

Creative Industries, Cultural Quarters and Urban Development: The Case Studies of Rotterdam and Milan



MARIANGELA LAVANGA

Amsterdam institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies (AMIDSt)
Universiteit van Amsterdam (UvA)



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Photo (cover page): Mariangela Lavanga, Mural dedicated to the Méliès's Voyage dans la lune (1902) – Isola Art Center, Stecca degli Artigiani – Milan, 2002

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Introduction

All the trends that are causing changes in contemporary cities have brought the necessity of restructuring and regenerating the urban systems in order to create an “harmonious city” which is able to satisfy the needs and wants of all different users. Within this emerging framework of urban policy, an increasingly significant role has been played by the artistic and cultural sector. Central to this approach is the perception that cultural policies, if integrated and co-ordinated with other urban policies, can have a leading position within urban development strategies with respect to locational attractiveness and competitive advantage and can help to create more human, balanced and civilised cities; they can restore and improve the quality of urban life through the enhancement and development of the unique characteristics of a place and its people.

Cultural heritage and artistic activities have always reflected the role and function of any city: since the Middle Ages the physical structure and the functional design of the urban texture has represented on one hand a response to widely cultural needs (e.g. the relationship and competition between the civil and the religious powers), and on the other hand the specific environment which cultural works and activities could be rooted upon. The outcome of such a process is that nowadays every city can be read as a wide open-air palimpsest where cultural signs and works allow both residents and visitors to understand the identity and role of the city itself (Lavanga and Trimarchi, forthcoming).

In such a respect, we must observe that in the last years, responding to the radical change described above, also the forms and procedures of artistic production and diffusion are changing within the urban framework, shifting from a typically bourgeois view based upon individual or collective property, educational functions and elitist consumption to a wider (and presently more chaotic) view in which the needs and tastes of local communities appear to prevail in the attempt to redesign the urban shape through a more organic integration of art works and activities in every-day life, aiming at the rise of residents’ welfare and – at the same time – at the enhancement of the urban identity in residents’ and visitors’ perceptions (Lavanga and Trimarchi, forthcoming).

It is clear that the cultural sector contributes in many ways to the well being of the urban society, but how can cultural policies be effectively integrated with the other urban

policies? and in that way, contributing to the development of a more equal, balanced urban environment? How can cultural policies help policy-makers to reduce the risk of social exclusion, increasing the social inclusion and stimulating community involvement? What policy actions are required to contrast the gentrification process arising from the concentration of cultural activities (both consumption and production) in specific areas of the city, for example, in the so-called «cultural quarters»?

The comparative analysis of different cities will show how local urban policies can succeed or not in promoting social inclusion and urban sustainability through the cultural sector (the «Northern Quarter» in Manchester, the social and cultural policies in Rotterdam, the «Quartiere Isola» in Milan). I will focus the attention on the importance of adopting bottom up approaches, the re-discovery of the urban public realm, the stimulation of mixture tenure areas, the need for free spaces for youth creativity.

Contemporary cities: urban crisis vs. sustainable growth

The present change in the technological, social and economic phenomena is strongly affecting the role and structure of urban life. The individualistic view that seems to have been prevailing within a paradigm dominated by manufacturing industries is being progressively overcome by a more complex framework, where a crucial role is played by the community and the quality of its life. The drastic corporate restructuring and the consequential massive job losses explain such a loss of the usual cardinal points, and the need for a new and more effective design in which a post-industrial condition is fully attained by the cities.

The globalisation of trade, capital and labour, the transition to a post-fordist society, the raise of the information and network society¹, the decline of the manufacturing industry and the rise of the service industry, as well as the European integration and the increasing competition among cities will bring some alterations on the inter-urban and intra-urban relations. The main implications seem to be a rise in the importance of the

¹ “In a broader historical perspective the network society represents a qualitative change in the human experience. ...Because of the convergence of historical evolution and technological change we have entered a purely cultural pattern of social interaction and social organisation. This is why information is the key ingredient of our social organisation and why flows of messages and images between networks constitute the basic thread of our social structure.” (Castells, 1996).

quality of life as location factor (the shift from hard to soft location factors), the intensification of the spatial interactions among systems and the push towards a higher degree of decentralisation in the management of public resources. Moreover there has been a deepening of social divisions and an intensification of poverty and social exclusion – a process that some writers have sought to analyse through the metaphor of the “dual city”, an increasingly polarised space in which the gap between the (new) rich and the (new) poor becomes progressively wider.

All these trends, that are causing changes in the contemporary cities, have brought the necessity of restructuring and regenerating the urban systems (Harris, 1997) in order to create a *harmonious* or *balanced* city (Klaassen, 1989) able to satisfy the needs and wants of different users: citizens, visitors, businesses and investors. The idea of conceiving the city as a living organism rather than a machine shifts policy from a concentration on physical infrastructure towards urban dynamics and the overall well-being and health of the people, implying a systemic approach to urban problems.

What is clear is that cities are developing along a multiplicity of (often heterogeneous) paths, and the main problem is to identify the potential actors of a consistent change mainly aiming at the increase in quality of life, combining the rights of the residents with the expectations of the external visitors, and with the needs of the productive sector: Cities have a strong potential for a long-term revitalisation, but this needs new tools for public action and the active involvement of citizens and local communities through projects and investments able to raise the degree of sustainability of urban development.

A new approach to urban management: Governance and Organising Capacity

The emerging needs of contemporary cities and their complexity appear to require a more comprehensive approach to urban management², based upon the integration of

² According to Bramezza and van Klink (1994), urban management is “the process of development, execution, co-ordination, evaluation of integrative strategies, - with the help of all relevant urban actors, private and public sectors (...) in order to improve the competitive position of a city or a region in a harmonious way.

policies, focusing upon a pro-active orientation. Such an approach records a growing consensus among both scholars and policy-makers.

Moreover, because of the complexity, diversity and dynamics of present society, government on the basis of one-way traffic between public and private sectors is no longer satisfactory. Urban management is not just a matter of formal public administration. Management is mainly a process of steering, influencing and balancing the activities related to the “governing efforts”, that are interaction processes between public actors and public or private target groups or individuals involved (Kooiman, 1993).

Such an approach to urban management has to possess considerable flexibility, in order to respond quickly to external and internal changes and to be able to continuously turn problems into opportunities. The future urban policy should be to enhance as much as possible the living climate, the appeal and attractiveness of the city in the widest meaning for all the (potential) urban users, and so the relative competitive position.

Governmental action faces a number of challenges. The issue of policy changes in open systems, characterised by a multitude of stakeholders, has been treated by various authors. The inertia of organisations may explain the incapacity of policy-makers to foster change. Moreover, with their passive resistance, or by explicit opposition, non-formal actors that however detain effective power on the regulated issues can prevent governments from achieving their objectives. Therefore, in situations characterised by a multitude of actors with diverging objectives, top-down planning is doomed to failure in the implementation stage (Russo, 2002).

Van den Berg et al. (1997) analyses the consequences of ineffective governance in a complex decisional context and recommend the creation of strategic networks at intra-city and inter-city levels, and embrace the notion of governance as the guiding organisation principle. Rather than executors of public policy, governments should be facilitators in a development process that involves other actors.

The (future) prosperity and success of a city in its urban development will depend upon a high degree of its «organising capacity» (van den Berg et al., 1997). Organising capacity is defined as “the ability to enlist all actors involved and with their help generate new ideas and develop and implement a policy designed to respond to

fundamental developments and create conditions for sustainable development”. Vision and strategy, spatial-economic conditions, leadership, strategic networks, political support and societal support are all elements that contribute to organising capacity.

The principal aspect of that power is to be able, adequately and on the proper spatial-economic scale, to anticipate, respond to and cope with the changing intra and inter-metropolitan relations due to internal and external processes of change. The combination of the framework of organising capacity and that of integrated urban development becomes really important. The shift in hard and soft location factors results in increased interdependency between social, economic, environmental and transportation aspects. Consequently, urban strategies should promote integrality. Integrated and interdisciplinary approaches to the urban matters are strongly required. The city has multiple stakeholders and the local authority’s role is increasingly to set up, manage and drive partnerships to come up with solutions. Seeing the city through the eyes of different groups is crucial as means of empowerment, and as a way of gaining an insight into different perspectives.

