



## The European Commission



Centre pour le Développement durable et les Technologies Appropriées  
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Centro per lo sviluppo sostenibile e le tecnologie appropriate  
Centro para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável e as Tecnologias apropriadas

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## Poster abstract

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We are rapidly going towards a complete absurd situation: new technologies are ever frequently inhuman and not adapted for improving our life.

Innovation is their claim, yet it generally means less labour hands for people and more profit for businessmen,

Those are one of the reasons why our Centre pays special attention to the “old” technologies that in many fields of applied technologies and science seems to be the only response for a higher quality of life and well-being.

We have many examples of this concept: in the sectors of catering or food and drink even water!), architectural conservation and decoration, agriculture and breeding, sanitary engineering and pharmacology.

As far as architectural conservation is concerned, the revival of the ancient techniques is particularly urgent and very desirable.

“Scagliola” and “marmorino” techniques are especially requested for the decorative quality both for interiors and façades.

Venetian “marmorino” is the continuity of an empirical discovery of the ancient craftsmen (stuccoists and plasterers): its components are such that combined with the technical skills and competencies, it can provide an effective protection and durability of the layers, saving them from the aggressive humidity and saltiness.

Its porosity is ensured by the use of the so called “coccio pesto” (powdered bricks, shingles and other remains of terracotta).

“Scagliola” and stucco-marble have been in use since XVII century in Europe for interior decoration, especially in the catholic churches, monasteries and cathedral, according to the baroque style: the imitation of marble is amazing and sometimes better than the true marble.

The effects of this decorative art are so imaginative and fanciful that it is used also today, in many modern houses, manors and luxurious palaces.

Both techniques and crafts are exemplary of the concept we want to highlight and promote: the old technologies are still able to satisfy a specific demand also in the modern market, in spite of its innovations and trends.

The old technologies are not only a testimony of the past and the backward society or economy: they can be a unique, original and irreplaceable factor of beauty, splendor, quality of the decorations, as well as the necessary know how for the conservation of the ancient masterpieces in “marmorino and scagliola” we find profusely in all Europe, from the Residenz of Würzburg (in Germany) to the Stiftung Kirche of Pöllau (in Austria) to the Charterhouse of Padula (Italia).

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Therefore, the old technologies, also in many other sectors, can play a role also today, in the modern society and originate a specific and interesting market, with high added value.

Moreover, the old technologies must be preserved in many social and economic contexts in the developing countries.

The introduction of new techniques and innovative materials in many developing and poor countries, has paradoxical effects: the destruction of the local markets and the source of income of the local craftsmen, working in their local communities, and the necessity to import from abroad (especially from the developed countries) materials and technologies that are completely extraneous and unknown. These countries could willingly do without this “help”: local craftsmen and skilled workers remain jobless, the communities impoverish, and the traditional markets of materials and basic stuffs go towards a failure.

For example, in the building industry, seems incredible and counter-productive to insist with the use of the concrete and steel in the areas where those materials must be imported, the maintenance by local manpower is impossible: to long term, this policy destroys the building methods with local materials.

This attitude paves the way to the destruction and extinction of many old and traditional crafts, in spite of the fact that they are still the basis of many “survival economies”: no matter how simple they are and not so profitable as the modern, advanced industries and technologies, many forms of traditional and local economies are the unique daily problem solving, in the villages of Africa, in communities of Indios and other marginalized minorities, in peripheral spots of the great towns, in the “bidonvilles” of India, even in our town and nations, in Europe, in the United States, in Australia (e.g. the native Australian are one of the most resounding examples of the criticism we are exposing you with our poster: their “survival economy” is a true miracle of creativity and problem solving, much more than many our capacities of managing to survive).

Our Centre is there to promote and favour the continuity of those techniques and know how: if not for profitability, at least for educational purpose for us and our “advanced” society: if we will move back again to poverty, to critical conditions, to sudden and unexpected collapse of our economy, will we be able to re-discover the competencies for survival, to choose the right herbs, to be again good fishers or shepherds or stone masons or craftsmen able to use the lime for building or even to know where to obtain the “lime”, with which materials, through which techniques? How many people know exactly the processes for the production of lime?

During the war, many “citizens” and urban advanced technologists, professionals and arrogant middle-class members, re-discovered the precious existence of the despised countrymen, the “dirty” shepherds, the unappreciated craftsmen.

Ernst Bloch, called the greatest of modern utopian thinkers<sup>2</sup>, said that “in the case of a nuclear catastrophe, he would like to have only two persons beside me: a countryman and a craftsman”.

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<sup>2</sup> Author of the text: *Das Prinzip Hoffnung (The Principle of Hope, MIT Press, 1986)*.