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Creativity-led urban development in China: the case of Shenzhen's OCT Loft

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Summary

Abstract.....	1
Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1 - The “creative city” discourse.....	7
1.1 New perspectives for urban innovation.....	7
1.2 The entrepreneurial city.....	8
1.3 The creative city.....	9
1.3.1 Overview of cultural creative industries.....	10
1.3.2 Creative cities and the creative class.....	20
1.3.3 Reshaping urban space: creative clusters.....	25
Chapter 2 - The “creativity” discourse in China.....	28
2.1 Global cities, worlding cities.....	28
2.2 The rise of creative industry in China.....	30
2.2.1 From Made in China to Created in China.....	32
2.2.2 Creative economy in the Chinese context.....	33
2.2.3 Towards the Chinese creative city.....	35
2.3 From Western to Chinese models.....	36
2.3.1 Culture 文化 <i>wenhua</i> , Creativity 创意 <i>chuangyi</i> and Innovation 创新 <i>chuangxin</i> in China.....	37

Chapter 3 - Shenzhen: becoming a creative city	41
3.1 Introduction to the history of Shenzhen.....	41
3.2 The role of planning in the development of Shenzhen.....	44
3.3 Pathway towards the Creative City.....	50
3.4 Current city profile and future perspectives.....	55
3.4.1 Shenzhen's Cultral Innovative Development 2020 Plan.....	57
 Chapter 4 - Creative clusters in Shenzhen: the case of OCT Loft	59
4.1 The phenomenon of creative clusters.....	59
4.1.1 Analysis of creative clusters in Shenzhen.....	60
4.2 The case of OCT Loft 华侨城创意文化园 cultural creative Park.....	72
4.2.1 The origins.....	72
4.2.2 Renovation and upgrading.....	74
4.2.3 Analisys of OCT Loft.....	79
 Conclusions.....	84
References.....	90
Websites.....	98

Abstract

本论文的目的在于分析导致创意产业崛起的历史和经济过程以及中国创意城市的概念，重点讨论创意主导的城市发展如何影响深圳。

创意一直是城市中心规划和管理的关键因素，但随着全球化和全球市场的开放，这些想法开始以前所未有的速度传播。

自二十一世纪初以来，利用创意资产促进城市增长和发展的想法越来越牢固，成为城市在全球化经济中竞争的基本要素。我的研究试图探讨如何创新有助于塑造城市空间的今天，从全球化的视角入手，然后过渡到一个中国发展现状的具体分析。

我的论文灵感来自我 2015 年第二次到中国的旅程，那是在开始读硕士学位以前，我在深圳工作了三个月。在此期间，我有机会探索这个城市，我利用我所有的空闲时间去发现城市所有创意区域里各种形式的艺术。

最吸引我注意力的地方是华侨城创意文化园，它的艺术、文化和生活方式非常吸引人，是我这种充满热情的游客的理想去处。在深圳停留过后，我开始想，如何才能在中国这样的发展中国家，一个年轻的城市，创造了这样一个有效的和动态的创意空间网络。进行进一步深入分析的这一想法，是在我参加了一个关于文化策划和创意的课程后出

现的，那时是我硕士学位的第一年。因为这一学术经验我了解到创意产业的相关文献，创意城市与创意阶级和这些概念是如何塑造全球化的世界我们生活在今天。

我研究的第一部分围绕着创意城市的话语展开，并探讨了这个概念的起源，以便了解一个城市被视为具有创造性所需要的东西。创新一直是城市的发展和创造性资产的核心要素，他是城市在我们这个全球化的世界中竞争的至关重要的因素。因此，我的研究也进行到创意阶层的分析，创意城市、创意经济的城市创新驱动引擎。然而关于创意城市离不开创意产业这一概念，这一概念产生于 1980 年代的欧洲，并在二十一世纪初被中国吸收，我也将就此进行概述。

第二章是完全专注于中国创意产业的发展路径和采用西方模式创建特设的政策，从而发展本国的创意经济。为此，国家一直在努力从制造业经济转型，致力于在全球范围内提供“中国创造”的产品和服务，并摆脱直至二十世纪末仍背负的带有“中国制造”的标签的经济。

第三章的重点是创造性的话语如何在深圳生根，这个城市有一个独特的经济和创新的发展道路，它为今天的中国在创新中的城市空间发展提供了完美的例子。

自从在上世纪八十年代，深圳成为经济特区以来，在形成现代全球化的服务经济的意愿驱动下，它经历了一个快速的和令人印象深刻的经济增长。这种变化意味着需要重建城市的城市空间，在短短的三十年已经转变成一个成功的贸易和文化中心。由于政府的规划和政策在使今天的城市成为高效创意中心方面发挥了关键作用，我将通过这一转变的主要阶段，充分了解哪些政治和经济条件导致深圳从一个渔村变成今天的巨型创意中心。

为了总结中国对创意如何引领城市发展的研究，我将为过去几年为深圳带来最大经济增长和创新的创意集群提供证据。然后，我将集中在华侨城创意文化园文化创新公园的案例研究，这是创意如何帮助塑造了深圳城市空间的案例。该公园是后工业城市再生的典范，在今天成为城市创新阶层和参观者的参考标准。我分析的目的是确定该项目达到成功的条件和它如何影响城市创意经济。

Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to analyse the historical and economic processes that led to the rise of creative industry and the concept of creative city in China, with a focus on how creativity-led urban development has shaped the city of Shenzhen. The inspiration for my work comes from my second trip to China in 2015, when I have worked in Shenzhen for three months before starting my Master's degree. During that period I had the chance to explore the city, and being passionate about art in all its forms I dedicated most of my free time to the discovery of the creative areas the city had to offer like museums, art galleries and the creative parks. The place that caught my attention the most was OCT Loft, one of the most famous example of top-down creativity-led urban development projects in China and the biggest in Shenzhen. Its mix of art, culture and lifestyle attractions made it the perfect destination for curious passionate visitors like me. After my stay in Shenzhen I started wondering how it could be possible for a young city in a developing country like China to have created such an efficient and dynamic net of creativity driven spaces. The idea to deepen my analysis came after I attended a course about cultural planning and creative processes during my first year of Master's, from which I gained knowledge about literature related to creative industry, creative cities and how these concepts are shaping our globalised world today.

The first part of my work evolves around the discourse of creative city, and explores the origins of the concept in order to understand what it takes for a city to be considered creative and how creativity can help

shaping urban space. Creativity has always been a core element in the city's development and creative assets have become crucial for cities to compete in our globalised world. My work shifts then to the analysis of the creative class, engine of creative cities and driver of urban innovation in creative economies. The concept of creative class is part of the namesake theory developed by Richard Florida who defined it as a new social class made by people with creative potential that can bring innovation to a given urban area. Before going deeper in the analysis of the discourse about creative cities in China I will provide an overview of the concept of creative industry, that generated in Europe in the 1980s and was adopted by China at the beginning of the 21st century.

The second chapter is entirely focused on the development path of creative industry in China and the adoption of Western models to create ad hoc policies in order for the country to develop its own creative economy. The country has struggled to shift from a manufacturing economy to an innovative services one in order to deliver its products and services globally as "Created in China" and distance themselves from the "Made in China" label that has characterised its economy until the end of the 20th century: I will try to dig deeper in the mechanisms behind this process..

The third chapter is focused on how the creativity discourse took root in Shenzhen, city that has a unique economic and creative development path and provides the perfect example of how urban space is developing in the name of creativity today in China. Since it became a Special Economic Zone in the 1980s Shenzhen has gone through a fast and impressive economic growth driven by the willingness to become

a modern globalised service economy. In just 30 years the city has transformed itself into a successful trade and cultural center, and the sudden changes it went through brought to a natural flow of urban regeneration and space revaluation. Since government planning and policies had a crucial role in turning the city in the efficient creative center it is today, I will go through the main phases of this change to fully understand which are the political and economic conditions that led to the transformation of Shenzhen from fishing village to world famous creative hub.

To conclude my study on how creativity-led urban development is shaping the city of Shenzhen, I will provide evidence of the creative clusters that have brought the utmost economic growth and innovation to the city in the last years. I will then focus on the case study of OCT Loft Culture Creative Park, which is the representation of how creativity has helped shaping Shenzhen's urban space. The Park is the perfect example of post-industrialization urban regeneration and has become today a point of reference both for the city's creative class and its visitors. The city has been able to exploit urban space giving life to a project that is the perfect mix of creativity production, branding and consumption . The aim of my analysis is to identify the condition under which the project has reached success, and how it has influenced the creative economy of Shenzhen.

1. The “creative city” discourse

1.1 New perspectives for urban innovation

Cities have always played a central role in boosting both cultural and economic activities. Not only they have shown to be able to generate culture, but also to bring innovation and contribute to the growth of wealth in society. Starting from the 1980s the world scenario has been shook by a series of social and economic changes driven by globalization, a phenomenon that has completely changed the role of cities and urban space. In order to compete in a continuously evolving and always more globalised market, cities had to reinvent their strategic asset and acquire new resources, among which two were considered as an important source of competitive advantage: creativity and human talent (Florida, 2002). As a result of economic globalization urban centers became more and more competitive, and the idea of city changed completely: cities were transformed into competitive global markets and economy became the main driver of urban regeneration (Costa, 2013).

Urban competition as an engine for economic growth has been always more focused on immaterial products, intended as cultural products and services; this focus motivates the need for cities to strengthen their intellectual capital. In order for the urban market to keep up with this changes in the demand of services there was the need for new development strategies in the urban asset of cities, that found

themselves to change their structure in order to comply with the new need for innovation, experimentation and change. It is in this context that new innovative models of urban development have been created, among which the “entrepreneurial city” and the interconnected “creative city” model.

1.2 The entrepreneurial city

The concept of entrepreneurial city can be associated to a few elements regarding international trade and management of urban space and human talent. First of all it is characterised by the presence of a government with an entrepreneurial attitude that is able to foster and promote employment growth and economic development. This way the government acts like a collective enterprise aiming at creating a good environment for the attraction of new investments, also regulating the production and consumption of services and the balance between culture and capital. Entrepreneurial cities are also centers for consumption of both material and immaterial goods, hence they are always looking for space and image improvements to show the presence of a business-friendly environment. Those cities go through a strong interurban competitiveness due to their willingness to attract human capital and talent from the global market. Furthermore an entrepreneurial city is always looking for new strategies to bring innovation to its urban asset to maintain and enhance its economic positioning in global markets¹. All the elements characterising

¹ Zheng, J., *Creative Industry Clusters' and the 'Entrepreneurial City of Shanghai*, Urban Studies, December 2011

entrepreneurial cities can be reconducted to the willingness of looking for innovation and growth in urban space, which brings to the ideation of the concept of creative city.