The role of the cultural sector in cities

Within this emerging framework of urban policy, an increasingly significant role has been played by the artistic and cultural sector, reflecting a strong belief among many commentators and governmental bodies that the «cultural realm» is destined to play an increasingly important part in the future evolution of cities. A substantial body of literature on the relationships between culture and city, culture and place, the «creative city» has been developed in the last years (Landry and Bianchini, 1995; Hall, 1999; Landry, 2000; Scott, 2001; Florida, 2002; etc). Culture is seen as a “way of doing” which is typical of a particular location, determining a comparative advantage in the production of specialised goods and services.

Since the late 1970s many European cities, confronted with the common challenge of planning for urban renewal and urban regeneration have increasingly used “culture” within urban revitalisation strategies to re-new the image of the city, making it a place in which to live, work and invest, improving the quality of life in urban communities.

Since the late 1980s the attention has started to shift away from flagship developments to softer infrastructure of networks and clusters within which knowledge, ideas, creativity and innovation are retained and stimulated. At the same time cities have started to develop an increasing interest in creating districts inhabited with a climate of innovation and creativity, the «innovative and creative milieu» and «cultural quarters». The concept of the «innovative milieu» has more recently been connected to networked production (Hall, 1998). The driving forces of an innovative milieu are cultural and technological: cultural through its content, technological as the cultural content flows increasingly via new ICT infrastructures. Evidence for this new wave of urban innovation based on ICT is given by Peter Hall's (1999) "The Creative City in the Third Millennium". Landry (2000) defines the «creative milieu» as a physical setting, whether a city, a neighbourhood, or a quarter, where a critical mass of entrepreneurs, intellectuals, social activists, artists and students can operate in an open-minded, cosmopolitan context and where face-to-face interactions creates new ideas, artefacts, products, services and institutions, and as a consequence contributes to economic success. Such a milieu contains the necessary preconditions in terms of hard and soft infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and innovations. Particularly important for such a milieu is soft infrastructure, the system of social networks and human interactions that facilitate the flow of ideas.

The definition of culture

At the base of those reflections, there is a broad definition of culture; culture can be seen as a shared way of doing and understanding things, a system of values and an aesthetic language that binds a community and is formed by the peculiar historical development of that community³. However, the definition of culture is a problematic task. There is no singular meaning to this all embracing word and definitional difficulties proved a major obstacle in efforts to streamline the information regarding the economic impacts of culture and propose a widely accepted assessment

³ At the world conference of cultural politics in Mexico City in 1982, UNESCO described culture as concerning «... all the specific features, spiritual, material, intellectual or affective, that characterise a society or human group. Culture includes, besides art and literature, way of life, basic human rights, system of value, tradition and religions».

methodology. Through time, two fields of analysis have become commonly accepted in the academic world: «culture as a product», which raises relevant questions regarding the production, the consumption and the economic value of culture, as well as the instrumental use of culture as a tool for urban regeneration and place marketing; and «culture as a process», which hints at creative thinking leading to distinctive patterns of social organisation and economic growth. The first category involves more closely the tangible elements of culture, the second its intangible aspects.

A complex set of activities and actors with utterly diverse characteristics, functions and objectives are generally included in accounts of the cultural sector. The identification of what is meant by cultural activity or production leads to the delimitation of the set of actors that constitute the «cultural sector». All the goods and services characterised by the following qualities can be included in this set: uniqueness, scarcity, idiosyncrasy in production, heterogeneity, low grade of use value, aesthetic and semiotic content (symbolic attributes), low grade of technical reproducibility, simultaneity between production and consumption.

In particular, in the recent years, it has become popular the use the term of «cultural industries» and later «creative industries». The terms «cultural industries», first used in the Great Britain by now abolished Greater London Council (GLC), defined cultural industries as: “those institutions in our society which employ the characteristics modes of production and organisation of industrial corporations to produce and disseminate symbols in the forms of cultural goods and services, generally, though not exclusively, as commodities”. The term «cultural industries» is not an attempt to supplant that of «culture» rather to stress that these activities are not simply charities or services requiring public assistance, but they are a productive sector in their own right, feeding in a number of different ways into the wider local and regional economy. Furthermore, the increasing crossovers between the different forms of cultural activities could gain nothing from an artificial separation produced by distinguishing their form (Wynne, 1993).

More recently, it has been common to refer to the «creative industries», as those industries which “incorporate all branches of industry and trade that rely on imaginative creation and cultural innovation aimed at production, distribution and consumption of

symbolic goods” (O’Connor, 1999). They include advertising, architecture, design, crafts, visual art, performing arts, video and film, literature, publishing, music, designer fashion, software and computer games, television and radio. Creative industries are composed of different sub-sectors, which are strongly dependent on each other for the development of ideas and skills and cannot be neatly disaggregated without undermining the subtle ecology of the broader sector.

The impacts of culture on the economic development of cities

“With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities – the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge. The growth of cultural consumption⁴ (of art, food, fashion, music, tourism) and the industries that cater to it, fuels the city’s symbolic economy, its visible ability to produce both symbols and space” (Zukin 1995). It is not surprising that cultural activities are eminently *urban* activities. They would concentrate in cities where audiences are big and sophisticated enough to make them economically viable; and where informal networks within the cultural sector and the local society stimulate innovation and creative ideas. In economic terms, clustering is driven by economies of agglomeration⁵, or the savings in unit cost that accrue to firms when a large enough number of them locate in the same place. An example is given by the presence of art schools in a given region, accompanied by a concentration of theatres, artists’ ateliers, galleries, bar, clubs and venues, stimulating a supply of creative ideas and “new combinations”.

⁴ Numerous social and economic trends can explain the growth in the demand for cultural goods and services: the growing welfare and the changes in the lifestyle, people live longer and especially the over-55s consume more cultural goods and services with their increased leisure time and disposable income, higher standards of education, increasing leisure time, a more diversified participation in cultural life which blurred the boundaries between «high culture» and «low culture», etc.

⁵ In particular, theatres, galleries and museums display the typical characteristics of central place functions (Heilbrun, 1987), concentrating where the demand is sufficiently large. How large is large enough depends on the typical variables of central place theory: the cost characteristics of the service offered and the geographical density of demand for it. For example, the greater the per capita demand for a service, the smaller the minimum size of city needed to support it.

The economic impacts of cultural activities

As any other economic sector, the cultural sector generates direct, indirect and induced economic impacts and other less tangible effects (qualitative impacts). The 1980s saw a flourishing of studies on the economic importance of the cultural sector in different cities, and of direct and indirect economic impacts of cultural activities and policies on employment and wealth.

The *direct* benefits result from expenditure by cultural institutions in contracting of services, employment of people and processing of goods; this expenditure represents the *first round* of spending initiated by cultural activities. Because of the distinctively labour-intensive nature of the cultural industries, these effects are largely local: suppliers and workers are paid locally.

The *indirect* benefits result from a second round of expenditure. Salaries earned in the cultural sectors are spent in goods and products, possibly local, producing a “multiplier effect”. Other concerns regard the “costs” of culture as compared to the benefits, therefore the capacity of art investments to generate “returns” and the argument for the public sector to defend and promote artistic productions and cultural activities.

The *induced* benefits result from the incidental spending other than ticket costs or admission charges, which is crucially stimulated by cultural expenditure. Tourist expenditure is a typical illustration: attendants to cultural events and visitors to monuments spend a substantial part of their budget in nearby restaurants and shops, hotels, cabs, etc.

Other benefits of *qualitative*, intangible nature are related to the presence of cultural activities in a city. Even in cases in which cultural services are provided free or at rates below market price, external benefits or qualitative effects of all sorts are expected, from the instrumental use of culture as a promotional landmark for the city and its resources, to the positive effect of the cultural sector on the regional creative climate and its image. Such benefits can be interpreted as technological externalities, which exert a potential impact on profits, and, thus, on the economic success of local firms. Furthermore, the level, quality and diversity of artistic and other cultural activities in a region have become an important factor in location decisions of enterprises that depends on the availability of high-quality labour (Dziembowska-Kowalska and Funck, 2000).

Finally, culture has important social effects in stimulating personal development, community cohesion and civic pride.

