhodiatoce, the Camera represented private interests as a collective organization. Only the Camera was granted the rights described above. Therefore, only those fashion houses registered with the Camera would benefit from them. Further, the agreement prompted the fashion houses to make greater use of artificial fibers—the textile innovation of the century—and encouraged collaboration between textile industrialists using Rhodiatoce fibers and fashion houses when designing fabrics. In return, both the producer's name and the type of fabric would be advertised.

In 1969, the Camera found two new backers. The first was Snia Viscosa, another artificial fiber producer. This agreement replicated the one with Rhodiatoce, except for the designer's collaboration being extended to the fabric design stage and was renewed annually until 1973 and. The second backer was Lanerossi, a manufacturer of yarn, furnishing fabrics, carpets, blankets, outdoor clothing, and knitwear. After a restructuring in 1970, Lanerossi emerged as an industrial giant. Its plant had been rationalized, its machinery modernized, and it had been vertically integrated through the acquisition of Manifatture Meridionali and Il Fabbricone. Through its agreement with Lanerossi, the Camera aspired to become a nexus between the interests of private and public companies operating in artificial fibers, textiles, and ready-made clothing. The ambitious project of coupling fashion with both a public and a private company was carried out by the Camera, which intensively raised awareness

32 Agreement between the Camera and Rhodiatoce, ASCNMI, Box 103-1. For the agreement pertaining to the high fashion shows during the stipulated period, see ASCNMI, Box 103, 2-12. Advertising material, ASCNMI, Box 140-1. The agreement was discussed at the Camera's general assembly; Minutes, 18 Apr. 1964, ASCNMI, Box 41-4. For the contributions that Rhodiatoce made between 1964 and 1968, see ASCNMI, Box 102-6. For the list of the textile industries producing fabrics with the Rhodiatoce fibers involved in the agreement, see ASCNMI, Box 4-5.

of the issues preventing fashion from playing a major role in the Italian economy.³³

THE BALANCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE APPROACHES These agreements exemplify the Camera's collaborative efforts and highlight differing approaches to fashion. As the only nationally recognized fashion agency, the Ente viewed fashion as a matter of public interest. Conversely, the Camera approached it as a matter of private interest. In the late 1960s, the Ente focused on coordinating and studying "actions related to fashion and clothing." It reaffirmed its role as the representative of Italian fashion by launching Modaselezione in Turin in 1969, a trade show for high-end, ready-to-wear fashion that competed directly with the Florence show. The initiative was short-lived, and it ended in 1974 amid changing political and economic landscapes when it merged with the SAMIA.³⁴

In the mid-1970s, the balance between private and public approaches began to shift in favor of the latter. Most Western countries were entering a new phase in the relationship between the state and the economy. The state gradually redefined its economic function and role, leading to a decreased presence in the economy. In Italian fashion, this shift started in 1975, when the Camera began supporting its members at Milanovendemoda, a fashion show that the Association of Agents and Commercial Representatives in the clothing sector (hereinafter Assomoda) had promoted in Milan since 1969.³⁵

33 Agreement between the Camera and Lanerossi, ASCNMI, Box 101, 3-6 and 102-1; Agreement between the Camera and Snia Viscosa attached to the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors, 14 Mar. 1969, Box 55-2.

34 Decree of the President of the Italian Republic, 10 June 1966, in *GU*, CVII, no. 215, 30 Aug. 1966, 3. By 1966, the Ente began to receive valuable funding of 250 million lire from the state. See Camera dei deputati, *Atti Parlamentari*, 1 Dec. 1966, 433-436. For the Modaselezione event, see Paris, *Oggetti cuciti*, 475-480; Alberto Vigna, "Il Samia e Modaselezione sono fondamentali per l'industria dell'abbigliamento italiano," *Cronache economiche. Mensile della Camera di Commercio, Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura di Torino*, III (1973), 75-78.

35 Luciano Radi to Franco Tancredi, 18 Sept. 1975, ASCNMI, Box 16-6. The unilateral decision to help Camera's members present ready-to-wear, knitwear, and boutique high fashion collections in Milan resolved a controversy that had begun in 1971 with the Camera's Board of Directors' resolution to establish a new sector called ready-to-wear high fashion (*alta moda pronta*). The resolution led to a predictably indignant and worried reaction from the Florentine Centre for Italian Fashion. Its president, Franco Tancredi, sought clarity on "the intended change that establishing a sector of ready-to-wear *haute couture* creators would bring about, when such a sector already existed, although under a French name." The controversy dragged on despite repeated attempts to equip the Florence Centre to "reabsorb the Milanese secession that could quickly become dangerous and represented a moment of confusion on the Italian