1.3 The creative city

What makes an environment creative today? And why the presence of a creative component in cities has become more and more important in modern society?

From an historical point of view creativity has always been the core centre of cities, even though the way creativity was intended evolved in time together with the conception of the city's environment. Cities have always needed creativity to grow, they have always served as the core of interaction between different cultures and hubs for creations of new ideas². Since the beginning of the century the idea of boosting the growth and development of cities through the use of creative assets has grown more and more solid, becoming today a fundamental element for cities to compete in our globalized economy. This idea is strictly connected to the concept of "creative capital", according to which it is a specific type of human capital (creative people) that shapes the economy and the growth of cities performing specific jobs in specific sectors³. According to Florida's theory creativity is not just considered as human capital in terms of people's imagination to create something new, as stated in his work by Jacobs⁴ and other scholars when the theory about creative industry and creativity in

² Landry, C., Bianchini, F., *The creative city*, Demos, 1995, p.11

³ Florida, R., *Cities and the creative class*, Routledge, New York, 2005

⁴ Jacobs, J., *Cities and the wealth of nations: Principles of economic life*, Vintage Books, New York, 1984

urban space took root in Europe. In his studies Jacobs had already pointed out that urban spaces have the potential to attract talent in the process of development of cities; what has been added to this concept is the definition of creative people and their connection with the economic growth of the city. The first scholar to analyze the connections between the creative talent and the economic growth of cities has been Florida, who introduced the idea of “creative class” that I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

1.3.1 Overview of cultural creative industries

Before going deeper in the analysis of how creativity and creative talent have helped shaping cities and their economics, it is important to focus on the definitions of cultural and creative industries. This way it will be easier to cluster the activities that had a crucial role in defining the creative city.

The discourse of creative industry has become a central topic in today’s globalised world and economy. Formal origins of the term creative industry can be traced back to the late 1990s, when the UK’s Labour government established a Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) as a core activity of its Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The aim of this innovative concept was to enhance the growing influence of arts and culture on society and economy at that time. The DCMS issued infact a Creative Industry Mapping Document, in which creative industries were described as “those activities that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the

potential for wealth and job creation thought the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”⁵. The document used a list-based approach dividing the creative industries in 13 sectors to provide a picture of how they were influencing UK’s economy through innovation. The mapping document has been a milestone in defining creative industry and fostering its development internationally.

According to the report, these were the ones that could be considered as creative industries⁶:

Advertising	Interactive Leisure Software
Architecture	Music
Arts and Antiques Market	Performing Arts
Crafts	Publishing
Design	Software and Computer services
Television and Radio	Designer Fashion
Film and Video	

Since its first appearance the concept of creative industry has been analysed and developed in many different ways, proving that the interest towards the topic was only to increase.

In 2006 NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts), an independent English charity which produces reports on art, science and technology published *Creating Growth: How the UK Can Develop World Class Creative Business*. This work represented a critical

⁵ Creative Industries Mapping Document, London, 1988

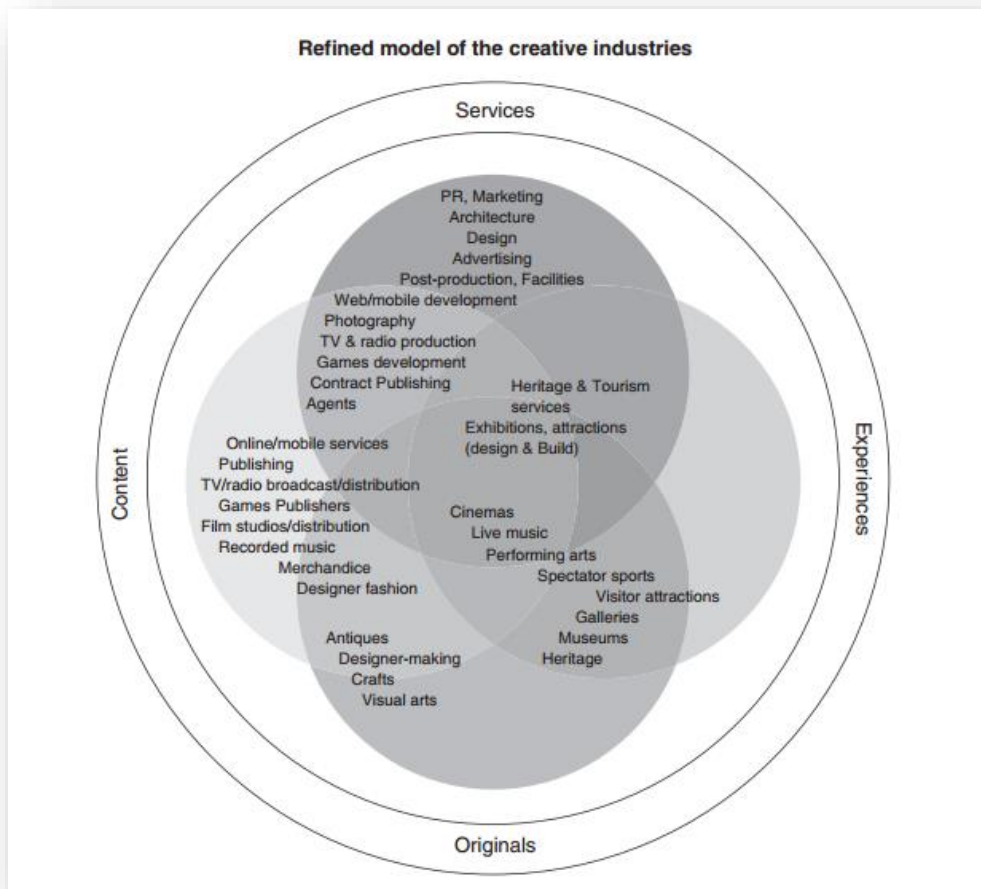
⁶ Flew, T., *Creative Industries: Culture and Policy*, Sage, Los Angeles, 2012

study of DMCS report, and it aimed to develop a more complete and coherent approach to the analysis of such a differentiated industry as the creative one.

NESTA's work pointed out that the main definition of creative industries was too general, and it proposed a new model that divided the creative industries in four interlocked but distinct groups:

- Creative service providers: creatives who earn thanks to the application of IP to their businesses (advertising agencies, design and architecture studios and new media agencies)
- Creative content producers: they produce copyright protected IP which is distributed to audiences. The incomes derive from businesses like sales advertising and subscriptions;
- Creative experience providers: enterprises that sell the customer the right to live some experiences like a theater, opera or dance performance; the concept could be extended also to cultural and touristic promotion;
- Creative originals producers: creatives involved into material creations and realization of physical artefacts which value derives directly from the cultural and creative valued perceived but also authenticity, exclusivity and originality. Design/craftsmanship products, and visual art works are included into the category.

Fig.1 Nesta Model of Creative Sectors



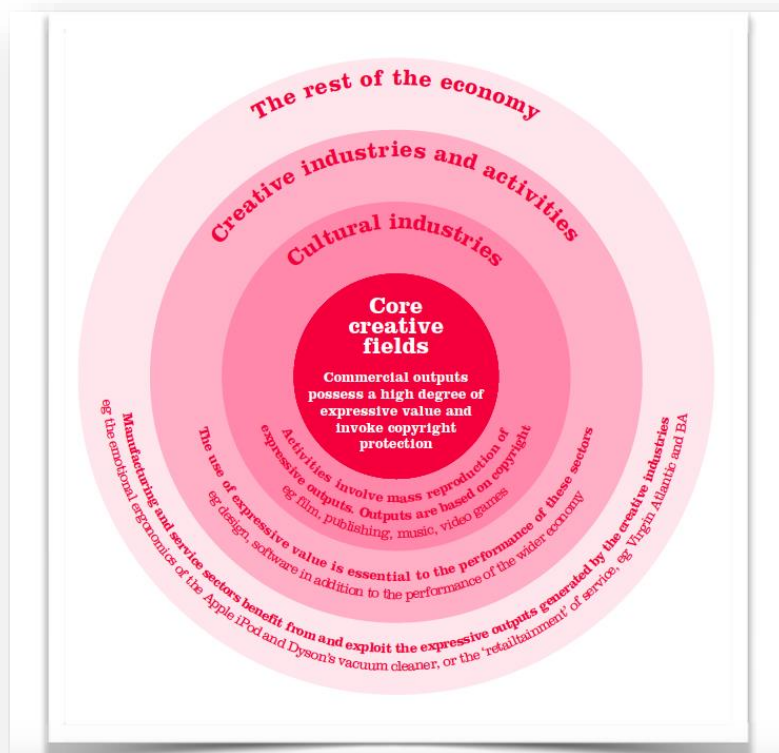
Source: Nesta, 2006

This new framework focused more on the economic growth and profitability derived by the exploitation of the creative sectors, looking at the creative industry as an industrial sector rather than just a set of creative activities.

In 2007 The Work Foundation published the report *Staying Ahead: The Economic Performance of the UK's Creative Industries*. This paper's aim was to differentiate creative content and the industries that produced

and distributed it depending on the expressive value⁷ of creative products and services. Their Concentric Circles model, based on the different levels of expressing value, differentiated between cultural and creative industries. While the former focused on the commercialization of expressing value (music, TV, radio, videogames), the latter aimed to deliver both functional and artistic value.