Creativity and the creative industries

Together with scientific excellence, creativity is today a driving force of economic growth, and has a special role in the development of places. Creativity is pervasive and ongoing, nurtured by and interacting with art and culture. This kind of interplay is evident in the rise of whole new industries, from computer graphics to digital music and animation. Florida (2002) suggests that one of the pillars of urban innovation is the presence in the city of the «creative class», which is attracted by large cities and regions offering a variety of economic opportunities, a stimulating environment and amenities for every possible lifestyle. It is the access to talented and creative people which determines where companies will choose to locate and grow. Rather than being driven exclusively by market forces, economic growth is occurring in places that are tolerant, diverse and open to creativity (Florida, 2002). His bestseller book – “The Rise of Creative Class” –, if in one hand it raised again attention towards the importance of stimulating a creative environment in cities, in an other hand, it had also some “strange” effects on policy-makers. The mayor of Denver announced last fall that he would bought copies of “The Rise of the Creative Class” for his staff and, inspired by his reading, engaged an \$80,000-a-year public-relations expert to “rebrand” the city as a more creative metropolis. The mayor of Amsterdam, after reading the book, came with the idea to chase away all poor people, and accept only the “creative” ones, and in that way making Amsterdam “a creative city”.

Van den Berg, Russo and Lavanga (forthcoming) deal with the importance of higher education and research centres as “incubators of ideas” and hence key engines of urban competitiveness. Their analysis rather than on institutions focuses on the academic community, and university students in particular, as a population group with specific needs and life patterns that needs to be attracted and well-managed in order for a city to make the best out of the development and innovation potential that they represent. They find that cities that aim to “hook” knowledge assets to their local economic networks have to act on different levels: quality housing, quality of life and cultural amenities, openness of the job market and conviviality of the urban environment. These

management issues regarding the “creative class” disclose many points of convergence between urban culture and population patterns. Culture-rich and creative cities result attractive for students in various disciplines, enjoying an “open laboratory” climate where research and education are perfectly integrated with everyday life and social networking, and for graduates looking for opportunities to build a life career in a stimulating and non-hierarchical environment. On the other hand, van den Berg, Russo and Lavanga show how, in successful student cities, students are among the main group of cultural consumers and the heralds of cultural and social change. Therefore it may be argued that cities with a rich student population result more attractive for creative industries because they enjoy a large market and have access to a vast pool of talents.

The particular aspect that distinguishes – not only conceptually but also from the point of view of urban impacts – creative industries from culture and art in the strict sense is the focus on the “instrumental” character of culture that they imply (Russo et al., forthcoming). Differently from cultural industries, creative industries do not produce culture for culture’s sake and do not target essentially cultural consumers, but they are more clearly driven by a commercial motive.

The creative industries have gradually become central assets of the contemporary urban economy and the social fabric of the city. Creative industries are typically labour-intensive; their organisation model is rather the network interaction of micro and small producers than the supply-chain hierarchy of fordist industries. The nature of these industries induces them to cluster in space. They operate through a specific spatial logic, by which they are strongly linked to the mutual dependency of culture and the city. Furthermore, they are highly dependent upon each other’s proximity, as this provides them with competitive advantages through *creative exchange and networking* (Porter, 1998; Scott, 2000). Because of the difficulty of substituting capital for labour, it is difficult for them to achieve significant economies of scale; hence economic advantage must be sought in economies of scope. These are generated through spatial proximity, which induces them to share production facilities, draw on the same audience, engage in collaborative marketing. Clustering is a source of innovation and growth for cities (Van den Berg et al., 2001; Porter, 1998; Storper and Harrison, 1991; Pyke et al., 1990). In this context, the notion of *cultural or creative cluster or district* is relevant, because it hints at the flexible articulation of the value chain of culture in a spatially delimited

setting, but also at the organisational values that bind different activities together. Competition is not ruled out in the industrial district model, just the contrary: it is the driving force of innovation and ecology in the cluster. However, it is not “destructive” and it is accompanied by a certain degree of co-operation in particular aspects of the production process. That is, a district can be highly competitive and culturally cohesive at the same time. *Trust* is the keyword: because of institutional arrangements and social control systems, each producer is convinced that sharing information and resources would not lead to a competitive disadvantage, and would stimulate the achievement of collective gains.

Whilst in the industrial age there was a need to separate dirty industry from work, home and leisure, today knowledge industries require urban settings that project space, openness and social interchange. Ironically, this is often provided by redundant industrial buildings in particular urban quarters, around the urban core, which have historically been the location of manufacturing and warehousing. In the city centre are high value services like finance, business, retail and civic political and cultural institutions. The inner urban ring provides supply services to the hub, it is also usually the home of the less well-established creative, knowledge and cultural industries – such as design, Internet companies, young multimedia entrepreneurs and artists – that provide the buzzing atmosphere on which cities thrive, experimenting with new products and services. The inner urban ring tends to provide the clientele for the new restaurants, clubs and venues, to which the more conservative people from the hub will ultimately want to go to.

The buildings in the inner urban rings are usually a mix of old warehousing, small industrial buildings and older housing with a large element of mixed uses. Lower prices enable younger, innovative people to develop projects in interesting spaces that in the centre only companies with capital can afford. As these companies grow and become profitable they move into the hub or gentrified their own areas. This inner ring provides a vital experimentation and incubation zone, where the older industrial buildings are recycled and re-used as incubator units for new business start-ups, as headquarters for cutting edge companies, as artist studios, or as centres for design and new media. An interesting example is the «Cable Factory» in Helsinki; formerly Nokia’s cable

production centre, it houses over 600 people from small businesses to museums and it is, probably, the largest centre of its type in Europe.

The Cultural Quarter

What is clear is that the cultural activities, both the cultural consumption and production spheres, are playing a central role in the contemporary urban economy and the social fabric of the city. An innovative and dynamic cultural sector is seen as an indicator of the flexibility and creativity of a city as a whole, providing an invaluable source of human capital, services and ideas. Moreover, it is important to note that the time frame for cultural consumption is not limited to the pattern of the normal working day. Cultural activities can be used as the basis for an “evening and night economy” as they are able to attract people not only into different places but also at different times through galleries, theatre, film, bars and clubs (for the creation of a «24-hour city»). Due to an increase of both the amount and the time-scale of activity, it is apparent that culture can also help to provide the critical mass which makes an area work, both socially and economically. This is achieved by stimulating a range of and mixed uses and activities in an area which support and reinforce each other and help to restore previously derelict areas.

The development of cultural quarters often takes place in specific quarters of the city, distinct areas defined by their limited area, their mix of types and sizes of buildings and tenure, their human scale and their individual character and intrinsic identity. In relation to the process of cultural regeneration in post-industrial cities, these characteristics are often developed in central areas that have historically been the location of manufacturing and warehousing. Since the rapid decline of this economic sector in the 1970s and 1980s, in many areas more marginal businesses run by younger entrepreneurs, students and artists have moved in, attracted by cheap rents and an urban location. Often these people are involved in the artistic or creative enterprises, and are keen to adopt an urban life-style and develop an urban aesthetic. In this way they provide the catalyst for the regeneration of the area as a «cultural quarter».

In general terms, *a cultural quarter can be defined as a spatially limited and distinct area which contains a high concentration of cultural and entertainment facilities*

compared with other areas of town or city (Wynne, 1991). More specifically, it is possible to identify a number of key characteristics which help to define it as distinct quarter and as an area of cultural activity: central location, cultural facilities, mixed use, crossover, public art.

The *central location* within the city makes the cultural cluster more accessible and also invites less formal usage, which is in character with many of the activities that occur there (bars and cafés), as well as making them ideal centres for specific uses and specialist interests (small retailers, clubs, etc).

The *cultural facilities* have to concern both cultural consumption and cultural production, for example music venues and recording studios, cinema and film schools, market stalls and craft workshops. Indeed, the increasing attention and importance of the cultural quarters rely in the recognition that cultural policies have to take into account cultural consumption and cultural production and their essential and important interrelations. However, most cultural quarters tend to become centres of consumption rather than providing a balance of the two. Less formal facilities are also required, such as the street and the square, in order to accommodate programmed events and festivals.

Mixed use allows for economic diversity, provides a more human-scale environment and helps to increase the sense of containment and self-sufficiency of the area. A mixture of small-to medium-scale businesses (shops, studios and performance venues), cafes, bars, clubs, hotels, youth hostel, cinemas and theatre, as well as residential developments allow for diversity and activity at all times.

