

Marianna d'Ovidio

The creative city does not exist.  
Critical essays on the creative  
and cultural economy of cities

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## Introduction

In the film *Blade Runner*, taking place in a 2019 dark and raining Los Angeles, *replicants* (a sort of synthetic humans) have developed a kind of humanity, and they have to be “retired”. On the very first photograms, the city is shown in a bird’s eye view: Ridley Scott imagined it with chimney stacks, spitting fire, giant factories and dark clouds. Yet, it was a direct and respectful reference to the pessimistic future written by Philip K. Dick, the author of the novel which *Blade Runner* is based on (Dick, 1968).

Well, there will be very few chances to have such a city in Europe or in the North America within four years, not so much for flying vehicles or *replicants*, but because of colossal factories, producing plants and manufactures in the fictional urban landscape. In our cities, factories belong to the past; today, they host museums, expositions centres, co-working spaces and fab-labs, all places where production is centred on the immateriality of the content, rather than on the object itself. More than Rick Deckart, the *Blade Runner* in charge of retiring the last few *replicants*, the contemporary city is perfectly lived by Hubertus Bigend, owner and director of the *Ant* advertising and cool-hunting company of William Gibson’s novels *Pattern Recognition* (Gibson, 2003). He claims: “far more creativity today goes into the marketing of products than into the products themselves, athletic shoes or feature films”.

This book is not about *replicants*, flying vehicles, nor about cool-hunting techniques, it is about the transformation of our cities from places of material manufacture, to sites of immaterial production. This book is about the creative city. Which does not exist. Indeed, the creative city is a theoretical model, or an ideal type: a way to analyse the contemporary city, focusing on the immaterial component of its economy. Moreover, the creative city is a model of development for post-industrial cities, which need to revamp their economy and to keep growing. Finally, the creative city is also a brand used to sell the city (or, better, some portions of it), to tourists, foreign companies, investors and whoever wants to buy it in the international arena.

Urban sociologists, geographers, planners, economists and so on, use the concept of creative city to focus on the development of a segment of the urban economy that is, more than others, intertwined with the immaterial (cultural and creative) sphere of the society. In this sense, we can approach the creative city as an ideal type or a theoretical model in order to focus the exploration of the urban changes. Examples of such analyses are studies on how the urban economy transformed, or on how jobs and labour market changed vis-à-vis the

increasing importance of the immaterial value in the economy.

Cities faced a deep economic emergency starting from the 1970s, when global markets were hit by an unprecedented crisis. We will discuss it later on this book, by now it suffices to point out that many authors have recognized this as the end of a stable period that characterized the Western Countries since the World War II. The urban economy suffered the closure of many of the large factories and the loosing of large part of the local manufacturing activities. The rising of the service economy was not always able to replace all the employment that manufacture was able to provide. Therefore, the economy centred on immaterial value has represented a crucial and strategic industry where to invest in order to revamp the local economy and to pursue the urban growth: the “creative city” has become a strong paradigm of development, which many urban governments aim at.

Thirdly, the creative city is a label for promoting cities. As the international competition among cities increases, together with the crisis of the national governments and the subsequent devolution of responsibilities to local actors, cities have now to promote themselves and their image on the global arena. The “creative city” is therefore addressed as the model to build by many local actors. Who does not like the “creative city”? That means presenting the city as a place full of entertainment, beauty, museums and nice people. It means promoting it with cool bars and the newest restaurants, in order to attract international tourism, professionals and investments. Of course, this has important consequences on the urban budget, in urban policies and strategies, as well as over the life of the entire urban population.

In the book, we will deal with all these aspects and highlight critically the consequences of the creative city for the society as a whole.

The book collects a series of essays in order to account for the complexity of the creative city. The collection aims at offering to the reader a variegated assembly of analyses of its different aspects, rather than building a systematic yet narrow portrait of a very small portion of it.

Therefore, the reader can move from the global socio-economic transformation at the basis of the emergence of the creative city, to the fashion economy, one of its most iconic industries; from the public support to the creativity, to the experience of creative professionals (both native and foreigners) in Milan, to the development of the fashion industry in London. Each chapter is built in order to be autonomous and to allow the reader moving from one to another, not necessarily following the same order of the book; however, the suggested order is recommended for a reader interested in a deep overview of the creative city debate.

In detail, the first chapter of the book offers an accurate analysis of the transformation processes of the urban economy that brings to the advent of



the creative city, in all the meanings discussed just above. The second chapter presents an exemplary case of creative urban industry, the fashion industry: through an historical recognition, we will see how fashion became an industry and how it is linked to the urban economy. Chapter three focuses on how cities and their institutions support the cultural sector in different western societies. Case studies from Europe and North America will highlights both positive and negative elements.

Chapters four, five and six focus on empirical analyses of creative and cultural urban economy: the first two chapters offer a discussion on Milan cultural creative economy, while the last chapter looks at London.

In Milan, we will observe how professionals in the creative and cultural economy develop social relations, how do they make use of their social capital and which functions are performed by their social networks (chapter four).

Secondly, we will look at foreign workers in Milan and at reasons of their moving to the city, staying or leaving it (chapter five).

Finally, we move to London and the focus will be on the fashion industry where we will explore its relation with the urban environment, under different perspectives (chapter six).

### **Framing concepts**

Before entering in the discussion of the book, a clarification on two basic concepts, is utterly necessary. Indeed, when talking about the creative city both terms (creativity and city) have to be contextualised, situated and, if not defined, at least framed.

#### *Which city?*

If it is true that the globalization is a process that tends to uniform each places of the globe, it is also true that societies keep their distinctive characteristics. Whether Manchester and Beijing possess a certain number of similar characteristics, they belong to very different (historical, political, cultural, social) environments. Although this can be obvious, we would like to clarify that when we talk about city, we have in mind the middle or large city located either in North America or in Europe. This is not to say that the underneath general processes that we refer to, did not occur in other cities, nor that many of the mechanisms that we underline in the book are not valid elsewhere. Yet, the creative city rhetoric has gained a large success in large cities in Asia, in China in particular (Kong, 2014; Kong and O'Connor, 2009). However, in this book this clarification is needed in order to avoid misunderstanding or, more

severely, ethnocentrism: in the book very often, there is a general reference to “the contemporary city” or the urban space in very broad terms, but, is the European or North-American city we have in mind, and it is important to make it explicit.

### *Creative and cultural economy*

We mentioned already many times the fact that the focus of the book is on the segment of the economy that is particularly linked to the immaterial value and how this intertwines with city. It is now crucial to recognize at least the borders of such economy. In 2000 Scott wrote a seminal book titled *The cultural economy of cities*, where he traced the main features and challenges of the economy linked to immaterial value (Scott, 2000). More recently, he defines the new urban economy as cognitive-cultural economy, and stresses the relevance of core sectors such as technology-intensive manufacturing, services, cultural industries and neo-artisanal design or fashion-oriented forms of production.

He claims that “significant elements of the sphere of productive activity today thrive on scientific inputs, continuous innovation, product multiplicity and differentiation, the provision of customized services, symbolic elaboration, and so on” (Scott, 2008a, p. 64).

Scholars provided many definitions to identify either economic sectors or jobs, which are part of this segment of the urban economy (Florida, Scott, Howkins, Bovone and Pratt just to quote a few). In addition, institutions (European Commission, Unesco, Department of Media, Culture and Sports in the UK ...) have contributed to the debate. For instance, the Dept. of Media, Culture and Sports in the UK defines the Creative Industries as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”. A detailed list of sectors then follows (Advertising and marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design: product, graphic and fashion design film, TV, video, radio and photography; IT, software and computer services; Publishing; Museums, galleries and libraries; Music, performing and visual arts) with the relevant facts and figures (DCMS 2001). Yet, it estimates that the Creative Industries in 2013 contribute for the 5 percent of the UK economy in terms of Gross Value Added (DCMS 2015). Many other practical definitions have been developed, in order to measure the weight of the creative or cultural economy (in terms of GDP, GVA, employment and so on).

In general, the expression *cultural economy* can be used in three different meanings: as the culture of the economic world, the realm of the cultural

## INTRODUCTION

consumption, and the economy of the cultural production (Du Gay, 1997). In this book we will use it mostly in the second and third meanings; therefore, we will focus at the creative and cultural economy intended as a very hybrid set of activities comprising production and services in science and technology, design and fashion, art and culture. That segment of the economy is mainly based on creativity and knowledge, and produces, creates and offers goods and services with a highly symbolic, cultural and intellectual content.



# Chapter 1

## The creative and cultural economy in cities

Since the demise of Fordism, immaterial value has been recognized as a central element for economic growth in Western societies, which has brought about changes in the organization of work, (de-routinized production and relatively open-ended working practices) as well as in the leading urban economic sectors (Scott, 2008a). This focus on the immaterial value has brought a renewed interest on cities as spaces for economic growth (O'Connor, 2004): in the last twenty years we are witnesses of a long and intricate process that can be broadly sketched with the following pattern composed by three levels.

Firstly, the heavy production left cities. By 1960s products were standardized, production routinized and decomposed into simple operations performed by product-specific or dedicated machines operated by semi-skilled workers. In the early 1970s as international competition increased and world market fragmented, firms became more and more cautious of long-term investments in product-specific machinery, as the market often disappeared before the machinery's costs were recovered. The more unpredictable and unstable the market became, the more flexibility in production was required. Large plants were not able anymore to fulfil consumers' needs and to follow the countless market niches, and therefore a new model arose, that of flexible production in small, differentiated, dislocated firms (Sabel, 1994).

Secondly, a general change in the consumption behaviour opened, or widened, the market for cultural goods. People have been changing their consumption style looking for distinctive, symbolic, cultural goods. There has been an increasing aestheticization of contemporary daily life, which pushes consumers to look for symbolic and aesthetic goods (Lash and Urry, 1994). Tastes evolve towards a search of culture-based goods, and more available time is used to consume cultural goods, to enjoy cultural events, to go shopping or to travel.

Finally, and this is the third process, the production of particular goods did not leave cities, because it had always profited from the urban atmosphere (Hall, 1998): the creative industry, or cultural, as many authors refer to it, remained within the urban borders, enjoying the cultural feeling distinctive of cities. Indeed, the city has been always considered the preferred site for the production of culture. From the Renaissance to the avant-garde artistic movements, the urban experience has been massively important for art, and in general, cultural production. The city is connected with culture in at least three

facets. It is firstly a place where art is concentrated in buildings, art works and public spaces (e.g. Florence, Athens, Paris, Salzburg and so on). Secondly, people mostly consume culture in cities, and, finally, city is the place where diversities, migrants, artistic movements, museums, and in general cultural institutions, converge and come in contact (Featherstone, 1991).

As a major consequence of these transformations, we observe that culture and economy are more and more intertwined: culture is progressively commodified, while commodities take up more and more symbolic meanings. Art expositions, museums, as well as advertising industry, design-related activities, publishing and fashion are leading sectors in the urban economy, replacing, both symbolically and practically, the heavy industry of the Fordist period.

The increasing interest on cities as spaces of production and consumption has spawned considerable literature which tries to conceptualize the emergence of these new economic patterns in cities and metropolitan regions.

## **1 Post-Fordism**

The transformation of the society since the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, has been named post-Fordism by many authors who focused their attention on the changes in the economic system (both production and consumption) and in the society as a whole. Concisely, sociologists identified the new system as divergent from the previous one, named Fordism that was characterized by mass production of goods and services directed to a mass market. Changes in the production world have consequences in all sectors of society, in an intertwined way, from which is not possible to draw causal links. Obviously, analyses about post-Fordism touch many different aspects of the transformation of the society, of which we want here to highlight just a few.

In the early 1970s, thanks mostly to the increasing international competition and world market fragmentation, the market became more volatile, the demand more differentiated and consumers interest in products quickly decreased well before machinery's costs were recovered.

Inevitably affected by the globalization processes, by the internationalization of the market, by the growing of the international competition and the flexibilization of the demand for goods, many large-scale mass production firms started to suffer a crisis mostly because their machinery became old very soon. The differentiation of the demand is one of the key variables in the analysis of the post-Fordism (Kumar, 1995): while a Fordism organization of production was based on mass scale, cheap and standardized goods, in the new kind of organization, production tends to be more differentiated and on

a smaller scale. This novel pattern of production and consumption has been named flexible specialization (Piore and Sabel, 1984). Flexible specialization depends primarily on new information technologies, which allow for speedy changes of the output, eventually satisfying rapid changes in the demand side. Flexible technology therefore makes flexible specialization possible. The rise of flexible specialization and its diffusion is noted as responsible for the growth of a different organization of production: as large firms were less adaptable and more rigid to adjust themselves to the many little changes which the market requires, small firms were more suitable for the new flexible production.

Flexible demand required a more flexible production, therefore, in order to be competitive, firms experimented new flexible forms of organization, which allowed for rapid shift in output.

As a consequence, also the relation between the economy and the space has deeply changed. The main, visible effect was the emergence of industrial clusters in many regions of the world, while, at the same time, large, multinational firms restructured themselves in order to survive. It became clear that industrial clusters, composed by small, cooperating firms, were more able than big factories to afford the crises, and to afford the changes on the demand side (Bagnasco, 1977).

Moreover, new forms of cooperation were activated among industries. As large firms reorganize, they try to develop the same relations existing in industrial districts with their productive units. Different kinds of alliances between large and small firms, for instance, small units firm can cooperate together, or a district is built around a large firm, which has experts in marketing and finance working together with small firms for the production.

Such a transformation of production is particularly evident in industries that face pronounced volatility and product innovation in their niche market. Examples of these kind include electronics, designers clothing, craft products, and other light industrial consumer products. In organizational terms, the new market circumstances are said to require a radical transformation of the production system towards flexible intra-firm and inter-firm arrangements which can simultaneously combine the economies of scale, scope and versatility (Amin and Thrift, 2002, p. 572).

If these are the main visible transformation in the production side, there is no conclusive evidence of the demise of Fordist elements of mass production and consumption: indeed, Fordist and post-Fordist production co-exist in the same economy. If industrial districts and the rise of a more complex, more disintegrated economy are the most visible element taking into account by the literature dealing with post-Fordism, there are also evidences that the process is much more nuanced as it is sometimes delineated (Amin and Malmberg,

1992). Many large factories are able to revitalize themselves towards a more flexible demand, and a more flexible economy, without radical measures. Often it happens that large and small firms act together, no more as competitors, sometimes it happens that many small firms grow and develop around a large firm, which is not forced to dramatically restructure.

The attention towards the relation between economy and space brings us to look at the urban economy, which, for many reasons that will be tackled in the following pages, received a novel attention as the post-Fordist transition caused a reconsolidation of the traditional metropolitan areas and city-regions. As well as societies, cities transformed since mid-1970s when big production started to leave cities and many small firms dislocated to different places.

As we will see this had many consequences beyond the urban economy: from the reshaping of the urban labour market, to the transformation of the urban landscape itself, with factories' buildings abandoned. Many factories were closed and, especially those located within the inner-cities, represented an urban planning challenge. The strong and symbolic heritage that the large urban plants represented, avoided their destruction and for long time they remained unused and even cumbersome in the cities. "Heavy industry has left heavy buildings" and in many places much of the huge area has been adapted, rather than redesigned. "The gigantic skeletons, threaded by pipes, tracks, waterways and old railway lines, and the tough, subtly replanted landscape, are left to speak for themselves" (Darley, 2003, pp. 202–204).

The interpretation of this changes opened a wide debate between those who started talking about a process of de-industrialization, and others, as for instance Soja, who developed a deep analysis of the *industrial urbanism*, namely, the geographical impact of the industrial production on the contemporary urban landscape (Soja, 2000). In his view, conceptualising the meaning of post-Fordism (transformation towards a regime of flexible accumulation), allows to understand that we are not facing a post-industrial society. Indeed, manufacturing still matters, in the sense that there is a rise of vertical disintegration, formation of districts, industrial complexes, neo-industrial space, flexibility: it is important to study all these features, in order to understand the contemporary transformations. We can grasp the real socio-economic transformation of the Post-Fordist society, only including the city into a wider regional analysis.

The effects of Post-Fordism are also reflected in politics and social relations. There is no space here to debate about the whole political economy of the contemporary society. To highlight the most important issues, we have to mention the decline of national class-based political parties; the rise of social movements and network based on single-issue politics; the decline of mass



union; the slow transformation of local government from welfare dispensaries to job-creation agencies; the modification of the trade unions towards a cooperation in the industrial reorganization.

Changes in culture and ideology are as strong as those in the economy: the rise of individualist behaviour, the growth of an entrepreneurialist culture, fragmentation of values and lifestyles, and so forth. Among all, Sennett (1998) analyses the individual aspect and consequences of contemporary attitude towards work within the wider transformation of the economy and labour market.

## **2 Mass consumption**

The mass consumption of cultural goods, as well as the importance of the symbolic value of certain goods is of course not a completely new phenomenon.

Film, newspapers, radiobroadcasts and designed clothes are all products imbued by a cultural meaning whose mass consumption has been developing since the last centuries: a large portion of the cultural consumptions has arisen thanks to the mass industrialization in the twentieth century, some others before. Without adventuring too much in the past, looking at the historical development of some of the cultural expressions of societies, and focusing in particular on the industrialization of culture, allows us to identify the main features of the cultural products today.

The historical analysis is organized keeping into account three elements, both from the production and the consumption side, which have contributed to the cultural economy to grow: the development of technologies, free time and available money, the search for symbols in consumption.

Firstly, by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the industrial revolution took place and it was a critical element for the development of mass consumption of culture, but it was also important for the moving of mass of population from the countryside to an urbanized environment, concentrating people in cities. Culture, in order to be consumed, needs free time and money. When discretionary time and disposable income were available, mass consumption of culture was possible: in the period after the Second World War, the economic boom, but also the new lifestyles, were the main engines for the consumption of culture to expand. Finally, the rise of cultural movements, with highly revolutionary contents, changed deeply the way in which consume was performed. In the 1960s, new models of consuming arose.

## 2.1 *Origin and rising of mass-consumption*

### *The industrial revolution*

The cultural industries started their developing process at the end of the nineteenth century when the industrialization reached its maturity. Technologies allowed reproducing cultural goods; the growth of big industries brought a flow of new inhabitants in cities; the number of illiterate people decreased markedly. All were decisive aspects that let the cultural economy rise at the beginning of the twentieth century. The fact that a cultural object is reproducible is indeed one of the main evidence for the cultural economy to exist, but masses of people willing to consume it are also needed. The industrialization of the press in Italy is a good example: it expanded at the end of the nineteenth century, when the number of literate people intensified. When cities started to grow, more people reached the places where culture was available; at the same time industrial capital collaborated with cultural producers and industrial processes started to be developed (Forgacs, 1990).

In this period, the industrialization of the press took place in all the industrialized countries, facing rather similar patterns. The industrialization of book publishing was a little bit more differentiated among countries, for instance in Italy was slower than in many other places. Nonetheless, around the end of the nineteenth century in all the industrial countries, thanks to urbanization and increasing literacy, publishers and booksellers developed a more commercial-minded approach to authors and market (Forgacs, 1990). The kind of literature, so called light literature, associated to “reading for pleasure”, developed in that period, mostly due to an increasing demand.

If the industrialization process of publishing happened between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, theatre and, in general, performance had a modern organization (with actors, companies, managers...) even before, while street performances kept a pre-industrial configuration along the whole century. The presence of a vast potential audience in cities at the beginning of the nineteenth century, gave the theatre a big incentive towards modernization, both in the organization and in the performance. Electric light on stage was one of the main changes, but also a more industrial attitude developed from the beginning of the century, when stable theatres replaced the itinerant ones. This is a good example of how changes in economy, such as industrialization, influenced urbanization (people move into the cities) and culture (theatres settled down inside cities because there is an audience)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Theatre in England is also a good example showing the links between cultural industries and local or national cultural politics: In England theatre has always been an institution and drama has

The best-known cultural industry that arose in the turn of the century was the cinema. At the beginning of the century, small shots were performed in every country, and in few years, cinemas opened in most cities. In spite of its success, however, European film industry was not supported by adequate finance and, therefore, has been unable to compete with the Hollywood production<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, film productions grew up in several regions of Europe, although at the beginning they were able to satisfy only small market niches.

The cinema is one of the best examples of a cultural product that has enormous production costs and, compared to it, incredibly low re-production costs. It is one of the cultural industries of the ninetieth century developing fastest thanks to the technological progresses. European film industry, yet under-developed compared to the Hollywood one, was weakened even more by the American protectionist measures and further because of the First World War. In Italy, for instance, most of the firms related to cinema collapsed after or during the war. In addition, the radio was invented in this period and during the 1920s radio broadcasts developed fast, but the wars and the interwar period hit badly the cultural system and the progress was interrupted.

With the First World War, the very first period of industrialization of culture comes to an end<sup>3</sup>.

*After the Second World War: free time, available income*

Social and political transformations can have dramatic impacts on the cultural economy, as happened in the 1950s. Actually, in the post-war period and in the following years, the deep social transformations, together with the economic developments, affected tremendously both the consumption and production of culture; at the same time, the cultural industry, in a double way process, had big impact on society and lifestyle.

The very constituency of mass-consumption takes place during the 1950s: people after war wanted to have fun, wanted to consume and began to have a growing disposable income and discretionary time. It was not only changes

---

been a popular spare-time activity. However, the moral and political content of theatre plays was strictly controlled by the government and only in the 1843 the Theatre Regulation Act allowed small theatres to offer a wide variety of drama; this encouraged many writers to produce an increasingly number of pieces and also boosted the number of audience in theatres. This, in turn, influenced the government, which around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century financed the building of most of the biggest theatres in London (Christopher, 1999).

2 In the third chapter, public support to French cinema will be examined, together with other examples of cultural and creative industries.

3 The high potential of cultural industries in proposing interpretation of reality was soon understood by governments, during the inter-war period. Governments discovered propaganda, and repression and censure were largely used.

in lifestyle, but the real revolution was in the transformations of the cultural forms and consumption models through which new lifestyles were expressed (Forgacs, 1990, p. 191).

The process of migration from rural areas to the cities, happening at the beginning of the industrialization era, had direct and indirect consequences on the urban cultural economy. Indeed, an increasing number of people were exposed to cultural goods, and started to demand them; moreover, education levels in general raised and the compulsory primary school provided everyone a minimum educational level so that everybody was able to write and read. Finally, increasing wealth and more available income, allow people spending and consuming more.

Not only populations moved from countryside to cities, there were also big national and international migrations. Migrants from other regions of the same country (for instance migration from the South to the North in Italy), and from other countries (from West India towards the UK or from North Africa towards France) brought in cities different cultural heritage, contributing to the diversification of the cultural production. Political movements also affected the cultural consumptions, as for instance the feminist movement: as during the war many women were working, they have developed an image of themselves as independent women. Some of them after the war period exited from the labour market, but many others wanted to keep their jobs. Thus, women started to have an independent life, to have their own budget and became active subjects in the consuming society (Leach, 1984; McCracken, 1986).

While radio and cinema had a very strong impact in the mass cultural consumption in the previous years, and still were extremely important media, in these years the invention of the television was the most important technological achievement, with revolutionary change in the cultural consumption, at least for the quantity of people involved. In few years, television became an institution, its stars and programmes were familiar to a growing audience. In many countries (for instance in Italy) the mass consumption of television broadcasts was not affected by the possession of the television itself because of the largely diffused practice of watching it in bars, public spaces, friend's houses (Monteleone, 1999).

“Consumerism” became therefore a mass behaviour during this period, as electronic goods, such as radio, television, record players and so on became very cheap and available; by the end of 1950s most households had almost one of these. Cultural goods were created more and more for mass audience, in the form of television and radio programmes, popular music, and films. The sale of popular novels, women magazines, newspapers and comics, increased

tremendously mainly thanks to the larger demand for entertainment<sup>4</sup>. The technological progresses made re-production even cheaper than before, and the cost of cultural products decreased. At the end of 1950 the consumer society had become firmly established (Christopher, 1999).

*Mass-consumption in the making: The 1960s and the 1970s*

1950s and 1960s are two decades characterized by a general atmosphere of economic boom, demographic growth and at the same time the rising of countercultures. Large social movements asking for social equality, from students and workers had, among others, the effect of opening universities to a growing number of people. These years were also witnessing the advent of many art and cultural movements, such as pop-art, conceptual art, Dadaism, which aimed, explicitly or not, at contesting the traditional art system.

Mass consumption, that has been developing during the 1950s, had its explosion in the following decade: there was an increasing freedom and choice in consuming, and the act itself of consuming became more and more a way to distinguish oneself from the others. At the same time “uniforms” such as music, language and style of behaviour were adopted as badges of belonging (Breward, 2004). In the 1960s, the act itself of consuming eventually became a mass behaviour: for workers, migrants, young people, women it represented also a mean to become part of the majority, yet remaining different.

The act of choosing what kind of object to consume is a way to distinguish ourselves from the others

*[...] provides the small number of distinctive features which, functioning as a system of differences, differential deviations, allow the most fundamental social differences to be expressed almost as completely as through the most complex and refined expressive systems available in the legitimate arts; and it can be seen that the total field of these fields offers well-nigh inexhaustible possibilities for the pursuit of distinction (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 223), [original edition 1979]*

Those are also the years when designed fashion arose as a social phenomenon and, together with pop music, represented a different and especially accessible culture; a popular culture easily affordable for the increasing number of young people with money to spend. Radio became smaller and cheaper with the introduction of the transistor radio by Sony in 1955 and soon every house owned a radio: music became affordable to everyone, not only to adult or rich

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<sup>4</sup> In Italy, in 5 years, from 1950 to 1955, the sale of comics in general doubled and shifted from 2 millions to 4 millions, and the same happened up to the end of the decade (from 4 to 8 millions comics sold in one year) (Forgacs, 1990, p. 192).

people. The number of listeners soon grew. The pop music also grew because the electronic instruments became more and more available and more people tried to make music. Clothes and accessories, as we will see in the next chapter, represented the quintessential of novelty, and fashion production start to become an industrial segment of very relevant dimension.

## 2.2 *The commodification of culture*

The analysis of the contemporary creative and cultural economy cannot leave aside an analysis of the cultural production (Harvey, 1990), in particular when urban policies are addressed. Studying consumption behaviour remains an important and a valid tool to understand the ongoing transformations, but the tight connections between production and consumption worlds make the analysis of the former as important as the latter.

Moreover, there are indeed countless and increasing occasions when cultural producers and consumers are in contact. People working in the radio, television, advertisement, universities, publishing, and so on, consume cultural goods themselves, not only do they create culture for both large-mass audience, and elite one. The fashion industry, which will be deeply explored in the following chapter, represents a very clear example of this: fashion designers are constantly looking for inspiration from street styles, where they can find styles and dresses made by fashion consumers. Street's inspiration is very important, so that most of the fashion houses have a budget for this kind of research (Kawamura, 2006; Polhemus, 2010). Now, scholars talk about the rise of *prosumer capitalism* (a term that mixes producer and consumer), to point out that production and consumption are two intertwined spheres of the economy. More, with the recent expansion of user-generated content online, *prosumption* is increasingly central (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010) in the contemporary economy.

With or without the contribution of consumers, cultural industries represent a very important segment of the society, not only from an economic point of view. They are also, and especially, involved in the making and circulation of *texts*, which have an influence in our understanding of the world: they provide either a representation of the world itself and an explanation of what happens around us (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Early in 1947, the term *culture industry* was used, in a negative meaning, to criticize the fact that the culture, which indeed was recognized as creates world representations, were subjected to economic law. Adorno and Horkheimer claimed that, as a series of commoditized cultural objects were massively sold and consumed, art was going to lose its unique value as a powerful instrument to criticize the society (Horkheimer and Adorno,

1947). Yet, art transformed in something to make money with. They criticized the entire structure where art degenerated in commerce and a new system of artistic products was created *for* the masses and no more *by* them (Adorno, 1975). They saw a continuous fraud performed by the capitalist system through the culture industry towards the consumers. “Industry” and “culture” were, in their opinion, two concepts unable to stay together and the denomination itself of “cultural industry” was used as a provocation and a critique (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Using the example of music, Adorno had sharply criticized the process of the commodification of art. “Seen from the social perspective, the present practice of music, production and consumption, can be drastically divided into that which has no trouble recognising its commodity character and, dispensing with any dialectical intervention, is oriented on market requirements, and that which as a matter of principle does not orient itself on the market” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947). The *real* function of culture, such as to act as a critique of the system, vanished once art became commoditized. The culture industry represents the failure of culture and its degeneration in commerce. To place a monetary value on a cultural act was to destroy its critical impact and to rob it of all traces of authentic experience (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947).

Nevertheless, this idea has been rejected already at the end of the 1960s, with the emergence of social movements (the peace movement, women’s movement, environmental movement and the youth movement) when the levels of cultural criticism and, to some extent, of cultural policy also changed. These social movements also understood themselves as cultural movements and it became clearer that culture, society and the economy were becoming more interrelated to each other (Bianchini, 1993). Culture has been increasingly seen as a potential for positive change, at least the one embedded in social movements<sup>5</sup> (Wittel, 2004). The term Culture Industry was extremely used with a positive meaning by activist, policy makers and sociologists, and it finally changed into “cultural industries”, suggesting all the different kind of cultural productions.

Others claim that the growing role of mass-consumption has had both positive and negative effects (Harvey, 1990). Cultural producers have learned how to use and explore new technologies, media, especially new media and multimedia potentialities in order to highlight an “evident quality of the postmodern age, the growing emphasis, and maybe a celebration, of the vain characteristics of the contemporary life” (Harvey, 1990, p. 82). We will come back to the critiques to the cultural economy and to activism of the cultural producers later in this book, by now it is important emphasising that what used to be called “high culture”, has been moving forward the popular culture all

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<sup>5</sup> See also chapter 3

along the twentieth century and still the process is going on now. This coming closer is not completely new, even if in the past all the attempts were always considered revolutionary (for instance the Dada-movement). What happens today is remarkable and new in the sense that popular culture and cultural production are increasingly nearby, thanks to the new available technologies, and this has happened without any strong revolutionary or avant-garde claim.

### **3 Creating the creative city**

In the introduction of this book, we presented the creative city as not a real entity, but as a concept, that is articulated around three main spheres. Here we go deeply into the creative city as a theoretical model that scholars apply when address the contemporary city, as a paradigm for the local (mainly urban) development, and, finally, as a label used to promote the city.

#### *3.1 Creative city as a theoretical model*

Culture and economy are becoming increasingly intertwined one with another and therefore culture is becoming an economic business with relevant dimensions: cultural production holds a central position in the economy as many economic sectors are founded on original creativity, and intellectual faculties such as publishing, advertising, fashion or design, and they are now leading sectors of the economy.

It becomes clear that there is an increasing concentration of cultural producers in cities (Du Gay, 1997; Scott, 2000; Zukin, 2000); indeed, the city has always been the privileged site for culture, and this is nothing new: what is new is the massive production of culture-based and symbolic goods, which shape neighbourhoods or even the whole city.

As already mentioned, creative and cultural economy is understood as the segment of the economy that is mainly based on creativity, and cognitive faculties of workers, who design, imagine, think, produce, create goods and services imbued by highly intellectual, symbolic and cultural contents. Advertising, architecture and design, fashion, film and video, music, the performing arts, publishing, television and radio are all part of the cultural economy, but also activities, such as tourism, hospitality, museums and galleries, heritage and sport can be recognized as being in economic relationship with cultural economy and being part of it. Each of these activities is addressed as a key element in today's urban economy. Cities grow and compete more and more thanks to the cultural economy that is produced, offered and consumed in them.