Fig.2 Work Foundation Concentric Circles Model



Source: Work Foundation, 2007

International organizations as UNICTAD and UNESCO also played their

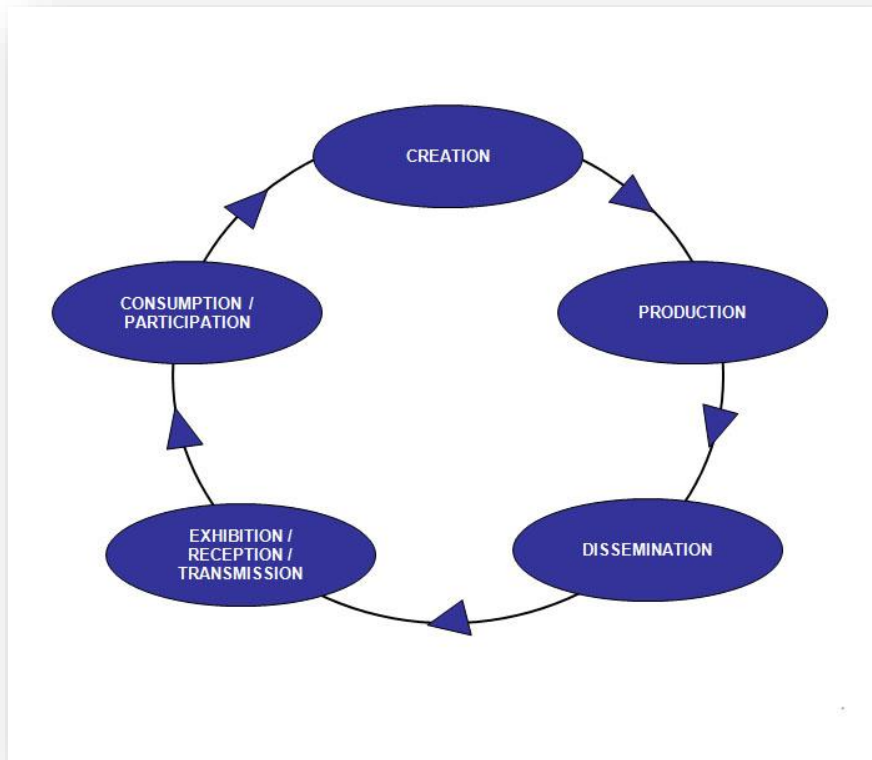
⁷ Expressive value is intended as every dimension which, in its broad sense, enlarges cultural meaning and understanding.

part in defining the creative industry phenomenon.

According to UNESCO (2006) creative industries are those that “combine the creation, production and commercialization of creative contents which are intangible and cultural in nature”. The organization believes the term creative industries includes a broad range of activities like the cultural industries and all cultural or artistic production. The creative industries are those in which the product or service contains a substantial element of artistic or creative value and includes activities such as architecture and advertising.

Since the first studies about cultural industries in the late 70s, the involvement of UNESCO with this controversial topic has grown and the approaches to the theme have been developed in many different ways. A turning point in the discourse about cultural and creative industries took place with the definition, in 2009, of the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics. This new study provided a scheme called Culture Cycle, which put together culture and creative industries enhancing all the phases of the creation, production and dissemination of culture and cultural products. Moving away from the debate about the breadth of CCI, this new framework focused instead on the issue of depth and structure of these industries, providing a guideline to countries willing to map their cultural and creative activities.

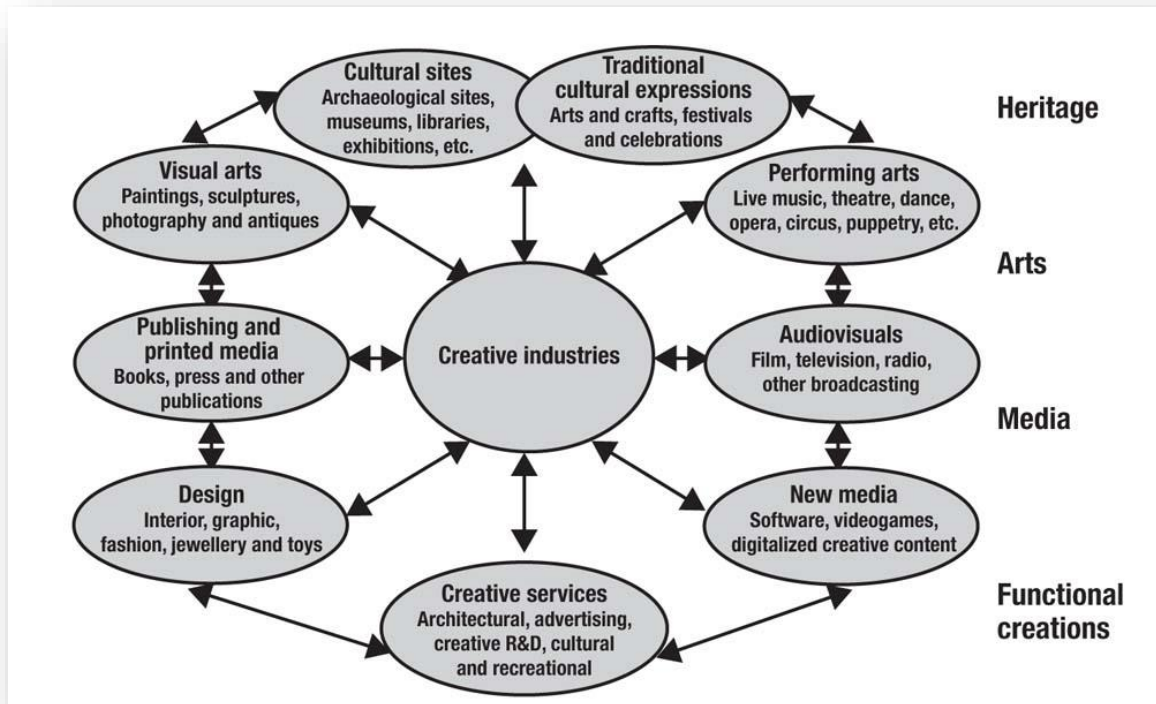
Fig.3 Unesco Culture Cycle



Source: Unesco

Another crucial study in the definition of CCI has been the one developed by United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In its study called *The Creative Economy Report 2010—Creative economy: A feasible development option* the organization gave a broader definition of the concept of creativity refusing the idea of core cultural industries versus others. The Report in fact identified nine interconnected sectors operating across the domains of heritage, arts, media and functional creation, as shown in Figure 4. The report was also an attempt to provide a new definition of what a creative economy is.

Fig.4 UNCTAD classification of creative industries.



Source: UNCTAD, 2010

The concept of creative economy

There is no disagreement that creative industries lay at the centre of what can be labelled as the “creative economy”. The term “creative economy” appeared for the first time in 2001 in John Howkins’ book *Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas*, about the relationship between creativity and economics. For Howkins, “creativity is not new and neither is economics, but what is new is the nature and the extent of the relationship between them and how they combine to create extraordinary value and wealth”. Howkins’ use of the term “creative economy” is broad, and since it was first used it has been followed by many other definitions. According to the work of

UNCTAD the creative economy is an evolving concept based on creative assets potentially generating economic growth and development:

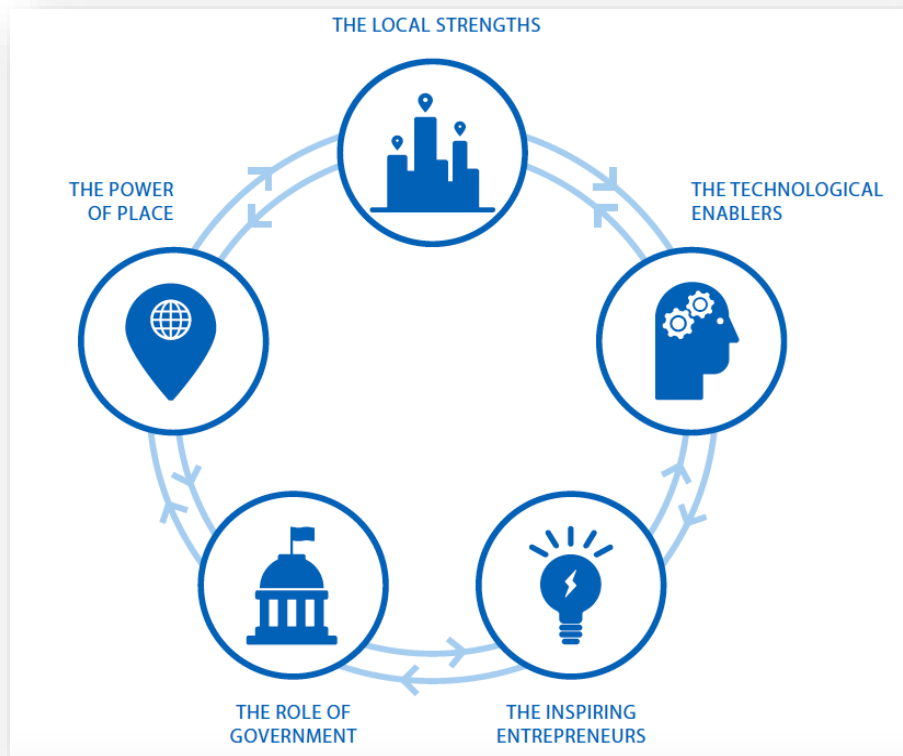
- It can foster income-generation, job creation and export earnings while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development;
- It embraces economic, cultural and social aspects interacting with technology, intellectual property and tourism objectives;
- It is a set of knowledge-based economic activities with a development dimension and cross-cutting linkages at macro and micro levels to the overall economy;
- It is a feasible development option calling for innovative, multidisciplinary policy responses and interministerial action;
- At the heart of the creative economy are the creative industries.

The creative economy has become today a vital driver for the urban and economic growth of many countries, embracing always more types of cultural creative industries and endorsing innovation and entrepreneurship⁸. According to Unesco's 2013 Creative Economy Report the creative economy is "one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy and a highly transformative one in terms of income generation, job creation and export earnings"⁹.

⁸ World Economic Forum, *Factors enabling the creative economy*, 2016

⁹ UNESCO, UNDP, *Creative Economy Report 2013 Special Edition: Widening Local Development Pathways*.

Fig.5 Factors enabling the creative economy.



Source: World Economic Forum, 2016

What does it take for a country's creative economy to actually become effective? Every economy has its own structure and it is not just a single force to lead a creative economy to become successful, but there are some common elements that every economy should consider in order to effectively stimulate the creative economy. The Global Agenda Council on the Creative Economy has drafted a framework of five factors that can boost economic growth and the creative economy¹⁰ (Factors enabling the creative economy, 2016):

- the local strtenghts: creative economies usually bloom in proximity to cultural centres;

¹⁰ World Economic Forum, 2016, op.cit.

- the technological enablers: technology enables creativity to spread at a faster pace;
- the inspiring entrepreneurs: creative space really becomes effective when successful creative individuals inspire one another;
- the role of government: governments can help creative economy to settle by drafting wise policies and using regulations and incentives in the right way;
- the power of place: creative economies are more likely to grow in locations that inspire people to create.

The idea of creative economy is interconnected with that of economy of cities and creative city and consequently creative class. These concepts are crucial in the discourse of creativity-led urban development, and will be analyzed in the following sections, with specific reference to the development of the creative industry in China.

1.3.2 Creative cities and the creative class

What does it take for a city to be labeled as creative? Since the discourse about creative industry has spread in Western countries there have been many studies on the “creative city” phenomenon.