Crossover between cultural production and consumption and in different areas of cultural production is essential. Due to the relatively high value-added nature of the production process for many cultural industries, it is important that there are close (geographical) links between the point of production and the point of consumption. Due to the smaller scale and local mix, businesses are more able and willing to share or use each other's resources, skills and facilities, etc. It is this general relationship between cultural consumption and cultural production that is a crucial factor for both general functioning and the successful functioning of cultural quarters. Crossover is also very important to stimulate "artistic innovation". For Castañer (2002), artistic innovation by arts organisations consists in the programming of an activity that radically departs from

existing art conventions, whether locally or globally. In this way, artistic innovation is distinguished from mere newness. Two important dimensions in which arts organisations can innovate are identified, namely, content and form. While past research has concentrated on the repertoire dimension of innovation, it is important to adopt a broader and more adequate definition of artistic innovation that also takes into account other content and process dimensions such as multi-disciplinarity and interactivity.

Public art and its integration with the built environment are also important. Once again, this calls for a balance between production and consumption, as local artists can be used to create attractions for their local environment, and moreover for a good urban design and, consequently, a vital and vibrant public realm. This is achieved by creating art that engages and involves people with the environment in order to contribute to a greater understanding of the area.

The cultural quarter represents the city's avant-garde heart, its "creative milieu". It provides a sense of place in downtown locations, an "ambience" which further encourages the use of cultural facilities, also during the night, by both residents and visitors. More recently, a number of cities and towns have begun this process of developing and planning such quarters. However, the formula for success in cultural quarter development is not defined by any one strategy. The management of cultural quarters may be organised in the different ways and involve a greater or lesser degree of intervention. Various cities around the world have realised their cultural goals through a multitude of approaches with respect to government involvement, types of management, intensity of development and cultural programming. The development of a cultural cluster can be the result of planning for the re-use of derelict land and buildings in city centres and at their edge, or a spontaneous self-reinforcing development around some catalyst function or organisation. However, it has to be understood as a continual process requiring a programme of investment in areas such as training and education, small businesses support and the refurbishment of buildings as mixed-use premises, rather than the reconstruction of places as spaces for pre-determined cultural activities.

Hitters and Richards (2003) analyse the process of development of cultural clusters and find that historical and institutional differences result in a different "role" of cultural clusters or quarters in cities, and in different evolutionary paths. Planned clusters in

eccentric locations (like the Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam, analysed by these authors) are more stable and maximise the “productivity” of the organisations hosted there in terms of artistic quality, because they are protected against gentrification and therefore attracting investments there is less risky. On the other side there are unplanned, spontaneous developments of cultural quarters, as in the case of the Northern Quarter in Manchester, meeting-places not only for artists and cultural entrepreneurs, but also for students, young skilled workers, tourists, and suburban middle classes in search of edge events and a vibrant urban atmosphere. Both these spatial models of cultural activity have important implications for urban development. The former stresses innovation, social regeneration and synergetic development of culture and economy. The latter stresses conviviality, consumerism, dynamism and urban value, and can be seen as a step towards the establishment of a “glocal” economy where local assets get inserted in global network of value generation (Russo et al., forthcoming).

In conclusion, a rich cultural patrimony is not a sufficient condition for the development of an innovative cultural sector, neither necessary, as it can be testified by the numerous cases of cities like Glasgow or Manchester. The analysis of different urban system shows the differences between a cultural patrimony that can be exploited automatically and an organised cultural cluster which is renewed in a virtuous synergy with the other functions of the city.

Box 1 – Manchester and the Northern Quarter

Manchester is historically known as the stronghold of the first industrial revolution, the main national centre for textiles and related activities. The city was also the first one to see the collapse of the manufacturing industries since the late 1960s. In the 1980s, Manchester embarked a radical urban policy programme. Culture was the keyword: the city government pioneered a new focus towards art and culture as strongholds of socio-economic recovery and city branding. The vision of a city that puts to value its creative assets in the new service economy was relatively new and surprising for a city that could not offer many “traditional” cultural amenities to its citizens. Manchester was one of the first cities in Britain to endorse an explicit strategy focused on cultural production activities as growth sectors for the local economy and the community. The city has also been a pioneer in research and policies regarding the cultural industries, testified for example by the work of the Manchester Institute

for Popular Culture (MIPC) at the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). Over the years, Manchester has built a reputation of a cool, creative city, with a lively cultural scene that attracts young audiences and gives a chance to talented artists, nationally and internationally. This image is very much a legacy of the 1980s, when the “Madchester” sound, an innovative and provocative blend of new sound, raw power, and melodic inspiration, topped the British charts (Ian Curtis, Joy Division, New Order, the Durutti Column, Oasis, Badly Drawn Boy) Moreover, the city hosts some of the most outstanding and better preserved industrial heritage in Britain. The success of the Council’s policy is also testified by Manchester’s keenness to become the first of Britain’s «24-hour cities». Manchester is now at a turning point in its cultural strategy, adopting new tools and a new organisational framework that allows on one side to “open up” the range of objectives and integrate them with other fields of urban management (land use, economic development, public works, city marketing, tourism) and on the other to enlarge the range of stakeholders involved in policy, from the European Union to the neighbouring community, from private partners and sponsors to the national boards (*Our Creative City*, Manchester City Council, May 2002).

Two areas of the city explicitly designated as cultural quarters, mixing entertainment, consumption and production spaces: Castlefield and Salford Quays and the Northern Quarter. The development of Castlefield could be described by «top-down» approach, characterised by large-scale investment, property-led development, and a thematic streamlining of museums, heritage and other tourist sites. The Northern Quarter can be seen as an antithesis of the development model followed at Castlefield and Salford Quay. It has attracted little planned investment, and yet – and probably because of this – it has become a haven for avant-garde (craft, fashion and design production) characterised by micro businesses and organisations, partly grown out of the city’s youth and pop-music cultures, the key innovative milieu of cultural producers in Manchester. Until 1970s the main street in this area was Manchester’s most popular commercial area. In the early 1970s much was demolished. A failing but still sizeable working class community remained, some of the traditional businesses that served this community were able to survive, and the area became established as a partly disreputable area serving these local interests. On account of the low rental costs, an associated laxity with planning permission, the central location, and the opportunity to exploit some of the remaining commercial premises and disused warehouses, alternative cultural businesses began to re-colonise the area. The Northern Quarter’s bohemien atmosphere was closely linked with the success of the “Manchester sound”, driving the area to become a prime site for youth culture in the UK – both production and consumption – principally in the music, fashion and design industries. Many new creative businesses were attracted to the area, are relatively small,

predominantly run by young people, embedded in dense networks, and their activities are closely linked to the local scene. Today, the Northern Quarter hosts over 300 small and micro cultural businesses including clothes boutiques, music shops, the Department Store (a mixed-use facility hosting many artists and the CIDS offices – Cultural Industries Development Service⁶ –), the vibrant Craft and Design Centre (the largest provider of studio/retail space and support for designer-makers in the North West region), bars, restaurants, jewellers, in addition to specialist professional services as solicitors, architects, interior designers, accountants and dentists, and a number of facilities for homeless, addicts, and other weak groups. It also includes an alternative shopping centre – the renowned Affleck’s Palace – which, since opening in 1982, has provided outlets for independent designers, acting as a magnet for tourists and a meeting place for Manchester students, and the Chinese Arts Centre which features a gallery and tea shop.

Key Issues

Culture can be seen as a real driver for a new stage of development of cities based on quality of life and conviviality, creativity and uniqueness as elements of competitiveness, at the same time guaranteeing *balance* to such development. However, to move towards the so-called model of a *harmonious* or *balanced* city (Klaassen, 1989), or sustainable urban development⁷, it is necessary that a city find a balance in the nature of investments so that all the pillars of sustainable development are maintained and enhanced: the cultural capital, the social capital and the spatial organisation.

A key principle is the balance between *production* and *consumption* of culture. In cultural policy there is often a clear distinction between consumption and production-oriented strategies. The former develop and promote urban cultural attractions and activities as magnet for tourism, retailing, hotel and catering. The latter provide strategic support for publishing, film, electronic music, TV, design, fashion and other creative

⁶ CIDS is a non-profit limited company, funded by the European Regional Development Fund, North West Development Agency, the City Council of Manchester and other regional partners to assist the creation and the development of businesses in the creative sector.