Many authors have regarded the city as the cradle of culture, creativity and innovation. Some scholars, though, not only acknowledge the fact that cultural production and innovation occur in cities, but focus on the reasons why it happens in cities and on elements that foster production and reproduction of “ideas” in cities.

The city is a cultural product itself and it embodies the culture that from time to time produces it (Mumford, 1938); more, the experience of the built environment represents a fundamental element in the formation of new cultural feelings:

*The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language, then we ought to pay close attention to what is being said, particularly since we typically absorb such messages in the midst of all the manifold distractions of urban life (Harvey, 1990, p. 90)*

Harvey (*ibid.*) shows, through a large range of examples, the transition to a pre-modern city from a modern and postmodern ones<sup>6</sup>, and how the built city mirrors the culture through its countless socio-spatial transformations: increasing processes of segregation, redevelopment projects for old neighbourhoods, gentrification, the urban tourism and so on. The physical transformation of cities can thus reveal the culture that produced it: the culture of a place spreads out from shop signs, people hanging out in the streets, cars or bicycles, as well as buildings shapes or social morphology.

Yet, links between city and culture are much complex that those existing between the physical and the symbolic urban environments.

Simmel (1903) offered an analysis on the modern metropolis that on the one side represents the modern society, on the other it is considered the fulcrum of the cultural production because place of continuous stimuli and heterogeneity. The city, moreover, incorporates and magnifies all the cultural traits of the contemporary society, and, in particular, the new logic of *commodification* of every element of life, where money become the medium through which society and social life are translated: therefore, in the city, there is a continuous tension towards the materialization and commodification of everything, not excluding art and culture.

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6 The term “postmodernism” was firstly coined in the architecture field. “*Postmodernism* as a term first entered the popular consciousness through architecture in 1979 when Philip Johnson put a Chippendale top on a skyscraper, offering a visible example of the thesis of Venturi set out in his aptly *Learning from Las Vegas*. Venturi called for a return to the vernacular forms, historical references and pop imagery that modernist architecture had banished from buildings. Johnson’s Chippendale top was ironic and self-deflating, putting a cosy domestic gloss on a form of architecture that had grown remote and authoritarian” (Heartney, 2001, p. 11)

Nevertheless, if the metropolis of the beginning of the twentieth century portrays the modern society, similarly, the contemporary urban landscape interprets the postmodern culture better than any other human artefact (Featherstone, 1991) The *museum* is its quintessential place:

*contemporary museums [...] should cease to be dull places for education; rather they should incorporate the features of postmodernism and become “amazing spaces” which present spectacular imagery and simulation (Featherstone, 1991, p. 100).*

In addition, the conventional and the exceptional, the different, the other, the strange and the vulgar not only are no more excluded in the postmodern city, but they are also encouraged to coexist and hybridize, thus contributing to a more elaborated definition of the criteria of aesthetic and cultural tastes of postmodernity. The modern and the postmodern city, in the eyes of Simmel and Featherstone, respectively, are conceived as a space where different cultures meet, collide, intersect.

The city represents a particularly fertile terrain for the production of knowledge, ideas, aesthetics, styles, art and design, innovation, science and culture in general because of the merging and mixing of individuals, people, events, organizations and so on.

In 1938 Wirth described the city as “a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of heterogeneous individuals”, giving one of the most efficient descriptions of cities ever (Wirth, 1938, p. 8). Although this definition could not fit all the contemporary urban settlements<sup>7</sup>, it’s still very pointed, in particular when common traits of the urban are investigated. Almost twenty years after Wirth analysis, Jacobs, and later Sennett expressed the cities capacity of concentrating a large number of diverse people: exactly because they act altogether and they interact with other urban elements, they have the ability to create and innovate (Jacobs, 1961; Sennett, 1990; Vicari Haddock, 2011) Also within the realm of the territorial economics cities are accounted as having an added value because of the concentration of diversity; so for instance Camagni wrote: “the success of the city lies in a series of advantages that the density of infrastructures and the proximity of differentiated activities and people generates almost automatically” (2011, p. 184).

Today the same concept is described with two words: city-buzz, that summarize the urban feelings, the hype, the vibrant environment that seems to

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<sup>7</sup> Wirth definition has been criticized recently, because it is not able to give account of the multitude of different configurations of the urban phenomenon and in particular of the urban spread (Vicari Haddock, 2013)

be often implied when talking about the urban and that is addressed as a key advantage of the city today (Arribas-Bel et al., 2015; Storper and Venables, 2004). In cities like London, New York, San Paolo or Bangkok the whole word concentrates in a bunch of streets where rich and poor people, extravagant and traditional styles, legal and illegal activities, sounds and musics, smells and colours all merge and overlap one on to another.

The emphasis on the city as a place of excitement and effervescence is not new to urban studies, already Simmel (1903) pointed to the cultural metropolis as the place of cultural hypertrophy, as to claim that the cultural production was particularly based on cities. The production of academic texts proliferates around the issue of city and creativity, urban space and innovation, spatiality of culture and significance of the city for knowledge production, reproduction, innovation and creativity (Shearmur, 2012). At the same time, another vast literature apparently goes in the opposite direction, claiming that the economy is becoming increasingly detached or independent by the space because of the emerging globalization. Yet, both interpretations are true, as they observe different kind of economies. We saw before that, in the so-called Post-Fordism, there is, indeed, a de-urbanization of big industrial plants and that in general the mass production of goods left the cities. We also see a parallel and opposite process of re-urbanization of the segment of the economy that is named the cultural economy.

One of the main outcome of the analysis of the spatial implication of globalization is that disintegration needs concentration: the more we observe territorial dispersion of standardized production activities (disintegration), the more we see concentration of managerial, control, project or design ones (Kumar, 1995; Sabel, 1994; Sassen, 2000 among many others).

Lash and Urry talked about *Economies of signs and space* to point to both a progressive aestheticization of goods on the (global) market and a strong tie with places (Lash and Urry, 1994). As we saw, through the long process of the making of a consumer society in the twentieth century, most of consumed goods are imbued by symbols and an aesthetic value, which increases both goods' value and their attractiveness and desirability. This is what makes Lash and Urry talking about an economy of signs. But, where are these signs produced? Lash and Urry clearly recognized that, although signs are consumed all over the world (because of the globalization of the market), most of them are produced in particular places, where they also gain their symbolic value. For example, leather bags are famously produced in Tuscany, Italy; while country music is coming mainly from Tennessee, USA. Moreover, the relation between production (design, organization, research and developing... ) of goods and space is particularly strong in cities: they become the place where organization

and managing of global activities concentrate (Sassen, 2000), but also the foci of knowledge and aesthetic designing of the new economy (Amin and Thrift, 2002; Lash and Urry, 1994; Scott, 2008a).

Cultural industries constitute the core of the post-Fordist economy and they differentiate from the past one based on standardization and mass market. The effects of such transformation are clearly visible on socio-spatial conditions of cities that, being in the past the preferred place of the mass-production plants, are now the fulcrum of the immaterial production.

Indeed, knowledge creation requires “a (re)combination of pieces of knowledge” and “interactive knowledge generation through collaboration of creative workers is of key importance in the innovation process” (Krätke 2012, p. 13). This means that the post-Fordist economy is based on the interaction of people involved in creation, design and managing. Knowledge and creative economy is thus based on proximity, knowledge sharing, creativity participation and so on, all vital sources of competitiveness (Molotch, 2003, 2002; Pratt, 2013a; Scott, 2005). We will explore deeply the links between city, proximity and cultural production in the fourth chapter of the book, when the role of proximity and face-to-face interaction among workers in the creative and cultural economy in Milan, Italy, will be the examined topic.

### *3.2 Creative city as a paradigm for local development*

With the decline and failure of manufacturing-based industries as the traditional engine of urban economic and social development, efforts to revamp city economies have focused on feeding the new creative economy in the hope it might become the engine of renewed urban growth. Each city attempts to find its own distinctive path of development, investing in a particular combination of local industries, in order to foster economic growth and to attract visitors and inhabitants wishing to enjoy the buzz and the beauty of urban life. For all cities, the crucial factor has become the spark of new ideas, in whatever field they may find application. Indeed, creativity seems to have become the ultimate asset of every city in the construction of what makes a city special, or, preferably, more special than other cities. The “creative city” has become popular among politicians, who use it to highlight the cultural assets of their cities and thus to enhance the city’s image in the context of international competition and to identify effective ways to promote creativity as a means to foster the development of cultural industries. Creativity and the making of the creative city have generated a great deal of interest, policy debate and action, particularly in the last decade. Although culture has always been a key issue in the urban politics, from the 2000s its relevance in the public discourse had

significantly grown.

Increasingly within the realm of urban policies, the term culture has been overlapping or accompanying with creativity, innovation and knowledge, to address to the immaterial and idea-based sphere of the urban economy. Many urban development programmes have been centred on strategies supporting cultural cluster, creative neighbourhoods or districts, assuming the co-location or concentration of such productive activities or institutions benefits urban economy and society, inducing per se regeneration and revitalization effects. Therefore, policies for culture, creativity and innovation have been largely proposed and implemented, mainly thanks to the idea that these elements are positive per se, without questioning means and details of such policies.

Within this frame, culture became “a must” of the urban politics (Rossi and Vanolo, 2011) with the subsequent proliferation of researches, theories and recipes on how to support culture and creativity of the urban growth. Among all, Florida’s theories gained much success. According to his perspective, the contemporary, post-Fordist economy is moved by a new class of entrepreneurs, that, literally, are able to create jobs and to revamp the local economy. This class, called the creative class, is a very heterogeneous group of highly educated professionals that, as self-employees or entrepreneurs, do not look for jobs, but create their own businesses and eventually offer jobs when they expand. Examples of professionals of the creative class are architects opening their studios, fashion designers establishing their own label, art dealers and start uppers in general (Florida, 2002). Such class is supposed to show coherent and common behaviours, as they are said to be highly mobile and looking for a good environment where to settle and to establish their economic activities. Good environment for them means cities where they could find people like them; where there is a satisfactory provision in terms of art, entertainment, culture, sport and in general an adequate quality of life; where they can easily start economic activities and so on. Florida does not only recognize the emergence of such new urban class (supported also by statistics and facts), but also provides a number of policies suggestions in order for cities to succeed in the contemporary economy. In his opinion, cities should promote their urban economy by attracting the so-called creative class. In order to do so, they should provide the needed environment, such as infrastructure for the economy to rise, but especially a pleasant, enjoyable cultural atmosphere where *creatives* can feed their culture and enjoy. In order to provide a more appealing theory, Florida named it as the “three Ts” theory. A city, in his view, should provide Technology (the right provision of infrastructure for the creative economy), Talent (in the sense that creative class is much more willing to settle where already other creative people are) and Tolerance (meaning an

open environment to art and culture and encouraging the acceptance of non-conformity).

Florida acts as a scholar, contributing to the academic debate on city and urban growth, and as a consultant, engaging with policy makers in many cities, mainly in North America and Europe. His theory gained a very large success and it has been implemented in many contexts, with much contested results. Indeed, Florida built his theory in order to have a very comprehensive one; yet, it does not allow to define clearly any of the key concepts and, therefore, proposing a “good-for-all” recipe, has been welcomed by the urban governments as the response to the urban crisis at the turn of the century. Put it extremely simply, the theory exhorts to implement a set of measures of beautification and amelioration of the urban quality of life as a tool for the international competition of city. Who could disagree with having a more beautiful city and yet a more competitive one? The “three Ts” theory, in line with the rising neo-liberal thought, has been largely implemented aimed at the quality of life of the urban middle class and in an urban renewal gentrifying many neighbourhoods (Pratt, 2011).

Yet, the creative class theory is coherent with the vision of the role of western cities in the global economy that was highly growth-centred (Harvey, 1989) and suggested to lever culture-led urban development processes (Ponzini and Rossi, 2010) and fits perfectly with the entrepreneurial approach of contemporary urban politics. Within the academic world, Florida’s theories have been strongly criticised on several grounds. On the socio-economic consequences of the “creative class” theory, many authors claim that Florida’s approach does not keep into enough account the social effect of an urban policy supporting the creative class (which is easily equalized to the urban middle class) and the cultural economy (see, for instance, Krätke, 2012).

Numerous criticisms have been raised also on the concept itself of the creative class and its theoretical foundations. Markusen demonstrated that the concept of creative class is too confuse, it needs too many variables to be accounted, some of them not even measurable (Markusen, 2006). Scott and Peck showed that the rise of the creative economy, as measured by Florida, not necessarily brings to a real urban growth (Peck, 2005; Scott, 2006). Pratt (2008) criticizes Florida’s approach as too much emphasis is put on the *consumption* side, and on politics needed to support it, rather than on the *production* of culture and the needed institutional support. A stream of very relevant claims against Florida’s “creative class” theory explores empirically the very core of the theory, such as the pattern of mobility of professionals in the creative, cultural or knowledge-based industry. Many scholars (Alfken et al., 2014; Borén and Young, 2013; Krätke, 2012; Lawton et al., 2010; Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Storper,

2013; Storper and Scott, 2009) test with empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative, the hypotheses on the residential choice of the so-called creative class. Most of the researches were not able to show a direct relation between the social and cultural quality of the environment and the presence of such group of professionals. Yet, amenities represent an important element in the location of professionals, but other elements (presence of job, the quality of work, infrastructure...) seem to be more important. The fifth chapter of the book focuses on this issue, and tests the hypothesis that foreign creative workers in Milan are attracted in the city by local amenities and the quality of life.

In general, the “creative class” theory undervalues the relevance of institutional frameworks and historically rooted social relations in the development of local production networks, assuming that creative industries can emerge everywhere. Consequently, they have led to policies that do not take into consideration the history of places (Vicari Haddock, 2010). Indeed, such policies tend to focus on the built environment (cultural facilities, such as opera theatres, museums, etc) neglecting other types of interventions, less visible but probably more effective, such as investments in higher and specialized education, or programmes targeting specific specialized industries (*ibid.* 26).

Finally, the “creative class” approach assumes, in a sort of ideological vision, that creativity is in itself a positive element, and that any kind of job arising from the creative sphere is itself an asset. On this concern, a now solid stream of literature focused on the internal organization of the creative and cultural industries observes that the idea that automatically creativity brings good social and economic outcomes is not always true. Indeed, the internal organization of creative and cultural industries is massively based on flexible and informal social relations that allow for new projects and initiatives (Brown et al., 2010; d’Ovidio, 2015; d’Ovidio and Pradel, 2013; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Scott, 2008a). In terms of working relations, this means an increase of self-employment and new forms of de-standardized work, flexible working times, contracts by projects, etc. Ross (2003) defines as *no collar ethic* the mixture of individualism, freedom and self-exploitation that occur within the ICT workers. Advocates of the “creative city” ideology presents it as a positive factor, which is connected to entrepreneurship, independence, self-management and freedom, and increasing working opportunity for young skilled people. Nevertheless, it also means high levels of insecurity linked to different forms of non-standard work, and self-exploitation (Arvidsson et al., 2010; Brown et al., 2010; McRobbie, 1998; Niessen, 2009). De-standardization of work in these sectors can lead to different negative consequences such as the blurring of the

line between work and non-work time and new forms of (gender) inequalities. This involves also the highly specialized workers in the field of cognitive-cultural economy, where flexible contracts and discontinuous careers are very common (Pareja Eastaway et al., 2011).

Another, more complex and situated, perspective on creativity focuses on its social dimension and it is often opposed to the Florida's one. It assumes that creativity is a socially constructed phenomenon that emerges as a response to challenges and opportunities that workers face, especially in large urban areas (Vicari Haddock and Moulaert, 2009). Understood in this way, creativity, as a form of social innovation (Moulaert et al., 2013), can be defined as the compound of collective practices aimed at satisfying material and immaterial human needs through the transformation of social relations (Moulaert et al., 2007). Under this approach creativity is considered as a tool for fighting against social exclusion in cities. According to this view, creativity and innovation emerge from a dense network of social relations framed by the local context, and only a part of them are explicitly oriented to economic purposes (Garcia et al., 2008). Neighbourhood-based groups and civil society associations often organize themselves and develop socially innovative practices that allow them to respond to needs, to empower and to propose new perspective on social problems, often redefining them. In the same way, people building their careers in cognitive-cultural sectors develop socially innovative practices which improve their situation and promote their inclusion in the labour market (d'Ovidio and Pradel, 2013; Oosterlynck and Debruyne, 2013).

### *3.3 Creative city as an urban branding*

Among all the policies devoted to promote an urban image functional to the increasing international competition, the urban marketing aims at building a vision and imagery of the city in order to make it appealing for the global marketing, and for the attractiveness of the city.

Such kind of strategies have gained a large success in particular because of two overlapping themes: firstly, the increasing importance of the marketing functions; secondly, the increasing importance of immaterial and cultural elements. Here Florida theory of creative class blends with the rhetoric of "urban consuming".

The image of city, as it is considered within this framework, has not only to do with the visual elements of the place: it concerns the whole sphere of meaning and idea of the city, from symbols of the built environment (iconic buildings, monuments, streets and squares), to the immaterial and cultural components of the urban social life (styles, food culture, habits, institutions),



but also discourses and stereotypes about the city (Vanolo, 2008). In order to construct the “right” image of the city, city brand builders select “core values” they wish to see associated with the city’s identity, articulate a vision for the future of the city and choose a logo to symbolize that identity. The decisions taken in the course of this process create a specific frame within which some urban policies achieve legitimacy while others become less relevant because lacking justification within the chosen frame (Vicari Haddock, 2010).

This can be addressed as the ideology of the image when policy makers tend to think (and the theories of Florida, for example, reproduce it perfectly) that a “good” image of the city is enough to attract positive elements for the economy. Thus, many of the policies that intend to build a marketable image of the city are based on a selective storytelling which seeks to emphasize certain aspects of the city by rejecting others.

Consistent with the emerging of the urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989), city branding reaches its pick during the 1990s and the beginning of 2000 with an excessive use of “culture”, “creativity” and “art” as rhetorics: they are increasingly used instrumentally in order to build a city image able to (re)present the city as appealing and “unique”. Cities tend to use the same language and same strategies in order to build a new image, with the paradoxical result of homogenising both cities and their branding: artistic and creative neighbourhoods have been created, magnificent museums and downtowns were designs by “archistars” (Ponzini and Nastasi, 2011), waterfronts were redesigned and so on. In a global market where all cities want to be within the top-ten ones, all cities narrate their characteristics as coherent with the most accepted standards to such market, becoming more and more one the mirror of the other.

Therefore, every single cultural form that does not pertains to the promotional image of the city is generally ignored if not fought. Cultural policies tend to finance, sponsor and support cultural programmes able to attract a large public, with events and popular exhibition. In such a “creative” city, there is very few space for avant-garde, research or even antagonistic art scene. The consequence of such rhetoric of the creative city, both interestingly and paradoxically, is the progressive homogenization of narrative regimes of cities and the rejection of all the cultural forms that are not fitting the institutionalized image. The most visible result is the progressive sterilization of all creative forms that are based on heterogeneity and diversity<sup>8</sup>.

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8 Surprisingly, one of the three pillar that Florida’s theory of creative class was exactly “tolerance”, but in its implementation the tolerance is often directed towards a domesticated and clear kind of diversity (consistent with a “nice” image of the city).

## 4 Reaction to the creative city

Notwithstanding the harsh criticism emerged within the scientific world, cultural policies have been largely put in practice under a strong neoliberal framework. Empirical researches have now brought to light some of the many negative consequences of such a use of culture: precariousness affects increasingly creative labour, gentrification afflicts our inner cities and culture is responding only to market logic.

In the book we will see that a wide section of the workers within the creative and cultural economy suffer from a deep precariousness of their job, and that (self)exploitation is extremely common in some of the most appealing sectors (fashion, architecture, design...). “The creative sector finds itself full of young people who are burnt out, exhausted, unable to consider having children, and often self-exploiting on the basis of the *pleasure in work* factor” (McRobbie, 2011).

Moreover, most of the allegedly creative neighbourhoods in our cities are the result of harsh processes of gentrification: the promotion of the so-called *creative class* legitimate and promote the relocation of the middle-class into interstitial zones of the inner city. As a consequence, those inhabitants which do not conform to such a class will be inevitably expelled. Moreover, gentrification, although triggered by art and culture, paradoxically causes often a weakening of the local art scene itself.

Finally, in the context of the neoliberal urban policies, the “alternative”, underground, subcultural culture represents a scene that mark the urban space as attractive, not only for urban tourists and city users but also, and more importantly, for urban regeneration programme. Cultural milieus represent a resource both in general cultural terms (for marketing, attraction of tourism...) and especially in terms of real estate and urban development, as “they are charged with cultural capital which in the scheme of creative city policy becomes transformed by investors into economic capital” (Mayer, 2013, p. 4). Often politicians exploit the cultural scenes emerging from alternative or underground culture as a branding asset showing how cool and authentic the city is. Therefore, “neoliberal urban policies on the one hand manage to incorporate alternative and subcultural activism including the creativity of squatters (who, in the process, may find it difficult to maintain their political autonomy), while on the other they entail intensifying repressive strategies, stricter laws, tougher policing, and hence more evictions and fiercer criminalization of squatting.” (Mayer, 2013, p. 5).

Paradoxically even the activities of the most alternative and antagonistic cultural fringes end up contributing to gentrification of neighbourhoods.

Contrarily to the strong homogenization process favoured by the neo-liberal cultural policies, a stream of the literature engages in researches that emphasize the role of the “alternative” fringes of cultural consumption in cities as one of the main support for the local production of culture.

*“An important element is the transformative dynamics of actual social transformations; [breaks with tradition and dominant paradigms] are often led by groups presenting themselves as extraneous to the previous local history<sup>9</sup>”* (Bertacchini and Santagata, 2012, p. 21).

Researches reveal that alternative, underground cultures have a deep role in the creative sectors and that closed links are built between mainstream knowledge (re)production and underground creativity (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011; Niessen, 2009; Pruijt, 2004; Vivant, 2009). Vivant (2009) defines *off* culture starting from a semantic pattern that opposes it to the *in* one. This scheme is inspired by the description of major art festivals such as the theatre festival in Avignon.

*“The in is organized and planned, while the off is spontaneous and opportunist; the off is free of commercial, academic or fashion constraints, so it can be a creative and innovative space; the in draws from the off new ideas and new talents; the off needs the in to build its legitimacy; and, little by little, the off becomes the real festival: the place to show and to be, the real engine of the festival that attracts more people and more artists until a new off of the off appears”* (*ibid.*, 40).

Pruijt in his examination of squatting activities in Amsterdam recognizes that “entrepreneurial squatters [...] created artists’ workspaces and venues for cultural activities were seen by policymakers as valuable for the city, which led to connections between the squatter scenes and the local administration” (Pruijt, 2013). In fact, the Municipality of Amsterdam invested more than 40 million euro in the “Breeding Places Amsterdam” (BPA) project in 1999 (Pruijt, 2004; Uitermark, 2004) aimed at sustaining the local cultural production with space and workshop provision.

Indeed, cultural policy overlaps more and more with programmes of urban regeneration as often requests are about having spaces for culture, or reclaiming an occupied space by subcultural scenes such as squats and so on. Interesting on this concern, the case of Paris in *La Chapelle- Stalingrad* where underground artists allowed to occupy empty buildings, are used to restore a former industrial site: artists can occupy spaces as long as they are empty and

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<sup>9</sup> English translation from Italian by the author

the requalification project has not yet started. Although in general terms the programme could be interesting because able to give space to a cultural scene that otherwise remains invisible, on the other side many questions are still open, such as, who decide who is entitled to enter the space? What's happen after they have to clear and leave the space? Are artists aware of the speculation of the area? (Vivant, 2009). In Italy *centri sociali* (that can be understood as autonomous cultural squatted centres) diffused around the end of the 1970s, as expression of the radical left movements. In Milan, in the 1980s they had a great expansion, exactly in the period when urban politics started to build an image of the city based on luxury and design, supporting design and fashion industry. By the end of the 1990s, such *centri sociali* became real breeding ground for young and productive talented workers being urban workshops of experimental creative professions in music, cinema, web, software, interaction design and so on. Such places were even very common touristic attractions for young people passing by Milan. All the cultural and creative production resulting from these places obviously opposed to the normalized branding of Milan, and often the cultural production is a tool through which perform a political action. Today, such places have been either evicted or normalized, because they were not able to adapt to the built image of the city. Most of the young professional trained there have been found good jobs abroad (often being co-opted by those economic forces they fought against), pushing away a large part of the so-called “creative class”.

Harvey recently recognizes the complex relation between capital and the cultural or art sphere: he claims that “...the problem for capital is to find ways to co-opt, subsume, commodify and monetize such cultural differences just enough to be able to appropriate monopoly rents there from” (Harvey, 2012, p. 110). On the other hand, yet, he hypothesized that the more the neo-liberal cities exploit art and culture, the more people involved in art and culture themselves tend to oppose to such an instrumentalization. “The widespread though usually fragmented struggles that exist between capitalistic appropriation and past and present cultural creativity can lead a segment of the community concerned with cultural matters to side with a politics opposed to multinational capitalism” (ibid. 111)

Criticisms and political resistance are rather common within the art sphere, however, they are recently emerging also within the larger realm of the cultural industries (see Grodach and Silver, 2013 for a large extent of examples). Not only artists are now involved in struggling the neo-liberal city, but also exactly those people who neo-liberal urban politics are supposedly directed to: the so-called “creative class” is aware of the politics of exploitation of culture (Peck, 2005) and refuses most of the actions that are formulated in its name (Novy and

Colomb, 2013). They seldom organize locally to protest against such politics and protests often extend to a larger scale and they can be recognized as urban social movements. Starting from small-scale issues or very focused aims, they tend to enlarge and comprise larger topics linked to the more general urban politics, and gaining support from other social movements in the city (d'Ovidio and Cossu, forthcoming; Pradel and Marti-Costa, 2012).



## Chapter 2

### Fashion and the creative city

For long time academics simply did not know how to treat fashion. Fashion was regarded as too serious to be missed, too superficial to talk about (Bruzzi and Gibson Church, 2000). It seemed too frivolous as a subject to be the object of serious research. Not only in the past, but even now, there are, yet, scholars who still believe that fashion cannot have a place in sociology, although its implications in the sociology of culture, economics and its relation with the local policies should have become evident. In the contemporary debate, however, there is a new interest towards fashion, and fashion has by now become the subject of many studies.

The analyses on the relationships between fashion and the society are extremely variegated and overcome disciplinary boundaries among cultural, social and economic categories, combining consumption and production, melting material with symbolic forms. Since this book aims at understanding the creative and cultural industry in cities, we address here the production-side of fashion (which includes imagining, designing, managing of the fashion goods), leaving aside the huge corpus of theories and researches on the consumption of fashion.

To have an idea of the variegated nature of the debate around fashion, let us offer an overview on the Italian researches on the issue. In Italy, researches on fashion are not scarce at all. Firstly, studies on the cultural sociology of fashion, some of them contextualising the fashion production in the city of Milan, are extremely well developed by Bovone, or Mora and their research team, who concentrate mainly on the sociological meanings of clothing. (Bovone, 2014; Bovone et al., 2002; González and Bovone, 2012; Mora, 2010, 2009). Other scholars within the social sciences address fashion in Italy as a social phenomenon (Codeluppi, 2007; Codeluppi and Ferraresi, 2007; Segre-Reinach, 2014, 2013, 2010) or focus on the social history (Gnoli, 2014, 2005; White, 2000). On the side of the fashion industry as an economic sector, there are researches on the economy of fashion and related industries (Ricchetti and Cietta, 2006), on the quality of jobs in the fashion industry (Arvidsson et al., 2010; Marchetti and Gramigna, 2007) and works on fashion designers and creativity (d'Ovidio, 2015, 2010a; Giusti, 2009; Malossi and Salbashian, 2005; Volontè, 2010).

On the international context, many researches about fashion in London, Paris, New York have been published in the last decade (Beward, 2004; Currid, 2007; Kawamura, 2004; Leslie and Rantisi, 2011; McRobbie, 1998;

Rantisi, 2004; Steele, 1998 just to quote a few). Such multifaceted literature basically can be broken down into two main streams: the one that emphasises the analysis of the fashion product, its content and symbolic, aesthetics and cultural elements; the second that looks at the fashion industry as other industries within the regional or urban economy.

Many authors claim that, in order to build an effective contribution to the fashion studies, all aspects linked to fashion must be kept into account, in particular Breward sees fashion as the “outcome of a precarious marriage between process of creative authorship, technological production, and cultural dissemination, [...] fashion as idea, object, and image” (Breward, 2003, p. 15). Fashion is considered as a composite process, starting from several stages of action, behaviour and experiences, moving from the designer, through the manufacturer, the advertiser, and the retailer and to the consumer, from which the designer can have new ideas and so on, in a circle way.

Also in this chapter, an analysis that is comprehensive of several aspects of fashion is carried out: the starting point is the assumption that the fashion industry is and must be understood as part of the local creative and cultural economy. There are indeed several aspects of this industry that reasonably make the fashion industry a sector of the creative and cultural economy and this chapter is aiming at bringing them to light. This means that we will take into consideration also elements linked to the consumption of the fashion goods as long as they are helpful to understand aspects of the fashion production.

In the first chapter the main features of the cultural economy have been deeply analysed and the connections with the urban environment discussed: it has been said, more than once, that the cultural economy is an urban phenomenon, that in cities culture feeds from the social mix, proximity, innovation and so on. This chapter is aimed at discussing the fashion industry as part of the urban cultural industry, as, for instance, its image is linked with some cities in particular and its production and financial aspects are strictly tied with the urban environment.

Several aspects compose our analysis. Firstly, as contemporary societies are characterised by new forms of consumption, aimed at building one’s identity and fulfilled mainly by symbolic goods, fashion, and in particular fashion goods, will be inserted in this frame and the connections among identity, consumption and fashion will be analysed. The history of fashion is, in this context, particularly useful, for it helps to identify some of the major trend in the developing of clothing.

Secondly, the process that brings about the creation of a fashion industry, as we understand it now, will be drawn and a particular attention will be given to the creative process, while the historical trajectory of the fashion industry and the evolution of education and training will be briefly analysed.



Finally, the relation between the contemporary urban space and the fashion industry will be taken into account; fashion is, both symbolically and economically, particularly linked with a number of cities in the world among which Paris, Milan, London and New York are actually worldwide recognised as the four main fashion capital cities, forming an international network.

## 1 Fashion and identity

Fashion represents “strong norms about appropriate appearances at a particular point in time” (Crane, 2000, p. 1). One of the most visible markers of social status and gender and therefore useful in maintaining or subverting symbolic boundaries, clothing is an indication of how people in different eras have perceived their positions in social structures and negotiated status boundaries. In previous centuries clothing was the principal means for presenting oneself in public space.

Looking at the history of fashion from a particular perspective, that of its relation with class and identity, helps to understand how clothes have been used in order to differentiate social classes. Until the late nineteenth century, people chose clothes mainly because of their social class, then in the twentieth century things became more complex. In the modern societies each class is differentiated from the other by its own culture, even if there are values, goals and ideals that can be shared. Today, class distinctions can be still important in some particular contexts, for instance in some workplaces, but outside them, distinctions are based on general numerous criteria, sometimes shared within the society, sometimes only within a specific social group. As Crane puts it “changes in the dissemination of fashion in clothing choices can be used to trace and interpret these transformations in class cultures” (*Ibid.*).