The idea of creative city started to take form in the late 80s and since then has developed in different directions that have both helped shaping what it means to be a creative city today and also have brought to contradictions and confusion. The core philosophy behind the concept of creative city is that, although just a few cities succeed in

actually becoming creative centers, every place has a hidden potential that can be explored and exploited. The most efficient way for this potential to come out is to create the conditions for people to express themselves, plan innovation and solve problems. The general theory on creative cities assumes that creativity just comes from artists and people that are directly involved in the growth of the creative economy, and it is officially recognized in art related communities and activities. At the same time creativity can be found in any type of person that has an innovative and inventive approach to problems and issues. That's the core idea behind creative cities according to Charles Landry, who in his book *The Creative City: a Toolkit for Urban Innovators* has remarked how cities need innovative and creative ideas to keep up with social and economic changes and transform their organizational asset. According to the author it is not just the creative talent that can contribute to the creative asset of the city: everyone involved in the urban innovation has its creative voice, and encouraging the use of imagination and creativity in all the layers of society can lead to a broader set of solutions to urban issues. Creativity and urban change become this way embedded with a consequent need for more than just hard infrastructures like buildings or road for urban innovation to take place: a creative city also needs a skilled and flexible labour force, intellectual infrastructures, spaces for extravagant minds to express themselves, a culture of entrepreneurship and strong internal and external linkages¹¹. A city that aims at living of and for creativity needs to put talent in the first place and build an inclusive flexible mindset;

¹¹ Landry, C., *Lineages of the Creative City*, Creativity and the City, Netherlands Architecture Institute, 2005

this is the only way to understand the different cultures and interests involved in a community and create the conditions for people to actively take part to urban and social transformation .

Connected to the idea of people directly involved in the innovation process of cities and central in the discourse of the creative city is the “creative class” theory provided by Richard Florida. According to the scholar the “creative class” is the core element of a creative city, a new social class made by people with creative potential that can bring innovation to a given urban area. According to the author in order to be creative a city needs to have all the characteristics to attract creative talents; only through human capital it is possible to have a real city development. Florida’s theory includes three social classes in the creative environment workforce: creative class, working class, service class. The creative class is subdivided in two clusters: super-creative core, that consist in those who perform a “directly creative activity” (Architecture, Computer and Mathematics, Social Science, Education and Training, Arts, Design and Media) and creative professionals, defined as people working in “management occupations”(Business and Financial operations, Healthcare and technical occupations)¹².

According to Florida’s studies cities that aren’t able to handle the work of their creative class find it more difficult to grow their economics compared to the ones that embrace and leverage their creative potential; in addition cities within a creative environment have been proven to be culturally tolerant and so more open to diversity. In fact, as pointed out by Florida, in order for a city to enhance its creative

¹² Florida, R., *The rise of the creative class, and how it is transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*, Basic Books, New York, 2002.

economy three elements need to occur together, and he described them as the 3Ts¹³:

- Tolerance: openness and inclusiveness to all ethnicities and races;
- Talent: the educational levels and presence of culture in a city;
- Technology: the combination between innovation and technical skills.

If well exploited, these three interdependent factors could become powerful tools of attraction of investments, workers and new possibilities of development, even though they don't necessarily imply the presence of a creative city.

Since the discourse about creative industries and the creative city took root in Europe, the recurring concept slowly raising with it has been that in order to grow and transform itself a city has to be able to attract the "creative class". The creative workforce has been hence considered as a competitive advantage for cities, a major element for strengthening the city's economy and its position in the global market. Creative class is itself evidence of the interrelation between economic and cultural development: creative economy and the promoting values connected to Florida's concept of tolerance become key elements of a city's development in which the growth of culture and economy happen simultaneously (Markusen, 2006; Sacco and Blessi, 2006; Scott, 2006; Cooke and Schwartz, 2007, Cooke and Lazzaretti, 2008).

In his work Florida has hypothesised the existence of a concrete relationship between the presence of creative class in cities and their cultural supply. According to the author cities should find ways to gather as many creatives as possible meaning that cities with ambition of developing creative assets have to invest in the creation of urban

¹³ Ivi.

spaces with efficient cultural services. In order to emerge in a city creativity needs to have the right channels and environment.

Florida's theory gives a framework for aspiring creative cities to follow, but he neglects some elements that according to other studies are instead crucial for creative individuals to smoothly settle in a creative environment. A key element to support creative class in this picture in the production system¹⁴: a city that is not able to provide an efficient system of employment and so adequate living conditions to its inhabitants will hardly make them decide to settle in that place; this means that creative people and cultural policies alone are not enough to create a durable creative environment. With his argument Florida also claims that once the creative class has gathered in a specific area its creative and entrepreneurial attitude will naturally be brought together to create an efficient economy. This assumption has limits as well because it does not consider a series of interrelated elements that are crucial in the creation of a creative economy: when planning the development of a creative city there are interrelated elements that cannot be neglected like the creation of a production system, the training of workforce, management of urban space and most of all creating harmony among the elements¹⁵.

The "creative class" theory, although presents some inconsistent elements and received critiques from researchers that came after Florida, became a planning framework to follow for cities who were willing to transform their urban structure; the idea that city could become attractive centers for creative capital became central in the development of new urban policies.

¹⁴ Scott, A., J., *Creative Cities: Conceptual Issues and Policy Questions*, Journal of Urban Affairs, 2006

¹⁵ Ibidem.

1.3.3 Reshaping urban space: creative clusters

The physical expression of the influence creative industry had on urban space can be recognized in different types of urban interventions: all of these transformations have in common the interaction of a physical space with an abstract concept or dimension.

While at first creative industries only served as a way to bring back to life abandoned areas of cities that needed urban regeneration, later they became a way to increase the value of the city and its expansion¹⁶.

Of the many types of urban structures through which creative industries are reshaping urban space I will focus my attention on the “creative cluster” , which comprehends different ideas of creative spaces and has influenced the concepts of creative city and creative economy both in Europe and in China.

The concept of creative clusters has been a critical issue in the studies related to cultural industry, creative economy and creative cities. The idea of clusters as business entities has first being introduced by Marshall at the end of the 19th century in terms of “industrial districts”. Michael Porter developed this concept and transformed it into the idea of business cluster¹⁷, intended as a geographic area in which firms from the same industry gathered together to gain a competitive advantage. The advent of the creative industry and then of the idea of “creative city” in our society implied the upgrade of the

¹⁶ Evans, G. L., *From cultural quarters to creative clusters – creative spaces in the new city economy*, 2009

¹⁷ Porter, M.E., *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, The Free Press, New York, 1990.

concept of business cluster in relation to the cultural creative industries: that's how the theory on creative clusters was born.

Creative clusters are the results of the clustering of groups of businesses, institutions or creative minds that are in some way interconnected. These districts attract people that have the same interest in producing new contents (ideas, services, products). The creatives involved in this process believe in the power of clustering as a way to exchange ideas and instruments more effectively in order to produce better content while gaining a competitive advantage and contributing to the enhance of the creative economy¹⁸.

According to Evans, creative clusters are linked to many aspects of economics, and this can be seen as both a positive and negative issue: the positive aspect concerns all the potential innovation and changes that can affect the clusters, the negative one is the difficulty to issue policies and measure the economic value of an industry that produces immaterial goods¹⁹. Nevertheless in his work Evans pointed out that many creative clusters aren't strictly related to the economic aspect: he refers to cultural quarters, that can be defined as city hubs in which cultural and artistic activities are performed. This type of cluster is usually focused on the preservation of the cultural heritage of cities, without aiming at gaining profits.

The range of creative sectors in the creative clusters theory include many types of industries and has kept on changing and developing in time: that's why many scholars have worked on a "category approach"

¹⁸ Evans, op.cit.

¹⁹ Ivi.

to define creative clusters more precisely²⁰. One of the latest studies about categorization of the creative clusters has been done by Shan, who divided the creative clusters in four main categories²¹: the first category includes clusters relying on the upgrading and renovation of old buildings; the second category are those concerning higher education and high-tech industries development zones; the third category includes cultural community and artists' villages facilitated by traditional cultural resources; the fourth category focuses on cultural consumption clusters with entertainment and leisure zones as main business operation.

The term “creative cluster” today includes many types of spatial entities, of which the main important are at least four:

- 1- Creative workspaces
- 2- Regional creative clusters
- 3- Virtual clusters
- 4- Creative districts

This review on the different types of creative spaces showed how the urban asset of cities has changed in relation to the constant growth of creative industries as an economic asset for cities. It also served as a base for going deeper in the discourse of chinese creative clusters and how they have become one of the main pillars of creative economy in China.

²⁰ Yuan Y., Chao M., *An Ecological Model for the Cultural-Creative Cluster: A Study of Shenzhen's OCT-LOFT and Its Creative Management*.

²¹ Shan, S.L, *Chinese cultural policy and the cultural industries City*, Culture and Society, Vol.5, 115—121, 2014

2. The “creativity” discourse in China

2.1 Global cities, worlding cities.

How can global cities be defined, and what are the roles they cover in their nation and geographic area? According to literature global cities are those centers characterised by efficient networks, intensive flows of people, innovative ideas, goods and services. Global cities are also considered as those cities where urban space is influenced by the rise and fall of a globalised economy. Following the economic globalisation flow, those city commit themselves to urban megaprojects that imply the development of retail, industrial, leisure, infrastructural and other types of facilities on large areas. Nevertheless the status of global city is not only achieved by the number of urban infrastructure a city can provide; being a global city also requires cultural capital, that can be obtained with a mix of elements: product-oriented, people-oriented and place-oriented strategies²². Product-oriented strategy implies the creation of cultural products; people-oriented strategy focuses on human capital and development; place-oriented strategy stresses the aspect of urban development. Literature on global cities has always focused on flows of people and services in global environments, but the cultural imprint on urban space and the contribution of human talent to its asset are crucial in determining the extent to which a city

²² Kong, L., *Cultural Icons and Urban Development in Asia: Economic Imperative, National Identity, and Global City Status*, *Political Geography* Vol,26, n.4, pp. 383-404, 2007

can be considered global. Searching for cultural development strategies to achieve the status of global city changes the environment the city finds itself in together with its geographical characteristics and the organizational and government assets: indeed context plays an important role in defining how a city can become global and maintain this status to which always more cities aspire. Cities have always been main sites for ambitious, game changing projects, and today urban change is involved in a worldwide net of opportunities. Emerging countries with developing economies are taking advantage of this flow of exchange to exercise their power and contribute to it with their visions, and a major example of this phenomenon is given by Asian countries. Major Asian cities have shown their willingness to establish themselves globally drawing capital and attracting businesses, but the discourse goes beyond the mere globalization process: these cities cannot just be considered as sites of capitalism, they are also main characters of a continuously changing scenario. What characterise these cities in continuous development is their contribution to urban change with their projects through which they keep on mastering the art of being global, which makes them worlding cities. The idea of worlding city can be better understood through the words of the authors of *Worlding Cities: Asian experiments and the art of being global*:

“We see the worlding city as a milieu of intervention, a source of ambitious visions, and of speculative experiments that have different possibilities of success and failure. We hold that such experiments cannot be conceptually reduced to instantiations of universal logics of capitalism or postcolonialism. They must be understood as worlding practices, those that pursue world recognition in the midst of inter-city

rivalry and globalized contingency. We therefore focus on the urban as a milieu that is in constant formation, one shaped by the multitudinous ongoing activities that by wedding dream and technique, form the art of being global. Inherently unstable, inevitably subject to intense contestation, and always incomplete, worlding is the art of being global.”²³

Belonging to the pool of Asian countries that are providing innovation and change both in their inside asset and with their influence on the global economy, China has gone through its own process of cultural and urban transformation with game changing projects in its worlding cities. I will provide an overview of the conditions and necessities that enabled the spread of creative industry in the country and then give an analysis of what creativity means in China today.