⁷ The concept of «sustainable development» has been defined in general terms in 1987 by the Brundtland Report, “Our Common Future”, as “that kind of development which fits the need of the present generation without affecting the capacity of the future generations of satisfying their needs”. The notion of «sustainable city» emerged in the mid-1970s as a response to the Club of Rome report on “The Limits to Growth” (Meadows et al., 1972).

industries. It can be risky in the long term for cities to rely on consumption-oriented models of cultural policy-led economic development, even if they can be profitable in the short term, by creating visibility and political return. The success of strategies that use cultural policy to boost retailing and consumer services industries, expand tourism and attract external investment increasingly depends on factors over which cities have limited control, like change in the level of residents' and visitors' disposable income. Moreover, a related problem concerns the quality of jobs created by these consumerist approaches (low-paid, part-time, low skilled). Therefore, it is important for cities to combine a policy aimed at boosting cultural consumption with local cultural industries strategies, which have the potential to create skilled jobs in high value-added sectors of the economy (Lavanga, 2002).

Societal innovation is an engine of flexibility and adaptation for cities in a dynamic, turbulent environment. A secluding city, a dual or divided city that does not know how to manage a *multicultural environment*, diversity and plurality runs the risk to see its successes come to a halt in the turn of generation (Russo et al., forthcoming).

The re-development of cities determines continuous changes in the values of proximity, centrality and access. However, the maximum value for the community is attributed to *spatial heterogeneity and multiple functional mixes*. In a balanced city, commuting times and traffic flows are minimised. A compact and dense city is to be preferred as it leads to better functional interaction and a more involved society. Planners can therefore intervene in the density and compactness of the city through planning regulations and fiscal instruments. Cultural projects and activities can favour such processes of "spatial rationalisation". However, the establishment of certain areas of cities as cultural quarters in some case has generated the phenomenon of *gentrification*, displaced local residents and facilities, and increased land values, rents and local cost of living. For the private sector, it is perceived that the arts could enhance the quality of downtown real estate developments and that this would in turn create uplift in rental levels. However, the increase in value may be such that some of the original inhabitants and potential incomers are pushed out of the property market. While this can be seen as a natural outcome and a symptom of commercial success, the risk is that the very social forces that are behind regeneration are swept away from the area, causing the regeneration cycle to become sterile and the benefits for the community to die down fast. Evidence of

such processes are examined by Zukin (1982) who charts the rise of the loft market in New York as being one unwittingly created by resident artists and subsequently exploited by the real estate sector. Such cases clearly demonstrate the inadequacies of unrestrained property-led regeneration strategies, and raise important issues for policy-making.

In conclusion, the difficulties posed by culture-led regeneration need to be balanced by the *opportunities* which it offers. Bianchini (1993) argued that these are most effectively obtained when cultural policies are integrated into every single sphere of municipal policy-making: the concept of «cultural planning».

The important role of a «cultural planning» approach

The concept of «cultural planning» becomes essential within such a framework, aiming at overcoming the traditionally sectoral approach focused on the development of separate cultural sectors or forms. Two-way relationships have to be developed between the cultural resources and any type of public policy. These processes have to present some important characteristics: they have to be holistic, flexible, lateral, networked, innovative, critical, people-centred, cultured, open-ended and non-instrumental (Bianchini, 1993). Central to this approach is the perception that cultural policies, if integrated and co-ordinated with other urban policies, can have a leading position within urban development strategies with respect to locational attractiveness and competitive advantage and can help to create more human, balanced and civilised cities; they can restore and improve the quality of urban life through the enhancement and development of the unique characteristics of a place and its people.

Often policy-makers are not still sufficiently aware of the potential of their cultural resources. Aesthetic definitions of culture as art still tend to prevail, and policies for the arts are rarely co-ordinated with policies on media, design and other elements of local culture. The result of this lack of integration is the failure to exploit potential synergies and strategic development opportunities. By its nature, cultural planning cuts across the divides between the public, private and voluntary sectors, different institutional concerns, and different professional disciplines. To implement cultural planning strategies, city governments will have to move towards a more corporate and integrated

approach to policy-making. The cultural planning approach reveals therefore the inadequacy of narrowly based professional specialisations. This is a problem of the urban planning in general. It has been largely forgotten that urban planning and design is a form of art. It is intrinsically linked with other forms of cultural production. It is about the production of a city, and the city is in part an artefact. There was more a continuum between architecture, urban planning, urban design and art in ancient Greece or in Renaissance Italy-societies which are still possible models to look at. There is a clear need for «organising capacity» and the development of the innovation potential of cities. New structures for policy-making are required. These should be much more integrated and overarching, bringing together departments and working on issues and themes, rather than on the basis of policy empires and departments. In particular, an adoption of a broader definition of culture, a general re-organisation of the cultural sector and the adoption of a cultural cluster strategy have been seen as a way to favour the development of significant synergies between culture and all the relevant sector of the urban economy.

Integrated approaches that look at the culture of the city as a way of life, that create connections among natural, social, cultural, political and economic environments, that grasp the importance not only of “hard” but also “soft” infrastructures are needed. The latter are the social and cultural networks and dynamics of a place. The cultural sector contributes to a more complex process of development: it provides communities with a higher – although not precisely measurable – quality of life in terms of immaterial benefits, also in the urban public realm, which is so strikingly missing in the vast majority of cities, and it is also able to generate material benefits for the economy and the society as a whole, directly and indirectly through the creation of a fertile social and cultural humus able to conceive new productive ideas, to experience new modes of exchange and production, to intercept new needs.

Urban public realm, urban design, public art

In the modern cities, two key problems that urgently need creative solutions are the increasing social, spatial and cultural segregation of low-income groups and the need to make ethnic and racial minorities an integral part of the civic network. Moreover, the combined effects of sub-urbanisation, standardisation of the urban landscape and

privatisation of space resulted indeed in a general collapse of civility and social cohesion, a lack of vitality and problems of safety (Punter, 1990). The poor quality of the «urban public realm⁸» and of the built environment has directly bearings on the quality of the social life of a city. As response to that crisis, a new approach to «urban design» has raised, which allows for a greater appreciation of traditional urban processes and the local and historic context for the new developments. It pays great respect to the uniqueness of particular places and concern for the continuity of their particular traditions. Therefore, urban design is increasingly recognised as integral to processes of cultural regeneration and urban revitalisation, as it involves not only the physical or economic sphere but also touches upon the social, political and cultural life of the city. Linking urban design with culture, with the political, economic and social processes implicit in the cultural planning approach, the sense of place can be stimulated in the built environment, and the interventions of urban designers can be more effective. In particular, public art and its integration with the built environment are important. This may be achieved by supporting art that engages and involves people and the environment, contributing to a deeper understanding of the place.

Although many initiatives labelled as «public art» seem not to reveal any specific innovation with respect to the usual framework of relationships (e.g. art in public spaces such as monuments in open squares, etc.), within such a generous label many heterogeneous projects are actually aimed at the enhancement of quality of life in the urban setting or in the environment as a whole. What seems to be in common among these projects is the search for a new and more «interactive awareness» on the part of local communities with respect to the physical or social shape of their space (Lavanga and Trimarchi, forthcoming). Public art tends to redesign the network of relationships and exchanges occurring among a multiplicity of people within the urban space, involving local decision-makers in side sectors such as architecture, traffic, environment, leisure, education and trade.

⁸ Bianchini (1990) defines the public realm as “... the realm of social relations going beyond one’s own circle of family, professional and social relations ... the idea of the public realm is bound up with the ideas of discovery, of expanding one’s mental horizons, of the unknown, of surprise, of experiment, of adventure”. The public realm is much wider concept than the public spaces or places in the city, referring to a distinctive set of social relations. Bianchini (1990) argues that public social life is “the interacting of socialising or sociability ... that occurs within the public realm”.

Towards cities as public domains and democratic communities

The Nobel Prize Amartya Sen, speaking at the World Bank Tokyo Meeting on Culture and Development in 2000, suggested that «... cultural matters are integral part of the lives we lead. If development can be seen as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared to development can hardly ignore the world of culture». He also argued that culture and development are linked in a number of different ways, and the connections relate to both the ends and the means of development. Sen relates culture to economic returns, foundation of behaviour and values system, as well as social choice, democracy and institutions. These values are important for economic success, such as the protection of the environment; democracy and institutions are clearly part of a local culture that influence social choice. Can therefore cultural policies help cities function as democratic public domains and catalyst for public social life? Linking the debate on the future of cities as physical and economic entities to that of the future of citizenship and local democracy will be one of the most important crucial tasks, and cultural policies can act as one instrument through which such linkage could be created (Bianchini, 1993).