In the late Middle Age, clothes started to resemble those we know today, however they were very expensive and usually an adult man owned just a single suit of clothes, maybe second hand; only with the advent of the industrialised production of clothes, they became affordable to everyone. In the pre-industrial society, clothing behaviour indicated exactly a person’s position within the society, not only their social class, job or gender, but also religious affiliation, regional origins and so on. For instance in the Middle Age in France, it was forbidden for people belonging to a certain class to wear gold jewel: “the decoration seems here as a mean to transfer social dignity or social strength into a visible personal distinction” (Simmel, 1895, p. 19). Similarly, the scandalous affair narrated by Chevallier in the historical novel (and then also a film) inspired to Vermeer’s picture “Girl with a pearl earring” refers to the fact that a servant has been painted while she wears a jewel, which was an exclusive privilege of the upper class (Chevalier, 1999).

In nineteenth century clothes were still not easily affordable for working classes as they were for the upper class, and often they still represented a substantial portion of families' possession. By the late nineteenth century, clothes became cheaper and affordable to lower classes. Costume historians talked about a process of democratisation of clothes, occurring during the 1800, since all social classes adopted the same type of clothing. Two examples illustrate appropriately how it is possible to explain the behaviour of clothing through self-representation.

Firstly, the obsession for clothes by American women in the middle of the nineteenth century can be explained through the fact that at that time class boundaries were particularly blurred, in a society characterised by a strong social and spatial mobility, and with no titled aristocracy. Competition for social status was fierce and clothing became a way to demonstrate one's position. Similarly, people from the working class, who migrated from Europe, tended to buy new clothes as soon as they could, in order to behave like Americans and to lose their migrants identity (Steele, 2000; White, 2000).

Secondly, social control, through the imposition of dressing codes, uniforms and so on was the other facet of fashion during the nineteenth century: uniforms proliferated in the workplaces in order to differentiate positions and roles, emphasising social classes and working tasks (Crane, 2000).

In the twentieth century, clothes lost their economic importance, as they were generally more affordable, but they did not lose their symbolic meaning. Clothes have become affordable for the majority of people, and people are now free to create their own style. The nature of fashion is changing, being more ambiguous, multifaceted, less rigid and, at least for some subcultures, without any constrictions.

Fashion and clothing behaviour are employed by Crane as a mean to understand and theorise the "fragmented society" (Crane, 2000). Social classes are becoming less important in contemporary societies than before, especially in contexts like politics, economy, and family, in particular due to the bigger mobility between and within classes. Thus, social classes have become increasingly less important also in the formation of one's self-image. People make choice in their lifestyle and they can even change it, and as a large number of people do it, there is a general transformation in lifestyles themselves. According to Crane "Social classes are less homogeneous because they are fragmented into different but continually evolving lifestyles based on leisure activities, including consumption" (Crane, 2000, p. 10). Giddens (1991) notices how the variety of choices in lifestyle has let people be free from the tradition and choose from many different directions creating a "meaningful self-identity". In the contemporary societies people are constantly reassessing

their identity and self-presentation, while in the traditional societies, people's identity was linked to their job. Today, instead, less and less people recognise themselves into the work they do (Sennett, 1998): people are freed to build their identity outside the economic sphere. More spare time available lets people consume more cultural goods (see chapter one), such as fashionable clothes, and gives them more opportunities in the construction of personal identity.

Veblen (Veblen, 1899) stressed the importance of consuming to demonstrate one's social position. He talked about "ostentatious consuming" to refer to the habit of the new urban social classes to emulate the consuming behaviour of the upper class, which provided them with social status and a place in society.

According to Simmel fashion is first adopted from the upper class people and then imitated by people of the middle-lower class. People from middle-lower class use clothes in order to imitate upper class people, in order to obtain a higher status. In this process, by the time that a particular style has been adopted by the working class, the upper class has found a newer style, thus differentiating again from the other classes (Simmel, 1895). This theory was built on the traditional society of the beginning of the nineteenth century and its validity is now questionable: changes in fashion industry, consumer society, transformations in behaviour and so forth, are all processes which make the Simmel's top-down theory less useful and they reinforce a new model, that of bottom-up, as it will be shown.

Bourdieu (1979) elaborates a more complex theory in order to understand how different social classes respond to cultural goods and material culture in highly stratified societies. Bourdieu's theory of class reproduction and cultural tastes considers social structures as complex systems of class cultures comprising a system of tastes and associated lifestyles. His work on the field of fashion, although here little discussed, is interesting in explaining not only class behaviours on fashion consumption, but also, and especially, the whole class structure (Delsaut and Bourdieu, 1975).

Simmel's "top-down" model was appropriate until the last century, in particular until the 1960s (Crane, 2000). Since then, the demographic, economic and social changes transformed also the attitude towards fashion. A "bottom-up" model is said to be more appropriate to understand more recent years, often replacing social status with age as the main variable to explain fashion styles. Styles emerge first for young and adolescents, often part of sub-cultures or "style tribe" (Polhemus, 2010). This is, for instance, the case of the punk style: it rose as a reaction to consumption, and afterwards, in the hands of Vivienne Westwood and other British fashion designers, moved into the very cycle of commodification, which,

paradoxically, it wanted to subvert<sup>1</sup>. Another example of bottom-up process in the definition of fashion is represented by the so-called “teenage phenomenon” which rose between the 1950s and 1960s, when teenagers started to choose dress in order to differentiate themselves from the dominant culture. Music, language, clothes and in general styles of behaviour and consumption is adopted as “badge of belonging” by many subcultures (Breward, 2003).

Clothing styles are increasingly significant to the social group in which they are originated or to whom they are targeted, but they are often incomprehensible for people outside specific social contexts.

Besides, the media system has a very influent role, as it accelerates the process of diffusion, awareness and creation of new lifestyles. Nowadays, the meaning of cultural products can be very complex and influenced by many different factors, especially the relations between creators and consumers, or managers and market. Today clothing itself is less important than the frames which are used to sell it: shops in which clothes are sold, magazines which advertise them, people from the star-system who wear them, and so on, are all frames which expand the social meaning of clothes and make them part of one’s experiences.

Finally one last, very significant topic is the implication fashion has with the gender issue. Many scholars wrote about it (Crane, McRobbie, White) and a vast body of literature has been produced. For instance, high fashion, especially in the nineteenth century, was created for a woman who did not need to work neither at home or outside, while men fashion was more adapted for a working man, and so on. This example, which describes well the connection between gender issue and fashion, also shows how the linkages among fashion industry, marketing and promotion are tied: fashion and its representation are indivisible. Despite its importance, the field of fashion and gender will not be the aim of this work, however it is worth mentioning it, because it represents a significant example of the connections among all the aspects of fashion, such as creation, promotion, wearing and culture, society and identity.

## **2 The creation of a fashion industry**

“The high fashion is an industrial sector aimed at making profit and whose creations produce an obsolescence encouraging consumption” (Lipovetsky, 1987, p. 117)<sup>2</sup>.

Fashion industry is nowadays an industry of relevant dimensions, where the

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1 See also chapter 6

2 « La Haute Couture est-elle bien une entreprise industrielle et commerciale de luxe dont le but est le profit e dont les créations incessantes produisent une obsolescence propice à l’accélération de la consommation »

fashion designer is an important public figure, head of large enterprise and able to influence on tastes and behaviours. In the past, nonetheless, things were different and fashion concerned a sort of artistic-artisan sphere, which only upper classes, eccentric people and aristocracy were interested in.

Many sociologists, historians, and even fashion designers, are concerned now with the role of design, and its historical development. Fashion is less and less linked with socio-economic status or age; now it is possible to talk about “style tribes” (Polhemus, 2010) not only for young people and tee-agers, but also for adults who might fall into several style tribes. The relation between style, people wearing behaviour and design or dress production is much tied, and complex. In the first chapter we already introduced the concept of *prosumer capitalism* (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). In fashion, theorists use the metaphor of a circular process in which people influence designers at the same way in which they are influenced, and vice versa (Luvaas, 2012). Indeed, it is possible to underline several important moments, where the role, the importance and the job itself of fashion designer radically changed.

In the 1920s and 1930s, when designed clothing was not yet mass-manufactured, the fashion industry was considered a small-scale luxury craft, requiring minimal investment. Women dominated Paris couture, and consequently world couture, being Paris the real, and only, world capital for fashion. With the advent of mass culture and mass consumption fashion became affordable for many people, style was created on the street, among young people and adolescents and fashion became a real business (see also chapter one for a deep discussion on the rising of the consumer society). As it became to be considered as a large industry, women lost ground, and many men became the new stars of the couture. Financial resources were much more accessible to men rather than women, and they were much more accepted in the society as entrepreneurs, a role still today largely precluded to women. As an example of this change at the turn of the century, Jeanne Lanvin opened her own fashion business with a little loan of 300 francs, while after the war Marcel Boussac invested 500.000 dollars in opening the House of Dior. It took a long time for women to participate again in the fashion system, and when they did, it was also thanks to radical changes in society and economy: women’s liberation and feminism movements from one hand, the growth of ready to wear and the globalisation of the market on the other were the most visible factors (Steele, 2000).

At the beginning of the 1950s the “Mods” movements (Mods stands for moderns) has been recognised by fashion historians as the very first fashion movements. They were a group of working-class youths, obsessively concerned with fashion and their personal style. For the first time the fashion

system started to “learn” from street styles and to take inspiration from young sub-cultures. Fashion designers at the same time were encouraged to innovate and to create clothes for young, who represented a new, very important, market segment (Gnoli, 2014; Steele, 2000).

Moreover, the rise of popular music gave more inspiration both to youths and to designers, encouraging people to dress similarly as the rock stars, and thus channelled a new wave in fashion, as well as the rise of the hippies and the social movements: fashion has been over time increasingly contaminated by society.

The role, and the job itself, of the fashion designer changed, too. For instance, Mary Quant, the inventor of the mini-skirt<sup>3</sup>, opened her shop in London, after graduation at the Goldsmith’s College of Art, and she was part of the first generation in Britain to experience to expanded opportunities offered by high education (Breward, 2003). Nevertheless, she herself claimed: “I have always wanted the young to have a fashion of their own. [...] I knew nothing about the fashion business. I didn’t think of myself as a designer.” (Mary Quant, *Quant by Quant*, 1966. quoted in Breward 2003). Fashion designers now have to know both how to do business and how to design and make clothes, since fashion industries are large enterprises, and designers often are chief of real financial empires.

One of the biggest changes in the fashion industry is, as previously said, the advent, starting from mid-1950s, and the success of the ready-to-wear, *prêt-à-porter*, lines, and the consequently massive industrialisation of the fashion system. The idea was that of create “fashion” clothes, following that of the Haute Couture, but accessible to a wider public and produced within an industrialised system. The ready-to-wear mixes factory and fashion, putting novelty, style, aesthetic on the street (Lipovetsky, 1987). At the beginning, the *prêt-à-porter* companies tried to simply copy or to have inspiration from the high fashion, but afterwards they became aware of the necessity to employ a *stylist*, a fashion designer in order to offer a more fashionable and original product. With the introduction of the professional position of the fashion designer, the industrial product changed status and became a fashion product. While there was a strong division between high fashion and ready-to-wear, the potentialities of the latter were soon understood by fashion houses: Pierre Cardin in 1959 was the first fashion designer within high fashion, to show, also a *prêt-à-porter* collection. He was also the first to open a *prêt-à-porter* shop in

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3 The invention of the mini-skirt is, in fact, uncertain: Mary Quant is known to be the one responsible for it, even though in Paris French designer André Courrèges claims the paternity of this garment. Mary Quant, in response to his claim, said “It wasn’t me or Courrèges who invented the mini-skirt anyway –it was the girls on the street who did it” (Steele, 2000, p. 10)

Paris. Following his example, many fashion designers of high fashion opened shops and presented collections of ready-to-wear.

Thus, with the technological advent in the fashion industries, with the development of the *stylisme* and of the prêt-à-porter, the old opposition between industrial and hand-made clothes has been vanished.

With the establishment of the prêt-à-porter in the fashion system, fashion companies have tended to become larger and larger, and to employ a growing number of workforce. In Italy, the case of the *MaxMara* Company offers a good example. In 1950, the founder, Mr Maramotti, after visiting US fashion factories, implemented the use of automatic machineries and an industrial process to make designed clothes. For instance, the hours needed for a coat decreased from 18 to just 2 hours, yet with the same quality (Gnoli, 2014).

### 3 The creative process

The fashion industry is based on a constant process of obsolescence, which causes an incessant demand of new products<sup>4</sup>. Clothes, accessories, shoes, and all the “fashionable” goods, by definition, are chosen by consumers because they can respond to particular aesthetic and symbolic law, because they are “new”, because they symbolise “something”; however their capacity to be new and “fashionable” is hardly durable and a new dress easily become “old” in just one season.

On the other hand, the historical trajectory of the fashion industry shows how today the fashion production follows an industrial organization, and fashion companies are very large enterprises.

The fashion system is, thus, composed by a double structure: on the one hand, the economic level, on the other, the aesthetic or creative side (Lipovetsky, 1987); in the fashion industry, the economic aspect is hence inseparable from the creative one, and even one is sustained by the other. If is true that creativity needs to be supported by a financial structure (Maramotti, 2000) it is also true that the real engine of the fashion industry is creativity: within the fashion business there is a permanent process of aesthetic innovation which cannot be explained with the economic rationality alone (Lipovetsky, 1987).

In order to have a clearer image of the fashion industry it is, hence, important to describe and to understand the creative process within fashion. The economy of the fashion industry has dramatically changed from the past years, and the kind of jobs, or the tasks of people working in the fashion industry now are

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4 Harvey draws a parallel between the cultural and the financial world, noticing that, as with the inflation prices rise, in the cultural production with the process of obsolescence, goods need to be reinvented (Harvey, 1990)

much different and more complex than in the past. In particular, the connections between creativity and economy, art and business, novelty and financing are crucial aspects which cannot be left aside (Ricchetti and Cietta, 2006).

Creativity needs to be supported and fashion begins when it is wore, and so a dress has to be made, put in a shop, chosen, sold and wore (Maramotti, 2000). In order to make everything be accomplished, many steps are needed. Aimed to these tasks, large fashion companies are composed by many different sectors, all connected to each other: the creative one, the marketing group, the production one and so on: a rather different image than the *couturier* working in their *atelier*, an image which represents the past.

Creativity can be analysed in term of *flows* connecting different aspects of the production. In the past, when there was a single *couturier* that drew, following the aesthetic rules of the time, cut and sewed, the flow of creativity was simple in the sense that there was no chain, no division of tasks or labour, but the process was a whole thing. In other words the same person, or at least, people from the same team, thought, draw, cut, sewed the dress and they were in contact with costumers (Mora, 2009; Ricchetti and Cietta, 2006). Often the whole process was made with the client, too. What is happening now is that all the processes are separated, yet linked in a circular way: design, production, retail-consumers. Design is connected of course with production, which is connected with retail and finally consumers have an important influence on the design side.

All segments of the creative and cultural industry, which fashion is part of, have a double dimension, they are based on two spheres, which seem to be opposed, but they are not. The industry actually derives its strength from the performance of both creation and business.

The role of the fashion designers is thus very ambiguous: unlike novelists, they usually have to deal not only with the creation, but also with management aspects or production; unlike managers, they have to constantly create new things. As copywriters, web-designers, or, in general, most of the workers in the creative cultural sectors, they have to split time, attention and effort in two opposed worlds.

Moreover, the fashion designer has to deal with a third set of “non-artistic” operations, such as cutting, sewing and preparing the material needed for *making* his/her creations.

#### **4 Fashion and the city**

As broad is the literature on fashion in general, also analyses on the links between fashion and space are proliferating. The connections between the industry and the city are thus interesting objects of investigation, both from



a theoretical and an empirical perspective. Paris, Milan, London, New York are known to be the main centres for fashion in the world. There are few industries so linked to places as fashion. Cities are, indeed, the privileged site for culture, and fashion is undoubtedly an urban phenomenon. Cities significantly influence the fashion design, fashion is consumed within the urban environments which is also the preferred place to show up (Currid, 2007). Fashion is also an important element for the urban competitiveness and a tool for urban attractiveness. In the following pages, the relation between city and the fashion industry is organised into two main streams: the first looks at fashion production and consumption in cities; the second one considers the fashion industry as a tool for international urban competitiveness.

#### *4.1 Fashion production and consumption in cities*

The first perspective, particularly rich within the fashion studies, investigates the role of specific cities and local cultures in shaping the fashion design of a given place (Beward, 2004, 2003; Beward et al., 2006; Entwistle, 2000; Gilbert, 2000; Morace, 2002).

The urban consumer revolution and the rise of a consumer society is said to be crucial in the developing of an urban fashion market, followed by the importance of the European imperialism and the development of competition among European cities.

Many studies on the relation between fashion and the city aim at looking how exotic and “diverse” aesthetics are absorbed and legitimized by the aesthetic and stylistic vocabulary of fashion produced in a given city. For instance, the effect of the colonialism and post-colonialism on the London fashion have been deeply analysed; how the aesthetic influence by fashion production in consolidated cities determined stylistic canons for fashion in more emergent cities: this has been shown in the relation between Paris and Milan in the post-war period (White, 2000) or between Paris and Tokyo (Kawamura, 2006, 2004). It is exactly the aesthetics within fashion that has the capacity of spatializing the world, labelling it and ranking it with hierarchies of cities (Gilbert, 2006, p. 10). “Streets, squares, arcades, and promenades offered places where crowds might congregate, classes intermingle, and individuals compete for attention” (Beward, 2003, p. 169). The presence of a wide market, hence, reinforces and encourages the development of a local industry.

London represents a good example, where the consumer revolution shaped the internal spatialisation of the production of fashion. As we will see in the last chapter of the book, the London geography of fashion production remains pre-industrial, with an economic structure characterised by small-scale

workshops, rather than large factories. There is a significant presence of many micro-activities working in the fashion industry, finishing, making or even copying clothes. This has encouraged the existence of many “sweatshops”, where immigrant labour is often exploited. The co-presence and the proximity of these front and back regions of the fashion industry is recognised as one of the key characteristics for the development of the fashion industry in the city, producing unexpected crossing and blurring between different social worlds (Gilbert, 2000, p. 16). London preserved a reputation as magnetic centres, attracting labour, wealth and creativity: for the fashion industry, which feeds on novelty and contamination, the co-presence and the social mix of classes, styles, and people is a very important element.

Focusing within cities, researches proved that since fashion is a typical segment of the cultural industry, fashion operators would “need” the urban environment in order to perform their job. In the first chapter we discussed already the topic and in chapter four, moreover, the role of face-to-face into the creative and cultural economy will be deeply explored.

As many other creative and cultural industries, fashion is “*engaged in the creation of marketable outputs whose competitive qualities depend on the fact that they function at least in part as personal ornaments, modes of social display, forms of entertainment and distraction, or sources of information and self-awareness, i.e. as artifacts whose symbolic value to the consumer is high relative to their practical purposes.*” (Scott, 2000, p. 3). Therefore, the fashion industry shares with all culture-based products continuously changing and uncertain environments, and a constant high demand for innovation. Due to these characteristics, it relies heavily on face-to face relations and tends to concentrate in specific urban neighbourhoods in order to profit from the concentrations of people, activities, events. In the last chapter of this book, we will see how fashion designers in London are extremely place-based in their neighbourhood and in the city.

Research on the creative and cultural industries explores the different functions that are performed by face-to-face communication. Three areas are identified: trust-building, the development of common behaviours and sensibilities, and the fostering of creativity. This happens also for fashion designers (d’Ovidio, 2010a). It is by being connected with other people in the field that fashion operators do business, solve problems and acquire information, visibility and recognition as they build their careers. Through social relations, trust is built and collaboration is fostered. As they need to be connected in order to function successfully in their profession, time and energy are constantly invested in networking, in seeing each other and being seen in the “right” places and events. Face-to-face interactions are said to be

also important for the fostering of creativity, although empirical results do not always support this view. For instance, in a research comparing interactions among fashion designers in Milan and in London, Milanese designers claimed they do not share any creative thoughts, while Londoner ones were keen in sharing creativity with artists or creative workers outside the fashion world (d'Ovidio, 2010a). Research on the design world, conversely, demonstrated that designers appreciate proximity and the creative exchange that derives from it (Molotch, 2003, 2002). Of course, patterns of interaction, emphasis on creativity and the relationship with the city are different in different cities and for different workers.

#### *4.2 Fashion as a tool for competition among global cities*

The second way to look at the relation between fashion and cities is connected with globalization and the ranking of cities in the world. International competition among cities always existed and fashion became soon a very special tool for that. By the end of the 1800 and the beginning of 1900, most of the world cities like Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin or Milan, were tied by economic and symbolic linkages to the imperialism: both international networks and the circulation of stylistic codes, placed fashion capitals at the core of the imaginative geography of consumer desire (Breward, 2003, p. 169). Hence, the modern character of fashion cities as London or Paris cannot be understood without reference to their imperial past and post-imperial present (Gilbert, 2000): London shopping stores, as Harrods or Knightsbridge addressed themselves as “the most elegant stores in the world” and exotic displays or commodities were common in the very beginning of the twentieth century. A new kind of tourism arose during those years, that of urban shopping, especially for women’s fashion. Imperialism also shaped the symbolic imaginary of an ordering of cities, placing the imperial cities at the core and colonised countries at the margins: the same happened for the fashion produced in imperial cities and those made in other places of the world: the first was appreciated and desired much more than the latter. During the post-imperial age, moreover, London and Paris, for instance, provided home for the non-European migrants, and an increasing level of social mix has been created within these cities.

Together with the great exhibitions, the avant-garde architecture, the literature and arts in general, fashion, and especially high fashion became a tool for cities, and nations, too, to compete and to measure each culture among other European countries. Those cities, as for instance London and Paris, which had a sort of reputation as fashionable cities or fashion capitals, were encouraged

by this kind of competition, to reinforce their status and emphasize the main characters of their fashion industry. Paris, therefore, highlighted its luxury and elite fashion, while on the contrary, London fashion promoted itself as strongly traditional on the one side and at the same time young and innovative on the other.

In recent years, urban international competition has sharpened and the fashion industry, with the consequent symbolic positioning of city in a virtual fashion chart, is used to demonstrate one's predominance on the others, but, especially, is an important tool for the attraction of flows of investments and people. Cities compete inside the field of fashion using different rhetorics which could stress the importance of tradition from the one side and the novelty or the technological development from the other; or, again, by emphasising artistic production, individual geniality and so on.

There is a strong overlapping of cities that are defined international capitals of fashion and global (Sassen, 1991; Taylor, 2004) or world (Friedmann, 1985) cities; of course this is not surprising, yet it would be the opposite: fashion industry is a very relevant economic sector, based largely in the immaterial value of goods and with a very strong link with the financial world. Indeed, the fashion industry is totally submerged into the process of concentration and centralization of the advanced capitalism, and therefore the industry is behaving more and more like the financial sector (Rantisi, 2004). Similarly, the contemporary condition of the fashion industry is described as at its end: the intense process of global financialization, the increasing importance of the marketing functions over the product quality, the delocalisation of the productive process are the reasons to claim the death of the fashion as we are used to refer to it (Agins, 2000). Following this interpretation, Paris, London, New York and Milan are not fashion capitals any longer, but nothing more than foci of business and marketing concentration, as for any of the global economic sector. Such a process is sharpened by the development of large financial groups concentrating many luxury brands as LVMH (the owner of brands like Louis Vuitton, Kenzo, Givenchy, Marc Jacobs, Pucci, Fendi, Donna Karan and many others) and Kering (the owner of Gucci, Balenciaga, Alexander McQueen Yves Saint Laurent and many others) and by the progressive financialization of the fashion houses. The whole process is well embodied in the giant skyscraper of LVMH in New York. The growing of an oligarchy of fashion brands strengthened on the one hand the connections between fashion industry and the financial sector, and, on the other, bolstered marketing functions within fashion linking it with advertising industry, management and all immaterial elements of the sector (Gilbert, 2006).

In an era of globalisation, the connections between the geographies of

fashion culture and the contemporary city remain vital for both. Recently, the fashion industry has seen the creation of global players, capable of surviving in a world of cross-national and cross-media marketing. Consolidation entails concentration of control, and concentration usually takes place in or around the established world centres. As for the financial world, the fashion industry concentrates its core activities (managing, designing and marketing) in few big centres, giving a new global significance to them, in order to take advantage of network of contacts, face-to-face interaction and established social institutions.

Certain cities are among the strongest and longest-established of global brands: there is a symbolic order of cities, which puts, for instance, Milan in a privileged position than Barcelona in the international fashion system. An object labelled “Paris” not necessarily has been made in Paris, but it reminds some qualities which are different from another labelled “5<sup>th</sup> Avenue”. Due to the high symbolic content of the fashion goods, this feature is vital for the success of a product. Concerning the symbolic attribute of fashion, many authors (Clark, 2004; Crewe, 2010; Crewe and Beaverstock, 1998; Molotch, 2003; Zukin, 1989) underline the importance of a place as a brand for consumed products: clothes, even more than other goods, are reinforced by the imprinting of the effort and pleasure spent in finding and choosing them. Moreover it has been showed that connections between consumption and production can be very useful for a place to success (Crewe and Beaverstock, 1998). Finally modern urban tourism demonstrates an extreme version of this phenomenon in which it is the experience of shopping in significant sites which is valued more than the commodities themselves (Clark, 2004).

The development of a symbolic ordering of cities within fashion media has thus a major impact on the ways in which fashion is interpreted as an urban phenomenon. The symbolic ordering of fashion global cities is hence more important because the fashion industry itself is based on the symbolic attribute of its products. In other words, when the media stress the significance of a city as a fashion city, that place *becomes* a fashionable one, and probably the fashion industry gains visibility and prominence. Making a city fashionable is now a common and often an explicit urban policy and governments pay increasingly attention to the image of their cities (Jansson and Power, 2010; Rantisi, 2004). The rush to a city, in terms of regeneration or redevelopment of the urban space, given by the integration of culture and economic activity has been widely analysed (Bianchini, 1993; Zukin, 2000). The well-known as well as contradictory case of Bilbao and its regeneration through the Guggenheim museum is maybe the best example (Evans, 2003; Plaza, 2000). The fashion industry is, hence, considered by many administrators, like a regenerator tool as valid as other cultural industries. Increasingly, what distinguishes places

from one another is the strength of their “consumptional identities” (Crewe and Beaverstock, 1998, p. 289).

Fashion is, therefore, an important industry to invest on because of its feature of being an attractor for tourism, a symbol-creator for the city, and a strong economic engine.

It has been demonstrated, by underlying its main features, that the fashion industry is an actual, and a very important one, segment of the urban creative and cultural industry. The aim of the chapter was that to discuss, therefore, the characteristics of the fashion industry, by using the body of literature built within sociology and partly history of fashion and costume, in order to adopt fashion as a key study and as an example of the wider creative and cultural economy. Since it is difficult to deeply analyse the cultural industry as a whole, and it can be impossible to trace its developments in a given place, the choice to consider the fashion industry as a key-industry seems appropriate for a number of reasons. Its high symbolic contents, and its aesthetic value have been discussed using the frame of the sociology of culture, the creative aspects and the added value due to the personal creativity has been underlined by tracing the creative process and development of the fashion industry as we know it today, shifting from being a craft-related sector to an industry with very relevant dimension. The economic impact of the fashion industry on the economy of cities has been discussed and finally the ties fashion holds with the urban environment have been pointed out.

## Chapter 3

### Supporting the creative and cultural economy. An analytical framework<sup>1</sup>

As largely discussed in the previous chapters, creative and cultural economy, being closely linked with local knowledge, creativity, art and culture, is now addressed as one of the main leading forces for the urban and local development. Such a topic has the power to stir the debate concerning cities - a debate that is filled with reflections, recipes and methods on how to make city areas and districts emerge from the shadows to become lively creative venues and innovation hubs. Politicians, scholars and consultants have been wondering whether, and how, politics would be fit to provide support to those sectors of the economy that are connected with culture and creativity.

We believe that the debate on the creative and cultural economy is too often limited to discussing attractiveness elements or issues related to economic support. However, it should be focused on the plurality of forces that contribute to define the environment that is being studied, so that the topic in question can be observed within the social, economic, political and institutional context it belongs to.

One of the issues that is often neglected is the effective aim of policies and formal institutions, which are usually blurred in favour of the importance of the so-called “soft” factors<sup>2</sup> within a given economic sector. We feel that the intermingling of social, political and economic circumstances in our cities is making even clearer that the important role played by institutions in shaping local creative and cultural economy should be further investigated. If a comprehensive analysis is to be carried out, the institutional context that governs it cannot be ignored. To such purpose, we maintain that a wide range of subjects, procedures, organizations should be considered, especially the ones that operate locally.

Through such a contribution, we wish to suggest a closer analysis of the institutional context in order to identify some further issues that are hidden away in the many folds of the social fabric. Therefore, we build a tentative analytical framework that might be useful to organize the analysis of policies and their

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1 An early version of this chapter has been published, in Italian, as: d’Ovidio, Marianna. 2009. “Le Istituzioni Dell’economia Della Cultura: Una Proposta Di Analisi.” In Nuvolati, G., F. Piselli (eds.) *La Città: Bisogni, Desideri, Diritti. Sociologia Urbana E Rurale*. Milano: Angeli.

2 Here the influence of Florida’s theories is massive (see chapter 1)

causal links with the creative and cultural economy locally. By considering seven case studies, a model is going to be introduced, that keeps into account three different areas that policies aim at: the cultural assets, the economic sphere and the sociality of the creative and cultural industries. In our conclusions, we are suggesting that a fourth dimension should also be considered in order to have the full picture, namely, to understand to what extent politics is able to provide support to local creative production as a social inclusion tool.

## **1 Cultural policies versus policies for the creative city**

The debate on cultural policies is far from being new, and the topics involved and their relevance within a public discourse are still important issues in public discourses.. By briefly drafting an outline of the relations between culture and politics, it is possible to identify three main phases where cultural strategies appear to have different meanings and to aim at different targets. Bianchini (1993) sketches a route that links policies to culture by considering the shift from a “culture for politics” approach to a “culture for the economy” one, up to a phase where culture is instrumental to urban and social regeneration. Those are the main trends and should be considered as such, keeping in mind that different places and contexts feature different routes and timings.

At the end of the 1960s, culture made a forceful appearance in the political agenda, and became right away an extremely important item, as well as a much debated one. Urban social movements in 1968 had a clear cultural character, since they were associated with an “alternative” culture that would merge with politics (Mortimer, 2006). Community and local administrators then used culture as a mean to achieve political and social goals. In fact, several activities were developed to bring new life to local culture and, at the same time, some measures were also taken to expand culture’s reach to all social strata.

Throughout the 1980s, a radical transformation took place. The shift toward a conservative and neo-liberal approach provided the ideal setting for the development of cultural policies aimed at achieving economic targets, and not social ones anymore. On the one hand, private investments in culture were encouraged, while, on the other hand, marketing and good management of local cultural goods became the main goals of government activities.

During the 1990s, cultural policies’ objectives changed again and culture became a tool to promote some innovative urban regeneration strategies. Culture was then brought into the political arena in order to foster regeneration of depressed areas and city development programmes. Local authorities would then use to their advantage the opportunities offered by vast and abandoned industrial sites located in cities, as they were seen as ideal venues



for residential, commercial and cultural developments – also thanks to some new kinds of public-private partnerships that were taking shape. Such new districts promptly became very useful instruments to encourage international competition amongst cities. International tourism, the European Capital of Culture programme, and foreign investments, are all fine examples of the sort of competition that started in those years. Bilbao represents a perfect example of such a significant change<sup>3</sup>. At the turn of the century, culture has increasingly been considered by policy makers as a cure-all remedy for any weak segment of city or community life<sup>4</sup>. Urban regeneration strategies make now ample use of culture and new city districts have been developed around contemporary culture “temples”, such as theatres, exhibition centres and museums (Vicari Haddock, 2004). Policies focusing on economic restructuring of cities are aimed at attracting the “creative class” (Florida, 2002; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008) in order to improve culture industry and, consequently, enhance cities’ wealth<sup>5</sup>.