2.2 The rise of creative industry in China

The discourse about culture and creative industry took root in China in the early 2000s. The first attempt to deepen the discourse about culture and creativity in China can be traced back to October 2000, when the Communist Party of China Fifth Plenary Session of the 15th Committee announced their plan of “enhancing cultural industries development”. That moment marked the real beginning of China’s new

²³ Roy, A., Ong, A., Edited by, *Worlding Cities: Asian experiments and the art of being global*, Blackwell Publishing, 2011

strategy towards an economic development based on the cultural industry²⁴.

2004 has been a turning point in the discourse of creative industry in China. The “Shanghai Creative Industries Development Forum 2004” *diyijie guojichuangyi chenyehudongzhou* “第一届国际创意产业活动周” marked the real beginning of the creative industry: the country started following the global trend of analysis of creativity as an asset for both economic and urban development, working on its own reforms based on the western models analysed previously. For the first time the creative industry was not just an abstract concept but a tangible reality to work on: Chinese government, academics, experts of the sector and entrepreneurs from all over the world participated to this revolutionary event that slowly but effectively led to the implementation of creativity-led planning in China. From that moment on the discourse about creative industry spread throughout the country, municipal governments issued new policies in order to support the development of new creative enterprises and to bring innovation to the already existing realities. Creative industries were about to become the main characters of economic and urban transformation in China.

Creative industries have been officially endorsed by the Chinese Government with the drafting of the 10th Five Year Plan, that happened together with the entry of China in the WTO (World Trade Organization). From 2005 to 2009 the theory on creative industry, that had led to the shift of the biggest cities like Beijing and Shanghai

²⁴ Yue Hong, X., Lu, L., Zhi-Xiang, Y., *Culture and Creative industry in China: critical review on the current research trends and future development*, International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management, Vol. 13, Issue 6, December 2016

towards the creative city model, spread throughout China and the rest of Asia. Many Chinese cities started to see creativity as a means for urban development and internal competitiveness. The promotion of cultural industries became a key element of cultural and economic policy in the 11th Five Year Plan (2005-2010)²⁵. With the draft of the 12th Five Years Plan (2011-2015) Chinese government not only recognized cultural and creative industries as an instrument for socio-cultural development, but it also underlined how valuing them could give China a chance to emerge as a competitor in the global cultural market. The objectives of Chinese government included:

- the promotion of cultural industry infrastructure through the increase of cultural and creative industries in the major Chinese cities;
- the export of Chinese creative value;
- the development of already existing creative realities and investments in creative-led urbanization.

2.2.1 From Made in China to Created in China

The focus of the 12th Five Years Plan was on the creative discourse both as a way for China to grow internally and gain global recognition as a value and innovation producer. As Li Wuwei stated in his work *Creativity is changing China*, the country saw the shift from “Made in China” to “Created in China” as a future strategy for its economy.

For many years China has been known for being a manufacturer and importer of foreign ideas, focusing on mass production rather than

²⁵ Keane, M., *Creative Industries in China*, Polity Press, 2013

innovation. Its main competitive advantage was low-cost labour and massive consumer market. This new slogan proved the willingness of the country to move from command economy to market economy²⁶, becoming not only part of the global creative market but also leading it. The slogan has been used for the first time in 2004 during the 7th Beijing Science Expo by Su Tong, executive director of the Creative China Industrial Alliance. He argued that China's focus on material production and performance had prevented the country from leveraging creativity. He underlined how important it was for China to put a new emphasis on creative assets, moving from from "material productivity" to "innovative productivity"²⁷. In a post industrial economy in which immaterial goods became a key element to gain competitive advantage in global markets, China's plan to move from Made in china to Created in China was a necessary move to become a leading actor of the international market. The slogan was also endorsed by the chinese government, who used this new concept in its creativity-led planning for China's major cities.

2.2.2 Creative economy in the chinese context

That was the right time for China to use creativity to find a place in the global economy: the "creative economy" concept spreading worldwide had already become a valid strategy for Western countries to increase

²⁶ Keane, M., *From Made in China to Created in China*, International Journal of Cultural Studies, Sage Publications, 2006

²⁷ Keane, M., *Created in China: the Great new Leap Forward*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007

export and income but also for urban and social change. Now it was time for developing countries to adapt this strategy to their internal economic asset bringing some creative innovation. As I pointed out before, UNCTAD gave a good contribution to the definition of the term creative economy in developed countries; according to them it was closely related to the capacity of creative industry to generate economic development through key elements such as human skills and individual talent. Since the creative industry discourse started to spread in China a question has been often addressed on what would have been China's vision of creative economy. According to Li Wuwei, that helped shaping the idea of creative economy in China, the country saw the potential of creative economy to gain recognition in the global market. The concept of creative economy in China though concerned the "aspirations of municipal and local governments to generate capital from the cultural market"²⁸: it was based on a topdown approach, a strategy guided by Government policies that hence saw Cultural policies as strictly connected with economic growth, urban transformation and entrepreneurship.

Since creative industry took root in China it gradually became one of the main pillars of the country's rapid development. The country has always aimed at transforming this industrial growth model into a creative economy model²⁹: if the growth of the city consisted in performing new investments and allocation of resources, in the creative economy model innovation and creativity where intended as investments.

²⁸ Li, W., op.cit.

²⁹ Ivi.

2.2.3 Towards the Chinese creative city

As we have seen analysing the main policies concerning the development of the “creative industry” concept in China, government has always played a crucial role in liberalising chinese economy and make the country an innovative super power globally. This implied a contraddiction between the need for China to follow the market liberalism model in order to establish succesfully in the international market and the implemetation from above carried out by the state controlling the cultural market through policies and planning. That’s why the word “authoritarian liberalism”³⁰ was chosen to describe the practices taking place in the chinese cultural scenario during the first decade of the 21st century.

Following the guidelines of Western countries, Chinese government kept on pushing for a creativity led planning approach, which translated into an urban transformation of the main chinese cities, that were labeled as creative cities. The biggest chinese cities started to benefit from government policies about allocation of resources, attracting more and more investments and so innovation. While small medium cities became manufacturing centers for foreign investors, the bigger centers were about to become creative economy hubs³¹. The first result of this innovation boost has been the creation of cultural spaces (cultural districts, creative parks, creative hubs) in industrial or abandoned areas: manufacturing industry started to move from the central areas of the city leaving behind big spaces and infrastructure. How did those abandoned spaces become home to so many creative

³⁰ Keane, M., *Creative Industries in China*, op.cit.

³¹ Martin Prosperity Institute, *Understnding the creative economy in China*, February 2011

activities? According to Li Wuwei³², big old spaces inspire creative people's imagination and give space to new ideas. In addition many creatives that started their business from scratch could not afford to pay for expensive buildings, so they took abandoned districts of the city transforming them in creative spaces; this way they gave new life to old areas creating a new flow of urban regeneration process that had never been seen before in China. Major cities like Beijing and Shanghai have been the first ones to see their urban structure changing completely due to the implementation of urban renovation, followed by minor centers that in the last ten years have rapidly implemented the creativity- led planning approach.

2.3 From Western to chinese models

In this paragraph I will reflect on how the main concepts concerning creativity and the creative industry have been translated in Chinese when being imported from Europe. As said before, the concept of creative industry has been conceived and developed in Western countries, and it was not part of chinese cultural and linguistic heritage. When the idea of creativity started to spread in China as well there was the need to transform its correlated vocabulary so that it could fit Chinese language; since there still weren't words to describe the idea of creative industry a series of neologism have been created. I have decided to focus my attention on the analysis of concepts that I believe have been most critical in the discourse about creative industry in

³² Li, W., op.cit.

China, and their relations with the cultural and social heritage of the country .

2.3.1 Culture 文化 *wenhua*, Creativity 创意 *chuangyi* and Innovation 创新 *chuangxin* in China

When the creative industry model and the concept related to it entered China, one of the challenges was to find a way to express those innovative ideas using the cultural heritage of the country mixing it with the influences from the West. The distinction between culture and creativity provided by the Western models lost ground in China. Although the country based its approach to creative industry on the Western theory, there hasn't been a unique definition of cultural and creative industry: the two terms in China have been used separately or put together to complete one another. In fact the creative industry in China is often referred as "culture and creative industry" *wenhua chuangyi chanye* 文化创意产业. The term embodies the sense of traditional chinese culture but includes also all the sectors that form the creative industry. It has been often used from local and regional governments as a way to generate investment and employment³³.

The different approaches to these concepts are due to social, cultural, political and linguistic differences. First of all the process of adoption of Western models in China has been influenced by the chinese language 普通话 *putonghua*, which is strictly linked to the country's culture and social values. When adopting a new word in the Chinese

³³ Keane, M., Creative industries in China, op.cit.

language there are different approaches to the transliteration process: the neologism can be a literal translation given by characters that together have the same meaning of the original word; in other cases the neologism resembles the original word just phonetically or semantically.