Many city governments have tried to make the cultural policy-making process more responsive to the demands, aspirations and ideas of citizens, community groups and local business, with a new emphasis on partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors. They drew up cultural plans auditing their cultural resources and identifying the needs of the local community, putting more emphasis on community arts programmes and multicultural projects. However, these efforts to involve citizens in the policy-making process and in the debate about the future of the city should be widened and deepened. Urban cultural policies should be driven by a new civic inspiration. Creative inputs and perspectives from different groups could help to democratise and enrich the city's cultural policy and could raise important questions about the way the city functions and is designed.

The comparative analysis of Rotterdam and Milan

Two case studies have been analysed, Rotterdam – harbour city and second largest city in The Netherlands –, and Milan – the economic and financial centre of Italy. Both

cities are improving their images: Rotterdam's image has shifted from a harbour and working city into a more dynamic, convivial and attractive one; Milan's image has moved from the negative industrial foggy city towards the European capital of fashion and design.

Rotterdam

Since the Middle Age, Rotterdam has become an important pole in the international trade and today it is one of the biggest port and in rapid expansion in Europe. Notwithstanding the strong economic recession in the 1970s, a clever policy to support investment and socio-economic regeneration allowed Rotterdam to maintain its position as "world port number 1". However, today, transport and distribution activities in the port, though still very important, generate fewer and fewer jobs in the region. The economic benefits of the expansion of the port accrue mainly to inland regions, where transport and distribution activities increasingly locate. With this in mind, the economic strategy of the municipality is directed to the broadening of the economic base of the city.

The city is in continuous movement and change. Its impressive reconstruction after the bombing during the Second World War, which destroyed almost the entire historic inner city, has been followed by a new urban development plan, formulated in the second half of the 1980s on the base of a broader debate concerning the future of the city and inspired by developments in Baltimore, one of the first cities to adopt a waterfront regeneration program based on culture and leisure activities.

In this period, Rotterdam was dealing with a rise of unemployment, a strong suburbanisation of the higher-income families to the peripheral district following the urban crisis of the 1970s, the consequent social unbalance in the city centre and a deteriorating investment climate. The policy memorandum "Revitalising Rotterdam", issued in 1987, started to look at culture, leisure and tourism as elements of an appealing ambience, part of the vision of the "complete town", aimed at increasing the urban quality of life. Policies were developed to promote high-grade services for citizens and visitors and to raise the spatial quality through, for example, architecture and the reorganisation of public squares. Architecture has then been used as a form of advertising for the city, able to transmit a catching, idiosyncratic image of urban vitality and integral part of the

incorporation of cultural investment and policy into urban growth strategies. Among the development priorities, were mentioned the renovation of the old city districts, the transformation of former harbours and the upgrading of the waterfront into an attractive place to live, work and relax, a greater concentration of diverse museums and the creation of a «museum quarter»⁹ (masterplanned by Rem Koolhaas) in a existing park area (the Museumpark), improvements of existing products and incentives to business tourism. Many festivals and events were organised, aiming at exploiting the potential for stimulating artistic experimentation, improving the overall attractiveness and image of the city, stimulating the urban economy, attracting tourists, improving the cultural infrastructure, and in some way facilitating the accessibility of deprived groups to culture.

Box 2 – The Museum Quarter and the Witte de Withstraat «cultural quarter»

The museum quarter, whose development was primarily based on a combination of urban revitalisation and cultural marketing arguments to increase the flow of tourists, high level of public sector involvement with a strong «top down» and consumption-oriented approach, it is at the same time experiencing difficulties in relating itself to the wider urban field (Mommaas, 2004). Hence the attempts to link the quarter to possible cultural functions in the area, thus strengthen the cultural ambience and urban embeddedness. A «cultural axis» has been defined, connecting the museum quarter to the historical harbour area. The connecting street, With de Withstraat, is being transformed into a «cultural quarter»¹⁰. Close links characterise the local authority and representatives of the Witte de Withstraat area, including the tenants association

⁹ The museum quarter is one of the first examples of a consciously developed cultural cluster (Mommaas, 2004). The project developed during the 1990s, as part of a deliberate attempt by local government to strengthen the urban profile of the city. It has no clear central management at all, apart from irregular meetings between participants and local government taking a responsibility for the collective maintenance and promotion of the sites. The museum quarter hosts the Boijmans Museum, the Nederlands Architectuur Instituut (NAI), the Kunsthal and the Natuur Museum. During the summer, the Museumpark hosts a variety of open-air cultural events.

¹⁰ A turning point in the downward spiral of social and physical decay in the area was the creation of the local tenants association, which wanted to stimulate the economic recovery of the area. The tenant association jointed forces with the Rotterdam Arts Foundation, which was in charge of some galleries in the area. Together they launched a plan to turn the area into a cultural street or museum boulevard. Although the area itself was in decline, its location close to important cultural centers at the Museumpark and the Maritime Museum provided the basis for recovery. The Neighbourhood Development Company, founded in 1990, was a major catalyst for revitalization, stimulating the development of a number of galleries, the Witte de With arts center, the Netherlands Photo Institute and trendy bars and restaurants that attracted a culture-loving clientele.

and the local business association. These parties come together on a regular base in the “Witte de Withstraat Advisory Group” to discuss the development of the area. However, the group has no administrative power, nor do any of other parties involved have a central management role. The overall management of the area is of a diffuse and informal nature. The most frequent collaboration is between the galleries for participation in joint opening and festivals. Other forms of co-operation are largely ad hoc and sporadic. It seems that these collaborations are purely the result of the geographic proximity and that the actors of the cluster don't feel a huge need to increase the co-operation. Moreover, the quarter relies heavily only the consumption-related advantages of clustering. Today, it is fair to say that the upgrading of the area has not yet succeeded completely (Mommaas, 2004).

Complaints were raised about a lack of support from Rotterdam public arts organisations. Indeed, the interest of the public sector in the development of the Witte de Withstraat came mainly from the Economic Development Department and the Urban Development and Housing Department, with no direct involvement of the Cultural Affairs Department. This suggests that the development has been largely directed in terms of urban development rather than cultural development, and investments in the physical hardware of the new cultural infrastructure were not met by equivalent investments in the cultural software. In addition, the synergy effect, intended to result from the spatial clustering of museum and other facilities, did not materialise as much as expected. Besides there is an overall acknowledgement of the fact that, due to its defensive attitude, the cultural sector has not taken the initiative enough in the development process (van Aalst, 1997).

Compared with the rest of The Netherlands, Rotterdam has lower education levels for high-skilled (pre-university) people, and a more serious situation with low-income groups. This is due to the peculiar social composition given by the dominant port activities, and to the strong presence of immigrants. Though a wise social policy has tended to avoid concentrations of “problem areas”, some areas of the city are severely deprived and called for a stronger effort. Among these, some that has been struck by the progressive shift of port functions out of the urban core, and other historical neighbourhoods at the West and North of the city centre. These neighbourhoods have been variously targeted in the past by innovative revitalisation policies favouring the functional mix and the involvement of private investors in social projects. An interesting example is the regeneration of a dockland area of the city, the «Kop van Zuid». As the industrial bother disappeared, the expansion opportunities were suddenly

life-sized and visible. The greatest impetus arose from the construction of the Erasmus Bridge, opened in 1996, which represents also the attempt to reduce the psychological, socio-economic and physical distance between the two sides of the city, the rich North and the poor South, separated by the Maas River. The Erasmus Bridge, with its spectacular design, stirred up considerable attention, becoming the new landmark of the city. The master-plan for the Wilhelmina Pier, the economic gravity centre of the area, is based on an integrated residential (mainly luxury apartment) and working area with several of leisure, cultural and other urban facilities, like the characteristic Hotel New York, the cruise terminal, student house in renovated old warehouses, a school, Las Palmas (once workshop of the Holland America Line, now used for art exhibitions, hosting also a café and a club), the Luxor theatre. However, if the plan succeeded in regenerating the area and making it more attractive, one cannot say that the integration with the surrounding neighbourhoods, among the socially, economically and aesthetically weakest in the whole conurbation, has already been achieved.