A speedy process of profound change took hold. In 1978, the Ente was abolished. In 1979, the Camera and Assomoda began collaborating with Milan Fashion Week, which became the most important Italian fashion show. In 1985, fashion entrepreneur Loris Abate, founder of the Mila Schön fashion house, was elected the Camera's first non-political president, signaling a new era, and the Camera's headquarters were moved from Rome to Milan in 1989.³⁶

By the end of the 1970s then, the organization of the fashion agendas expanded from a national to an international level, excluding all national political involvement. In the late 1990s, this new direction culminated in a memorandum of understanding with the French Federation on coordinating the international fashion weeks' calendars.³⁷

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS Within the institutional theoretical framework, organizational forms are influenced and legitimized by institutional logics. Organizations often exhibit a dominant logic that shapes their identity and strategy by consolidating the organizations themselves. Research has also pointed to contexts where multiple logics coexist and conflict or where logics transform due to institutional changes, affecting the organizations' stability and legitimacy. The Italian and French cases illustrate both contexts.

The evolution of the Ente and the Camera highlights the intricate and challenging institutional context of Italian fashion.

fashion scene." Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors, 18 May 1971, ASCNMI, Box 57-4.

36 Law 641, 21 Oct. 1978, in *GU*, CXIX, no. 298, 24 Oct. 1978, 7634. The Ente continued to exist as a moral entity subject to private law, albeit formally. This status was reaffirmed by Law 476, 19 Nov. 1987, in *GU*, CXXXVIII, no. 275, 24 Nov. 1987, 3. Camera and Assomoda agreement on the coordination of the Milan ready-to-wear high fashion and Milanovendemoda fashion shows, 26 Jan. 1979, ASCNMI, Box 361-2; "Data Set for Milan Shows," *WWD*, CXXXVIII (1979), 2. The list of Abate's predecessors includes diplomats (Antonio Venturini, 1969–1972), members of parliament (Luciano Radi, 1972–1975; Carlo Molé, 1976–1980; Vittorio Barattieri, 1984–1985), and even controversial figures, like journalist, secret service informant, and member of the P2 secret lodge Giorgio Zicari (1980–1983). Succeeding Loris Abate as Camera president were fashion press publisher Giuseppe Della Schiava (1990–1998), textile entrepreneur Mario Boselli (1999–2014), and Carlo Capasa (2015–present), president and managing director of the fashion house Costume National.

37 Robert Murphy, "France, Italy to Fight Fakes, Coordinate Fashion Calendar," *WWD*, CLXXIX, 28 June 2000, 2.

It also reveals the significant extent to which the Italian and French institutions differed from each other, despite the temporal gap between them. The differences concern their nature, functions, roles, and institutional logics. In French fashion, two dominant logics at the organizational level followed one another: a corporatist logic until the early 1970s, followed by a market logic. By contrast, in the Italian case, multiple logics overlapped and contrasted at both the organizational and the societal level, reflecting various institutions and competing interests. It was only in the late 1980s that the dominant commercial logic emerged at the organizational level in Italy.

Understanding French fashion's framing and definition of its material practices, values, rules, and beliefs is easier. Fashion professionals created the *Chambre* as a trade and employer association to maintain and promote the emerging French couture business' activities. By 1911, the reformed *Chambre* began to represent specifically the Parisian cluster's interests, becoming the only agency regulating and preserving the high fashion field. As such, it also played a key role in establishing and legitimizing Paris' international fashion leadership. In the 1930s, public authorities' official recognition of the *Chambre* allowed it to expand its role and address effectively the impact of the financial crisis; it coordinated the fashion show calendar and formulated rules about buyers' access to protecting its members' intellectual copyright, assisting the workforce, and preserving craftsmanship and know-how by creating an apprenticeship school. After World War II, the *Chambre* lobbied the public authorities for financial and legislative aid to support haute couture's declining business. In keeping with its corporatist logic, it operated in its members' common interests until the 1960s. This logic provided the *Chambre*'s organizational actors with collective sense-making by balancing their creativity and exclusivity with market and business concerns.³⁸

38 The tension between art logic and market logic in the fashion field is central to sociological studies according to Bourdieu and Desaut, who argue that the field of fashion is "situated at an intermediary position between the artistic field and the economic field." Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Desaut, "Le couturier et sa griffe: Contribution à une théorie de la magie," *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, I (1975), 22. On the dynamics between the creativity and commercialization of French couture industry, see Pouillard, *Paris to New York*; *idem*, "Managing Fashion Creativity," 77, 87.