In Chinese, creative industry is translated as *chuangyi chanye* 创意产业, where *chuangyi* 创意 means to initiate new ideas and *chanye* 产业 stands for industry, business. Cultural industries are referred to as *wenhua chanye* 文化产业. For these two words a literal translation from English has been chosen. As said previously Chinese government promoted the idea of cultural industry keeping control on the industries and their production. The state has “borrowed” the concept of culture and creative industry as a way for the country to reach economic and urban growth, but the concept in China also implies an involvement of local governments in the control of production, which is far from the Western definition. The term cultural industry in China emphasizes the willing of the state to keep that control. The term has been used in China for the first time in 1995, when the Chinese Government eventually included cultural industries in their development plans. In 1998 the Ministry of Culture instituted a Cultural industries Department as an additional sign of the country’s willingness to open to cultural innovation, and in 2001 cultural industries were recognised and endorsed in the 10th Five Year Plan. The presence of the term *wenhua chanye* 文化产业 in the Government’s policies was due to the willingness of the Ministry of Culture to have a more open approach to the cultural industry; the idea of promoting cultural industry in China consisted in three three major

approaches: enhancing the cultural product itself, international cultural relations and provision of infrastructure for an efficient production and protection of the products. The first one was about improving the quality of art and cultural works, the second one aimed at encouraging international cultural exchange and the third approach included a series of interrelated strategies³⁴:

- enhancing cultural infrastructures;
- building a cultural market system and good market environment for cultural development;
- promoting cultural industries through the creation of a Department of Cultural Industries that could outline strategies, formulate plans, control the regeneration of cultural enterprises and also manage the reconstruction of cultural facilities;
- investing in the creation and promotion of cultural infrastructures.

When talking about *wenhua chanye* China marks a distinction with the term *wenhua shiye* 文化事业, where *shiye* stands for “activity”, “project”, and that literary refers to a cultural establishment. While the first word refers to cultural enterprises that can be “commercialised”, the second defines “public cultural institutions” and so product that can’t be commercialised.

The concept of innovation has been another crucial element in the Chinese path towards creativity. The Chinese word for innovation is *chuangxin* 创新 (create something new). Since the country opened to

³⁴ Kong, L., Gibson, C., Khoosand, L., Semple, A., *Knowledges of the creative economy: Towards a relational geography of diffusion and adaptation in Asia*, Asia Pacific Viewpoint, Vol. 47, No. 2, August 2006

international trade it has been a challenge to move from the idea of Made in China to a more creative approach. China needed to prove that it was possible to create a culture of innovation and creativity. Innovation in China is mainly associated with technology, and the country has a great potential due to a growing creative workforce. The country though has always been associated to manufacture and mass production, and that has always been a limit to the exploiting of its innovation potential.

3. Shenzhen: becoming a creative city

3.1 Introduction to the history of Shenzhen

Until 1980 Shenzhen was a rural area made of a few small towns and many villages whose economy was mainly based on agriculture and fishing. The area East of the Pearl River Delta has been inhabited since the Neolithic by tribes who lived of agriculture. The first county was established in the area in 1573 with the name of Xin'an, which eventually was renamed Bao'an in 1913³⁵. Despite its ideal location between two big and strategic cities like Hong Kong and Guangzhou, the city had never witnessed any major economic change.

Between late 70s and early 80s China went through a series of political events that were about to change the history of the country and lead the city of Shenzhen to a new era: in 1978, short after the death of Mao Zedong, the Chinese government decided to issue new economic policies towards a more liberal market with the aim of opening to foreign investments. As a first result of this new approach in 1979 Deng Xiaoping, China's leader at that time, decided to establish several Special Economic Zones (SEZs)³⁶ in the Pearl River Delta as part of his "Four Modernizations" programme which aim was to modernize agriculture, industry, national defense and science and technology.

³⁵ Zacharias J., Tang Y., *Restructuring and repositioning Shenzhen, China's new mega city*, Progress in Planning Vol.73, pp. 209–249, Elsevier, 2010

³⁶ Special Economic Zones (SEZ) are areas in which foreign and domestic companies can trade and invest without the same control and regulations from the central government of Beijing as other areas of Mainland China. The aim of these special areas is to foster overseas investment in China and boost the country's economic growth.

According to the leader's vision the SEZs were intended as "a window of technology, management, knowledge and foreign policy. We [China] can then import technology and learn various kinds of knowledge including management techniques. The SEZs will also be a base for economic opening and a nurturing ground of human resources, hence expanding our external influences"³⁷.

Shenzhen has been the first city to undergo such a major change in China, following the example of already existing SEZs such as Taiwan. The actual name *Shenzhen* 深圳 was given to the city after it became a SEZ in honour of a specific feature of that area: *zhen* 圳 is the word locals used when referring to the small streams draining fields and hills, while the word *Shenzhen* 深圳 means "deep drains"³⁸. There are many reasons why Shenzhen has been chosen as China's first Special Economic Zone: the distance of the city from the central government, Guangdong's history as a point of entry for traders and its geographical position, the cultural differences between the region and the rest of China.

Right after becoming a SEZ the city, that counted a population of 20000, just relied on internal resources like fishing and agriculture and lacked innovation and technology, started flourishing and saw its assets growing exponentially. From that moment on Shenzhen has become the city of many "firsts"³⁹: in 1982 the first overseas bank of China was located in Shenzhen, while in 1987 it became the first Chinese city to allow property ownership: with the first land auctions the local

³⁷ From selected works of Deng Xiaoping, cited in Shao- Shao, H., *Deng Xiaoping's Theory and Practice in Shenzhen*, Shenzhen, Haitian Press, 1998. (in Chinese).

³⁸ Zacharias, Tang, op.cit.

³⁹ Bontje, M., op.cit.

government was able to exact market based prices for land leases gaining a capital that allowed it to undertake major infrastructure projects in the following years⁴⁰.

Fig.1 Shenzhen Municipality and Districts



Source: Ng, Tang, 2004

Until the beginning of the 1990s the Municipality of Shenzhen comprehended the four districts of Nanshan, Luohu, Futian and Yantian. In those years three were the areas that contributed the most to the fast growing of the city: Shekou, which port was a strategic pole for international trade; OCT (Overseas Chinese Town) in Futian District, where the industrial area was located; Luohu, that connected inner China with Hong Kong and for this reason became another central spot for trade. Due to the fast industrial and economic growth of the area the city was expanding at a rapid pace and in 1993 Bao 'an

⁴⁰ Zacharias, Tang, op.cit.

and Longgang districts were incorporated in the Municipality (Fig.1). At this point Shenzhen had become an industrialised city, but its main source of income was still industrial mass production based on low labour cost, which had been possible not only because of the SEZ status of the city, but also because of the availability of a huge number of labor migrants from China's countryside. In addition the economy of the city was still managed by the central government, and this prevented the city from having complete freedom in controlling its resources and assets.

In the early 2000s it became clear that Shenzhen was ready to make a step forward in its economic development, of which high-tech industry was about to become the core sector. The city had become home to some of the most prominent technology companies of mainland China, but its economy was still based on mass production and manufacturing: due to constant changes many companies were relocating their factories in new areas out of the city, leaving big industrial spaces empty⁴¹. It was time for Shenzhen to change its image exploiting its assets in new ways, shifting towards innovation and a creative economy.

3.2 The role of planning in the development of Shenzhen

The pace of development witnessed within the city of Shenzhen is unprecedented in China, making it the first and only city to rise as an economic power from a rural environment in such a short amount of time. From 1980 to 2001 the population has grown by 23 times, its

⁴¹ Ibidem.

GDP by 724 times, import and export by 3918 times⁴².

The establishment of Shenzhen as a SEZ implied a series of political and economic transitions for the city, which had a big influence on the central planning system. At the time when the SEZ was implemented the area required the construction of new physical spaces and facilities: since urban planning was linked to economic planning under the control of centrally planned economy⁴³, socio-economic and spatial planning became essential tools to promote market development and economic growth. The integration of the two plannings was inevitable and has been central on the path of Shenzhen towards growth, laying the foundations to innovation and the creative economy.

I will give an overview of the socio-economic and urban plans that have been issued from the creation of SSEZ until the early 2000s and have been most influential in the development of Shenzhen, having as a starting point the framework developed by Ng and Tang as showed in Table 1. In the framework the plans are in chronological order and divided in three major cluster, each one corresponding to a specific phase of the development of Shenzhen.

⁴² GSB -Guangdong Statistical Bureau, Guangdong Statistical Yearbook, China Statistics Press, Beijing, 2002.

⁴³ A centrally planned economy is an economic system in which the state or government makes economic decisions rather than the interaction between consumers and businesses. Unlike a market economy in which private citizens and business owners make production decisions, a centrally planned economy controls what is produced and the distribution and use of resources. State-owned enterprises undertake the production of goods and services. (source: Investopedia)

Table 1. Socioeconomic and Spatial Plans in Shenzhen

Year	Planning document
Phase 1: 1980–1985	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rapid development of domestic economic linkages• Outward processing industrial activities
1980:	Draft Master Layout Plan
1981–1985:	Sixth Five-Year Plan
1982:	Shenzhen Socioeconomic Outline Plan (SSEOP)
1982:	The First Master Layout Plan
Phase 2: Mid-1980s to mid-1990s	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Export-oriented economy through attracting foreign direct investment• Economic restructuring toward high-tech and tertiary-sector development
1986-1990:	Seventh Five-Year Plan
1986:	Second Master Layout Plan
1989:	The Comprehensive Report on Modifications of the Second Master Layout Plan
1991–1995:	Eighth Five-Year Plan and the Shenzhen Socioeconomic 10-Year Development Plan
Phase 3: Mid-1990s onward	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning control extended as Longgan and Bao’an Counties were turned into Districts within the Shenzhen Municipality in 1993• A need to reinvent Shenzhen in the face of mounting competition within China and in the global economy
1993:	Review of Master Layout Plan started.
1995:	Municipal Government approved the Outline for Modifying the

Table 1. Socioeconomic and Spatial Plans in Shenzhen (continues)

Shenzhen Master Layout Plan

1996–2000: Ninth Five-Year Plan

1996: Draft Third Master Layout Plan

2000: Third Master Layout Plan approved by the State Council

2001–2005: Tenth Five-Year Plan

Source: Ng, Tang, 2004

Phase 1: 1980-1985

Building SSEZ has been an unprecedented urban and socio-economic experiment for China. Under the centrally planned economy every economic decision was taken by central government, who controlled new investments. Foreign investments had never been an option for Chinese government, that had to learn how to build and deal with a globalised city that was about to open to international trade. Anyway the central government has had an important role in the first phase of planning; for example during the drafting of the “Master Layout Plan of Shenzhen” it was the central government who provided the guidelines for the development of SSEZ with references to the creation of agricultural, commercial and tourist activities⁴⁴. The central government also contributed to the formulation of the Shenzhen Social and Economic Outline Plan (SSEOP), drafted by the Municipal party Committee in 1982. According to the plan (Chiu, Shenzhen Museum, Wong) Shenzhen would have become an independent economic identity focusing on tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, commercial

⁴⁴ Ng, M., Tang, W., *The Role of Planning in the Development of Shenzhen, China: Rhetoric and Realities*, Eurasia geography and Economics, 2004.

and real estate development; industrial growth (especially high-tech and capital intensive activities) had to become a priority for the city.