What has been observed is, on the one hand, the rising number of players involved, whereas on the other hand, quite paradoxically, politicians and consultants seem to favour local policies that boast a massive communication impact, but whose real effectiveness is unclear.

## 2 The rules of the game

Undoubtedly, investigating the role of institutions in society’s economic life has by now become an important issue in social sciences. *Institutions matter* is a motto that forcefully entered the social science debate (Jessop, 2001)<sup>6</sup>. Since the 1980s, a new trend has been emerging in the study of economic activities, i.e. a “sociological neo-institutionalism” that mainly focuses on the analysis of organizations and institutions. The core idea underlying neo-institutionalism is identifying a

*sociologically specific nature of organizations by conceptualising them as set within a historical and social context that should not only*

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3 Bilbao’s regeneration - that changed the former industrial centre into a cultural destination - has been studied by many scholars who provided contrasting interpretations. See, for example, the debate on the effectiveness of urban regeneration strategies through investments made in cultural infrastructures and urban marketing (Gómez, 1998; Gómez and Gonzalez, 2001; Plaza, 2006, 1999).

4 The term “cultural economic policy”, that made its appearance in literature toward the end of the 90s (Gibson and Kong, 2005), reflects the attention that local governments devoted to strengthen the link between culture and economy.

5 See the first chapter for a vast and critical literature review

6 In his paper, while differentiating three kinds of “*institutional turn*”, the author outlines the debate’s evolution and discusses several types of definitions to be used for institutions and related analytical approaches.

*consist of material restraints, but that should also be made up of legal provisions and cultural rules consolidated throughout history; a context where other organizations having similar aims operate too* (Regini and Ballarino, 2007, p. 15) [Translation by the author]

The above approach also aims at understanding institutionalization procedures related to “organizational fields” (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991), i.e. the set of similar organizations that are part of a given context, by analysing informal rules and social relationships too - and not just formal coordination and control mechanisms. Similarly, North refers to *scaffoldings erected by humans* defining them as the formal rules and informal principles that fix the rules of the game (North, 2005). A renewed interest in institutions that constrain society has been emerging in recent years. What characterizes the current analysis is a growing attention for any kind of institutions, not just for those ones that are traditionally considered government institutions. Such a new trend concerns the whole set of formal and informal institutions, as well as relations and rules. Contemporary economies are increasingly governed by the relationships existing between public players, economic institutions, together with informal elements - *The focus falls on building the wealth of regions (not the individual firm) with upgrading of the economic, institutional and social base* (Amin, 1999, p. 370). In our opinion, not enough attention is being paid to the role of institutions within the cultural economy as far as empirical research is concerned, even though the issue is often emphasized in theoretical investigations. Authors such as Scott, Rantisi or Pratt stress the need to consider formal or informal institutional levels as well.

While analysing the links existing between regional and urban economies and the creative sector, Scott feels the need to point out that the economic sphere of a creative city is closely linked to the institutional and political domain (Scott, 2006, p. 8). Moreover, Pratt and Jeffcutt (2011) emphasize that creativity needs an institutional context which should be able to feed it. According to them, such a context consists of individuals, institutions and government since creativity is a process that brings together different players. Consequently, they conclude that it is necessary to understand how creativity is considered and expressed within different institutional contexts. Finally, Leslie and Rantisi (2006) assert the importance of a study able to tackle the role of institutions, since economic development is more and more linked to institutions’ ability to adjust to changes within an increasingly complex society governed by a multitude of public and private subjects.

Our contribution is aimed at responding to such requests by providing a theoretical and methodological framework that may be used to investigate and

analyse the role of policies and formal institutions in relation to the creative and cultural economy. Therefore, we intend to draft a multidimensional interpretation thread which should facilitate the observation of institutional actions through the effects they produce on the creative and cultural economy. By following the neo-institutionalist approach, we intend to set the cultural industry within the institutional context it refers to, and to identify the kind of effects institutions bring about on local cultural and creative production.

To such purpose, we need to clarify the terms that are going to be used in this paper. By the term “institutions” we refer to what was stated by North who called them *the rules of the game*. Therefore, by “institutions” we mean the regulatory systems which govern and prescribe individual or collective behaviours through a range of incentives and sanctions mechanisms (North, 2005, p. 75). Secondly, when we state that we are aiming at identifying the kind of effects that institutions bring about on local production, we mean that we wish to investigate how an implemented action (or a group of actions) may work on the local cultural and creative production. That is in terms of financial performance improvement, of the sector’s innovative and creative power, of the kind of subjects involved, and of the extent of their involvement. Hence, we are aiming at suggesting an institution analysis model that should be fit to investigate the causal effect of institutions on the single domains of the creative and cultural economy.

### **3 The capitals of the creative and cultural economy**

First of all, before proceeding with our presentation of the methodological picture that we are suggesting, let us recall here the debate we proposed in the first chapter on the creative and cultural economy. This will help us to break the concept down into its main features in order to better grasp the role of supporting actions.

In the first chapter, we briefly traced the history of cultural consumption and we emphasized some of the main transformations in the urban economy: this allowed us to observe that the creative or cultural economy features products (goods or services) whose value is determined by their symbolic and cultural content, rather than by their actual material worth. Moreover, we can add here that a cultural object may be split into three spheres: the innovative and creative aspects that characterize it; the economic setting it belongs to; and, the professional mix that contributed to its creation, or that is involved in other ways. In fact, economic players, cultural agents, creative professionals and innovators are all included, as well as the peculiar streams of knowledge and knowhow that flow amongst the different players concerned. This particular

field is often more thriving when the three aspects (culture, economy and relationships) are intertwined to produce a special mix made of art, business and player networks (Scott, 2006). Borrowing from traditional social sciences language, we may say that cultural economy's products derive from a mix of cultural, economic, and social capitals.

### *3.1 Cultural capital*

The value of a cultural product originates from the cultural, symbolic and artistic content that makes it up, rather than from the physical material it is made of. For example, paper and ink do not determine a book's value, but rather the content of its pages does. Similarly, whenever we buy a perfume, we are aware that its price is not given by the alcohol and fragrances that were used to produce it, but by the whole set of symbols, status and images that are linked to such a perfume. When all those cultural, artistic and creative elements undergo a commercialization process, they are subject to market rules. One of the consequences of such a shift is what Harvey (1990) called *symbolic inflation* - i.e. the process through which every object needs to be continuously re-invented, re-covered by symbols, or re-assembled in order to stand the many challenges of a market that is unceasingly searching for novelties. The endless transformations of fashion styles, intellectual currents and star-system trends are only some of the visible results produced by symbolic inflation. Therefore, to ensure cultural economy's success, it is essential to keep on launching new products on the market, and to create new signs and symbols all the time (Molotch, 2003; Negus, 1997). Hence, cultural capital can be defined as the ability to imbue products with symbols and immaterial value, to continuously innovate and to offer newer and more original products.

### *3.2 Economic capital*

Creative professionals, artists and cultural workers operate according to market logics too, and not only in response to their creativity drive. Financial soundness seems to be especially crucial in the cultural domain, due to at least three kinds of reasons. First of all, competition is particularly harsh in a market that changes very quickly, and that is subject to symbolic inflation (Hirsch, 2000; Pratt, 2006). Secondly, since goods are judged according to their symbolic and aesthetic value, when a new product is launched on the market it is very difficult to predict its success (Entwistle, 2000). Finally, the creative and cultural economy is often characterized by very high production costs, against very low reproduction costs (Bassett et al., 2002). That is the

case of film industry, where production is very expensive, whereas consumers pay a small price to enjoy films. That is what makes investments in culture much more significant compared to the ones of traditional industries, where economies of scale allow for some remarkable cost reduction.

### *3.3 Social capital*

The role and influence of social capital have been evaluated by many authors in relation to any social aspects, from politics to economy, from family to social movements (see Andreotti, 2009; Woolcock, 2001 for an overview of the debate on the topic). However, both theoretical analyses and empirical researches show that this kind of capital is peculiar (even though not exclusively) to creativity- or culture-based economy. First of all, more significantly than other industries, the cultural domain is organized into networks that tend to expand both horizontally (if interaction occurs amongst same-level operators) and vertically (when operators from different levels cooperate to produce a given product). Moreover, one of the crucial aspects of the creative and cultural economy is the development of co-presence conditions, or face-to-face relationships. Evidence gathered shows that such relationships can actually work as useful tools to foster creativity (Becker, 1982; Molotch, 2002), to establish trusting relations (Banks et al., 2000), to provide legitimacy and recognition (Storper and Venables, 2004), and to secure new appointments and projects (Pratt, 2000) much more than in other industries. We discussed the issue extensively in the first chapter. In chapter four we will deeply explore the relation between social capital (expressed in thick relational networks) and the creative and cultural economy of Milan, Italy.

The model that we wish to put forward for the study of institutional impacts on the creative and cultural economy is based on such a breakdown into different capitals, and it suggests that the way institutions act on each capital should also be investigated, and broken down into the effects produced on cultural, economic and social capitals.

## **4 Seven case studies to build an analytical framework**

The starting point of our work is a cross-section secondary analysis of seven case studies found in literature where a set of policies and actions by formal institutions have been assessed. The case studies in question were then broken down and reassembled by applying the suggested analytical model. Such case studies are not meant to be representative samples for any possible case, nor

did we mean to provide a sort of taxonomy, but, as examples of institutional support, they can be considered as some good starting points upon which we tried to build our analytical proposal. Out of the seven case-studies, four of them are public-led institutions, while three of them are private organizations (although one is owned by a public body).

1) *Centre National de la Cinématographie* (France). CNC is a public organization which supports the French film industry in different ways: through offering loans, by supporting several training and educational activities, by sponsoring the Cannes Film Festival, by organising a number of events to provide social contact opportunities to producers, directors, operators and so on. Special attention is devoted to technology innovation through the work of an *ad hoc* commission, the *Commission Supérieure Technique de l'Image et du Son* (CST), which focuses on sustaining research in the field of technology innovation and audiovisual applications (<http://www.cnc.fr> [Last accessed on September, 2015]).

2) *Provincial Tax Credit Programme* (Canada). It is a special programme developed by Quebec's *Département de économie, innovation et exportations* aimed at granting tax credit to companies based within Quebec. The companies wishing to benefit from the programme should use the services offered by qualified designers for various applications, such as industrial design, fashion, furniture production, and so on (<http://www.economie.gouv.qc.ca> [Last accessed in September, 2015]).

3) *Société De Développement Des Entreprises Culturelles* (SODEC) (Canada) is a Montreal's province agency directly supervised by the Canadian Ministry of Culture. It offers support services for marketing and distribution of products manufactured by artisan-style, or almost artisan-style, companies. It also operates as a commercial bank ([http:// www.sodec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/home](http://www.sodec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/home) [Last accessed on September, 2015]).

4) During the annual competition known as *Commerce Design Montreal* (Canada), organized by Montreal's municipality as one of IDM's programmes, several prizes are awarded to public venues that renew their interiors through innovative design efforts by using local designers (Leslie and Rantisi, 2006).

5) *Institute of Design Montreal* (IDM) (Canada) is a non-profit organization set up by Montreal's municipality whose official mission is "to promote design as an economic value and have Montreal become a design centre of international calibre" (Leslie and Rantisi, 2006). Amongst its programmes, it is worth mentioning the Institute's active role concerning the organization of workshops and conferences, scholarships and internships offered to design university students, financing solutions devised for young designers to start-up their businesses, and the support given to companies to integrate production with design.

6) *Langhe Consortium* (Piedmont, Italy). The Consortium represents an example of what Santagata (2004) defined “institutionalized cultural districts” to identify those local productive contexts where a special brand is adopted by producers to preserve the quality standard of their goods. Another example of such a phenomenon can be found in the Chianti region, in Tuscany. Within those contexts wine production is protected through a DOC label (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata* – Controlled Designation of Origin) which ensures the high quality of grapes and production methods (<http://www.langhe.it> [Last accessed in September, 2015]).

7) *Banca Etica* (Italy). It is a commercial bank whose activities are based on ethical finance principles (transparency, credit access right, efficiency, and attention for non-economic consequences of economic activities) ([www.bancaetica.it](http://www.bancaetica.it) [Last accessed on September, 2015]). Amongst its different credit activities, the bank offers loans to theatre companies working in jails, or working with ethnic minorities, disadvantaged groups and so on (Cliche et al., 2002).

**Tab. 1 Case studies**

	Institutions	Public/private	Description
1	<i>Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC)</i> (France)	Public	Backing offered to French movie industry.
2	<i>Tax Credit Programme</i> (Canada)	Public	Tax credit granted to companies using the services offered by designers.
3	<i>Société Général des Industries Culturelles (SODEC)</i> (Canada)	Public	It supports marketing and production of artisan-style products and companies.
4	<i>Commerce Design Montreal</i> (Canada)	Public	Prizes awarded to public venues featuring innovative design.
5	<i>Institute of Design Montréal (IDM)</i> (Canada)	Private	It provides support on Montreal’s design industry.
6	<i>Langhe Consortium</i> (Italy)	Private	Adoption of protective measures to safeguard local production.
7	<i>Banca Etica</i> (Italy)	Private	Financial solutions offered to associations dealing with social inclusion through cultural activities.

## 5 Institutions at work

The seven case studies investigated here can be rearranged keeping in mind the analytical framework that was introduced above - i.e. by considering where they mainly affect the economic, social or cultural capital of the given segment in the creative and cultural economy. Therefore, for example, *Banca Etica* acts on the economic capital, likewise the *Centre National de la Cinématographie* in France. On the other hand, the *Commerce Design Montreal* has an effect on cultural capital, whereas the Montreal's *Institute of Design* deals with social capital.

Such a description does not produce great benefits, as it seems to provide nothing more than a taxonomic kind of classification. Nevertheless, one advantage that such a model may offer is an in-depth analysis of their impact on individual cases. In fact, apart from investigating the area where they directly influence, it is also possible to study indirect effects brought about by such actions, and that is exactly what we are going to illustrate in the following pages. Supporting actions implemented by formal institutions and policies may encourage local cultural production, or they might have unpredictable results in other areas, or even hinder such a production.

Let us now start with an analysis, which takes into account both the direct and indirect impacts of institutions. Firstly, we can look at two institutions sustaining a whole local sector of the economy - i.e. CNC in France, which promotes film industry's initiatives, and IDM in Montreal, which fosters the design industry.

CNC's action has been analysed by Scott (2000) in a research on the French film industry. First of all, Scott explains how the main role of CNC is that of acting as a sort of coordination agency that contributes to establish some useful links amongst the different subjects involved, by providing financial support where needed on the one hand, and by creating relationships on the other. Moreover, through a specific commission called CST (*Commission supérieure technique de l'image e du son*) it promotes technological development too. Therefore, CNC's action can be seen as directly aimed at strengthening economic capital (tax load reduction), as well as at enhancing innovation capital (mainly through CST) and, finally, social capital too. In particular, the latter level of activity can be considered as the key one, since the pluralism of the different subjects involved is actually the strongest point of the French film industry (Benghozi, 1989).

IDM's official aim concerns acting on the economic sphere of the design industry. To such purpose IDM operates to establish player networks, both between institutional and private players, and amongst private operators



(Leslie and Rantisi, 2006). Therefore, its activity is devoted to social capital with an aim at increasing economic capital through feeding innovation. In fact, IDM offers a special scheme to allow designers and small/medium-size companies link up with each other, by promoting designers on the one hand, and, on the other, by organising consulting services to identify those aspects of product definition that should be improved. IDM organizes conferences and brainstorming sessions where designers, trade operators, scholars and politicians are invited to ponder and discuss various topics related to design industry.

The following two institutions, by directly supporting the economic capital, contribute, indirectly, also to the development of cultural innovation: indeed, we will see that in Italy, theatre activities are facilitated through some new kinds of cooperation between private companies and third-sector organizations; whereas in Montreal, artisan-style companies are encouraged to express their creativity by establishing a self-supporting “virtuous circle”.

*Banca Etica* in Italy acts directly on the economic capital by lending money at low interest rates to theatre companies operating in non-conventional circumstances (e.g. ethnic/language minorities, situations of social marginalization). Through its activity, the bank sustains a network of private, public and third-sector players that would not be able to survive otherwise. The networks generate a strong social capital that produces innovation in theatre production. It has been observed (Cliche et al., 2002) that cultural production originating from such social capital is extremely innovative and radical, with the capacity even to enhance theatre production at large. Hence, it might be plausible to assume that, in addition to a direct impact on economic capital, such institutional activities can further strengthen social capital too, that, in turn, generates cultural capital for the broader sector.

SODEC is a state-run company that plays a role which is similar to the one performed by *Banca Etica*. In fact, it provides financial support to companies by funding internships and training programmes, or by acting as a proper bank. Nevertheless, its actions are directed toward helping small, artisan-style companies devoted to creative and cultural activities which are the very hub of local creativity and innovation (Leslie and Rantisi, 2006). Even when SODEC operates as a bank, it shows a remarkable ability to appreciate the economic value of creativity featured by cultural products and, consequently, it tends to apply low interest rates. So, its explicit actions are directed toward economic capital, which then translates into support for innovation capital.

In the *Langhe* consortium’s case, institutional cultural districts produce both positive and negative effects in relation to backing local production and improving its performance (Santagata, 2006).

The main resulting virtuous effects can be summed up as follows: a) community culture protection for a given area through the creation of a special brand that can only be used by local producers; b) protection against unauthorized reproduction of local assets, and incentives aimed at promoting high-quality production; c) enhancement of local producers' networks and fostering of information exchange; d) definition of quality standards that, in turn, attract new producers that are able to maintain the same standards and prevent unfair competition; e) finally, as a consequence of the above chain reactions, prices increase backed by an improvement of product quality. Institutional local districts originate from the formalisation (institutionalization) of network of local players and, therefore, stem from local social capital. The effects of such a background can be appreciated in terms of improvement and increase of cultural capital (in this instance capital originates from local culture) which, in turn, is reflected on economic capital too. However, some negative effects have been identified in the institutionalized cultural districts in general, and regarding the *Langhe* consortium, too. Indeed, such institutions may encourage free-rider behaviour, if individuals or groups of local producers that use the consortium's brand offer low-quality goods (Santagata, 2006). In such circumstances, it may also happen that agents interested in the quality of local production do not use the brand and exit the consortium, damaging the specific culture even more seriously. Such situations arise when the institution in question weakens, i.e. when the social capital that originated the same institution diminishes. In that case, players that are only interested in economic capital take advantage of the institution for such a purpose to the detriment of culture capital.

*Commerce Design Montreal*, for instance, achieves some rather scarce positive goals, and is not able to provide a truly sound support to the design industry (Leslie and Rantisi, 2006). From some points of view, the programme was a success – public areas gained visibility and reputation; work opportunities increased for designers; people's curiosity for design was aroused; and tourism, too, benefited from the scheme. Nevertheless, results were more linked to city revamping and tourism, rather than to design industry support. Such an activity that mainly focuses on transferring money, and only partly on enhancing designers' and public area's social capital, appears unable to produce positive results in terms of cultural capital.

Similarly, when considering the *Provincial Tax Credit* scheme there are some doubts about the actual significance of such a project (Leslie and Rantisi, 2006). In particular, two aspects are usually highlighted in this respect; first of all, the programme's timing is not clear; secondly, the scheme is focused on design seen as a cost to be incurred, and not as a value in its own right. So, once again, the role played by this institution seems to be mainly centred

on economic capital, and only partly on social capital, whereas it is hardly effective on innovation capital.

## 6 Institutions, culture and creativity

We have aimed at providing a theoretical and methodological picture that should allow for a closer investigation on actions to be carried out considering three different aspects: innovation and creativity (cultural capital); financial strength (economic capital); and networking (social capital). Through the illustration of seven case studies, we have shown how the model suggested can be used to break down institutional actions in order to analyse their effectiveness into the creative and cultural economy. Our contribution should continue by suggesting some other issues that are not always worked out by researchers dealing with the creative and cultural economy, nor by players in charge of governing local territories.

The first question concerns the relationship between art and economy. In the seven case studies described here, institutions that tend to favour cultural capital directly operate on the economic sphere, and are hardly interested in the artistic one. In our opinion, another challenge should be tackled - i.e. the need to act in a more “hybrid” fashion, trying to keep the two domains connected. In particular, as suggested yet many years ago by O’Connor (O’Connor, 2000), a rethinking of the role played by art seems to be much needed, especially in its relation to the market. We agree with O’Connor, and we also wish to stress how, by now, it seems inadequate to consider the two domains as completely separated. Relevant questions arising concern institutional action and sociological analysis – i.e. how can art and economy be kept together? How can institutions support both capitals without favouring one to the detriment of the other? From a sociological analysis perspective, an effort needs to be made in order to understand the importance of those two worlds, trying to maintain a unified vision.

Secondly, the positive aspects of networks have been discussed at length, and it will be discussed in depth in the next chapter, let us anticipate here some comments about their failures. We will see that if networks are too tight they may hinder innovation when they tend to reject outside influences, and when they get structured in such a manner that prevents the exchange of ideas and information. Scott observed that: *cut-throat competition, low levels of trust, or a failure to recognize the mutual interdependence of all upon all can lead to dysfunctional outcomes, but relevant agencies, such as industry associations or some sorts of private–public partnership, can sometimes provide frameworks for remedial action* (Scott, 2006, p. 6). What we wish to highlight here is the

importance of the support provided by subjects that are deeply rooted in local culture – public and private players establishing partnerships with third-sector organizations (e.g. *Banca Etica*) are good examples of networks that may bring about some positive effects on cultural capital too. A mix of weak and strong links amongst different players, at different levels, can be more productive than a few strongly focused actions. For example, thanks to the role played by CNC which supports the weaker players, the French cinema industry can manage to succeed within the international market.

Through the case studies described in this chapter, we have attempted to show also a last point: that culture relates not only with the economic development, but also, and especially, to the social one and more broadly to social inclusion. In some circumstances economic performance proceed at the same pace as social innovation and inclusion (e.g. French cinema industry, or local culture enhanced by brands and consortiums), whereas in other situations (e.g. *Banca Etica*) social motivation prevails over economic value, but the resulting culture innovation can generate a creativity virtuous circle that may become economically successful too. In Montreal, cultural policies are driven by financial concern, but are also motivated by some strong interest in supporting local culture (especially through the SODEC scheme). Institutions and politics own the tools in order to follow such paths. They should use them more often.

## Chapter 4

# Social networks in the creative and cultural economy. The case of Milan, Italy<sup>1</sup>

This chapter explores the elements at the bases of the success of the creative and cultural economy in the Metropolitan Area of Milan, Italy. In particular the focus will be on interactions and social networks among professionals and workers in such industry.

As deeply explored in the first chapter, the transition between Fordism and post-Fordism is characterized by the shift from a mass-production of goods and services for a mass-market, to a market based on symbolic value and on goods customization (at least from an aesthetic point of view). Today, production is depending increasingly by intellectual and immaterial resources (as, for instance, designers' creativity, software engineers' knowledge, advertising professionals' inventiveness or architects' competence) while it is less and less linked to routines or production process division. Obviously, symbolic elements have always been present in the economy, but, in the past, costs reduction through production mechanization and work division was more important than today. On the contrary, in the contemporary economy, workers' rational, intellectual and emotional faculties are valued because crucial for the production of goods and the provision of services that are un-standardized and highly based on cognitive and cultural elements (Scott, 2008a). It is therefore important to explore the links between the local development and the creative and cultural economy, investigating in depth which factors are able to stimulate growth and to strengthen such industries. In other words, we challenge the "creative city" paradigm as a model for local development.

The chapter will examine the creative and cultural economy<sup>2</sup> of the Metropolitan Area of Milan, an area with a mature post-Fordist economy, consistent with other major European cities, characterized by the central position given to knowledge and creativity for the local economic development. Both at the urban and at the regional scale the economy based on information,

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1 An early version of this chapter has been published, in Italian, as: d'Ovidio, Marianna. 2010. "Network Locali Nell'economia Cognitiva-Culturale. Il Caso Di Milano." *Rassegna Italiana Di Sociologia*. 51 (3): 459.

2 For the aims of the research we built a practical definition of the creative and cultural economy including both the economic sectors based on creativity and local culture (economic sectors: fashion, design, publishing, advertising) and those which rely extensively on knowledge (economic sectors: HR activities, software and informatics, consultancy, finance).

creativity, innovation and knowledge is expanding, together with the typical segment of manufacture and the so-called “made in Italy” (Bonomi, 2008; Mingione et al., 2007; Rullani, 2004).

We will discuss the role of a number of elements in fostering the creative and cultural economy, particularly the functions of face-to-face relations among workers in the economy that are eased by the spatial concentration of economic activities.

## **1 The geography of the creative and cultural economy**

Here we briefly recall some of the most important features of the urban creative and cultural economy, referring to the first chapter for a broader analysis.

We saw that the creative and cultural economy is characterized by a peculiar geography: although it encompasses goods and services aimed at the global market, cultural sectors, more than others, are intimately linked to local contexts. In this sense, with a very meaningful expression, Lash and Urry talked about *Economy of signs and spaces* (1994) as to indicate from the one hand the progressive aestheticization of the economy, and, from the other, the strong relation of the economy with the space. Cities represent the places where the relation between cultural production and the local context becomes more explicit; such relation, as we saw in previous chapters of the book, has been largely discussed within the social theory. Above all, here we underline just those elements focusing on the creative and cultural economy as an engine for urban growth and local development.

The academic tradition that investigates local development has been focusing for long time on elements able to support or, contrarily, hamper the economy in city-regions. Increasingly, both classical and new elements are considered together in the researches about which elements are able to support the urban economy. Therefore, local and national policies, the local labour market, transport and communication infrastructures are observed as well as cultural elements (such as the openness and easiness of social relations, tolerance towards newcomers...), the presence of social capital or the quality of life.

Many researches analysing the economy based on knowledge, creativity and culture, emphasize the importance of the second group of elements, often neglecting the first class of supporting factors. Among them, one of the most echoed theories is that by Florida (2005a, 2002), that was presented in chapter one.

Briefly, we recall that, following his interpretation, the presence of the so-called creative class (professionals and operators working the advanced urban

economy, such as fashion, design, engineering, software, highly specialized services and so on...) represents a crucial factor in the urban economy. Creatives share common behaviours and manners and they supposedly have a very high residential mobility, looking for urban contexts where the quality of life is good, services are excellent, cultural facilities are outstanding<sup>3</sup>. Cities should therefore forget about traditional old economic policies and offer high quality standard of life, beautiful neighbourhoods and avant-guard museums, so to attract the creative class.

His theories received much attention both in the academic realm and, in particular, in the implementation of local policies aimed at boosting the urban economy. Many cities, particularly in the North America, but also elsewhere, put in actions policies of *beautification* of cities and neighbourhoods in the name of the creative class, whose members, following Florida's recipe, would move, create jobs and give the local economy a boost.

Florida's theories have been strongly criticized by many scholars, both from a theoretical point of view and from the empirical evidences collected in rigorous researches. In general, researches acknowledge that today also soft elements are supporting the economy, but they have to be accompanied by hard and traditional policies (above all, we recall the works done by Bonomi, 2008; Bovone, 2005; Leslie and Rantisi, 2011; Markusen, 2006; Mommaas, 2004; Storper and Scott, 2009).

Very broadly, we can classify the approaches exploring how to support the creative and cultural economy in three main groups.

The first one is linked to the Florida's thesis: both Florida's advocates and the ones who criticize him, observe the city as a whole and they assess if and to what extent the cultural economy is linked to the urban economic growth (Florida, 2005a; Krätke, 2012; Landry, 2000; Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Thiel, 2015).

The second group of works concentrates on the preconditions and paths taken by those contexts where the cultural economy developed. We can recall here Hall's *Cities in Civilization* (1998) which is in between an economic history of cities and a social analysis. Zukin's explorations on the role of particular institutions (Zukin, 2000) or communities (Zukin, 2009) can be also mentioned as part of this group, as well as, for instance, Musterd's analysis on the socio-historical conditions that favoured the economic development in the Amsterdam area (Musterd, 2006).

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3 In Florida's terminology, these local elements attracting the creative class are called *soft factors* to be separated by the *hard* ones, such as the elements typical of the "old" local development policies.

Finally, the last stream of researches about the development of the creative and cultural economy in cities concentrates on the analysis of social relations among workers. The most important analysis is that performed by Scott (2008a, 2000) analysing workers as part of creative communities. Scott identifies the importance of the creative communities in three main tasks. Firstly, the urban creative communities settle not only where cultural labour force is concentrated, but they are also, and especially, active centres of cultural reproduction: the intense interactions among individuals represent the fabric that supports their community. Indeed, communities are working and developing thanks to their function as magnets for talented individuals from other places who migrate in search of professional fulfilment (Scott, 1999, p. 809). In this sense, communities assure themselves the constant presence of new individuals and, at the same time, gain novelty and innovation.

Secondly, communities develop intense relationships with local (cultural) institutions: museums, expositions, schools, and universities. In particular, schools and universities are significant, for they prepare the new generations of cultural workers; often creative workers act also as teachers and instructors in schools, assuring that the new generations practise their technique. The example of fashion is particular clear in this sense: many of the fashion designers teach also in the fashion universities or colleges and often they employ students as practitioners in their ateliers. Many of the fashion *maisons*, moreover, recruit labour force during the student's final year shows, thus gaining new ideas, innovations and at the same time skilled people. Another example showing the links between cultural communities and institutions are exhibitions and fairs that provide places and events for artists to show their creations.

Finally, communities represent the social context where face-to-face interactions multiplied with specific and important functions, as we will see below. Workers in the creative and cultural economy tend to work and live in the same neighbourhoods in order to have more chances to meet other people and to exchange ideas with them. For instance, the community of new media in London is heavily reliant in interactions in order to develop ideas, exchange information and knowledge, in a process of collective learning which is extremely useful for the industry to advance (Pratt, 2013b).

The concept of creative communities as proposed by Scott and developed by Pratt offers very useful tools: it allows acknowledging the evolution of the economy in the post-Fordist cities, in particular as far as the social capital among workers is concerned. Researches extensively show that the agglomeration of the cultural economy in cities is mainly due to the need of building social ties based on frequent and daily interaction (Banks et al., 2000; Chapple et al., 2010; Currid, 2007; d'Ovidio, 2010a; Pratt, 2013b; Scott, 2000), thus offering



a theoretical toolbox allowing the development of new and more complex set of questions on the links among local economic development, the urban cultural economy and the social relations.

Starting from these theoretical premises, now we can be clearer about this chapter's aims: we are going to examine the creative and cultural economy of Milan, Italy, and, using such perspective, we will connect the local development of the city with the local creative and cultural economy and with social capital among workers.

## 2 Social relations and local development

The Italian tradition of researches on the industrial districts has been exploring and debating for long time the links between social relations and local development (Bagnasco, 1977; Becattini, 2004; Brusco, 1982; Trigilia, 1986).