In the early 1970s, the French fashion system, including the haute couture and ready-to-wear sectors, became part of the French Federation, the *Chambre's* new umbrella organization. This shift symbolized a change of pace in the institutions' actions and role in the fashion field, whose initiatives and tasks were now aimed at modernizing and deinstitutionalizing French fashion, revising the rules and schedules, and promoting French fashion's culture and heritage by forging an even closer relationship with the government authorities, such as the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance. The *Chambre* and the French Federation adapted haute couture classification norms and opened the sector to ready-to-wear designers, providing clear evidence of their acceptance of a new market logic that facilitated the French fashion system's transition to a global dimension.³⁹

During the rise of Italian fashion, both of the main institutions sought to coordinate and support the fashion field by overseeing the plethora of local Italian fashion entities. Unlike French fashion, which was more unified, Italian fashion was characterized by multiple institutions and diverse institutional logics complicating their roles and impact. The *Ente*, which originated as a political and cultural project in the 1930s Fascist era, reemerged as a public agency from the ashes of the ENM in 1951. It retained both its original headquarters in Turin and its previous general director, Vladimiro Rossini. Despite its designation as a national institution, the *Ente* relied almost exclusively on financial support from Turin's local authorities and entrepreneurs. Therefore, it played a marginal role, mainly focusing on patronizing fashion fairs and engaging in publishing activities. The *Ente* displayed conflicting institutional logics. On the one hand, the state logic, rooted in an outdated and failed Fascist political project's cumbersome legacy, viewed the management of the emerging Italian fashion sector as a matter of public interest. On the other hand, the community logic of the Turin textile industry focused on private and local interests. Both of these logics were disconnected from the field's professional actors. The *Ente's* activities resumed in the late 1950s, coinciding with the emergence of the new, reliable private institution, the *Camera*. Nevertheless, the advent of the new institutional

39 On the process of deinstitutionalization of French fashion, see Zajtmann, "L'organisation professionnelle comme source de légitimité," 15.

landscape did not lead to significant changes to the Ente's policy or influence.

Following the example of the French *Chambre*, the *Camera* was established as a private trade association promoted directly by fashion professionals. Through closer collaboration with public institutions and several private organizations to regulate and organize the burgeoning sectors of Italian fashion, its creation aimed to resolve the impasse that the coexistence of multiple institutional logics had created. Despite the ambitious goals and tasks outlined in its 1962 statute, the *Camera's* main achievement during its first period was to coordinate a national calendar for fashion shows and synergize high fashion with the textile industry. Yet the *Camera's* attempts to collaborate with the Ente and public authorities to govern jointly and systematize Italian fashion failed to overcome the different perspectives, limiting the scope of its actions.

Until the late 1970s, the *Camera* dedicated itself to institutionalizing the Italian fashion field. By embracing an associative logic, it sought to identify and recognize various actors, organizations, and sectors to unite them under a single umbrella organization. The closure of the Ente and the redefinition of the state's role in the economy marked a new direction for the *Camera* by freeing it from all political influence. The *Camera's* transition to a new management policy and commercial institutional logic began with the election of its first non-political president and its new partnership with the association of commercial representatives of clothing sector to plan Milan Fashion Week. Following this new logic, the *Camera* focused on providing organizational support to initiatives, primarily the fashion shows, aimed at representing and developing the Italian fashion image and business at both the national and the international levels.

The 1970s marked a turning point for fashion and its institutions. The advent of market and commercial logics in France and Italy, respectively, highlighted a trade-off between the internal and external goals of the fashion institutions. The need to reinvent fashion to cope with growing international competition rendered the previous pursuit of a federative governance model in fashion increasingly anachronistic. The institutional outcomes of this transition reflected the different contexts and timings during which

French and Italian fashions first emerged on the international scene, as well as their institutional foundations. In France, private and public interests sought mutual benefits. In Italy, a broader antagonism between private and public interests limited institutional efforts, which, in line with commercial logic, was strictly concerned with managing fashion shows (in other words, capitalizing on the business aspects of the fashion side) rather than expanding its scope. Not surprisingly, the Camera has only recently started promoting professional fashion education. In addition, well-known fashion designers have not joined the institution, and private initiatives continue to oversee the promotion and protection of fashion heritage rather than exploiting them as distinct reputational assets collectively.

Our research shows how the institutional logics affected the development trajectories and cultural backgrounds of French and Italian fashions. Both countries eventually gained international acclaim, but the distinct cultural dimensions of their institutions led to different outcomes in establishing their fashion systems and business models. The dominant and straightforward French institutional logic facilitated a cohesive fashion system by nurturing, enhancing, and expanding the original attributes of haute couture along the value chain to a wide variety of goods. By contrast, the complex, multiple, and even conflicting Italian institutional logics did not effectively shape a unified fashion system or organize Italian fashion into precisely defined and well-structured categories.

Comparison with the highly institutionalized and centralized French fashion system sheds light on the Italian system's uniqueness and the link between institutional models and organizational structures. More generally, it reveals the role institutions play in shaping a sector's configuration, legitimation, and development. The intricate institutional evolution of Italian fashion and its inconsistent logic have negatively impacted the recognition, promotion, and sharing of the symbolic values and attributes of the Italian fashion system, undermining the effectiveness and competitiveness of its organizational structure in international markets.