The content of the SSEOP provided important guidelines for the formulation of the First master Layout Plan of Shenzhen, created to transform the city into an industrial hub creating an environment that could suit foreign investments⁴⁵. Between 1980 and 1985 Shenzhen SEZ rate of economic growth went way further than all of the economic and production targets specified in the plans.

Phase 2: mid-1980s to mid-1990s

During the decade from mid 1980s to mid 1990s the focus of SSEZ has been on building an export oriented economy, as stated in Shenzhen's seventh Five Year Plan (1986-1990). Making Shenzhen an export economy was also the main focus of the Second Master Layout Plan, of which the final version underlined the importance of international trade as a mean for making the SEZ a metropolitan city; the Plan's aim was to base the city's economy on capital and technology intensive enterprises, electronics industry, machinery, food processing, high-end construction and building materials, and textiles industries⁴⁶.

The project of investing in new areas to increase export required an adequate land planning which was constrained by the fast growth of SSEZ population in the late 80s, also due to a continuous migration flux. Given the rapid increase of population, new investments in education and social and urban services were needed.

Amongst the Second Master Layout Plan concerns there was also the

⁴⁵ Yeh, G. O. A., *Development of the Special Economic Zone in Shenzhen, The People's Republic of China*, *Ekistics*, March/April, 1985a, pp.154-161

⁴⁶ Ng, Tang, op.cit.

coordination of spatial development. Since SSEZ had been developing as a centrally owned spatial economic zone from the beginning, a lot of areas had been built by Government departments and bureaus as private “communities” with an autonomous management⁴⁷. This was a big obstacle for urban planners who, in order to really transform Shenzhen into a modern city projected towards international export and investments, needed a more open and flexible environment. This situation led to a series of administrative reforms in five phases between 1980s and 1990s⁴⁸ in order to end bureaucracy led economy. In addition, with the introduction of the Land Market in 1987 the capital available for infrastructure development plans increased, and this led to a new series of urban changes in Shenzhen.

Phase 3: Mid-1990s onward

The Ninth and Tenth Five Year Plans marked the beginning of a new phase for Shenzhen, that after revolutionizing urban space was ready to become a world class city projected to the 21st century. The emphasis on innovation and development of technologies has been deepened in the Tenth Four Years Plan, with a new focus also on environmental issues like sustainable development and environmental protection. These new issues gave urban planners a new framework to follow in order to lead Shenzhen to a new phase of growth and development.

The focus of the strategy at the beginning of the 21st century was on making Shenzhen a modern city with an attractive appeal and a stable economy, as it has been pointed out in the Third Master Layout Plan. The framework set a new standard for urban planning and

⁴⁷ Ivi.

⁴⁸ Shenzhen Museum, op.cit.

environmental protection, but the innovative focus was on the creation of cultural facilities and creative urban landscapes.

3.3 Pathway towards the creative city

Starting from 2003, when Shenzhen began to plan the development and the enhancing of culture and creative enterprises, China started to lay the groundwork for establishing a culture-based city strategy, linked to the principle of cultural economy⁴⁹.

In 2005, while most Chinese cities were still focused on developing their manufacturing bases, Shenzhen was ready to transition its economy and structure: what had been defined as a manufacturing hub until the end of the 20th century was about to become a creative megacity. The creative turmoil shaking Shenzhen in those years was connected to a bigger discourse about creative industry in China: starting from 2004 the whole country started to see the creative industry as an economic growth sector and source of both national and international competitiveness (Krop, 2013). The guidelines for this creativity-led development in China have been defined by a few main actors: Li Wuwei, senior policy advisor, and Liu Shifa, vice-director of the Market Development Department within the Ministry of Culture have defined the development of creative industry with their writings, as mentioned in the first chapter. The focus on the new industry was at first on biggest cities like Beijing and Shanghai, where the first events for promoting the creative industry in China were held (i.e.: the first Creative Industry Forum was held in Shanghai in 2004). Following the

⁴⁹ UNESCO, *10 Things to Know About Shenzhen UNESCO City of Design*, June 2009

country's willingness to go from "Made in China" to "Created in China", Shenzhen intensively promoted the development of creative industries; the city was able to leverage its history and unique economic and urban growing path, going through a redesigning process that brought it to become one of the strongest creative centres in the country.

In 2005 the aim of Shenzhen was to develop four main pillars:

- high technology;
- modern logistics;
- finance;
- cultural and creative industries;

This new focus was the result of a Government decision to adopt a "culture + technology" strategy model as an engine to the city's economy; since establishing these new standards the local cultural and creative industries have in fact experienced a huge increase, growing by 20% a year⁵⁰. From 2004 to 2016, the added value produced by the cultural and creative industries accounted for 4.6% to 11% of the city's GDP: in 2016 the culture and creative industries in Shenzhen provided an added value of 194.9 billion yuan, one of the highest in China⁵¹. These data show how the creative industry has gradually but steadily become central in the development of Shenzhen.

2008 has been a pivotal year for Shenzhen to confirm its status of creative city. The SEZ was named city of design by UNESCO and became the first chinese city to be included in its Creative Cities network. From a beginning manufacturing leader in the chinese market

⁵⁰ World Cities Culture Forum, Cities.

<http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/cities/shenzhen/Perspectives%20on%20the%20city>

⁵¹ Shenzhen Government Online

www.sz.gov.cn

to the first steps towards international trade Shenzhen has been able to move from selling products to selling design, from a processing centre to a city of design⁵², earning the title of birthplace of modern design in China (UNESCO, 2009). The city took advantage of the new status to promote design and attract new creative resources⁵³, hosting international fairs, cultural and design events, and starting to leverage urban renovation as a mean to spread culture through the ideation of creative parks. Some of the major events related to design and creativity that took place in Shenzhen are (UNESCO 2009):

- Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture, that has been first held in 2005 and became Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bicity Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture in 2007;
- China Industrial Design Elites Competition, taking place in Shenzhen since 2002;
- Biennale Exhibition of Graphic Design in China, one of the most influential graphic design events in China.

In 2008, the former general secretary of Guangdong Province Wang Yang proposed the redevelopment of the “Three Olds”, which consisted in the conversion of old towns, old factory buildings and old villages. He believed that the conversions could have two transformative effects: one was to enhance economic performance and to make the economy stronger and more creative; the other was to upgrade the physical and social fabric of the region. This proposal had a huge influence on urban regeneration in South China, especially for the changes related to the development of creative industries. As a result, urban transformation became always more tied to the promotion of

⁵² Li, W., op.cit.

⁵³ Ivi.

creativity.

International recognition of the creative value of Shenzhen has always been supported by local government, who has constantly believed in the fostering of creative enterprises in order to achieve an effective urban renewal; this presence in the creativity-led urbanization of the city is not surprising considering the constant presence of top down organization in China. In 2008 Shenzhen Government's Office of legislative affairs *shenzhen zhengfu fazhi bangongshi* 深圳政府法制办公室 issued a document regarding the Regulations of Shenzhen Municipality on the Promotion of Development of Cultural and Creative industries *shenzhen wenhuachan cujin tiaoli* 深圳市文化产业促进条例⁵⁴: the paper's focus was on the definition of a strategy for the development of the city on a cultural foundation and the improvement of the mechanisms of promotion and development of the cultural and creative industries. The latter were referred to as activities which provide cultural and entertainment products and services for society, to be promoted in accordance to the following principles:

- 1- to make overall planning and to have concerted development;
- 2- to encourage independent innovation;
- 3- to help the cultural industries with distinctive features and advantages;
- 4- to strengthen the protection of intellectual property rights;
- 5- to harmonize social and economic benefits.

The willingness of the city to invest in the creative industry has been reinforced with the implementation by the Government of the "2011-

⁵⁴ *shenzhen zhengfu fazhi xinxiwang* 深圳政府法制信息网
www.fzb.sz.gov.cn

2015 Plan to boost Creative and Cultural Industries”⁵⁵. The Municipal Government planned a yearly investment of 500 million yuan in cultural and creative industries focusing on the following:

- ❖ Creative design
- ❖ Cultural software
- ❖ Animation and gaming
- ❖ New media
- ❖ Culture information services
- ❖ Cultural exhibitions
- ❖ Performance and entertainment
- ❖ Cultural tourism
- ❖ Cultural heritage development
- ❖ Advertising
- ❖ Printing and copying
- ❖ Arts and crafts

⁵⁵叶尚青(Ye, S.), City of Design, Senzhen, 2014 http://www.shenzhendesign.org/content/2014-10/20/content_10549937.htm

The plan projected an average annual growth of 25% for cultural and creative industries by 2015, forecasting a total output of cultural and creative product of more than 580 billion yuan in the same year.

3.4 Current city profile and future perspectives

As stated in the World Cities Culture Report of 2015 “a successful city is one that is able to establish its distinctiveness and identity”. Shenzhen’s main focus today is still on advanced industrial sectors and innovation, and the city sees itself as an “innovative city, smart city, low carbon city”⁵⁶.

Although in the last few years the city had to face issues concerning educational supplies due to a lack of spaces for attracting and developing creative talent, Shenzhen still sees culture and creative industry as the foundation of its economic development.

Arts and culture have an important role in giving life to a city and make it modern and vibrant; if the economy of a city has the role of producing wealth, cultural infrastructures often define the city’s actual value. In Shenzhen’s case creative industries have three main roles today: cohering the city’s population, nurturing the city’s creativity and defining its brand⁵⁷. The city is today more active than ever in supporting culture and creativity, and this can be seen in a series of new investments and fundings that have been done in the industry. Shenzhen has been recognized by Unesco as an example in the culture industry for its innovative model for promoting reading; the project

⁵⁶ World City Culture Report, 2015.

⁵⁷ Ivi.

includes the issuing of the “reading month” and the installation of over 200 book dispensers in the city⁵⁸.

Shenzhen has also been recognized as a “culture pioneer” in China for its role in contemporary art: in 2017, for example, there has been the opening of Shekou Design Museum, that gave a big shake to the city’s art scene. The museum is a venue with Victoria & Albert Museum, an institution in the British art scene, and it is part of a project by one of the most important finance and construction operators in China, the China Merchants Group (CMG)⁵⁹. This project not only is the first international collaboration of the British Museum at a high level, but it also represents one of the biggest projects connecting China and Europe today, repositioning once again Shenzhen as one of the most international chinese city when it comes to business and city development.