The theoretical interest on the importance of social relations and face-to-face interactions rises from the focus on the co-location of the economic activities. Of course, the spatial concentration of firms is not at all a new phenomenon. In 1890 Marshall described the powerful dynamics of *industrial districts*, a geographic agglomeration of firms, cooperating and working together. He argued that an important portion of the growth of the British economy was due to the development of several cases of localized industries characterized by an "industrial atmosphere" able to increase productivity. It is a set of formal and informal traditions and practices which were developed among actors in the districts, a mixture of behaviours institutionalized in the industrial culture. In such a localized economy there were many positive factors, such as the attraction of various intermediate and subsidiary industries providing inputs to the localized firms, the creation and growth of a pool of skilled and specialized labour, the development of specialized machinery amongst local firms involving different stages of the same industry, and finally the spillover of knowledge and technology between local firms. Localized economies increased the competitiveness of the industry and the area in question, with advantages in trade and production.

In the 1970s, Bagnasco described a particular situation in the central and north-east part of Italy, called *Terza Italia*, in order to differentiate it from the north-western one characterized by large-scale mass production and the less developed south of Italy (Bagnasco, 1999, 1977). He found that there were agglomerations of small firms, which developed strong cooperative relations and which had been able to survive to the economic downturn of those years. He noticed how important were social relations in keeping these agglomerations,

which he named industrial districts following Marshall's concept. Brusco (1982) highlighted the "productive decentralization and social integration" as the main character of such regional specialization. Indeed, social relations within and among firms, between firms and their surrounding community represent certainly the main aspects of the Italian industrial districts. Most of the workers own very specific skills and entrepreneurs cooperate together with their employers: the small dimension of firms eases good relations to be built within firms; workers know almost everything of the firm, so it is not difficult to move for being an employee to be an entrepreneur, and often to collaborate with the former employer. The division of labour is flexible, and hierarchies are flat, mainly thanks again to the small size of the firms. The need to be competitive, to offer new products, and to exploit market gaps, are among the main reasons why flexible production in small firms is very successful. Conception and production, separated in the Taylorist and Fordist organization are now integrated in this kind of production. The regional specialization of the Third Italy implies the development of an industrial system composed of inter-linked but independently own production units, not just a co-presence of small firms, or subcontractors of a large one (Bagnasco, 1999).

Porter described as *clusters* the spatial agglomeration of economic activities. He defines a cluster as "geographically proximate group of interconnected-companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities" (Porter, 2000, p. 254, 1998). Many geographers have focused on the concept of soft externalities, such as local, social, institutional and cultural foundations of clusters, and other "untraded interdependencies" among firms forming the cluster. Spillover of knowledge (both tacit and codified) and collective learning, are two main assets of clusters. Interest in clusters has, especially in recent years, arisen in the policy agenda, as politicians see in clusters a new way for developing and strengthening the economy. Although much criticized for the oversimplification and sometimes misleading rhetoric of Porter's idea, the cluster concept gained soon a large success, in particular because its political implications seemed both quite simple (namely sustaining the co-location of firms) and able to respond quickly to the need of an economic revamp of many regions<sup>4</sup>.

The Marshallian idea that an industrial atmosphere represents a competitive advantages for industries co-located in the same territory translates in the generic advantages rising from proximity of activities, that, as we already saw in the first chapter, has been labelled "buzz" (Storper and Venables, 2004). This concept refers to the idea that a context (often, although not exclusively,

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4 For a complete set of critiques to Porter's concept of cluster see (Martin and Sunley, 2003)

an urban one) is vibrant thanks to the many different occasions to meet people, share knowledge and information, see things and so on. “Actors who are located –literally- *in* the pool are exposed to noise. That is, actors [...] are surrounded by a concoction of rumours, impressions, recommendations, trade folklore and strategic misinformation” (Grabher, 2002, p. 209). More specific, buzz refers to the whole set of benefit that derives from direct interactions and face-to-face contacts.

This buzz consists of specific information and continuous updates of this information, intended and unanticipated learning processes in organized and accidental meetings, the application of the same interpretative schemes and mutual understanding of new knowledge and technologies, as well as shared cultural traditions and habits within a particular technology field, which stimulate the establishment of conventions and other institutional arrangements (Bathelt et al., 2004, p. 38).

### **3 Social capital in the urban cultural economy**

The chapter examines proximity relations as they originate face-to-face interactions that are expression of social capital<sup>5</sup>. Aiming at investigating the development of the creative and cultural economy in Milan, we will explore contents and functions of social interactions among workers in the creative and cultural industries. Yet, there is a new need of exploring the field of social capital, *vis-à-vis* the transformations that characterize the post-Fordist economy (Bagnasco, 2003).

Indeed, we have to understand the extents to which the city is able to sustain the rising and development of such an important economic sector: relations among workers in the creative communities (in the meaning used by Scott) can be one of the “keys to the city” (Storper, 2013) in order to re-compose the complex picture of the local urban development in the post-Fordist economy.

Since the seminal work of Goffman (Goffman, 1959) and Garfinkel (Garfinkel, 1967), face-to-face relations have been considered the richest communication medium, because in a face-to-face context communication occurs on many levels at the same time – verbal, physical, contextual, intentional, and non-intentional. Such multidimensional communication is essential to the transmission of complex, uncodifiable, tacit knowledge. The rise of the creative and cultural industries, which rely to an enormous extent on this kind of knowledge, has

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5 Not all proximity relations are conducive to the production of social capital and, using Pizzorno’s words, we should consider only those relations where participants have a recognized identity and where, at the same time, solidarity and reciprocity are the outcome of the relation itself (Pizzorno, 1999)

renewed the focus on face-to-face interaction and its functions in the coordination of the economy. For many of these industries there is empirical evidence that face-to-face interaction remains a crucial means of communication for highly skilled workers, despite the development of new communication technologies and the low cost of their use. The reliance on direct interaction, and the requirement of physical proximity that this entails, are part of the explanation of the clustering of these industries in cities and in specific neighbourhoods of cities.

Studies on different creative and cultural industries have shown that face-to-face communication performs several functions. First, cultural workers spend time, money and energy in face-to-face interaction because they need to build relationships conducive to trust and to mutually renew and confirm that trust over time. Trustworthy relations are necessary because of the nature of knowledge involved in their work, which entails individual ability, sensibility, taste and lifestyle that can be communicated and transferred only through a personal relationship based on mutual trust. Trust thus makes easier the sharing of different cultural assets and skills necessary for collective projects. Because more and more cultural products are the result of the coming together of different special skills and distinct forms of human capital, trust is a prerequisite for successful collaboration. Banks *et alii* (Banks et al., 2000) in the analysis of Mancunian cultural industries have shown how networks and informal spaces of social interaction were conducive to non-planned cooperation and the development of new products. In his work on new media workers, Pratt (Pratt, 2013b, 2000) stresses the need for frequent face-to-face interaction and relationships of familiarity among them.

Secondly, trust is also important in the creation of dense networks which tie together cultural workers in community-like formations based on common sensibilities, aesthetic orientation and cultural values. Workers learn common behaviours and skills, they develop specific knowledge on “how-to-do” and, more importantly, “how-to-be” (Negrelli, 2005). Within the community, knowledge is shared “horizontally” among the actual participants but also “vertically”, that is, transmitted over time from one generation to the next (Scott, 2000). The network/community thus performs a socialization function, since through the interaction with its members, individuals learn the ‘codes’, acquire specific criteria of judgment which, in turn, signal to others that they belong to the same social world. Through this process of “getting into the loop” (Storper and Venables, 2004) the network selects its members and defines and reproduces its identity: as a result, individuals’ qualities and skills are recognized as adequate to belonging to the group and the group defines its cultural capital. Once in the network, due to the fact that group members have an interest in maintaining a high standard of quality, there is constant monitoring

and assessing of one another: thanks to frequent and extended interactions the network guarantees the competence of its members and produces reputation capital for them, which results in a reduction of risk and information costs, enables more efficient partnering in joint projects and increases motivation in collaborative efforts. As in the creative and cultural industries there are no formal credentials that can guarantee about a professional's talent, individual's reputation, which derives from being recognized as belonging to the creative community, is of paramount importance. Moreover, due to the flexible, unstable nature of cultural work, which is performed mostly on the basis of short-term contract projects and forces cultural workers to be committed to different temporary jobs at any given time (Menger, 1999; Storper and Christopherson, 1987), they are constantly on the lookout for new jobs or better contracts. The network provides them with the reputation and the contacts needed to further their careers (Pratt, 2013b; Wittel, 2001).

Finally, face-to-face interactions are said to be connected with creativity. Its importance for the cultural industries cannot be overstated, as they combine artistic expression and creativity with material production, tradable goods and, to a greater or lesser extent, market-based consumption. The conception, production and manipulation of symbols, signs and ideas employed in making a movie, a video game, a music CD or a fashion collection are much less the result of the creativity of single individuals and much more the outcome of intense interaction among a critical mass of highly skilled, creative individuals in an environment which promotes and rewards creativity. Becker's pioneer study of the art world (1974) has shown the socially constructed nature of the production of works of art. Far from being the result of a spark of inspiration of an individual artist, a work of art is the outcome of a process involving different actors, of whom the artist herself is the last in a long chain. The process is mostly carried out through face-to-face interaction of the actors involved, who agree on value judgements, share conventions and mutually adjust to each other's orientation and style; by doing so, they are able to effectively collaborate in the final definition of the work of art. More recently, the work of Molotch on the design industry (2003, 2002) has shown that, in the creative process leading to the production of "new things", geographical proximity is considered vital, as it increases the opportunities for interaction among designers and for unplanned, inter-network contacts with other creative communities; in turn, these frequent face-to-face contacts and encounters are crucial to the enhancement of creativity.

From this literature review, it emerges that face-to-face interactions are extremely vital for the creative and cultural economy; consequently, in order to value the capacity of a given context to develop, it is important to explore

which different functions are performed by social relations. This will help us to value the so-called *local relational capacity* (Trigilia, 2007) that is the mix of cultural, institutional, local elements which sustain the creation of social relations and social capital. Without questioning the role of traditional elements in fostering the local development, which remain crucial, but valuing also the rising importance of the *soft* factors (in the Floridian meaning), we argue that if we want to explore the local development of a given context, we must include an analysis of local relational factors.

Trigilia calls it the *social quality of the context*: “Environments that sustain, more than others do, the exchange of knowledge and forms of cooperation [...]. In the conditions of the contemporary economy, the social and relational dimensions of innovation are becoming more important than the organizational ones. At the same time, the embeddedness of economy activities turns out to be more important than in the past”<sup>6</sup> (Trigilia, 2007, p. 12).

#### 4 Creativity and culture in the Milanese region

With the aim of exploring the supporting elements, but also those that could hamper the creative and cultural economy in Milan, we will make use of a set of interviews that have been collected in 2008<sup>7</sup>. Interviews were semi-structured or completely open, focusing on the supporting or hindering factors that characterized the professional life of the interviewee<sup>8</sup>. In particular, we emphasized on crucial moments in the professional history, such as when they decided to open an activity in Milan, or entered the economic field, or started a new important project and so on. In the following chapter the focus will be on the foreign workers and in the attractiveness of Milan towards the international creative and cultural workers; here, we are interested in understanding which elements are able to facilitate (or impede) the development of the creative and cultural economy in Milan, both in the Italian workers’ and the foreigners’ opinions.

When asked about the most important elements for the Milanese creative and cultural economy, our interviewees usually refer to transport and

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6 English translation by the author

7 In particular we will make a secondary use of data collected for the research ACRE ([www.acre.socsci.uva.nl](http://www.acre.socsci.uva.nl)): 25 interviews to Italian workers in the cultural economy of Milan, 21 interviews to foreigners workers in the cultural economy of Milan, a focus group with key informants (a sociologist, an art critic, a design school manager, a policy maker, a network of foreign entrepreneurs director). Within the cultural economy for the research the following sectors were included: fashion, design and web-design, media, software, high-level services for companies.

8 We are interested in professionals’ social interactions in relation with the development of the cultural economy, not on the social relations themselves: for this reasons we did not use social network analysis.

communication infrastructures, the economic primacy of Milan in the Italian context, the presence of a good labour market and so on. Those are, indeed, all traditional elements that, in the opinion of scholars such as Florida, were supposed to be replaced by newer and *softer* factors.

However, for many industrial sectors in the creative and cultural economy, the presence of successful activities in near sectors is an attractive element of paramount importance, in a virtuous circle of agglomeration and local development. For instance, the rise and development of the fashion industry (which has been presented in the second chapter as a typical segment of the urban creative and cultural economy) in Milan is partially explained by the presence of a strong textile industry with a very long tradition (White, 2000). The same happens for the industrial design sector, whose success is partially due to the strong local craftsmanship know-how; the finance sector, that attracts in the city a large number of activities linked to the high-level consultancy and administrative services. Moreover, the agglomeration of economic activities, typical of the metropolitan regions, translates also in a strong concentration of working opportunities and qualified labour. Within the most traditional elements, surprisingly, our interviewees did not mention the role of local government as crucial in any stage of their professional life: they usually do not recall any formal sustain by public body, not by collective actor (as the Chamber of Commerce, for instance).

From this very preliminary presentation of Milan, it emerges that classical, or Fordist, elements are still very important for local development of the creative and cultural economy: the presence and quality of infrastructures, the labour market and the presence of solid industries, which attract new firms. All these elements, in the interviewees' opinion, are not enough sustained by local or national institutions and are said to be quite obsolete and not able anymore to act as a real breeding ground for the emerging economy.

*The city is dead. Milan prefers to die rather than generate new things. Nobody takes the responsibility of making reforms [...]. The whole Country goes on without anyone directing it and taking the political responsibility. (Actor and activist)*

Indeed, the classical factors that are usually mentioned as attracting factors for the economy, are also, at the same time, criticized for not being constantly renovated. This is the case for transport infrastructures, or for communication ones. Also the labour market is, in certain sectors, not completely appropriate. When compared with other countries, Italy is often complained as not able to offer enough support.

Milan, in particular, is said to be relying too much on the past heritage, when, in the 1960s it was the centre of the big transformation of the whole country

and the Italian economic capital. The path-dependency is very strong, but the city needs to be up-to-dated.

#### *4.1 Networks of workers in the cultural economy*

The density of economic activities, the physical proximity of professionals, and the cultural habits of interaction translate into a thick network of relations that plays a crucial role in the interviewees' experiences.

Researches on the Milanese creative and cultural economy reveal that it is exactly the mix of peculiar geography and local culture that is at the basis of the strong networking of professional in the city (Bertolino and Cominu, 2011; Bonomi, 2012; Bovone, 2005; Bovone et al., 2005; d'Ovidio, 2010a, 2010b; d'Ovidio and Mugnano, 2008; Mingione et al., 2010). Urban territorial borders enclose a relatively small space, especially in comparison with other European cities. Yet, the space is even smaller if we observe the symbolic environment of the city whereby the city centre, as in the medieval *borgo*, represents the space that one has to occupy in order to demonstrate one's importance (in economic, cultural or symbolic terms). Moreover, the city has (still) a rather provincial attitude, where the coolest the event, the central place (territorially) it deserves; the few newly gentrified neighbourhoods where large number of creative and knowledge activities concentrate, are not far from the city centre (Arcidiacono and Piga, 2007; Bruzzese et al., 2015; d'Ovidio and Ponzini, 2014).

Moreover, and more importantly, empirical researches support the existence of a cultural element that privileges the informal over the formal, with a primacy of word-of-mouth over formalized information flows. This, as a circle, strengthens the informal network formation as a common cultural trait that characterizes the insiders of the industry. The centripetal dynamics and the concentration in few neighbourhoods of the urban economy allow the diffusion of face-to-face relations and the development of different sorts of interactions.

In the following pages, we will deal with such interactions, exploring their role and functions.

Interviewees are embedded in very dense networks of relations, based on face-to-face interactions and crucial for their job: networking is a very important activity, but also extremely demanding, in terms of time and resources.

*It's all networking, you cannot do this job through e-mail or telephone, you have to meet people, talk with them, show up. (Fashion designer)*

Networks develop at all levels, from the local context to international ones, and they involve very diverse actors differently connected. The simplest kind of network, and probably the most common, is represented by the set



of relations among operators within the same sector at the local level: among fashion designers, among operators in the world of finance, among directors and film professionals and so on in all sectors. The cultural and immaterial component that characterizes this economy does not shape particularly this kind of networks, which happen usually in the whole economy.

Another kind of network circulates along the whole productive chain: directors relate with photographers, musicians, producers; fashion designers relate with textile producers and patterns-makers; head-hunters relate with financial operators and managers and so on. Although this is true for all economic sectors, some more than others seem to rely on this kind of networks because the final product is the outcome of a very long chain of people. For instance, in the film industry, the coordination among very different but close sections is essential, as most of the operators work as free-lance professionals, engaged just in the single project.

Moreover, within those sectors based on the manipulation and creation of symbols (fashion, the arts, design...), networks with journalists, critics, galleries and, in general, with cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1993), are extremely important because they allow to mediate the product towards the public (Crane, 1992).

From the interviews we know that the regular and frequent interactions among operators in Milan create a system that Storper and Venables would call *the loop* (2004), where social capital is produced and reproduced: trust develops among operators, information circulates and talent is recognized. We report here a long interview piece of a web-designer because it describes very well the making of the network in the Milanese context.

*“it’s like a ‘magma’, imagine that you go to a closed party and you can have a chat with the art-director about your job, and s/he goes “what do you do? Give me your card and I will call you“. Everything unfolds around this... Everything develops around the word of mouth, around this loop. And then you discover that you know the same person and have common friends: there is a strong familiarity in the network! In Milan this happens in fashion, in PR, in communication, in design, ... because everything works in the same way. So, if you are asking me where you can find these people, you have to find a closed party and get in. Once in, basically 80% of people from this world are there and get there to network. (Web Designer)*

Workers in the creative and cultural economy of Milan spend time, money and energy in face-to-face interaction because they need to build relationships conducive to trust and to mutually renew and confirm that trust over time. In

particular, in the experience of our interviewees, when products are the outcome of a large set of different activities performed by a large number of free-lance operators who have to cooperate together, trust is extremely important. This is the case, for instance, of the film industry, or of the web-design sectors. Trust allows the product to be completed in the right time, but also helps to have future engagements. The creative and cultural economy is characterized by being particularly risky, and subjected to volatile and aesthetic judgments: knowing that the person who proposed the job is a trustful one that carefully assessed both risks and opportunities is very important for each worker. Finally, from the interviews, a working culture emerges, that is characterized by self-exploitation and very hard-working, in particular in the creative sectors; this is largely at the bases of the success of many creative industries and it works only if shared with other group members (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Niessen, 2009).

Moreover, interviewees claim that they need to exchange critical information, and trust is functional to do this in the shorter time and safely. For instance, in the human resources field, the information exchange about people and companies is priceless, as operators have to act quickly, and they need the right candidate for the right position.

*In Milan I can go and have a drink with [...] who is also a competitor. We work in a highly competitive sector; therefore one has to avoid crucial issues. But, at the same time, we share messages, as long as it is possible. I cannot figure out another place in Italy with the same social networking, as all head-hunting companies are here. (Head-hunter)*

In the film industry, information on prizes, festival, policies or local institutions that can facilitate one's work are all essential elements, which the interviewees prefer to share among their community, instead that research alone by themselves, knowing that if they share an information today, tomorrow someone will share back. Of course, trust is again crucial in order to have sensible information to be shared.

The example of the software industry is particularly meaningful as it allows to understand how networks adapt to the transformation of the market context. The sector has been expanding very rapidly between the 1980s and 1990s of the last century, and then it went into a severe crisis after 2001. In the first period, when the sector was growing, information exchange was extremely easy and encouraged within networks, because it was functional to innovation. Nobody fears the competition, because the market was expanding and the operators were still few. In the following period, with the crisis of 2001, the market suddenly collapsed: networks were not anymore the places for sharing ideas and projects, and competitions became extremely rough.

*From about 1994 to 1998, especially in the USA, there was a sense of sharing: every time you met someone they told you everything they were doing. The speed of the sharing experience was fundamental during these years. There wasn't this sense that "I have to protect because they could be my competitor", the sense was: "anyways, whatever we are doing now, in 6 months it will be outdated". This functioned everywhere in an efficient manner for 3 or 4 years, until the big money arrived along with the consultants and the big business banks. Then, in 2000, even here we had a great development followed by the collapse. (Web-manager)*

According to interviewees, information about new jobs, working opportunities and better contracts represent actual "commodities" to be shared and traded within the social network. Being the job primarily based on temporary contracts, it is of paramount importance to be at the centre of a circulation of networked information of new potential customers and clients. Moreover, as already said, work is organized on the bases of single projects and professionals are recruited each time on single tasks. A wide network of relations is therefore essential in order to constantly find new projects and move from a position to a better one: an informal arena is essential for professionals to move from one opportunity to the other. Similarly, within the film and advertise industry most of the projects are organized and managed through face-to-face contacts.

*This is a job where relations are extremely important: maybe there are more contacts in the production side, because at that stage you have to coordinate authors, directors, actors. (TV Producer)*

The kind of relations that characterize the professional interaction of creative and knowledge workers in Milan demands them to be part of a complex ecosystem where they have to be constantly reachable and permanently available to meeting people who are part of the system, or are engaged in the same "loop" (Storper and Venables, 2004). The reciprocal recognition among operators within the network generates a virtuous circle where the group guarantees for talent, which is crucial for the worker in the cultural economy. In highly competitive sectors one needs constantly to affirm their talent and to demonstrate to own the needed quality to accomplish the job: therefore being into the group means automatically being recognized as one with the talent.

Relations are necessary because of the type of "soft skills" involved in their work, which entail not only talent and individual ability, but also elements of sensibility, taste and lifestyle that are generally communicated, transferred and mutually recognized only through personal relationships based on mutual

trust. Therefore, reputation becomes a chief element to answer the question of how to assess the quality of work of a professional in the creative and cultural economy.

The group works exactly as a mirror, which, as soon as it accepts a member, it reflects their competences and talent.

*You can survive doing your job without having contacts with anybody, working with your customers and living all alone. But you will never succeed. [...] if you are outside this network hardly you will be representative: we never looked for a customer; never promoted directly our company (with advertisement campaign), we never sent e-mails to promote ourselves. We've got clients and jobs because they know who we are. (Designer)*

Therefore, belonging to the group, is alone a warranty itself for professionals' talent. Within the fashion system, participating to "closed" parties and events is important also to attest to be an insider and be legitimized to produce highly symbolic goods: parties and fashion shows are the main catalysing events of interaction and sociality for a fashion designer. Participation in these events is a must because by being there designers affirm their belonging to the system. It is also during these events that they gain visibility and recognition by the media; in this respect journalists play a crucial role as they legitimize the work of a designer, acknowledge the lifestyle that their clothing are supposed to convey to the final consumer, and, more in general, interpret fashion for the general public. The direct interaction with journalists is here perceived as necessary in order to ensure the desired interpretation.

It is essential to be in the "right places" to be recognized as the "right" person, with all the needed characters (not only talent, but also trust, devotion to duty and commitment)

*The access code [to networks] is your competence: you are what you do [...], you are not the person, but your job. Therefore, for instance, you introduce yourself not with your name, but as the person who made that particular project or launched that particular brand. There is the usual "do you know him? Did you work with her?" So, there is that particular mechanism according to which each one seems to know everyone. (Web designer)*

As soon as fashion designers, filmmakers, or artists, are accepted in the group, they will be legitimized to produce goods with a high symbolic value, but at the same time, they are called to act as *gatekeeper* for newcomers. All this is surely true for those professionals working with the manipulation of

symbols, but also for a consultant or for a head-hunter is important to attend the right places, to meet with the right people, in order to be recognized as a trustful person.

Finally, the literature addresses at frequent face-to-face interactions as a strong impulse to creativity and innovation (see Molotch, 2003 for example). Nonetheless, our interviewees never mentioned proximity and direct interactions as the mean through which their creativity rises or develops. However, some of them claim that their job is intrinsically linked to a context that, somehow, nurtures their creativity, without being able to specify better what they mean by that. In a previous research (d'Ovidio, 2010a) aimed at comparing the networks of Milanese and Londoners fashion designers, relations with professionals working in near sectors (artists, architects, industrial design) were identified as conducive to creativity and as inspiring circumstances. This happens because fashion designers clearly fear competitions within their sector and looked for inspiration elsewhere. Investigating about the mechanisms of inspiration, creativity building and innovation rising requires an ad-hoc and complex research programme, which cannot use only interviews, but also other in depth methodologies, as observation, ethnography, focus groups and so on. Moreover, a possible key to interpret the relation between proximity and creativity could be an investigation of the environments and places where interactions take place, shifting the analysis from the actors to the spaces.<sup>9</sup>

From the picture we offered, we could say that face-to-face relations, emerging from social networks among workers in the creative and cultural economy of Milan appear to be the ground where the productive fabric of the city is breeding. This is particularly clear when interviews with foreign workers are analysed<sup>10</sup>. Their experience as workers in the Milanese cultural economy is often characterized by the perception of the typical Milanese worker, as a *workaholic* person, who gather with colleagues and competitors also after work and ends up working during parties, *aperitivo*, or dinners. Since their profession is built on the personal relations, they are always working. Other foreign interviewees define the working Milanese culture as a party-working-culture, meaning that every decision is taken in informal settings (as those of the parties, or week-ends, or drinks, etc.).

While the Milanese economic system seems to be well sustained by such connectivity derived by the local working culture, it also presents a number of weaknesses, as it emerges both from the interviews, in particular with emerging

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<sup>9</sup> Parrino in her research obtained interesting results exploring knowledge and creativity exchange in co-working spaces, starting exactly from such premises (Parrino, 2013)

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 5 will be totally devoted to the analysis of foreign experiences in Milan

entrepreneurs and foreigners, and from previous researches (Mingione et al., 2009, 2008). The Milanese social networks, which the creative and cultural economy of the city is based on, represent a real obstacle for those who are excluded from them. Mainly young professionals, emerging entrepreneurs and foreign workers are unlikely admitted into network, with negative consequences for the cultural economy of the city as a whole.

*We were looking for a job and we realized that Italy shut the door! Mainly because you're a stranger, even if one has a passport [...]. One must be a real genius to get a job here, otherwise they prefer Italians. (Industrial Designer)*

*It's a system lagging behind, where young people cannot make it. (Actor)*

Dynamics of entering the networks are complex and they require specific attention, which is not possible to give in this chapter. Recent research has been done about how actors access networks, emphasising the role of social and cultural capital, stressing how inequalities are reproduced and highlighting dynamics of exclusion (Ashton, 2013; d'Ovidio, 2015; Freire-Gibb and Nielsen, 2014; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2011). Indeed, the system of networks in Milan appears as one that rewards those actors who have already a very good social capital, and, oppositely, is closed towards those who are outsiders. Being inside the network means also having access to financing, and, without effective policies aimed at sustaining young entrepreneurs, this seems particularly hard in the Milanese context.

*For a young person with a good idea it is very difficult finding someone who finance them. It is easier to go in the United States and looking for founds there. (Manager)*

Young professionals claim to have difficulties in finding someone who believes in them, who can finance them and help them start a new activity. Very frequently young entrepreneurs have a solid familiar background, if not, in order to gain visibility, young workers must pay one's due for a long time. More often young people with brilliant ideas tend to go abroad, where networks are much more institutionalised and they can more easily find ways of, for instance, being financed. The risks of such a situation are similar to those highlighted at the end of chapter three: that if networks are too tight, they become an obstacle for innovation, since they are closed to external influences (Santagata, 2006, 2002). If relations are structured in ways that impede the

flow of information and ideas, networks generate a vicious circle which is difficult to break.

## 5 Functioning social networks with an uncertain future

The aim of the research was providing an analytical exploration of the capacity of the Milanese context in supporting the cultural economy. The research is based mainly on interviews to managers and operators in the most innovative cultural sectors, such as fashion industry, design, advance services for companies, web-design and so on. From the interviews' analysis, it emerges that the classical factors and the path-dependency of the Milanese economy are extremely important. The past economic success of the city is certainly at the bases of the development of the creative and cultural economy today: many firms are attracted on the Milanese context by the presence itself of other companies, infrastructures and the local labour market are also a reflection of the past, rather than the consequences of targeted economic policies. The same can be said about the image of the city, which, as we will see in the next chapter, is attracting many foreign professionals.

Milan has always been called the “moral capital” of Italy. It has always been considered one of the most important national industrial hubs, as well as the most international and one of the most innovative and progressive Italian cities. However, from the empirical material, we can also claim that, at least in the interviewees' perception, the city has declined at the turn of the century, and that it has lost its supremacy in Italy and its competitive edge at the European level. The picture emerging is that of a successful context where public local institutions have been extremely weak, on many different sides<sup>11</sup>.

Yet, where public institutions are lacking, the social capital emerges, as in a sort of auto-organization of the economic actors, using a strong *local relational capacity* (Trigilia, 2007) to pursuit their goals. The local social connectivity of the Milanese economic system (the capacity of making network and organizing business though that) is at the basis of the economic success of the city today. We agree with Dente claiming that the city, at least in the past, has always been “under-institutionalized” and “under-governed” and that “most of all the excellences which we are proud of, happened without a real political actions<sup>12</sup>” (Dente, 2005, p. 329). Therefore, we could ask which effects can have this lacking of direction on the architecture of social networks and on the creative

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11 Today, the city has much changed, and there are signs that the city is waking up: the urban government put a lot of effort in many directions in order to boost the most innovative sectors of the city, yet aiming at social cohesion and social inclusion.

12 English translation by the author

and cultural economy as a whole. The open questions are a lot, but here we limit on two very urgent issues.

Firstly, a problematic issue is represented by the dynamics of accessing the networks, which are strategic for the working of the creative and cultural economy in Milan, but they are also extremely close and inaccessible for the outsiders. Researches demonstrated that networks' strength depends also by their degree in accepting newcomers: it is therefore urgent to think about local policies aimed at "opening" the creative and cultural economy to external contaminations.

The second matter is strictly linked to the first one and it is inspired by Trigilia (2007) who claims that both cultural and social capitals need to be reproduced, or they decay. How can social networks sustain the economy if there are no political actions aimed at reproducing them? The rising in the city of a large number of co-working spaces, and the interest of the local administrators in some forms of co-working can be partly an answer to the increasing need of building social capital among young generation or newcomers, but it is still too early to assess it.



# Chapter 5

## The attractiveness of Milan.

### Testing the creative class theory

This chapter<sup>1</sup> offers a test to the theories developed by Florida about the supposedly mobility of the so-called creative class towards particular urban environments. A short recalling of his theory will open the chapter, and a discussion about its limits as proposed by many authors will conclude the short theoretical section. The chapter will go on with a presentation of the research design that has been implemented in order to put the research forward.

#### **1 Do jobs follow people or do people follow jobs?<sup>2</sup>**

“Regional economic growth is powered by creative people, who prefer places that are diverse, tolerant and open to new ideas<sup>3</sup>”. This sentence very well summarizes Florida’s thought about the creative class, as well as it shows its weakness as a rigorous scientific issue (Florida, 2002). In the first chapter we already discuss extensively about Florida’s thesis, here we just recall some of its key points. First, the so-called creative class (supposing that it is possible to identify such a class) is characterized by very homogeneous behaviours in residential preferences and shows high residential mobility rates. Second, creative people decide to live in places with a vibrant cultural offer, amenities and a tolerant social environment; third, and final, the economic growth of cities is directly linked to the presence of those people, who create jobs instead that look for it. This means, in other words, that a fashion designer moves to and lives in Seattle because of its amenities and its social climate, and then will open a fashion design studio there, eventually offering jobs to other people. A recent literature stream stresses the importance of quality of life, amenities, and the social or cultural environment as drivers for the urban growth (Aubry et al., 2015; Clark et al., 2002; Flew, 2010; Florida, 2005b; Glaeser, 2011; Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Storper and Scott, 2009; Wenting et al., 2011).