The recent appointment as Cultural Capital of Europe for the year 2001, with the motto «Rotterdam is many cities», can be seen as the highest momentum for the cultural strategy of the city, representing, as its director Bert van Meggelen explained, a “SWOT analysis to look back at the strengths and weaknesses of the city”. The multicultural city was intended to be promoted: an attempt to bringing into contact the cultures of ethnic minorities with the rest of the city with a focus on supporting and developing youth culture. The central objectives in Rotterdam 2001 were the long term lasting effects in both realms, community and arts. Several institutions and events started in 2001 continue their activities very successful: Calypso, Las Palmas and the Motel Mozaique festival. In particular, Las Palmas, once workshop of the Holland America Line, is still used as art centre, in addition to a disco. On its roof there is still the “Parasite House”, an experimental form of housing and living, as well as technological and spatial-planning innovations. Nevertheless, there seems that there is still little integration between the new face of Rotterdam and its residents, as the low levels of participation of the indigenous population to the cultural events. Rotterdam is still predominantly a worker’s city, where middle and high-income groups are only a small minority. At the same time, the city is clearly becoming more lively and attractive for young people.

Compared to the expensive Amsterdam¹¹, Rotterdam starts to be seen more attractive for students and artists; moreover new clubs are opening, like Off_Corso or Now&Wow, which made Rotterdam ranking first at the national level for its nightlife; the Scapino Ballet company moved to Rotterdam, as did the Netherlands Architecture Institute (Nai), the Witte de With international art centre, the Berlage Institute of Architecture (BiA).

Milan

Once the Italian capital of the industrial revolution, today the entrepreneurial vocation of Milan has been confirmed in many sectors: communications, telecommunication technology, finance, fashion and design. The production system in Milan is characterised by a net predominance of small and medium sized enterprises (more than 90% of the local structure), which contributes enormously to add dynamics and diversification to the urban economy. Compared to other Italian industrial cities like Turin and Genoa, Milan is the one that made faster the transition to the post-fordist city. This transition has been accelerated by the fact that Milan has always been characterised by a mix of productions and functions, and it has been less signed by the monoculture of the car industry, as in Turin, and the steel and iron industry, as in Genoa. Today Milan is hardly describable with few words, being a too heterogeneous and contradictory city, engraved by multifarious historical influences and a booming industry. Milan is the city of culture and history, industry and fashion, business and design, education and science, wealth and dirt. However, the transition to the post-fordist city has brought some problems and what is emerging is a *dual city*: on one hand, the city of the high-skilled and well paid workers, on the other, the so-called working poor, employed in the circuit of the hyper-flexibility with an income inferior to the poverty level.

In the last 15 years, the urban policies in general have been characterised by a strong crisis, looking strongly only at the physical dimension of the transformations and showing a sectoral point of view and top-down approach, with no shared vision about

¹¹ Amsterdam, always proud of its prosperous climate for young artists, is changing character. At high speed the loose edges of the town are cleaned-up. Buildings which gave possibilities to artists, like the Lloyds Hotel, the Silo, Vrieshuis Amerika, are changed into apartments or luxury lofts with prices far exceeding the possibilities of the average artist. However, a special project, BroedplaatsAmsterdam, has been started in 2001 to create affordable working space for creativity.

the development of the city. A big lack is a complete absence of integrated urban policies. Moreover societal support and community consultation are not an essential part of the urban local policy. Although in other European cities the issues of quality of life in the broadest sense (including accessibility, traffic, green spaces, cultural activities, public spaces, social interaction opportunities, etc), attractiveness for all city users and involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the decision making process are the most discussed topics recognised as important for the future sustainable urban development, the city of Milan has a tendency to take more into account the interests of the business activities present in the city (but often run by people who live outside Milan) rather than those of the citizens who at the end live in, work in and would like to enjoy the city. Even when the pollution rates are very high and the decision to close the city to cars (on Sundays) is taken, there is always complains and lobbies by businesses which are frightened to loose some part of their daily turnover!

For what regards culture, notwithstanding the presence of a very large number of cultural activities and cultural industries (museums, theatres, galleries, foundations, clubs, etc.), both in the consumption and production spheres, Milan has not a clear, unique, integrated and well defined cultural policy. Each department is concerned with a particular field of culture and the organisation is very sectoral: there are the Department for Museums and Exhibitions, the Department for Culture and Libraries, the Department for Tourism and Performing arts, Fashion and Big Events, the Department for Sport and Young People. Besides the local government, the Province¹² and the Region are also concerned with the cultural sector in Milan. Sometimes they collaborate promoting common projects, otherwise each of them has its field of action. An interesting project, run by the Department for Sport and Young People, is the «Fabbrica del Vapore», an ex-industrial building inaugurated in 2001 aiming at becoming a centre for youth cultural production. The Department for Museums and Exhibitions is concerned with the management of the activities of the municipal museums and with Project of new cultural spaces, like the Ansaldo – Città delle Culture, the Museo della

¹² In last years the Province of has been more active in the contemporary arts field; examples are the opening of the Spazio Oberdan (photography exhibitions, conferences and cinema d'essai) and the collaboration with Fondazione Fiera Milano e Fiera Milano International which organises MiArt, the International Fair of Modern and Contemporary Arts, to qualify Milan as a meeting place for young talented artists and the arts world.

Reggia, the Museo del Novecento (Arengario) and Museo del Presente, the first museum for contemporary arts in the city. Milan is indeed the centre of contemporary arts in Italy, a city with a very large concentration of private arts galleries and foundations, a big amount of arts collectors, a lot of initiatives by the private or voluntary sectors, by grassroots groups and cultural associations¹³, but a city where a Museum of Contemporary Arts lacks. This suggests that the private actors are the main managers of the artistic activities. The big projects of the municipality will require some years to be realised and lack of funding is also emerging as a problem. In particular, the Museo del Presente project is now facing a lot of problems as the area where it would have been located (inside the gas meters in the Bovisa area) is contaminated and the cleanup procedures are requiring too much funding.

Martinelli¹⁴ has arisen the issue of the cultural policy in Milan, showing that the present big cut to the cultural investments by the municipality is completely in contrast with the tendencies of other many European cities, independently from the political and ideological orientation of their governments, and also with the contemporary economic and social development theories which identify in the cultural sector as a fundamental factor for the economic and society development. The present cultural policy is only focused on the cultural infrastructure investments (cultural hardware). There is a need to pay more attention to the demand and cultural needs expressed by the city and in particular by its periphery and young people.

Compared to other Italian city, Milan lacks also social aggregative spaces in the urban public realm, like the numerous “piazze” that can be found for example in Rome; public benches of seats are a mirage in a city completely devoted to work, to businesses, to shopping and to an expensive entertainment scene. After the fencing of the small park “Parco Vetra”, the only opened air place in the city centre where young people, mainly students, were used to meet also during the night, an area called “Colonne di San

¹³ An interesting example is a group of young people who created, from a cultural association, a cultural agency, Esterni, which ideated cultural events aiming at the rediscovering of the urban public space. In seven years, Esterni invented and realised the MilanoFilmFestival, the Salone Arredo Urbano (International Show for Urban Furnishing), held during the Salone del Mobile (International Fair of Design in Milan) and other interesting initiatives.

¹⁴ Gruppo consigliere Comune di Milano DS, Ordine del Giorno 28/02/2002, “Bilancio di previsione per la cultura 2002/2003”.

Lorenzo” became the centre for an alternative and not expensive youth afternoon and night life. People can just seat under the Roman columns, take a drink from the many bars nearby, speaking, watching, promenading, just relaxing and enjoying the very particular atmosphere, rediscovering the street life and the value of having a public realm. However, the municipality is now deciding to adopt a repressive policy making the bars close at 11 p.m. and in that way obliging young people to go away from the area, with a lot of complaints from local residents, businesses and young people. Milan shows itself as a city, in a certain way, against “free public events”, where the interests and revenues of clubs and discotheques with ticket entrance have to be preserved. Even the public events programmed during the “Notte Bianca” (following the example of the “Nuit Blanche” in Paris) were only allowed until 4 a.m., with no public transport services during all the night in a city where night bus can only be dreamed.

The local government is not often able to recognise the importance of bottom-up initiatives, sometimes choking very interesting ones and snatching spaces to youth creativity. It is clear that the evolution of the cultural system or cluster in Milan will be determined by the public, private and voluntary actors; some efforts should be therefore necessary to define and stimulate the role that each of them could and should cover within a synergetic cluster. The case of the «Quartiere Isola» is an emblematic example showing the somehow “blindfolded” eyes of the local government.