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1 This text is a substantial revision of a published research report by the Milanese team of the ACRE project ([www.acre.socsci.uva.nl](http://www.acre.socsci.uva.nl)). The empirical research have been conducted, under the supervision of Enzo Mingione, Francesca Zajczyk and Elena Dell’Agnese, by Silvia Mugnano, Carla Sedin and Marianna d’Ovidio. A sincere gratitude is particularly due to Silvia and Carla.

2 This question is asked and answered by many authors arguing about processes of urban growth and local economic development (see for instance Asheim, 2009; Florida, 2002; Neff et al., 2005; Storper, 2010; Storper and Scott, 2009)

3 <http://www.creativeclass.com/rfcgdb/articles/montreal%20capacity.pdf>

We already discussed about the consequences in terms of urban policies, let us now consider its weaknesses. Among many criticisms to that particular aspects of Florida's theory (see again chapter 1), Storper and Scott (Scott, 2008b; Storper, 2013, 2010; Storper and Scott, 2009) offer one of the best, most rigorous and comprehensive critical analysis. Their criticism is directed in general to the class of theories which assume that the urban growth is driven by movements of people in search of consumer or lifestyle preferences (Aubry et al., 2015; Clark et al., 2002; Flew, 2010; Florida, 2005b; Glaeser, 2011; Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Storper and Scott, 2009; Wenting et al., 2011 above all). At very beginning of their paper, Scott and Storper maintain that "a more effective line of explanation must relate urban growth directly to the economic geography of production and must explicitly deal with the complex recursive interactions between the location of firms and the movements of labour" (Storper and Scott, 2009, p. 147). Using many empirical evidences and a linear and structured dialectic, they criticized such theories by both emphasising their conceptual weakness, and showing that job and production create prosperity. Amenities regard for sure an important aspect in people life, but work and wages are more important. Therefore, a series of policy recommendations derives and in particular they reject boilerplate approaches to the urban growth: each situation should be considered as unique, in respect with its historical, social, cultural and institutional frame.

## **2 Researching the attractiveness of Milan: the research design**

The research aims at assessing the attractive and retaining power of Milan for foreign talented workers in the creative, cultural and knowledge-based economy, such as those workers that, in Floridian language, are called the creative class. In order to pursue the study's goal, we explored the path that foreign workers in the cultural, creative and knowledge-based sectors<sup>4</sup> followed on their way to settling in the Milan (from their decision to come, to the practicalities they had to go through, to their decision about staying or moving away). Moreover, we investigated how they assess some distinctive elements of the city. Reasons to move to Milan, motivations to stay (or to leave) once moved in and their assessment of the life in Milan, are the focus of the research. In particular, we wanted to test the following statement: members of the "creative class" are willing to move in different cities, looking primarily for

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<sup>4</sup> I do not use the concept of "creative class" (see chapter 1 for some criticisms to the concept), instead I prefer terms as professional expatriats or foreign creative and cultural workers to identify workers in the creative and cultural industries that were not born in Italy, yet that have moved to Milan.

a good (for them) environment where to settle. Such expatriates do not usually look for jobs, rather, they are professionals and they will become entrepreneurs offering eventually new jobs to the local population. Therefore, the questions that the research will answer to are alike the following: did workers in creative and cultural sectors decide to move to Milan due to its (cultural and social) environment and its quality of life? Did they choose to stay because of its *soft* factors? Was the role of *hard* factors a determinant in their choice? How do they assess the quality of life in Milan? And its social and cultural environment?

In order to collect empirical evidences<sup>5</sup> able to give an answer to such questions, we decided to have in-depth interviews to workers that were not born in Italy, and that have been moving in Milan in their adulthood, as professionals in the creative and cultural sectors<sup>6</sup>.

Parallel to the debate about jobs and people we will keep in minds theories focusing on nomadic behaviour of expatriates and international middle-class (Andreotti et al., 2014; Favell, 2011; Nadler, 2014) and those investigating brain circulation among territories (Daugeliene and Marcinkeviciene, 2015; Vertovec, 2006, 2002). A further element that arose recently from theoretical investigation is the role of urban policies in the attractiveness of particular group of people (see also chapter 3).

In the following pages, we will present interviews with highly skilled expatriates in Milan starting first of all by *describing* the hard and soft factors that have been highlighted during the interviews. This pattern, referring to the Florida model, helps us to give a broader vision of the experience of expats in Milan.

The hypothesis that leads the analytical part underlines that other aspects, besides those highlighted in the Florida model, are needed in order to shed a light upon the moving patterns of workers in the creative and cultural industries. Hard

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5 In this chapter we mainly use empirical material collected between 2008 and 2009 in Milan. It must be noted that the situation today in Milan is rather different, as many years passed. The financial crisis that hit the global economy is still echoing on the local economy. However, the research has the important value (both methodological and factual) to present empirical material able to challenge Florida's hypothesis. 22 professionals have been interviewed in depth, focusing on their personal experience as expatriates in Milan. The interviews have been recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed to extract information about the research questions.

6 In the original formulation of the research, interviewees have been organized into two classes. The first class includes creative workers that are involved in activities linked to personal creativity such as advertising; architecture, arts and antiques trade, computer games, software and electronic publishing, designer fashion, music, visual and performing arts, publishing, video, film, music, photography, radio and television. The second class was that of knowledge-based sectors such as information and communication technologies, finance, law and other business services, R&D. As already discussed in the introduction of the book, here we use a broader definition of creative and cultural economy that encompasses both the creative- and the knowledge- based economy.

factors, primarily jobs availability, but also personal and working characteristics of talented foreigners interact with their perception of the city, with their needs, and eventually with their decisions about staying or moving away.

### 3 Hard factors

People's decision to move to another country can be influenced by several factors. In particular, we will assess here which reasons have caused the interviewees to move to Milan. At this step of the discussion we are going to present the so-called *hard* factors, while the *soft* ones will be presented in the next paragraph. In order to describe the hard factors, a number of issues have been highlighted: availability of jobs in the fields of interest; university and education; housing; institutions and bureaucracy; geographical characteristics, infrastructures and accessibility.

#### 3.1 Labour market and job availability

As underlined by many of the theories addressing international migrations, job-related mobility is one of the main cause of migration (Ambrosini, 2012; Fullin and Reyneri, 2011). In this regards, the economic role of Milan is an important element of attraction, even for middle-class, professionals and entrepreneurs. Above all, Milan is one of the international capitals of fashion and design, and it has also a relevant position in the international financial market, therefore, it is not a surprise that many of the interviewees claim they have been coming to Milan for job-related reasons.

*Milan is the place where the biggest and most popular agencies are. As a foreigner, if I go in another country I would like to find something as "cool" as possible. You have to find a label, a name which were well known. (Designer – Denmark)*

*I arrived in Italy and I drew Rome or Milan. Rome, beautiful, but I couldn't schedule one appointment. I stayed there 2 months and I couldn't conclude anything. Then, from Rome, I called the Piccolo Teatro of Milan and they told me: "Yes, you can come Wednesday at 9:00". I took the train, I went there, I gave them my stuff and in 15 minutes I signed all the papers. And I said: "This is the city where I have to study". So, Milan has this kind of thing: at the beginning is a city which works properly and for this reason is a city which is attractive. (Actor – Argentina)*

*For my work, Milan is the only city in Italy where I can live most of all for the contacts and the agencies, which are all here. Then, one could work in Sicily thanks to the Internet, as some of my colleagues do, but contacts are here. (Photographer – Venezuela)*

If, on the one hand, the city attracts professionals for the availability of jobs, in the other, interviewees are not completely satisfied by their income and the labour conditions. At the very beginning of their Milanese experience, they are not fully gratified with their job position and the respective wage: they lament both the long period they have to spend in the same job position, without being allowed to work their way up, and the high level of flexibility that is demanded. Being the city very well known as an economic hub, the respondents are frequently disappointed by the fact that they have to work as interns, poorly paid or often not paid at all. The divergence between the image expatriates had before moving, and the real life they encountered in Milan, is often very substantial.

Nevertheless they usually do not give up and they keep looking constantly for the best for themselves. The respondents are very rational in this regard: they know what they want and they make a huge effort in order to find it.

*I got annoyed because I had unqualified jobs, therefore I looked on the yellow pages and I look for studios that could be interesting. I started from A to Z, but I found what I wanted on the letter C: it was a small technical planning studio and they offered me a good job. (Consultant - Sweden)*

Indeed, the Milanese job market is perceived as rather mobile and dynamic, and offers many opportunities to those who are ready to grasp them. A previous research exploring job satisfaction among Milanese creative and knowledge workers reached similar results<sup>7</sup> (Mingione et al. 2008).

*I think that Milan is the perfect city for my work because it offers many resources. Milan works perfectly in my field, if I did another work, I don't think that Milan would have been the city for me. (Interior designer - Taiwan)*

On the contrary, fields that are perceived as static and declining are that of research and development, and the academic one: Italian economy is characterized by a poor investment in research and by a even poorer expenditure in public university research. As a consequence, the (few) foreigners involved in the university area are less satisfied with their job.

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<sup>7</sup> The research was carried out by proposing a questionnaire to a number of workers in the creative and cultural field in the city of Milan. Among many, one of the results was that they were satisfied of their job position, especially as far as the content of the job is concerned. Also, they were ready to change the job if the conditions would change.

*I am precarious. It would be very nice to have a fixed entrance every month and I know that many foreigners have the same problem. There is many precarious people here. And not only at the university; but those who have a salary earn a few money. It has been several months that I haven't earned anything. (Interpreter - USA)*

*There aren't any expectations about the academics carrier. I chose to do this job, there is some advantages and disadvantages. [...] It's clear that if you chose this field you don't dream about getting rich, but you can choose to do what you want in your life, what you like or are you interested in. And this is a big advantage. [...] But, for example, there are little money for research and so for sustain the work you are doing. (Research associate in informatics - Romania)*

Most of the interviewees suffer job insecurity, and flexibility, since they have to compete with many other workers, in a job market which is dynamic and constantly moving. Nevertheless, this perception is a push to demonstrate their professional capacity performing at the top of their possibilities:

*There is 1.000 like me in Milan. So, the competition is very high and agencies are too small because there are too many people for too few jobs. (Industrial designer - Brazil)*

There are also some interviewees that arrived in Milan because they were sent by their companies. Milan is an international city, well positioned within the global network and a good starting point for the exploration of new markets (Magatti et al., 2005; Mingione et al., 2009). Milan has been thus chosen because of its economic chances: rather often it has been said that, in Italy, Milan is the only feasible option. In those cases, the interviewees did not *choose* to come to the city, but they chose to move to a foreign country and Milan was one of the options.

*I've never really worked in continental Europe. So it would be interesting to work there. One of the things that my company needs to have is people with international experience, so I saw this as a way to get international experience [...] Italy was the opportunity that came along, I didn't have an option [...] but also inside Italy, Milano was the only location available. (Computer scientist - UK)*

### 3.2 Universities and education

Another element that is always mentioned by the literature concerning migration is education. Although poorly financed by the local government and

not attractive in terms of research, the Milanese universities are apparently a strong magnet for foreigners. The availability of good universities and post-university programmes is surely a relevant factor, able to attract people from other countries: universities have a great impact on the creation of innovative processes through the development of scientific research. Therefore, post-secondary institutions are the places where knowledge is created, where young minds are trained and culture is transmitted. For these reasons they represent one important agent able both to influence local economic developments and to attract foreigners (Caglioti, 2008; Caponio, 2005).

Among the interviewees, many of them claim they first arrived in Italy for educational reasons: with an Erasmus exchange, or a semester abroad, for a master degree or for an entire university course. This is a bit in contrast with data about educational financing in Italy, which is very scarce, nevertheless the attraction of Italian universities (in particular the Milanese ones) is connected with aspects other than the universities themselves.

In particular, the Polytechnic for engineering, architecture and design and the Bocconi University for finance are two main Milanese poles of attractions. The appealing of the education in Milan is also linked to its flourishing design and fashion industry: several post-secondary schools offer course and degree in design, fashion and art, with many English courses and they are a real magnet for many foreign students (d'Ovidio and Pacetti, 2015) .

*The specialization I choose at the university was biomedical engineering. Therefore, I didn't have many possibilities, Milan was the city, so I came here. (Engineer - France)*

Moreover, the decision of moving to the city is also linked to the presence of very good public primary or nursery schools. This is an important element, which concurs to the decision of moving to Milan, although not really the main one. It must be noted, thou, that the quality of public schools is much more connected with the general high quality of the social services in Italy. The interviewees stated that both infant and primary schools are attractive, and offer very good teachers.

*Italian public school is very good, in the US is not: so we decided to move in Italy to give a good education to our kids. (Diplomat - USA)*

Nevertheless, if schools and university courses have been a reason for many foreigners to come to Italy, the perception that a number of respondents<sup>8</sup> have about education in Milan is fairly negative. They perceive the educational offer of the city as either “old”, or too expensive, or low quality in general. Moreover,

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<sup>8</sup> We remind that, in line with the purposes of the research, the sample is composed only by people *working* in the creative and knowledge economy, and no one in the sample is still a student

several interviewees lament the impoverishment of the quality of the offer, although they are satisfied about their own education obtained in the city.

Often they complain that people are attending courses and masters only because of the qualification (the formal aspect), rather than the contents of the programme (the substantial element), and claim that the proliferation of such courses has been followed inevitably by a reduction of the quality.

*About education, where are masters? It's going to be lost what at the beginning I found here, masters, today are no longer there! (Actor and director - Argentina)*

Also, some interviewees happened to move to Milan while they were studying in another city, attracted by its economic power and the job market. In those cases, the appreciated educational attractiveness is related to Italy in general; nonetheless the reasons they came to Milan is often linked to university networks: through post-secondary courses professionals were able to build their own network related to Milan, which was a crucial element for entering the city's job market.

*I came here, I was working, I was studying this master in Turin... I was in Turin for nine months and then I started the internship in Milan. (Engineer - Argentina)*

### 3.3 Bureaucracy

Once foreign workers in the creative or cultural industry have arrived in Milan, whatever the reason of their move, they have to face a very difficult issue: Italian bureaucracy. Regulations on migration and regularization are very strict and limiting (Fullin and Reyneri, 2011). Italy tends to “defend” itself from migrants, without acknowledging the crucial importance they have for the country (d’Ovidio, 2009). Moreover, the high presence of illegal jobs, on the one hand, attracts illegal migrants, and, on the other, pushes the government to strengthen the protective policies. Therefore, it is very common, among the interviewees, that they faced difficulties in this respect. Bureaucracy creates even harder problems for those who decide to start their own business.

*Italy offers a negative environment for entrepreneurs, because there is much bureaucracy [for a foreigner] to create a start-up. Expenses are disproportionate compared to other countries and also timing has no reasons to be so long. (Consultant - Sweden)*



*What I don't see is the same support which there is in Northern countries [...] there are funding [...] if you have a little business there are masters of bigger firms in order to help you. (Designer - Denmark)*

*If you come to Italy as a foreigner, you have to face with problems and nobody explain you the solution. For example, when we arrived we needed the residence permit. If you were born outside the CEE it's a mess (...) you waste time, go to the international police and you waste one day to take care about papers. (Marketing director - UK)*

Linked with the Italian law system, administrative problems are encountered also in other contexts: the bank system, for example, is hard to understand and to manage, especially for foreign people. Like the working life, everyday life is difficult to organize too. Recruiting information about what to do and where to go in order to regularize their presence in Milan is complicated and it takes a long time: from registering with the Municipality, to obtaining a phone and electricity connection. The experiences of foreigners with Italian bureaucracy are very similar, and generally cause frustration and misunderstandings.

*[...] Another aspect is the Italian banking system, which is ridiculous. (Consultant - Sweden)*

*I needed to move my residence [from an Italian municipality to another one] and it was an almost impossible process. To have a document you need the residence, to have the residence you need other things and no one explains you anything. (Marketing director- UK)*

*I think the bureaucracy related to services is fairly awful. Probably because it took us about six months to get an Internet line working. Another example, which I quite like was that we got registered immediately for our gas connection, for our heating. So we were registered for gas...Yes, set up, registered, my name on the connection, and they did not send me a bill for one year. And then they did not send me a bill at all, they missed out a year and they charged me for three months after one year. (Lawyer - UK)*

In general, bureaucracy is an important element, able to influence the opinion of foreigners about the attitude of a country: a nation with bureaucratic barriers “at the entrance” is perceived as less friendly and welcoming than a country where all the procedures are easy to manage. Because of bureaucracy slowness, the interviewees felt rejected and not welcomed. Of course, this is not a direct

problem of the Milanese region, since most of the laws in this regard are national, but there is a direct responsibility in the local administration, in the sense that they do not organize anything in order to facilitate or help foreigners to disentangle within myriads of laws and rules.

*Probably, there is at the Municipality a window for foreign people where they can be helped. In my opinion, yes, maybe advertise more, something sexier, appealing to the foreigners, for example: "Do you want to come here, in Milan, this is what you have to do. Come here and we will help you to find a house (...), a better job or Italian courses". (Engineer - France)*

In this respect, foreigners built networks, more or less formalized, where people in the same condition can help each other: business networks or simply groups of foreigners sharing the same experiences, are created in order to facilitate many duties, above all bureaucratic tasks.

*For professional women there are networks organising cocktails, conferences and simply letting people connect each other. [...] Everything is organized in this American style of networking where members of the club talk to each other about their jobs, their problems and their hobbies. These networks can be very helpful for changing job, improving your position and so on. (Diplomat - USA)*

### 3.4 Housing and the cost of living

Just like the labour market, the housing issue is itself a factor that can retain or expel people from a region (Pareja Eastaway et al., 2011). Housing market could be very influent on a newcomer's decision about settling down or not in a new city. In this respect, Milan seems to be not very appealing for foreigners, since it is one of the cities with the most expensive real-estate market in Europe (Costa and Sabatinelli, 2013). Connected to this, the Milanese metropolitan area is very spread on the territory, and many researches claim that high housing prices are the main reasons why young families tend to escape from the city. Seemingly to the European cities, the Milan Metropolitan Region has an historical core with very high prices, and declining values as moving outwards in the outskirts of the city and in suburbs.

Usually interviewees are satisfied with their choice and they appreciate the quality of Milanese houses. It must be also said that most of the interviewees are quite wealthy, which partly mitigates the perception of house prices. Yet, it seems that foreigners tend to recreate abroad the same residential pattern

they had in their native countries: therefore, couple with children prefer to live in the suburbs in order to allow children to have larger spaces, while people used to an urban environment choose to live in the city centre, or as close to downtown as they can afford.

*We have two young children who were used to have a big big garden and we thought putting them in a small apartment in the middle of the city would be very difficult. So we toured the city and thought “no, probably wouldn't work”. So we looked out of the city [...] a quite big ex-pat area near enough this side the city. [...] It's not that we didn't like Milan, it's that it's a different way of life, it's a different style of living and this was my decision, [...] It made the change much easier because we chose to start off in a life that actually was quite similar to our life in Scotland, in the sense that it's a house with a garden, and some space, and a garage, a box, and from that point of view it felt less strange, a little less new. [...] If it had just been my wife and myself I think we would have lived in the city centre because, with no children, with an easier life, in my point of view it would be more interesting.*  
(Lawyer - UK)

Moreover, according to our sample, it seems that the attitude towards housing among foreigners working in the creative and cultural industries are related to their profession: most of the workers with a creative job (designers, fashion designers, writers, photographers...) tend to live in large flats, that they use also as workplace, while professionals into more knowledge-based fields (lawyer, managers, consultants ...) tend to detach their home from their working place. Mixing the residential with the working environment seems to be a typical feature of the way of working of Milanese people, who tend to fuse private and working life, especially in the creative sphere (see also the previous chapter).

Besides the high costs, Milanese and in general Italian housing market is influenced by the high level of home-ownership: in Milan about seventy percent of the dwelling places are owned by the occupier (ISTAT 2011) and for this reason places to rent are difficult to find, not only because they are very expensive, but also because there is only a few available in the city.

Nevertheless, despite the high prices and the small amount of available rented houses, for many interviewees finding an accommodation in Milan does not seem to be a problem and they do not seem to be worried about the housing issue. Actually, many of them are already at a rather high step in their careers, therefore they can afford to have a house where they prefer. Secondly, through informal channels and personal relations most of the interviewees could find an appropriate home. As we will see in the next paragraph, in Milan informal

networks and relations are the key for almost every aspect of life. Therefore, thanks to their networks, foreigners can avoid extra expenses for real-estate agencies, and negotiate with the owner the price to pay.

*It's very easy to find a house if you have money [...] there's many houses, there's always something to rent, but it costs a lot of money and it's also hard to find a place that you like [...] The only thing I understood in order to find an accommodation is going through friends, contacts...it's like that that I found the houses where I lived. (Designer - Denmark)*

*To find a house is not easy but I had chance and I've always found very laid-back people; I've never had any problems [...] I found it through friends, people I knew, but I've always lived outside the city because of the prices. (Computer graphic - Ecuador)*

In some cases, they simply occupied a house temporarily, waiting for the owner to come back, and then found another temporary occupation and so on.

*I am a lucky person [...] you know in Milan you never find a house, I met an Italian girl who was going to do the PhD abroad and we get close [...] she told me that she would leave the house to me for few money. (Actor and director - Argentina)*

Linked to the housing issue, the cost of life in Milan is a real issue for many of the interviewees. All of them stated that Milan is expensive. Nevertheless, interviewees react in a surprisingly positive way: first of all, many of them have a rather good economic status and, although they lament the high cost of living, they can actually afford it. Secondly, those who are younger or with less availability of resources find their way to buy cheaper goods, and to discover the less-expensive Milan.

*I'm not worried about the cost of living. I know that Milan is expensive, but I've been always much organized, I'm not a consumer. (Photographer - Venezuela)*

*Yes, it is expensive. [...] I don't miss money to eat, it could be better, for sure, but it is not bad! I've to be satisfied with what I can afford to buy. If I would have economic difficulties, I would shoot me. But I do not need money to live, what is available is enough. (Computer graphic - Ecuador)*

Finally, the perception about the cost of living depends on previous residence or other experiences abroad (for instance people who lived in London and in other northern European cities find Milan cheaper).

*Life is expensive, but not too much. Maybe 1000 Euros rent is a lot, but it is not too expensive. (Industrial designer - Brazil).*

### 3.5 Accessibility and infrastructures

We will conclude the analysis of hard factors in the Milan Metropolitan Region assessing how infrastructures connect the city locally, nationally and internationally.

To begin with, the geographical position of Milan, both inside Italy and in Europe, is perceived as strategic by the interviewees: that is mainly because the city is very close to a number of nice places in the Northern part of the country, secondly because it is not too far from Central and Southern Europe.

*I really like outside Milan [...] I enjoy to go to other small cities [...] so travel a little bit to the mountains, Lecco, these kinds of places that are a little far. (Computer graphic - Ecuador).*

*[From Milan] there is a direct flight to Cyprus, therefore it is very easy for me; I have a colleague from Bologna who must fly to London and then to Cyprus. (Consultant - Sweden)*

Moreover, the city is neither big nor small, and this has positive consequences in the respondents' opinions. The fact that the city is not too big allows them to travel around easily, with the feeling that they know the city and are not strangers. In the following paragraph, we will analyse the perception about the quality of life, and we will come back to this issue.

*I lived in a huge city, Buenos Aires, so I like the size of Milan, the fact to live in a small-big-city would have been an advantage. (Actor and director - Argentina)*

The demand for accessibility is one of the main issues: due to the nature of their jobs, workers in the creative and cultural economy tend to have high mobility levels, and for this reason, they strongly need the city to be well connected, both with urban transport inside and towards other cities. Moreover, they are usually linked with their countries of origin and they use to travel very much. Therefore, the accessibility to transport from and to Milan is a key factor in their decision to move to the city or to go away. From this point of view, the region seems to respond to their needs at an international level, although it is not always easy and comfortable to move within the region and different opinions have been collected concerning the local mobility.

*Milan is a very easy city for the international communication, but very difficult for the local one. I think that it is the easiest city for the European communication. I have fewer problems to leave to Düsseldorf than to go to Cinisello Balsamo or Como<sup>9</sup>. This is a drama. (Architect - Germany)*

*There are places where you cannot go without a car. (Consultant - Sweden)*

Many of them are very satisfied with the public transport, while others lament traffic congestion and scarcity of public transports. Milan is said to be inadequate if compared to other European cities: too many cars, lack of good infrastructures for biking, insufficient time coverage of public transportation and a tricky and very expensive taxi system.

*I don't like the public transportation. Living in the outskirts, late at night there is nothing. When you go to Milan, and you want to return you have two hours, at twelve, or at five in the morning. (Engineer - Argentina)*

*I can be from my house to my work in ten minutes by car or fifteen minutes on a bicycle so I have a very easy life. Going into the city, I think using a car is as terrible in Milan as it is in most of the large European cities. [...] The subway doesn't look very pretty but is actually a really good service. [...] Milan it's not at all well set up for bicycles. (Lawyer - UK)*

*What bothers me is that you cannot take a taxi on the street, you have to book it [...] and then the taxi arrives and it has already 12/13 Euros when it would cost 5 Euros to go to the Central Station. (Research associate in informatics - Romania)*

## 4 Soft factors

*Hard factors* have always been considered by the literature as the main elements, which can either make the city attractive and appealing for expatriates or which, on the contrary, can cause them to move away. As we saw, however, most of the recent literature stresses the increasingly growing importance of other factors, not easily tangible neither measurable, such as the quality of life,

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<sup>9</sup> Cinisello Balsamo is located very close to the Milanese border, in a very dense and congested area, while Como is located around 40 km north Milan.

the cultural offer and the creative milieu of the urban environment (Florida, 2002). These elements of the city are said to be particularly significant for workers in the creative and cultural fields, more than they are for other kinds of professionals. Actually, if the *hard* factors are crucial elements for any kind of economic activities, the *soft* factors, as they are called, are particularly important for the post-Fordist economy.

A description of these elements will be presented in the next pages, followed by an analysis of the results according to the characteristics of the respondents.

#### 4.1 *The image of the city*

It appears from the interviews that the image of Milan is very strong and it is one of the main reasons underlying some interviewees' choice to come to the Milan Metropolitan Area. As presented in the pages above, two of the main attractive features of the city are the presence of advanced economic sectors and good universities for design and fashion. As the interviewees state, they were disappointed by the real university programmes and courses in the city, and the same happened for the job environment. Although the real presence of well performing economic sectors, people often come to Milan in order to specialize in the well-known Milanese industries, and they are disappointed because the working situation is more difficult than what they expected.

*It was precisely this image of Made in Italy that they sold us as something that was "super cool", instead it was essentially the same thing they were teaching in Brazil, maybe here the professors were better reputed, some of them had participated in some design revolution, but apart from that it was quite simply advertising. Then, to give you an idea, there was the super designer that was supposed to teach a course, he came three times, then his assistant would come, so it was a bit of a rip off, but that's okay, I had fun. (Industrial designer - Brazil)*

The city, actually, has a very positive image as home of the design and fashion industry, but also as a Mediterranean city, with a pinch of Northern atmosphere! In the view of the respondents, Milan seems to have everything: the sun of Italy, the professionalism of European capitals; it is a trendy place and an *entertainment machine* (Clark, 2004), but at the same time it is a very good city for business; the cultural offer and the cultural production are pictured as an avant-garde, as well as people are imagined as having fun all day long. Of course, foreigners are always disappointed when they come to Milan, because the city cannot keep up with their expectations.

Actually in the past (mostly in 1950s and early 1960s), the city has been a

genuine European cultural capital, where art production (painting and sculpture, theatre, dance and music) were at their peak and represented the avant-garde culture in the real sense of the word. The presence of a fashion and design industry contributed to build a city image, so that in the 1980s brought the city the appellation of *Milano da bere*: Milan, a city which one can (or must) drink. Most of the interviewees came to the city exactly in these years, and their disappointment probably originates from this. The situation has changed very much from the past, and it is very different from the image that foreigners had.

*I have to say that the first time I arrived I thought: "It's all here... It's so small!" it was fun because coming from Barcelona I felt myself to be in a much more comfortable situation. You could do everything in such a short time, the distances were so small. (Architect - Argentina)*

*The myth is there, don't touch the myth. In Germany there are bars, Milan cafe's, this myth of Milan exists, it outlives us. So many people want to work, but then they realize that it is difficult. (Architect - Germany)*

*I had images of Milan linked to clichés, I saw it as an elegant city, like a city... yes, the Piccolo Teatro was something..., I remember, in the school room there was a poster for the Piccolo Teatro. The idea was something like the "luxury" of theatre, after you have seen it though, it's more down to earth. (Actor and director - Argentina)*

*We arrived in winter in a strange climate, without being able to speak the language very much, without knowing any Italian customs, without things for the house [...] it was a difficult five months because [...] the preconception that foreigners have about Italians is that they are lively, people that eat a lot, drink a lot, sing a lot, live life to the fullest, but maybe these are the people from Puglia, Sicilia, in Milan people are different. (Marketing director- UK)*

Nevertheless, there are people who are still happy with what they found in the city.

*Why Milan? I think, if I'm honest, probably because that's where the opportunity was. I mean, rather than coming to Milan, or coming to Italy and finding a job, I found a job that was in Milan, and if it had been Berlin, quite honestly I wouldn't have taken it, it doesn't appeal, but because it was in Milan, and in Italy, and the background and culture appealed, that was why I took the job. It wasn't that I chose*



*Milan, that's just where the job needs to be. (Lawyer - UK)*

Of course, very often, the clearer the image is, the more frustrated the interviewee will be. Very often people with a clear image are those less informed, but they turn out to be more upset if they based their choice on the image of the city.

Comparing Milan with other European and Italian cities, offers an interesting view in order to analyse the image of the city: from time to time Milan is perceived as a European city, where everything is organized and perfect. Some other times it's perceived as an Italian city, or even a grotesque Italian city, where nothing is working and where people are disorganized and lazy.

*My wife isn't English, she is Chilean, and she thinks that the European Union is a uniform thing and she has lived in England and thought that Italy is in Europe and that things work more or less as they do in England; it was also difficult because things don't work well in Italy. I don't want to be too critical, but to have to wait two months for a phone line and to still maintain contact with family and with colleagues is very difficult. There are many aspects of life in which Italians have different customs compared to the English. (Marketing director- UK)*

*And as soon as we realized how the city worked, we understood that the image we have of Italy abroad is a caricature! It is a folkloristic image. (Architect - Argentina)*

*The public services don't work, from the post office to the public transport, you have to wait, I find everything absurd. We pay loads of taxes and we don't have a single service that we want, from the school to the public hospital. The first time I came to Italy I saw that it was a slower country. There is no efficiency in this country. This is only a nice place for a vacation. (Interior designer - Taiwan)*

A final remark about the image of the city is linked with place-branding. The strong image of Milan in fashion and design, but also as a city hosting a well performing knowledge economy, is a positive sign that featured the products of the city, but also people working there. For professionals, especially abroad, Milan is a very good brand.

*Milan, from my point of view, is not developing innovation, but is still living off the noble fathers, I mean it's as if we were good administrators of a glorious past, but sometimes not even that good. I have the feeling that, as it happened to me as well, but as it probably happens to so many other people, that we use Milan as a brand, because when we*

*live in this city in reality we are not very happy, we love it with love and hate, we like it because it gives us so much, maybe we want to give more, but when we are here we are here only to go elsewhere. Milan is a place where we can take a breath, but then we have to leave, because we are continuously exporting, exporting, thanks to the Milan brand. (Architect - Germany).*

## 4.2 Personal ties

Reasons for foreigners to be in Milan (either as attracting factors or retaining ones), have to be searched in the sphere of personal relations and ties. A recent stream of studies within migration theories underline the importance of personal reasons together with job-related ones in the migration process (Conradson and Latham, 2005; Favell, 2011; Ho, 2011; Kennedy, 2004; Nadler, 2014). Yet, foreigners are embedded in the local environment and develop relations with local people, often becoming, in their personal life, engaged with people they know.

Among the different individual conditions, there are two main situations. Firstly, foreigners came to Italy because of personal ties, and then decided to stay. In these cases, family and personal relations are really attracting factors, moving talented foreigners to the city.

*Well, I came to Milan for her [his wife], then I was lucky, because I also found a good job. (Industrial designer - Brazil)*

In many other cases, the most common situations among the interviewees, personal ties represent the motives that retain talented people in Milan.

*It is not easy to move, I cannot move; there are my children, my husband with his job here. [...] I also thought about coming back to the Netherlands, but it is difficult to find job for two people and be happy. (Fashion designer - The Netherlands)*

*In the meanwhile, I engaged with a Milanese actress, and she was working in theatre and she founded a company, so I stayed and worked with her. (Actor and director - Argentina)*

When they talk about relations, the interviewees usually refer to family ties, but less often, it can also be the case of close friendships.

*[Question: have you ever thought about moving in another city?] Well, yes, I have, but here [in Milan] I felt at home, I had many friends [...] I*

*had a network, then I met a girl [...] there was a nice feeling with them.  
(Computer graphic - Ecuador)*

Moreover, the way the city is experienced is different when one is living with a family and children or has strong relations. Family is finally a lens through which professionals look at the job and job conditions.

*I think it's a different experience from being twenty something and single or just married and that thing, when you would know the city, you would know the bars, you would know restaurants, compared with being old. Having kids gives your life a different focus. It's not so much about that, it's more about weekends and going away and seeing more of the countryside. (Lawyer - UK)*

*Then, at a certain point, I was less and less satisfied, and my life was more and more tiring. The studio was organized with people saying "OK, let's go with the new collection at the end of the month" and you work day and night, seven days a week. When children were going to sleep I started to work again, and when the deadline arrived, they would tell you "no, it's not finished yet, we move the deadline" ... therefore I could stand it anymore, and I quit the job, I took a long holiday with kids and I feel very well now. (Fashion designer - The Netherlands)*

It is nevertheless important to stress that, whatever cause made the foreign workers move to Milan, they would stay in the city because they found a job. The attractiveness of the city might not be the labour market or the job availability, but this is the main retaining factor for creative and cultural foreign workers.

### *4.3 The city working atmosphere*

Once they arrive in Milan, and they start working and knowing the city, talented foreigners recognize that they feel a particular atmosphere in the city. Indeed, many respondents refer to a general working mood which is said to be typical of Milan. When asked to be more precise, they describe the Milanese attitude as very devoted to work, sometimes even too much. We already referred to this briefly in the fourth chapter, now we can be more precise and tackle the issue in depth. Many interviewees appreciate what has been called the Milanese practical attitude, a sort of methodological know-how expressed in everything they do.

*In the end we you are always working. This is alright if you are very*

*young and you want lots of experience, then when you reach a certain age, maybe you want to do other things as well. (Designer - Denmark)*

*I think Italy in general has a great culture. I think Milan has a superb work ethic and a vibrancy determination, manufacturing. I think, I don't think Italy sells itself. It sells things. It manufactures, it creates, builds and sells very successfully. (Lawyer - UK)*

*From the work point of view above all, here there is male fashion, the know-how here is ten times what it is in the Netherlands. (Fashion designer - The Netherlands)*

This *workaholic* attitude is expressed through a very keen capacity of developing relations, again a typical feature (in the foreign professionals' words) of the Milanese way of working and living.

Everything in Milan is organized through the word of mouth, especially in those sectors where information and tacit knowledge are crucial, such as the creative, cultural and knowledge intensive occupations (see the previous chapter, but also Bonomi, 2012; Bovone, 2005; d'Ovidio, 2010b; Mingione et al., 2008). How do people who are external to the network manage to get in and how do they profit (or not) from it?

Interviewees claim that it is or it has been rather difficult to enter into the Milanese network, but they add that once in, the first network works as a generator of other relations.

*Bit by bit you begin to meet people, at a certain point I met a whole group from the Domus Academy, all foreigners, I mean, in the beginning it is difficult to meet Italians because the Italians are very closed in their circles of friends. (Designer - Denmark)*

*After two years, maybe, I met a guy, he was a foreigner too, and he already lived with three other foreigners, he was Danish and the others were English or maybe there was an American. By that time, it was a whole group of foreigners. (Consultant - Sweden)*

On the other hand, networks and relations are useful for many aspects of their own life, both personal and professional. In particular, it's possible to identify at least three ways in which, depending on the actors involved in the network, relations are useful for foreign professionals.

First of all, in order to go through all the practicalities, one has to face in a new country (from understanding the complex Italian bureaucracy, to finding

a new home ...), creative professional often look for compatriots (being them university mates, friends of colleagues, or friends already in the country) in order to have a guide.

*I found my house with the help of a French friend of mine with whom I went to live with. (Engineer - France)*

Secondly, the foreign professionals, well aware of the importance of local networks, develop relations with local people.

*At first I didn't speak the language at all and then I met only one person who gave me information because he arrived first to find out a bit and then he called me: "Yes, yes, I've found you a house". (Interior designer - Taiwan)*

*At the beginning I led a student life. I didn't speak Italian and so I bought an Italian book to learn the language a bit. At that time in Milan there was a big Slavic community that lived a bit like that. We were all very young and our social life was to go to parties, to meet in the evening in one place or another. (Engineer - Serbia)*

Many of them acknowledge that entering into local networks is very difficult, as clubs that are shut to the external ones and they accept new comers with difficulties. At a first sight Milanese people seem very close, but once one is allowed to enter the network they become very open and friendly.

*I mean, the people I work with are welcoming, friendly, easy-going, at the level of work. The real Milanese are northern, they're really busy... faster and faster. So that's probably not as welcoming. When you meet somebody, come and be part of my friendship group...that doesn't happen. (Lawyer - UK)*

*In the beginning it's difficult to meet Italians, because the Italians are very closed in their circles of friends. I met foreigners [...] it's easy to speak right away with people, but I had a hard time becoming a friend [...] now we have lots of Italian friends. (Fashion designer - The Netherlands)*

*Also making friendships is not as easy as it seems, so it's not one of the easiest cities to live in, to create a network of people, to find a job. [...] Now the group that I have created in these last few years has expanded and let's say that I don't have lots of friends, but I have good ones, even*

*good Italian friends with whom I get on very well with, but it's difficult. If it wasn't for this friend of mine who introduced me to so many people, he made me live Italy in an Italian way, it would be difficult, but now I have also an Italian girlfriend... (Industrial designer - Brazil)*

In the sphere of the relations both the personal and the working life can mix, like it happens for the residential behaviour, discussed above within the hard factors: the work environment is frequently used as a pool where to find friends. More often, personal relations become a useful tool for creating a working network or for expanding an existing one. In both cases interviewees emphasize the mixing between personal and working relations: this is regarded as positive by some interviewees and as negative by some others.

*Everything here is very tied to work, you even make friends at work and there is always this way of exchanging contacts, of thinking of what projects we have to do together, and on the one side it is fantastic, from another point of view you never get away. (Designer - Denmark)*

*But I then discovered that these friendships were purely opportunistic, not real friendships, so I ended those friendships as soon as I realize that they had interests [only for the person] that worked for the counselling and that could be advantageous to know. And this is a distinction that I have found different in a few other cities I have lived in. Maybe I have been unlucky, but there has been this tendency for opportunism among a few Milanese that I had felt for many years, but then, after a few years, I was more prepared to deal these delicate situations. (Consultant - Sweden)*

Thirdly, much more than Italian workers do, foreign professionals share networks with other foreigners, who are not necessarily in their same working field or from the same country. What they share is the common experience of being abroad. Foreigners are seen in general as more open, more willing to meet other people, more available in engaging in new relation. Very often this kind of networks are also attended by local professionals with a particular lifestyle: they are used to travel and very mobile, were probably not born in the city, and have experienced life abroad. It has been coined the term *net neo-bourgeoisie* for this type of people, such as an international élite rooted in many places (global cities as Milan, London, Brussels, Tokyo, New York) at the same time, and acting as global players in the local economy (Bonomi, 2008).

*Then, after my first relationship, I was single for a few years, but I met a new circle of people that worked in advertising and they were people*

*who I immediately connected with, because they were people that had a certain lifestyle to do with music, films, and social life that interested me and a few of these people had lived abroad when they were young, so we had things in common and with them I was able to create a real friendship and one of them helped me very much. All of a sudden I discovered another side of Milano that I didn't know about with nice, lively people with whom you could share many things, journeys, etc. (Consultant - Sweden)*

#### 4.4 Quality of life

We already discussed extensively the links between the urban attractiveness and the local quality of life: here we are going to present, interviewees' view on the quality of life in Milan, and how it influenced their international mobility towards the city. Opinions about the city's quality of life are rather variegated among the interviewees: many of the respondents are dissatisfied with the general quality of life and liveability of the city, but, surprisingly, many of them, on the contrary, love the place and its features.

*In my opinion, Milan is very ugly. I mean, it is enormous, grey, there is no green space. To go out, if you don't have a car, it takes you hours and hours and hours, and if you do have a car, you are in a queue. (Designer - Denmark)*

*[The quality of life in Milan is] terrible, it is schizophrenic, the city of design, the city of luxury [...] It's as if the Milanese are always waiting for the moment to travel (...) the streets are paved because its more convenient, full of dog excrement, the parks are dry and yellow, the air is unbreathable. It isn't a beautiful city in terms of the facades. (Actor and director - Argentina)*

*The quality of life here is good. If you speak of Italian things, like food, for me it is one of the best things here. Then there is the culture, and this is something that doesn't exist for us in Brazil, for example to go and see an exhibition in a museum, to go and see a photography show or to have events like the Salone del Mobile or any of the other events that take place. (Industrial designer - Brazil)*

*Architecturally, Milan is very beautiful in the centre, but I don't like it so much because it is always full and I don't like places with lots of people. I like the parks very much. Parco Sempione is beautiful. There*

*are also some very nice hidden areas. [...] Sometimes it seems to me that, not everyone obviously, but many people have forgotten a bit about education. Also life rhythm in the city is a bit heavy, because it is made of work and to go home late like everyone else. However, these are small things, in reality it isn't bad. (Computer graphic - Ecuador)*

In terms of quality of life, when the interviewees were asked to be more specific about what they dislike about Milan, they mentioned the weather and traffic congestion. They also believe the city is not suitable for kids. Of course this very last statement was expressed by those who have a family.

As pollution and environmental issues are concerned, many of the respondents come from countries which have always been more sensitive about the living environment, and that have a positive tradition in sustainable ways of moving and travel (such as Germany or Denmark).

The weather is very much cited, probably because of two main reasons: in our sample many interviewees are from Southern countries, or they lived in a Southern country; secondly as shown above, they came to Milan with a stereotyped idea of Italy, where weather is always beautiful and warm.

*Winter in Milan it's cold, it's wet, it's miserable, like winter is everywhere. And it just felt very foreign, very strange. (Lawyer - UK)*

*There isn't a good climate, it's humid in the summer, cold and humid in the winter; it is often grey. [...] it's terrible how little green there is, every once in a while I see the roundabouts with flowers and some parks with just a few trees. I miss the green space. (Interpreter - USA)*

*I don't dream of spending the rest of my life in Milan, but for five years everything has depended on our only son. The city is not particularly favourable for children, with a life in the centre, behind Porta Venezia, due to the smog in general, the green spaces are very limited, we have Palestro which isn't bad, but all caged in. People complain, negativity, yes, this thing... I don't understand why, because there isn't a why, it's just the way it is. (Consultant - Sweden)*

The city is perceived as full of entertainments, with enjoyable restaurants and good food. This statement is not very common among interviewees, although a number of them are enthusiastic about these qualities. The city is the core of the design and fashion industry, which are sustained, as we saw in the previous chapter and in the above pages, by a *party culture* typical of the city. Bars, parties, clubs and restaurants are a very important substratum of the creative and cultural



economy, because they are the places where interactions take place and sustain the creative communities and the professional networks in the city.

*Here you can go away for a day if you want, but certainly for a weekend, easily. It's a good life. [...] I think I enjoy, a little too much, the Italian obsession with good food and good wine, and probably enjoy more of that than I should. I like the fact that you go to a local restaurant and children are welcome and it's friendly. And it's not an expensive restaurant and the food is good quality, well made, and people care about the quality of it. (Lawyer – UK)*

A further element of the city, which is undoubtedly a strong retaining one, is the good welfare system, especially when educational environment for children is considered: in the interviewees' opinion, the city offers both high-quality and not expensive services. It must be said though that at the same time other respondents claim that in Italy (not referring to Milan in particular) public services are rather scarce and disorganized.

*The schools are good, the health care is good, the cultural offer is great and if there's some time that's missing, I mean, if one likes this lifestyle, it's alright. I live in a city; it works well in this way. (Architect - Germany)*

*A positive thing, working in Milan, in Italy there are tons of holidays in comparison to the country where I come from. For the rest, a load of problems. The only thing, the government helped me when I was pregnant. I gave birth in hospital without having to pay anything. That was the only occasion that they gave me something. In the end it seems that they have resources, but that they aren't able to achieve anything. (Interior designer - Taiwan)*

*A nursery here is fantastic, it's beautiful, so many countries follow their example and the day care is beautiful as well. Both of the girls went to the same nursery, I always found space because this is a good area with more places than children. And that was fantastic. Our children went to two different day-cares and I found both to my satisfaction, but above all with my youngest, it was also nice in how it was structured, how they do the projects. I have some Dutch friends and they too are happy in other areas. The price is also good, public day-care. (Fashion designer - The Netherlands)*

Another issue, linked to the general quality of life and the perception of daily life, is the attitude of people on the street, or the “tolerance<sup>10</sup>” as Florida (2002)

10 This is not the place for a discussion about the issue of tolerance, or toleration, which is largely

named it. Milanese are known to be frantic and very busy, looking as they were always late, just because they are doing many things at a time. Milanese are also considered, by few interviewees, as negative people, always in trouble. They complain continuously about everything, but they just don't do anything but moaning.

*People is lamenting all the time, they are negative on everything, yes, this very thing... I don't understand why, there's no why, it is like this.  
(Industrial designer - Brazil)*

Worst, beside these ideas, there are many negative comments about Milanese people being close-minded, especially towards migrants, that are often perceived as "the stranger".

*[as far as tolerance is concerned] I could say zero. There is no openness, there is no tolerance, there is no desire to mix, due to fear; because cities that are rich and old have a great vice: to always think that they have to defend themselves. Defence is not a nice story; defence is fear's terrible advisor; that's why in this city there is defence and fear; unfortunately that's why there is no openness (Architect - Germany)*

Some of the interviewees happened to witness episodes of intolerance towards other foreigners. They reported to have had the feeling that foreigners were experienced as different, and therefore perceived as somehow dangerous.

*Yes, but one side is that I realize that I am a woman, I am blond and light skinned and I come from the North. I mean, people are very friendly towards me; I've seen others who maybe have a totally different skin colour or something that isn't... If we speak about foreigners like that, I believe not everyone is equal. (Designer - Denmark)*

*I think I've never felt rejected or any danger or in any way unwelcome in Italy at all, and it's always been very open and comfortable. (Lawyer - UK)*

*In Italy it seems as if you come here and you occupy my land, you take my job. Now the immigrants as well [...] Either way, they look at you as if "you've come to steal something". Maybe a doctor or a scientist,*

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debated in the realm of multiculturalism (Cohen, 2004; Nessi, 2015); here it suffices to remember that in Florida's idea a tolerant city (defined above all as a city where there are a large number of gay couples and marriages between people coming from different countries) is more likely chosen by the creative class than other places.

*someone in a high position has a different face, isn't a foreigner, eastern or Indian, but they look at you bad all the same. It is something that I find very negative about Italy [...] Italians are very close minded. (Interior designer - Taiwan)*

*[...] it's happened that we have friends with children that have been encouraged to avoid the public school because of the massive presence of foreign pupils who do not speak Italian. So, now they pay double or triple for a private day care, it is ridiculous. And yet they did it, I was stupefied. So there are neighbourhoods where you don't see any Italians. (Consultant - Sweden)*

Other interviewees have the impression to represent even a menace for Italian people, being seen as different, strange or diverse. An interviewee said that the city is *suffering* migration, without doing anything to promote integration. She underlined how Milanese people seem not to understand that in order to make the city less provincial and more international, different cultures should be welcomed.

*There are many foreigners in Milan, but people don't interact among themselves. I think it is evident that one should communicate with everyone to be more comfortable. It isn't easy, obviously many foreigners come to steal, to do bad things and for this reason many people close up. (Computer graphic – Ecuador)*

*I don't find it welcoming enough to foreigners, even if I've noticed some African art exhibitions, but I don't find it that evident. (Marketing director - UK)*

Actually many respondents reporting negative attitudes of Milanese people towards foreigners did not personally suffer the intolerance of the city, but they perceive it in the way people behave to other foreigners. On the contrary, there are other interviewees (fewer than the others) that appreciate the openness of Milanese people, and that have been helped a lot by their Milanese contacts, especially at the beginning of their permanence in the city.

*If I have to give you an opinion as an Argentinean, I have always been treated very well in Italy, I think that Argentineans, with respect to integration problems, to racism, these things, they don't exist in Italy. In general terms one can say that the Argentinean is always a lucky card, maybe being African is not the same thing (Actor and director - Argentina).*

*Yes, I think so. If there is a city in Italy that can welcome foreigners let's say I think it is Milan. (Engineer - France)*

Finally, the cultural offer and the artistic scene of the city contributes to the local quality of life. Talking about workers in the creative and cultural economy, the issue appears very relevant: it has been shown by many researches how cultural stimuli are essential for these people (both for their jobs and for their spare time). Many of the respondents compare Milan with other international capitals such as Paris, London or New York, and find in comparison the cultural production and provision in the city very poor and limited. Other people, who have lower expectations, have been positively surprised by the good quality and quantity of the cultural overview of the city.

*Milan offers you so much, one of the things that I like about Milan is that there is always something to do, even if you are alone you can go to see a gallery, a museum, in terms of cultural activities there is so much, all you need to do is to look (Industrial designer - Brazil).*

*Florence and Rome are much more touristic than Milan, but to have tourists in your face every day is not the best situation in life. Well, there's la Scala, there are galleries, events, there are tones of theatres that I really like, they are a bit expensive, but you can choose. (Research associate in informatics - Romania)*

*Yes, according to me, Milan offers many things for those who want to go out and see things, or go to clubs, this kinds of things. When I did my Erasmus I thought it was a place where there are tones of places to go to, theatres, from what I understand there are quite a few, cinemas too, but, if I can give my opinion about cinema, films in original language are lacking and this, according to me, is really too bad, to not say a shame. (Engineer - France)*

*[In terms of cultural offer] there's a lot, for this yes. I still haven't gone out so much, I haven't seen so many galleries, I haven't moved around so much, but I think the city offers a lot, when I wanted to see something it was easy. In the centre, in our area, there is always something going on. After this, it is true that design, I don't go crazy for these kinds of things, but I have some friends who came from Paris specifically to Milan to see things related to design. (Marketing director - UK)*

*I believe that, for a city that claims to be an important European city, the offer is mediocre. But then you also have to make an effort because*

*you can't just spit in your own plate continuously. But in general a bit of attention, because an important city like Milan that is also the centre of design, fashion, maybe could a little bit more than what it already does. (Consultant - Sweden)*

Nevertheless, many cultural operators complain about the very scarce cultural offer of Milan, and paradoxically find the audience much more open, avant-garde and provocative (or ready to be provoked) than the cultural offer itself.

*You'll understand about culture, no one cares about it, so, because no one takes responsibility and no one does anything for the cities, I think the cities have changed..., I am thinking about Torino: Torino has changed, it is said that everything falls and becomes stable, you take a bit of all these things, you gather them together and you create different things. Here on the other hand that isn't the case, there is not one cultural centre in Milan, not one. (Actor and director - Argentina)*

*[As far as the cultural offer is concerned], there are a growing number of things at theatres, in terms of galleries there is a lack of contemporary art, there is more in Torino, in Venice than in Milan. Maybe I'm out of the alternative loop. (Fashion designer - The Netherlands)*

The city is also negatively perceived in this respect, because of the so called *happening culture*, that is to say how events are organized, and which features the cultural life of the city: each cultural event is organized by itself, without any continuity with past or future events and without any broader content, other than the event itself.

*And then this tradition of the event that in Milan... I say: "Let's make sense of this", it's not that I say: "Oh, not an event", we have gone from the project to the event, alright, let's make sense of it. Let's have important events, no, instead there is always this attraction to the cocktail in a rundown place and to the model who walks through the ruins with a bum from the Central Station, because it's chic and it doesn't produce new things. (Actor and director - Argentina)*

## **5 People do follow jobs... but under certain conditions**

Let us recall and organize here the main results of the research. The job market and the economic strength of the city resulted as very strong magnets for attracting people, in particular those working in the creative and cultural

industry. The presence in the city of a number of creative communities (Scott, 2000) works as powerful attractor for other workers in the sectors. For instance, in the design and fashion industries, foreigners came to the city both for education purposes and for good working experience. Moreover, the city has been a magnet for artistic communities in the past; although the situation has changed, many artists still try to make a living in the city, but often they complain about the crisis in the local cultural sectors and, in particular, they claim that city has lost its capacity of being a breeding ground for artists.

Another factor that emerged as important in the interviewees' experience is personal life course. Indeed, the presence (or the absence) of a family, and of children in particular, can have a significant impact on foreigners in Milan in two important aspects. Firstly, family has an impact in the perception of the city, the use of the urban spaces and the residential choices. Secondly, and more importantly, the presence of a family has a strong influence on the mobility of people, and it can be expressed in the dichotomy young/adult, or with or without children, or, again, with young or older children. In any case the more the life course is "advanced" or "mature" (involving a partner, children and other strong relations), the more the choice of move or stay is linked to other people's needs. In particular, in presence of children, the mobility is valued only if it is favourable to the development of children (in terms of education or in terms of experience). Hotherwise, workers tend to move alone for a temporary project, or they do not move at all. This variable could be considered as banal and, indeed, it is, but it is as obvious as crucial and often it is omitted in analyses.

A stream of literature stresses the emergence of the so-called hyper-mobile bourgeoisies (Andreotti et al., 2014, 2013; Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999; Bonomi, 2008; Favell, 2011) referring to professionals travelling around the world (very often around a very specific portion of it) and being involved into the creative and cultural economy. Some of them simply are more flexible than others. Of course, the dichotomy mobile/not mobile is a strong simplification of the reality. Moving to Milan has proved that the interviewees are to a certain degree flexible, but those who are more flexible will probably move again, no matter what the city will do in order to retain them. There are chances that they will come back to Milan, in the future. Moreover, those who are more used to travel (the hyper-mobile ones) tend to demand more to the city, but also to appreciate more its peculiar features. They find for instance the cultural scene a little bit provincial and not international (because they compare Milan to London or New York), but they find the city not expensive, and they appreciate local food and the friendship of the local people.

Therefore, to conclude, we can say that, yes, people do follow jobs, and not the opposite. Nevertheless, they would move only under certain conditions that involve both the urban environment and the personal characteristics of the professionals such as their life-course, or their mobile attitude.





## Chapter 6

### Exploring city and creativity: the fashion industry in London, UK.

This chapter, parallel to the second one, focuses on the fashion industry and it looks at the interaction between the city and creativity. We already saw that the fashion industry, due to the high symbolic content of its products and its immaterial value on which it is based, is considered apt to represent an example of the urban creative and cultural economy. Hence, it is used here as a case study.

Several aspects will be taken into account to study this particular segment of the creative and cultural economy in London. The history of the fashion industry of London, with a particular attention devoted to the 1960s and the rise of a consumer society, will be described; secondly, the relations between the urban space and the fashion industry will be explored. The creative process will be analysed, as the fashion designers describe it, and the daily relations they have both with the neighbourhood and with the city will be discussed.

The research has been carried on in three different periods (spring 2003, autumn 2007 and spring 2012) and it is based on observations, and interviews with fashion designers based in Brick Lane, Hackney, Notting Hill and Clerkenwell, London.

In particular, the area around Brick Lane has been for long time a genuine mixture of Bangladesh tradition and fashionable places, from bars to shops, from studios to local markets; it was considered one of the most promising of the twentieth century London (Beward, 2003) and the fashion designers who worked there felt the “creative atmosphere” of the neighbourhood. The area is, in London, one of the best example to show the post-imperialism transformations. Brick Lane gained a reputation as one of the emerging fashion district of London (Gilbert, 2000, p. 17): it is one of the fashion’s archetypal back region, a district characterized by a long history of immigration, a sweatshop economy, and a huge weekly flea market (the Spitafields market). Moreover, Brick Lane is a good example of the success of the social-mix: it is a street in the middle of Whitechapel, a district characterized by a massive migration from Bangladesh and India, with an economy mostly based on sweatshops. In the years, starting around the end of the 1970s, artists, musicians and young people in general have been “colonizing” the area; several markets and fashion markets arose. Together with artists, designers and other creative workers,

many fashion designers, fascinated by the artistic atmosphere of the area, and the relatively low cost of the rents, located their studios in the area. Brick Lane is hence gaining a reputation as one of the emerging fashion district of twenty-first century London (Alexander, 2011; Mavrommatis, 2006).

Today, the area has changed. A severe process of gentrification hit the area, with very bad consequences on the social but also cultural sphere: as the lower strata of the society that have been pushed out from the neighbourhood, also most of the emerging (and less economically robust) fashion designers, artists and creative workers have been expelled from the area. Brick Lane now is home to tourist attractions and expensive shops, where only a normalized and clean diversities are welcome.

## **1 The fashion industry in London through history**

From the eighteenth century and most importantly during the nineteenth one, London was famous for its local craftsmen producing classical men clothes; tailors were known worldwide and the production of classical dress was a distinguishing character of the city. The production of women clothes started by the end of the nineteenth century and the Second World War, and the proximity with Paris and its haute couture functioned as a crucial competing factor.

Yet, in those years a particular style, a mix of elegance and minimalism, became known as the London style. It was the result of the promotion of utility lines during the Second World War. Promoted by the Board of Trade, in 1941, there was an effort to make simple garments using as less fabric as possible (Breward, 2004). This new “smart London” style was advertised by many pictures of women in the urban landscape, thus associated easily with the city itself.

During the 1960s and the consumer revolution there was a deep transformation in the sphere of consuming and of clothing, where young people started to dress in an unconventional way in order to distinguish themselves from “the other” and in order to assimilate themselves to “the ours” (Bourdieu, 1979).

The results of the two antithetic movements of the fashion history of London, tradition and contestation, are clearly visible in the fashion production of London: traditional fabrics used for unconventional clothes or, traditional dresses tailored with strange and innovative fabric, or eccentric shapes, and so forth. Indeed, “[...] unlike the regulated fashion culture of Paris, London’s sartorial infrastructure represents a collapsing of rules and a tolerance to innovation in the face of surviving traditions” (Breward, 2003, p. 182). Nonetheless, London did not always enjoy an international recognition for the

creativity of its clothes, as it is today, but rather, it had a name for traditional clothes. Today, London is undoubtedly known worldwide as one of the four fashion capital cities, with Paris, New York and Milan.

In order to understand the process that led the city to hold such a position in the international arena, fashion historians have been identified a number of interconnected themes. They are linked to the history of the city as the central of the British Empire and the following post-colonial period, the rising and developing of the consumer society, city branding and competition among cities within the international arena, the symbolic ordering of cities and so on. Let us briefly browse through them.

During the British Empire the city of London was permeated by a true international atmosphere, by a large offer and demand for new and exotic products, it was characterized by a great social mix, and there was the idea that London, as the capital city of the British Empire, was at the core of the world. All this excitement was very productive, for a number of reasons: foreigners brought new objects, different cultures and unusual garments inside the city, there was a ferment of new ideas and new requests, hence firms needed to innovate in order to fulfil new tastes. With the collapse of the British Empire the flows of migrants from former colonies became even greater, contributing, thus, to enrich the already multifaceted social environment. Moreover, the position as a global and international centre, a reputed tolerance for (ethnic) differences and a great social mix, encouraged a massive migration towards the city, thus increasing, in a circular way, the social mix, bringing into the city numerous different people, and being a factor of innovation and diversity. London has always been positioned in a very privileged place, at the core of the international network of world trade.

In the first chapter, we explored how the urban consumer revolution of the nineteenth century has been very important in the rising of the creative and cultural industry in many cities (Breward, 2004; Christopher, 1999; Forgacs, 1990; Gilbert, 2000; Leach, 1984; McCracken, 1986). Of course, the consumer revolution had also a major role in the development of the fashion industry in London. The increasing desire to consume, the possibility of doing it and, in particular, the capability of certain particular cities in fulfilling the desire of consumption has been crucial in this process. The fashion industry, indeed, is one of the sectors which were especially hit by the consumer revolution and the city of London has been central both to the learning of new consumption practices and to their pursuit.

London soon became recognized as a site for consumerism, and consuming practices have been addressed as “of vital significance for London long term status as a fashion centre; while fashions themselves came and went rapidly, the overall

spatial ordering of fashion proved remarkably stable” (Gilbert, 2000, p. 15). The development of an urban tourism and a notion of the city as a fashionable object, established the position of London as a fashion capital city, hence augmenting the value, the production and the consumption of locally produced fashion items. Moreover, the presence of a remarkable number of creative communities (Scott, 2000) had an important role in the attraction of other workers in the creative and cultural economy. The city gained also international visibility and reinforced its image thanks to the development of the film industry and to the success of particular films celebrating the Londoner style as both elegant and innovative. Therefore, the image of London as a creative hub, the presence of creative communities reinforced, in a virtuous circle, the creative and cultural economy of the city, and the fashion industry, too.

Lastly, urban governments in London have always been very keen in investing both in a supposedly creative image of the city and in its creative and cultural industry. Such industry has been addressed by urban policies as a strategic tool for international competition and urban growth. As well as architecture, art, music and culture in general, the fashion industry in London have always been used as a tool for international competition and image-building.

It is not possible to draw the history of the fashion industry in London without referring to two fashion designers who transformed the aesthetic canons of fashion widely: Mary Quant and Vivienne Westwood<sup>1</sup>.

Mary Quant was emerging from the atmosphere of Chelsea (a neighbourhood in central London) of the mid 1950s, when “it grew out of something in the air which developed into a serious effort to break away from the Established” (M. Quant in “Quant by Quant” quoted by Breward, 2003). Historians, as well as fashion academics now agree about Mary Quant’s crucial role of in the genesis of the “Swinging London”. Chelsea was characterized by a very open and mix social structure, with a general optimistic entrepreneurial attitude. This might be the reason why this particular area of London should have played nursemaid to a radical shift in the production of style during the middle of the 1950s and Quant’s own career is symptomatic of that period (Breward, 2004).

In 1955 she opened her shop, named Bazaar, where new styled clothes, accessories, unusual shoes were sold. It was a total novelty, but it was for sure helped by the countless shops and stores developing in the new fashion district of the Fifties London.