Box 3 – The «Quartiere Isola», towards a cultural quarter development

The «Quartiere Isola» is among the most interesting quarters in Milan in constant development and characterised by an adequate mix of functions and urban populations, like for example the «Quartiere Ticinese» (close to the Navigli, part of the canals projected by Leonardo Da Vinci for the city of Milan) whose development has been more spontaneous rather than been guided by top-down policies. The Garibaldi quarter, known as Quartiere Isola (island quarter) because of its traditional isolated position, is separated by the centre by railway tracks and by a “vuoto urbano” (urban empty place). This morphology gave to the quarter a specific internal, physical and relational structure, preserving it during the years, and showing today its typical and peculiar character and atmosphere, still strongly popular. Together with traditional housing “a ballatoio” (gallery) and traditional shops, in a narrow system of streets and “piazzette”, craft and restoration laboratories, creative studios, exhibition spaces, associations, quality restaurants, find their place. To promote the development of the quarter, its diverse vocations, to anticipate

the risks connected to the present transformations, in particular the Garibaldi-Repubblica project¹⁵, which will involve the quarter, to reinforce the networks among the actors active in the quarter, some years ago the Cantieri Isola Association has been created, to answer to the needs of a quarter which is crossed by spontaneous development processes, fragmented, in part hidden, in part evident. The association is located in a rest of an industrial building called Stecca degli Artigiani, which separates two green areas in constant transformation and self-managed by the residents of the quarter. The Stecca degli Artigiani is also re-used by local artisans, artists and other cultural associations, like the Isola TV, independent and self-produced TV channel against the commercial television, and Associazione Isola dell'Arte (Association Island of the Arts) founded in 2003 to suggest to the municipality, who owns the building, to re-use some empty spaces of the Stecca degli Artigiani as a Centre for Contemporary Arts, and to preserve the Stecca and the gardens from the dismantlement planned by Garibaldi-Repubblica project. The whole image is therefore one of a laboratory and multidimensional quarter, traditional and innovative at the same time, rich of relations and vitality, a place open to diverse and multiple identities. The development of the Quartiere Isola into a cultural quarter is a spontaneous and self-guided one, with no intervention or policies from the local government, which, instead of recognising its importance as creative milieu of the city, considers it as the back of a big stage, to which it has to leave space, the Città della Moda project.

Conclusions

From the analysis of Rotterdam and Milan, it is clear that both municipalities should move towards a more corporate and integrated approach to policy-making, bringing together departments and working on issues and themes, rather than on the basis of policy empires and departments. Urban cultural policies should be then developed in order to reconcile the social and cultural priorities with the economic development ones, moving towards a «cultural planning» approach.

¹⁵ The local government has developed a plan for the “Città della Moda” and an institutional pole in the big “vuoto urbano” located at the edge of the Isola quarter (the Garibaldi-Repubblica area), an area always been considered a strategic resource to orient the development of Milan, taking into account its central location, dimension and excellent accessibility. However, the urban policies have seen the Isola quarter in a marginal way, bad interpreting its relations and generating conflicts. The central point of the transformation of the area is the realisation of a new institutional pole. The City of Fashion, with its clubs, shops, restaurants, will serve then to animate a space which risks to be deserted in the night and during the week-end. However, the fashion actors, or at least a big number of them, are not agree on the necessity of realising such a project and the major part of them has already opened exhibition spaces in different part of the city.

Rotterdam has an approach to culture much more integrated than Milan, however this is not still sufficient. The development of a strong cultural sector, perceived as an engine to improve radically the quality of the living environment, is seen today in Rotterdam as an objective which matches in importance – and strategically integrates – the physical redevelopment. Notwithstanding the attempt of the Rotterdam 2001 to promote the multicultural city – «Rotterdam is many cities» – with attention to the ethnic minorities and the younger generations in the city, some critics can be addressed on the recent cultural policies and generalised to the growth strategies in general, that though innovative and far-fetching, do not seem rooted in the local reality, thus arising doubts on their effective capacity to bring forward fundamental changes in the society and economy of this city. There is therefore little integration between the new face of Rotterdam and its residents. Rotterdam is still predominantly a worker's city, where middle and high-income groups are only a small minority. For a city that is still characterised by a large part of low educated people, the focus on the education sector, including the student population as a target, broadening participation and vocational training is an essential arm. The planning efforts of the next years have to put therefore a greater emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects. The education institutes play also a key role in the development of the audio-visual cluster, one of the policy spearheads of the Rotterdam City Development Corporation (OBR), which regards the sector as a potential motor for economic development. The most important projects developed to stimulate the cluster are the Rotterdam Film Fund, to stimulate the audiovisual cluster in the region and the image of Rotterdam as a film city, and the redevelopment of the Schiecentrale, a former powerhouse located in the old port area of the Lloydkwartier, is intended to become the focal point of the audiovisual sector in Rotterdam, functioning as a media centre and an accommodation for audiovisual industries. For too long there has been a lack of vision about the way the cluster should develop in relation to the possibilities offered by the urban economy, the characteristics of the cluster and the trends in the communication industry. As a result, too much effort has been put into ad hoc policy measures, with little involvement of the private sector in the policy-making. It is important to develop an integral and broadly supported strategy, implying that focus should not be on the audio-visual sector alone, but also on the cultural industries in general and in particular to the new media in which audio-visual productions are

incorporated to a growing extent. Another important space for cultural production have been then projected in the Van Nelle Fabriek, once a coffee, tea and tobacco factory, reused now as a design factory, housing hundreds of young companies. For the future development of the cluster, it is fundamental therefore to keep young talent in the Rotterdam region. This requires the creation of specific, targeted conditions regarding starters support and accommodation.

However, some problems and issues have raised in the last two years: the decreased public sector funding, the political changes (after eight year socialist-liberal government of 1994-2002, after the murder of its leader Pin Fortuyn, a Christian-conservative coalition took over) and the consequent change in city priorities (less priority to arts and culture, and on cultural diversity). Moreover, Rotterdam is becoming witness of a phenomenon that could be called “the dissolution of urban planning and the inversion of cultural planning” (Vanstiphout, forthcoming). Through the “Groeibriljante” (growing diamonds) project, Rotterdammers are called to submit to the City Council projects aiming at strengthening their neighbourhood, through the use of culture. This project shows the new philosophy embraced by the City Council aiming at a) replacing «top-down» urbanistic and cultural planning approaches with a system of stimulating and rewarding «bottom-up» entrepreneurship initiatives, b) changing the cultural and economic make-up of the city through highly specific projects with huge spin-off effects instead of an holding masterplanning. The project seems to work quite well. Instead of huge cultural and economic projects with world famous architects realised in locations chosen by the city planners, as it happened in the past, the City Council adopts a «bottom-up» approach. The project is acting as “a brutal provocation to the artistic and architectural elite of the city, by seemingly destroying any chance for huge, centrally supported, cultural programs on a monumental level, and turning cultural and architectural innovation over the streets” (Vanstiphout, forthcoming). There is not anymore planning, neither urban nor cultural, no planning model to refer to: who will profit from that chaos?!

Milan is the city of the thousand potentialities, but where cohesion lacks. Milan has a real opportunity to build a strong virtuous cultural cluster, relying already on a strong cultural production system and on an increasing cultural consumption in all cultural spheres (visual and performing arts, design, fashion, heritage, etc.), on the fact that the

city is the centre in Italy for communication, ICT, business services, design, fashion, for education, hosting very good universities and schools, for the good interest showed by the private sector and voluntary sector in culture. The presence of a strong system of small and medium sized enterprises working in the cultural sector is an important characteristic of the city. The challenge is therefore to favour and stimulate the networks and making them more visible, moving towards the realisation of integrated strategies which involve all the important stakeholders dealing directly or indirectly with the cultural sector. The cultural actors are willing to co-operate to increase their visibility, but a clear effort from the local government is required. A priority must be the attention to grassroots initiatives, community arts programmes, youth creativity and experimentation.

Since always cities preserve in their DNA the cells of a big inclination to change and acceptance of challenges. It lays in this very inclination and capacity to change that Sir Peter Hall identifies the formula for the urban development, underlining the necessity to renovate a constant attraction capacity for new talents, to stimulate the development of new professions and to experiment the new technologies. For a city that means believing in itself and adopting an integral strategy, in which the local government is not the only actor. Milan and Rotterdam are laboratory-cities, cities in continuous development; many things are done and produced but much remains invisible, the signals of re-launching are numerous, what lacks is an organic view of the future of those cities.

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