The shop gained immediately success and reputation: Quant was able to exploit her social capital, namely a vast networks composed by artists,

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1 Due to the aims of this work, more importance has been given to the social aspects rather than to that linked to personal style, or design.

journalists, musicians, and so on, in order to reach visibility. Her idea was not only to provide a place where people could find clothes and accessories which could free them to dress how they like, but also a place where meetings and social life were encouraged. The proximity with known jazz clubs and with several other pubs was another relevant factor. After some time, the retail activity was not enough to satisfy the demand and a proper fashion line, designed by Quant, was launched. She had graduated at the art school and she did not know how to make clothes, nevertheless she succeeded: most of her success was due just to the crudeness of her clothes, which, far from being perfect, represented a way of freedom that was very well marketable during that period (Breward, 2004). The city itself was hit by a transforming process moving from the Victorian city of the Empire, towards the modern London. This atmosphere of transformation and change was channelled also through the literature, cinema and theatre, but mainly from the “people of the street”, who started to dress unconventionally and to demonstrate their freedom through fashionable clothing (Polhemus, 2010).

Such was the fame and success of Quant, that she was invited to the American wholesale market in 1962, and in 1963 her dresses and style was franchised and mass produced for the whole UK and in 1966 she launched the Mary Quant Cosmetics. In 1973, she had a retrospective exhibition “Mary Quant London” at the Museum of London.

Such a trajectory is not maybe as unusual as it seems, due to the tendency of the London establishment to incorporate and commodify the talents of its successful creative people (Breward, 2003). Quant’s story represents a symbol of London’s capacity to generate and inspire revolutionary sartorial change; most importantly, her example opened up the terrain for countless art-school trained and innovative designers whose work was at the boundaries among high and popular culture, art, fashion, craft and commerce, in a very Londoner way.

Vivienne Westwood’s story is rather different from Quant’s one, but still representative of the London fashion atmosphere. She represents the other facet of London’s fashion system, and her story is as significant as Quant’s. Westwood was born in a working-class family in 1941 and enjoyed the new educational and welfare policy that England adopted after the Second World War (Westwood and Kelly, 2014). She went to primary school and then to the Harrow Art School, where she discovered and practiced her artistic capabilities and where she met Malcom McLaren<sup>2</sup>, who would be later her partner and

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2 Artist, musician and DJ, Malcom McLaren is an icon of the artistic atmosphere of the 1970s and 1980s’ London

who had an enormous influence on her work. She lived with McLaren in the south of London, and he was particularly involved in the movements of 1969, while she taught in a school. After a temporary move out of London, Westwood moved into a council flat in Clapham, a very popular area, in a very different atmosphere than Chelsea, where Quant used to live. She submerged herself in an underground fashion scene characterized by struggle, and a sense of disillusion, mostly due to the recessionary era following the boom of the 1960s. She opened her first shop, Let It Rock, in 1971 in King's Road, where, with McLaren, she sold mid-twenty-century memorabilia, furniture, accessories and authentic 1950s clothing. Several clothes were designed by herself, produced by an East-End tailor and sold in the shop. Soon they changed the name of the shop to SEX and the philosophy shifted, too, turning to sell fashionable clothing, made by the two artists, with a provocative mixture of fetishism, political and controversial symbols. There was the nascent Punk scene, which Westwood and McLaren both built and exploited (Oakes 2008). SEX "attracted actually a following of suburban and provincial outsiders whose anti-establishment energies positioned them simultaneously against the reactionary attitude of middle England and the complacency of the metropolitan style elite. It was precisely this grouping of followers who would form the core membership of that movement which would become known after 1976 as the Punk revolution" (Breward, 2003, p. 190).

In 1976, SEX evolved into *Seditionaries* transferring the Punk production into a style called "new romantic", but it was only in the 1981 that Vivienne Westwood, aged 40, entered into the fashion establishment presenting an entire collection with her name. Again, a London institution, always very attentive to new emerging cultural trends, as the Victoria and Albert Museum asked Westwood for one of her clothes for its permanent collection of the Museum.

Even after her success, Vivienne Westwood has based her market on a particular cultural milieu, which has provided her with a respectable volume of sales, even if her business has not been able to sustain itself as a powerful global brand in financial terms (Breward, 2004).

## **2 Branding London as a creative city**

London has always been claimed by media, artists, creative workers, and so on, as a creative environment, a city where it is possible to "have new ideas" and inspiration. The city, which now has a great international reputation as a creative city for fashion, especially for youths, always enjoyed such a reputation, especially because its size and complexity and it has long encouraged distinctiveness, but localized interactions, with culture and clothes production

amongst its inhabitants (Gilbert, 2000). Both cultural institutions and the government (at many different levels) have been investing in the creativity as a tool for urban growth and international recognition (Hannigan, 2003).

Museums have always paid attention to novelties in fashion, new artists or designers, especially to the unconventional and avant-garde art. London administrators have a great sensibility for art, and they understood soon that art, museums and galleries, were an extraordinary tool for city promotion, urban tourism, and for the image of the city itself. Art and museums have always been supported by all the administrations in London, and by many private foundations and companies, too. The presence, within the urban area, of countless de-industrialized areas, which offered old buildings and empty areas, is a further encouraging factor in the opening of museums, art shows and exhibition centres. One of the best known example is the Tate Modern gallery: an electric power station located on the south bank of the Thames has been regenerated into a museum and cultural centre which hosts the largest permanent collection of contemporary art, and several temporal expositions; it has been connected with the centre of the city, by the Millennium-bridge, which links the museum to the St. Paul cathedral. The bridge is symbolically very important as it contributes to the image of London as a city which links tradition (the cathedral and the financial district) and innovation (the Tate Modern).

Another example, less known, but more interesting for the regenerative impetus it created, is the White Cube in Hoxton square. The White Cube is a private gallery with a number of spaces in London, in the UK and in other countries, known for the avant-garde of its shows. In 2000 White Cube opened the Hoxton square space, in the East End of London, in the heart of Hackney, an area traditionally characterized by social exclusion and poverty, and now hit by a strong gentrification process. On the White Cube webpage, the neighbourhood were described as “[...] a vibrant cultural area that has seen a profusion of commercial galleries, public art spaces, restaurants, bars and clubs opening up over the past few years. With its commercial and industrial character and abundance of disused warehouses available for studio space, it has always drawn a large community of artists. Many of the London-based artists that White Cube has shown over the past years live and work in the surrounding area and the East End of London in general is known to have the highest concentration of artists in Europe”<sup>3</sup>. The areas where both the Tate Modern and the White Cube are located experienced a strong and dramatic gentrification process (Harris, 2012; Mathews, 2014; Newman and Smith, 2000; Pratt, 2009).

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3 [www.whitecube.com](http://www.whitecube.com)

The spectacular architecture in London has also many links with the past role of the city as the UK Empire capital on the one hand, and with the hegemony of London in the contemporary global financial world (Sassen, 1991) on the other. The symbolical meaning of London as an international place and as a world city, were reflected on an emphasis in the architecture, which has been always aiming at demonstrating the power of the city (Kaika, 2010; Sklair, 2013). The financial district, the City Borough, hosting the major financial companies in the world, demonstrates its power also through imposing buildings designed by the most prominent architects of the time. In so doing, the financial district contributes to the whole image of London, as a city with avant-garde buildings and innovative architecture. The administrators of the city are not immune to this power demonstration, and they renovate and finance public buildings in order to renovate the city and to *sell* a new skyline every decade: yet, the making of an *official silhouette* advertises the city and rises city's attractiveness marketing (Sklair, 2010).

The Lloyd building in the core of the City District of London, designed by the celebrated architect R. Rogers and the new city hall on the South Bank, wanted by the Major Livingstone and designed by N. Foster are just two of the countless examples of this. Again, London is presenting itself as an innovative city, a city able to mix iron and glass skyscrapers with Victorian buildings and traditional houses.

Finally, the creativity of London is expressed and celebrated, maybe at its higher level, by people walking on the streets, by street markets, by shops and itinerant sellers.

Tom Ford, when was chief fashion designer for Gucci, was famous for his "army" of fashion students, collaborators and assistants, moving around London trying to catch the newest street-style. For fashion companies, London means creativity, being in London and being part of the fashion system, means having countless sources of inspiration: indeed, the presence of countless street styles and style tribes (Polhemus, 2010) has been identified, within the fashion studies, as a crucial element for the development of new styles into the mainstream fashion industry. Street-markets in the city are known worldwide and they can also be considered a real opportunity for young fashion designers: as a large number of graduates from the London fashion schools in the first years of their career, design their own collection and sell it in Camden Town, Portobello or Spitalfields markets (McRobbie, 1998). However, the importance of street markets for the fashion industry is not restricted in the opportunities for young fashion designers. For the fashion industry, the numerous street markets gain relevance because they create spaces where designers and stylists can go and see. Stella McCartney, one of the more prominent Londoner fashion designers, attends regularly the



Portobello market; the Spitalfields market is a resource for fashion designers that want to understand the newest street trends, and the celebrated Camden Town Market is a real goldmine for the fashion designers looking for new ideas. Moreover, London works as a brand for fashion productions, labelling them with a creative allure, and, more importantly, it represents a very important badge on fashion designers' curricula.

### 3 Fashion designers in London

What kinds of relations do fashion designers develop with the neighbourhood where they are inserted? And with the city, in general? What kinds of interaction do exist among fashion designers? How are they feeding their creativity? What kind of tasks do they have? How is creativity expressed in their work? These are the main questions which form the second part of the research. Seventeen fashion designers have been interviewed during a number of empirical field in London<sup>4</sup>, each working for a different company, most of the interviewees work in the area between Brick Lane and Hoxton square. The analysis is structured in two main themes: interaction (among fashion designers and with the city) and creativity.

#### 3.1 Interactions

How do relations develop within the fashion industry? Why do fashion companies tend to concentrate in particular neighbourhoods? What kind of interactions, if any, is functioning into the fashion system?

*It is all about contacts within the fashion world. (Brian, interviewed in 2003)*

The picture that emerges from the interviews is one of a profession in which contacts are crucial in terms of business and visibility, upon which the system is built on.

What is important are the connections they build within the fashion industry in terms of working relations. Very clearly, one respondent says that a company, unless it is a very famous and established one, could not survive in the country side, or in the middle of nowhere because of the lack of contacts: as Peter, interviewed in 2012 claimed, there is a need to meet people all the time, to

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<sup>4</sup> Three waves of interviews have been carried on: in 2003, in 2007 and finally in 2012. The research design is not aimed at confronting answers in different times, but the three samples are used here to have a larger number of observations. Interviewees names are used without surnames to guarantee their anonymity

make the brand always visible; it is a business that one cannot do only through e-mail and telephone.

Three levels of interaction are identifiable. The first one relates to the internal environment of the laboratory: here the designers are at the centre of a network of intense interactions aimed at channelling their creativity into a product with a precise positioning in the market; a lot of different abilities, skills and sensibilities are employed, value judgments and taste and style interpretations are monitored and reciprocally adjusted. Such rich work of interpretation requires direct and intense interaction where the persons involved are perceived to be tied together by relationships based on a certain level of trust.

*I work alone when I do the designing part; and then I work with my staff. (Key, interviewed in 2003)*

The second level refers to the interaction with other fashion designers. According to our interviewees, these relationships tend to form a network which is the basis of an exchange system where information and support circulate. A problem with a textile producer, the search for a junior designer or for a better job are all issues, which can be tackled through face-to-face interaction with other designers.

*It is only business, and it is done by talking to people. It is all networking: if you have a problem with the production, you can talk about it and maybe make new contacts, understand what is happening and so on. (Albert, interviewed in 2003)*

In the network, relationships are constantly renewed so that they can be resumed when opportunities for collaboration arise.

*I used to work in a project, where he also [the actual boss of the interviewee] was involved. When he needed a consultant he remembered about me. (Wendy, interviewed in 2012)*

*I have studied with [F.] and then I went working for a big company. But we keep ourselves in contacts and made some projects together. Now that I am free-lance, F. is one of my clients. (Peter, interviewed in 2012)*

Designers report helping each other in different matters. Some designers have relationships with artists and emphasize the high level of reciprocal support, which circulates in the creative quarters of the city where they work and live.

*We hang out a lot with the guys from the lab next door; because we understand each other: we give each other support both for practical*

*things, for example taking deliveries when they are not in or helping each other with transport, but also for more important things, even financial issues. (Paul, interviewed in 2007)*

All designers have a clear perception of the benefits deriving from their being part of networks.

This brings us to the third level of interaction, where fashion designers are involved, which refers to the fashion system as a whole. At this level, parties and fashion shows are the main catalysing events of interaction and sociality. Participation in these events is a must, because by being present designers affirm their belonging to the system. It is also during these events that they gain visibility and recognition by the media; in this respect journalists play a crucial role as they legitimize the work of a designer, acknowledge the lifestyle that his clothes are supposed to convey to the final consumer, and, more in general, interpret fashion for the general public. The direct interaction with journalists is here perceived as necessary in order to ensure the desired interpretation. Last, these events are increasingly the occasion for meeting people in show business who may provide further visibility.

*I met him there [...] and I gave him [a famous actor] one of our hat, so he might wear it in public occasion (Brian, interviewed in 2003)*

They also have a very clear idea of the geography of this interaction: parties, events, specific restaurants and places where they gather for both social and professional reasons. Parties organized by sponsors, by the fashion press, by designers to celebrate a special occasion and, of course, fashion shows are all mentioned as important occasions to meet people, to consolidate already existing relationships and to forge new ones. Because contacts are so essential, a lot of attention is paid to the planning and attendance of these meetings—nothing is left to chance.

This is, however, only one side of the picture. Other designers have different behaviours and attitudes towards the importance of contacts and the visibility they provide within the fashion system.

*We almost stay in our place, we don't go to the parties, or to other places where fashion designers go. (Julien, interviewed in 2007)*

*Fashion world is superficial; I do not like it. [...] I know many people in this neighbourhood, many artists, and painters are living there. There's such an artistic movement here. (Claire, interviewed in 2003)*

*I used to see a lot of people living here, in this neighbourhood, artists, musicians, and so on. Now I am a little bit tired of those things, but some time ago, yes, I liked this artistic atmosphere. (Key, interviewed in 2003)*

*Fashion system is imbued by bad and superficial values... (Eley, interviewed in 2003)*

Those fashion designers associate themselves more with art and artistic worlds and they tend to have a social network with creative people, artists, but not with people of the fashion system. A number of designers, on the other hand, report being more engaged in relationships with the world of art, specifically in the form of specific localized artistic communities; generally, they have chosen a “creative” area for their laboratories and they often live in the same area, thereby making contacts with other artists is particularly easy. These fashion designers tend to set themselves apart from the fashion world and to identify more with the art community: that is the locus where they seek belonging and recognition. These designers portray the fashion world as dominated by appearance and superficiality, as opposed to creativity, and refuse to be perceived as belonging to this world or to be identified with its values.

*We keep in touch with many persons in this area, they are creative people too, but not fashion designers [...] we don't go to parties or to places where other fashion designers go. (Paul, interviewed in 2007)*

*Many of the people I meet are artists [...] and it may happen that they want to wear our creations, and give us publicity this way. We like the fact that artists wear our hats. (Julien, interviewed in 2007)*

*You cannot be friend with a person working in the same field: you are first a competitor and then, maybe, a friend. We have a lot of contacts with the people working in the shop nearby<sup>5</sup>, because they understand us, but they do different things: we support each other, we are really friends. [...] we have contacts with many people in the area, they work in the creative industry, but not in the fashion industry; most of the people we are in contact to are artists: it is very exciting talking about our work with them and we want them to wear our creations. (Paul, interviewed in 2007)*

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5 Harriet, making accessories

Important contacts, within the neighbourhood community, but not necessarily among fashion designers, are also built with commercial venues and shops nearby.

*On the neighbourhood, I have contacts also with fabric shops, there is a kind of contacts network, maybe I could know some producers who can be helpful also for them. (Brian, interviewed in 2003)*

The area of Brick Lane is significantly occupied by Bangladesh traders, selling mostly fabrics. While it is not common that a fashion designer buys fabric directly from them, it could happen, and in that case, proximity and direct contacts are helpful. It could happen that the seller gives advices, provide new suppliers or even new customers.

### 3.2 Creativity

Finally, in the interviews the relationship with creativity was explored. Contrary to the prevailing view in the relevant literature, the focus of interaction among designers is more on business than on creativity.

This is closely related to the tasks of the fashion designers in a company, where they could be the manager, employees, the owners and so on.

The working tasks of a fashion designer are strongly linked with the size of the company he/she works in.

If fashion designers are employed with a creative role in a large company, they tend to present the job as mainly “creative”: designing clothes, objects, or accessories, organising catwalk, mixing clothes, and so on.

*Most of the day is spent making garments and designing. (Louise, interviewed in 2007)*

*I am doing the creative part, it goes into two sections, seasonally. In the first part I do research, design, I choose the fabric, with A., the designer chief, and then I have to meet with other people of the department. (Mary, interviewed in 2003)*

*I can work either in the studio or in the office. When I am in the studio I do mainly the design, research, and so on. In the office I usually go to meetings, talk to other people of the designer team, we chose fabrics... (Claire, interviewed in 2003)*

Within medium companies, fashion designers usually are not involved only in the creation, but they have to deal with suppliers and customers, or they have

to organize meetings and so on. Of course, they claim that the majority of the job is dealing with creation, but they refer also to other tasks.

*The creative part is important, of course... but I have to do also the business part: manage my stuff, develop new business, licences, e-commerce. Various aspects of the business, sometimes I delegate. The creative process is separated from the management, often the creative aspect takes the second place to the management aspects, but I do it at home, not in the office. (Toby, interviewed in 2007)*

*We have to keep in mind the fact that the object needs to be sold. (Paul, interviewed in 2007)*

*We work as a team, but everybody does the administrative part, the management, the organization of orders, we are working in multitask. (Eley, interviewed in 2003)*

*I am like the main assistant of the designer. Dealing with all kind of different people, as well as do all the typical creativity stuff. Everything. I almost do everything. (Albert, interviewed in 2003)*

*It mainly consists in working about creation, fabric material, but we also do quite everything. We are a small company and everybody is doing everything. (Brian, interviewed in 2003)*

*Creative part is the main one: I design personal accessories and garments. Sometimes I am commissioned art piece for gallery exhibitions, I design and produce dress for theatre. (Claire, interviewed in 2003)*

*We are artist, we create clothes. Sometimes the clothes are built in order to be showed in art galleries, they are impossible to be worn. (Key, interviewed in 2003)*

*We are spending a lot of time here, just constructing and making clothes, a lot of designers work with team, we are working alone. We are completely involved in making clothes. (Julien, interviewed in 2007)*

If the fashion designer is the owner of a very small company, which does not employ any other people, the tasks devoted to the management, the organization, promotion or simply the commerce of the products are extremely reduced. Therefore, the fashion designer does not even name the tasks concerning the organization of the activity during the interview.

On the one hand, some of them are keen to underplay the creative content of their work and to emphasize the business-related aspects and even the routine character of their job. In particular, a lot of time seems to be occupied by decisions related to the quality of details such as the choice of seams, linings or buttons, the combination of accessories, and so on.

*We spent hours on these buttons, we decided they are the fil rouge of the entire collection. (Mary, interviewed in 2003)*

On the other hand, the sphere of creativity is described as an individual and private area, which should be kept separate from business; the birth of new ideas is a solitary activity, as the fashion designer works alone when drawing and putting new ideas to paper. But this is not to say that the creative process is not a collective and creative undertaking; quite the contrary—there is a high level of interaction with the staff in the fashion labs who must transform the idea contained in a drawing into a material object. As they perceive the collective nature of the creative process, designers show appreciation for the contribution of their staff to the creative and original character of their final product.

*No, we never talk about our drawings [with other designers]. Even if you know that one is working on the Fifties, he would never show his sketches, we all work alone when drawing. (Mary, interviewed in 2003)*

Outside the laboratories, however, the interaction with other fashion designers does not concern the production of ideas or the creative content of their work. For some designers what is important for the nourishment of creativity is interaction with other creative workers, mainly artists but also architects or designers; a number of fashion designers claim to have close relationships with artists and/or to consider themselves artists. These relationships are sustained by frequent face-to-face interactions and are perceived as conducive to enhanced creativity. The resulting need for proximity is seen as the main reason for living and/or working in a specific neighbourhood where different creative workers are present.

*I often show him [a neighbour, painter] my drawings of clothes, and he does the same with his sketches for his paintings. We often talk*

*about colour or shape; it helps us find new ideas or further develop the ones we have already. [...] I have many friends here. It is a sort of community. This area is very nice, it's very creative. A famous painter lives just around the corner, and another artist lives above me. There is a mix of many different things, I think the relevant thing is having all sorts of people around you, many of whom are artists. It's a very exciting area. (Lucy, interviewed in 2003)*

*My work is more like that of an artist than a fashion designer. I create unique works of art that, of course, can also be worn. [...] I know many people who live in this neighbourhood, many painters live here [an industrial building remodelled into lofts and laboratories], there is a sort of artistic movement here. (Claire, interviewed in 2003)*

Fashion designers are well aware of the importance of the city as a stimulus for their creative work. Without prompting, all interviewees repeatedly refer to art galleries, to museums and exhibitions, to the mix and diversity of people in the streets, to open-air markets, to the buildings and their aesthetic qualities as potential sources, which provide inspiration for their work, new ideas and novel innovative directions to explore. Designers show appreciation for all forms of inputs which they reportedly receive from the city; in particular, open-air markets, such as Portobello or Spitalfields, are mentioned as important parts/events of the city in this respect. They are places where most of the designers go, to look around, to understand what people like most, to observe the creations of young designers and to have new ideas. The clothes sold in the fashion market, are usually of good quality and innovative design, typically they are not sold elsewhere in shops and they are not mass produced.

*I often go window shopping during my lunch break, especially for vintage clothing; and every Friday we go to the market [in Portobello Road]. Many fashion designers go there, you can find lots of strange and old things there, and you meet people. (Joanne, interviewed in 2003)*

Many fashion designers claim that they like to work in a particular creative context because they feel, through shops, bars, markets and people on the street, an artistic mood, something which feeds their own creativity.

When asked to further specify how the area nourishes creativity, the fashion designers usually refer to people on the street, to people working in the same building, or nearby them, the opening of expositions, or art gallery, new shops and so on. "It is a mixture of things" (Lucy, interviewed in 2003).

Having the studio in such a creative area, means also that, in every moment,



designers can go and visit shops, vintage clothes, street markets, and so on. Many fashion designers talk about art, galleries, expositions, as a source of inspiration, whose proximity is important to them.

*I have a lot of friend around here, they are involved in creative field, it is like a community of people. This area is beautiful, a quite creative area: a very famous artist is living round the corner, another young British artist is living just on the upper floor. This is a very creative area. [...] It means that it is a mix of all different things, I think that most importantly are people around you, lots of young designers. Traditionally in this area sweatshops and firms were placed, and rent was cheap, so many artists came. There are a lot of new shops, new galleries open every week, there are nice bars. It is an exciting area. (Lucy, interviewed in 2003)*

Usually respondents point to the remarkable wealth of London in terms of art galleries, museum, exhibitions, etc., and to the remarkable attention museums give to contemporary art. There are particular areas of the city, where there is a strong concentration of galleries so that for a person needing inspiration it is easy to get out of their own studio and to attend to an art show in walking distance.

*I came to London from Tokyo because it is here that the design is developing. And here something happened; I went in London to "see" the place where ideas started, it is like an energy that you cannot have if you are not in the place. There are sub-cultures here, street cultures, expressing themselves through clothing. (Claire, interviewed in 2003)*

Finally, fashion designers take inspiration from the city itself: London is particularly endowed of innovative architecture, square and malls, parks and gardens, which are said to be a significant source of inspiration. In this environment fashion designers state that they can feed their own creativity by just walking in the streets, literally, and look around. People, galleries, shops and buildings with peculiar shapes, unusual colours, and eccentric styles are there to excite their imagination.

Moreover, increasingly, fashion houses are main sponsors of art exhibitions and establish dedicated venues for the presentation of their collections, but also as spaces for culture where cross-fertilization between fashion and art is said to occur. All designers report an increase in the number of events and venues where art and fashion blend, as it is increasingly common to present collections in art galleries or to make short movies or to use experimental art for the promotion of collections. Also, music and multimedia and visual arts

are used to communicate the emotions that a particular brand is supposed to produce.

#### **4 London fashion industry between art and business**

The fashion industry is strongly embedded in the local society in London, where institutions, collective actors and designers interact within a vibrant creative atmosphere. Two main groups of elements work here together in shaping and sustaining the fashion industry locally: first of all the community of fashion designers (in the meaning developed by Scott, 2000); secondly the institutional actors and collective bodies that work together for the success of the local fashion economy.

Structures of networks correspond to a mix of creative people, designers, stylists, journalists, fashion scholars, academics and so on. The networks in London serve different functions not so different from what we saw in the case of the creative-cultural workers in Milan (in chapter four). Many fashion designers, moreover, establish strong relations with the art world.

A result is emerging very clearly. In the London fashion system, at least as far as the sample concerns, it is possible to distinguish two kinds of fashion designers. One has a strong business attitude, both in their practices and in self-representation, they tend to conceive themselves as business people, very busy, sometimes they are involved also in the managerial side of the company. In the making of fashion, they are looking at past collections, at market behaviour and they are interested in doing innovative, but first of all marketable products.

The fashion designers of the second type conceive themselves and act like artists, rather than businessmen. They usually do not care about big business, they present themselves as artists, they want to follow their creativity, even if they produce clothes that are not marketable, or even impossible to wear.

The two typologies of fashion designers create two different kinds of interaction networks, mutually exclusive: the first, business oriented, the second a stage where creativity and art is exchanged. Business-oriented fashion designers tend to create a system of people from the fashion system channelled through formal or semi-formal networks, and not territorial-based. Parties, fashion-shows and nightclubs are places where interactions take place.

Fashion designers acting as artists rather than business people want to have a bohemian image, conceive their creations as art work. They attribute negative values to the fashion system, from which they like to distance themselves. They tend to create communities place-based, shared with artists, industrial designers and in general with creative workers, but outside the fashion world.

The two groups have few contacts: the only moments where they gather

are the fashion shows. Nevertheless, young, creative fashion designers, with an artistic attitude, tend to show their creations outside the usual institutional channels, using often underground spaces, the urban environment and so on. Consequently, the two fashion worlds very seldom come in contact with each other.

Due to the territoriality of the community build among fashion designers and creative workers, the urban space is much more used by those designers in order to make contacts, and they tend to concentrate where artists do.



## Conclusions: the dark side of the creative city

I was grown up between the 1970s and the 1980s, and early became a fan of the *Star Wars* saga, where futuristic knights, armed with laser blades fought for the liberation of the Galaxy from the bad Emperor. They used their “force”, which only few ones possessed and that allowed them to see things that no other sees, to move things with the power of their mind and to be particularly skilled. However, the force has a very deep and dangerous dark side, which is even more powerful than the good one, and particularly attracting for some people. All the enemies of the “good ones” made use of such a dark side, and the whole Galaxy is menaced by it.

*Star Wars* taught me a very important lesson: that everything has a dark side.

As the force, indeed, also the creative city has a dark side, a very dangerous and threatening one. As we explored largely in the book, many aspects of the creative city affect our cities with problematic issues for a large number of social groups.

Our cities have been transformed into creative ones since the turn of the century. Many scholars and experts warned about the many dangers deriving from an excessive instrumentalisation of culture for the economic urban growth. Nevertheless, culture has been largely used as an engine for boosting the economy of cities.

This, indeed, had very bad consequences for societies and culture and, nowadays, the promises of the creative city are mostly broken: creative and cultural operators often do not recognize themselves in the policies proposed in their name, alternative and avant-garde culture are still emarginated, the production and promotion of culture is not more open than before and a large segment of creative labour is suffering a precarious and insecure situation. It is, therefore, necessary to reflect upon the trajectory undertaken by our society and “be [extremely] careful what we wish for” (Pratt, 2011, p. 126).

The relation between city growth and art itself has been called into question by many authors, who emphasized the exploitation of the art scene by economic forces in the neo-liberal city (Jakob, 2010; Lees, 2000; Peck, 2012; Zukin, 2000, 1991).

Analysing the contemporary transformation of cities through the increasingly rise of immaterial economy, new patterns of consumption and gentrification, Zukin offers conceptual tools in order to look at the relation between urban transformation and culture. In her famous book, *Loft Living*, she shows the instrumental appropriation and exploitation of a cultural scene by real estate developers (Zukin, 1989), while in *Landscape of power*, on the commodification

and “functionalization” of art, she emphasizes the new role of culture in the urban landscape (Zukin, 1991). Arts, and culture in general, have been systematically used in order to revamp the urban environment and to promote neighbourhood development into new marketable places. Nevertheless, the promotion of urban growth through the use of culture is achieved with high social costs: conflicts among populations, displacement of artists and disadvantages people come together with increase value of real estate. Circuits of capital, thou, not only shape the urban landscape (as mentioned above), but they did it by interacting and exploiting the culture circuits (Zukin, 2000). Two parallel systems of production overlap in the symbolic economy: on the one side, the production of space that incorporates aesthetics and cultural meanings of buildings; on the other one, the production of symbols where cultural systems influence on how to consume that places (for instance about the people who are or feel allowed to occupy public spaces). In that sense she talked about “pacification through cappuccino”, meaning the cultural colonization of the public space by economic forces through forms of urban marketing. Public space is increasingly shaped and appropriated by economic forces (commercial and corporate) on the basis of a cultural war between middle-class and “the others”, thus bringing to a gradual loss of meaning of public spaces. Since the use and consume of public spaces is increasingly generated by a particular commercial (hegemonic) culture she concluded asking whose culture and therefore whose city.

We could also add a question on how to resist to such a dark side of the creative city, yet building a city which is creative, open and inclusive. Zukin find a partial answer to such questions in the ability of a place to acknowledge the individual worth despite all the opposite forces and to support authentic communities (Zukin, 2009).

Our cities will have to develop a large set of practices of resistance, and, yet, many examples are already visible. There is, in fact, an emergence of cultural practices, mainly bottom-up, that seem to go in this direction. These are cultural movements, virtual spaces, libraries, independent bookshops, associations and so on, which build and promote a culture not necessarily aimed at the market. Yet these practices are able to find their place into market niches, and consider culture as a public space and an antidote towards the disruptive elements of the creative city. They build on sociality, integration and a very fruitful cultural, social and artistic hybridization.

Moreover, institutions and local governments can (and should) use the creative and cultural economy as a tool to foster social inclusion and local culture development, not only for the economic urban growth (which may come after, or may not). The very nature of the sector in question allows for

that. Being rooted in cultural and social capitals belonging to the same social background from which it stems from, the creative and cultural economy may become a useful tool that could be used to strengthen its own substratum, through the resulting economic capital that is produced<sup>1</sup>. Institutions and, above all, local governments, could address supporting measures for the creative and cultural economy towards the development of social cohesion and inclusion, not necessarily aimed at enhancing the sector's financial performance per se. It is now urgent that both academic research and public politics address social issues in the creative city with the same dedication devoted to the economic ones.

Indeed, the social aspects that stem from local creative and social capitals should be considered as important as the economic issues. Therefore, they should be dealt with the same level of attention devoted to the economic elements, by urban governments, academics and practitioners.

Both social, progressive urban politics and bottom-up socially-innovative cultural initiatives, have the power to open new spaces, where the city can find the resources to resist to the dark side and keeps being a place whose air makes people free<sup>2</sup>.

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1 As noted by Kong (Gibson and Kong, 2005), this is true for every segment of the economy, but in the culture-related domains this relation shows a particularly significant intensity.

2 A Middle Ages principle in German stated that "urban air makes people free" (Stadtluft macht frei) in the legislation about servants in the feudal regimes.





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