2017 has also been the year of a new milestone for the city: the first Shenzhen Design Week took place in April with the aim to provide new platforms for international exchange, communication and cooperation in various design categories with an international audience of scholars and designers from all over the world⁶⁰.

It is not surprising that the 2017 Chinese City Creativity Index (CCCI) report released by Shenzhen University last December showed that Shenzhen has the fourth highest CCCI among Chinese cities⁶¹. The

⁵⁸ Ivi.

⁵⁹ Belleri, D., Dreyer, J., *Shenzhen’s Design Revolution*, 2015,
https://www.domusweb.it/en/design/2015/11/05/shekou_design_museum.html

⁶⁰ <http://sz.design/>

⁶¹ *Shenzhen has 4th-highest creativity index in China*, December 2017.

http://www.eyeshenzhen.com/content/2017-12/12/content_17977313.htm
per ulteriori informazioni consultare il sito <http://sznews.com/>.

research on the CCCI, also sponsored by the government, is based on the analysis of cultural industries competitiveness and aims to help the Chinese local governments with the drafting and optimization of related policies. As stated on Eyeshenzhen news portal last December, The CCCI system consists of four grade-I indices (element impetus, demand impetus, development force and industrial influence) as well as 11 grade-II indices and 28 grade-III indices. A total of 50 large and medium-sized Chinese cities and regions were evaluated by the system this year and the research has seen Beijing in first position in the ranking, followed by Shanghai, Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Guangzhou. According to the data Shenzhen has the highest indices regarding input-output ratio of its cultural industries; on the other hand the demand of cultural industry is still lacking, meaning that just a minority of Shenzhen's community is willing to invest in cultural related services today⁶².

3.4.1 Shenzhen Cultural Innovative Development 2020 Plan

Despite the still existing gaps in Shenzhen's culture and creative industry today, the city is still working to ensure its cultural development. At the beginning of 2016 Shenzhen's government issued the "Shenzhen Cultural Innovative Development 2020 Plan", which aims at increasing creativity and culture in Shenzhen providing a guide to the cultural development of the city for the next years⁶³.

⁶² Ivi.

⁶³ Shenzhen Government Online, Cultural&Design Industry.

http://english.sz.gov.cn/sp/201709/t20170913_8677881.htm.

Highlights of the Plan include:

- projects for the protection and enhancing of cultural relics of Shenzhen such as Nantou Ancient Town, Dapeng Fortress and Dawan Ancestral Residence;
- the creation of platforms for social science researches, with the participation of influential scholars and researchers in order to increase the number of social science talents in the city;
- encouragement of culture and art industry, including film, music, television, performing arts and theatre;
- launch of a “key project-driven” strategy to upgrade cultural sectors. Shenzhen’s government will team up with districts governments to support local creative projects;
- improvement of the industry service platforms, with a focus on the optimization of the already existing cultural resources of the city. The new projects include the creation of a cultural Silicon Valley with the aim of combining culture and high-tech, and a cultural foreign trade service platform.

The aim of the city from now to 2020 is to push for China Cultural Industrial Investment Fund to invest at least in three new creative companies (www.sz.gov.cn).

4. Creative clusters in Shenzhen: the case of OCT Loft

4.1 The phenomenon of creative clusters in China

Creative industry can improve the spatial asset of a city in different ways. One way for cities to exploit it is to focus the creative and cultural life in the Central Business District (CBD); the second approach is to give life to a new creative environment in different urban and suburban areas. The way urban space is structured has a big influence on the efficiency of a city and its personality: since they represent an innovative way to rethink urban space creative clusters have a big impact on how cities are presented and have been used as a mean of space optimization, economic growth, and social transformation⁶⁴. Today creative spaces are regarded as an opportunity to redevelop abandoned urban areas, to provide workspaces for the “creative class”, to offer leisure areas to both locals and tourists, to preserve industrial and cultural heritage and most importantly to exploit their capacity to rebuild the city image and contribute to city-branding⁶⁵.

Creative spaces in China have become the symbol of what has been called China’s Second Transition⁶⁶. The adoption of the concept of

⁶⁴ Li, W., op.cit, p.81

⁶⁵ Zielke, P., Waibel, M., *Comparative urban governance of developing creative spaces in China*, Habitat International 41, 2014, pp.99-107, Elsevier.

⁶⁶ Referred to as the new economic phase China has gone through starting from the late 90s, when the concept of creative industry entered the country and their renewed growth plans involved reducing the relative importance of low value-added manufacturing and increasing domestic innovation in order to make China’s economy more efficient.

Bottelier, P., *China’s economy in 2020: the challenge of a second transition*, Asia Policy, Vol.4, 31e40, 2007

creative cluster in Chinese cities was in fact related to the ambition of the country to move from manufacture industry to advanced services. Chinese creative clusters served as a mean to control and enhance innovation of new business activities and cultural practices; they also contributed to the stimulation of urban development⁶⁷. Beijing and Shanghai have been the first cities to experience this kind of urban change starting from the end of the 1990s: due to the presence of many inefficient state owned enterprises a lot of “inner-city” factories started to close; the abandoned spaces were seen from the creative class at that time as valuable spaces to implement their work, and that’s how they gave life to creative districts like Shanghai M50 district and Beijing 798 Art Zone⁶⁸. At the beginning of the 21st century other Chinese regions followed the example of Beijing and Shanghai’s culture-led urban renovation, amongst which there was Guangdong Province with its fast growing cities Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

4.1.1 Analysis of creative clusters in Shenzhen

Shenzhen has been the first Chinese city to implement a “city based on culture” strategy⁶⁹, becoming one of the leading creative forces of the country. The city has been able to leverage its geographical position and internal urban changes to build a strong creative economy that today is mainly evolving around creative clusters. The creative spaces in Shenzhen have become the main expression of how creative industry has changed the spatial asset of the city. Together with the

⁶⁷ O’Connor, J., Lei, L., *Shenzhen’s Oct Loft- creative space in the city of design*, Reserchgate, 2014

⁶⁸ Zielke, P., Waibel, M., op.cit.

⁶⁹ Invest Shenzhen, Culture and Creative industries, 2015.

<http://en.szinvest.gov.cn/districts/sectors/industries/>

objective of becoming “capital of creative design”, the city also aimed at redesigning the urban space through creative clustering. Shenzhen invested in the implementation and development of creative spaces in different areas of the city, focusing on a wide range of creative fields.

The cultural industry in Shenzhen today mainly focuses on seven sectors: creative design, animation games, digital media, movies and performances, high-end printing, culture software and culture tourism⁷⁰. A big part of the city’s creative enterprises is based on the “culture+tehnology” development mode⁷¹, and creative districts are becoming a central force in the city’s creative industry development: just in Nanshan district there are 15 active Creative parks, of which 12 are municipal-level and constitute one fourth of the city’s total⁷². This makes the district one of the cultural centers of Shenzhen, but creative spaces are spread throughout the whole city.

The picture below shows the location of the creative clusters that are currently shaping Shenzhen’s creative industry and creativity-led urban development in the most innovative way. I will provide a brief description of the current state of affairs of Shekou district (2), , ID Town (3) and Dalan Fashion Valley (4). These three clusters have been through recent upgrading and development projects that show how Shenzhen is driving the creativity-led urban regeneration scenario in China today reconfirming itself as one of the most creative centers of the country. I will then focus my attention on the case study of OCT Loft Cultural Creative Park (1), which is the most important example of

⁷⁰ http://www.eyeshenzhen.com/content/2017-05/08/content_16173899.htm

⁷¹ Transformation of cultural enterprises from the traditional mode to a innovation-driven and technology-based one.

http://www.eyeshenzhen.com/content/2017-05/08/content_16173899.htm

⁷² Ivi.

creativity-led urbanization in Shenzhen today and also the first creative Park to be constituted in the city. Through my description and analysis of OCT Loft I will investigate the factors that make it a unique urban project and the impact it had on the creativity-led urban development of Shenzhen.

Fig.1 Location of creative clusters in Shenzhen



1. **OCT Loft** *huaqiaocheng chuanyi wenhuayuan* 华侨城创意文化园
2. **Shekou** 蛇口
3. **ID Town** *yixiang guoji yishuqu* 艺象国际艺术区
4. **Dalang Fashion Valley** *dalang shishang chuanyicheng* 大朗时尚创意城

Shekou 蛇口

Located in Nanshan district, West of Shenzhen, and close to Hong Kong's border, the Shekou Peninsula is a big harbour area that is mainly divided in two parts: Shekou Industrial Zone, the former industrial area that hosted the 2013 Urbanism/Architecture Bi-city Biennale and the Sea World area. Shekou has been one of the first areas to be developed after the creation of SSEZ, and for many years it has been a successful industrial area. When the industrial zone started to lose its appeal and companies moved their factories in cities North to Shenzhen, the spot became the perfect ground for new urban implementations. The redevelopment of the area was commissioned by the government to China Merchants Group⁷³, who owns most of the Shekou district. The company transformed the industrial building into a location for the Biennale.

The Sea World area has instead been built to be a touristic and commercial spot with cafes, restaurants and clubs, but in the last years it has gone through a series of changes that reconfirmed the whole Shekou district as a cultural and creative center. The most recent and game changing development of the Sea World area has been the construction of the Sea World Culture and Arts Center *haishang shejie wenhua yishu zhongxin* 海上世界文化艺术中心 .

⁷³ China Merchants Shekou Industrial Zone Holdings is a China-based company mainly engaged in the development and operation of industrial parks, communities and cruise business. The Company mainly operates through three segments. Community segment provides quality residential real-estates for family level customers under the brand of China Merchants. Industrial Park Development segment is mainly involved in the development and operation of the theme industrial parks, characteristic industrial belts and the ecological zones. Cruise segment is mainly involved in the construction, operation and management of Shekou Cruise Terminal. The Company operates its business in the domestic and overseas markets, with China as its domestic market. Source: <https://www.reuters.com/finance/stocks/company-profile/001979.SZ>

Fig.2 SWCAC in Shekou



Source: Design Society

Shenzhen Sea World Culture and Arts Center was first commissioned by China Merchants Group in 2014 and has been conceived as cultural core of the commercial and residential area of Sea World. The site, covering an area of 70000 square meters, is located in the southeastern part of the Shekou peninsula, overlooking the ocean and Hong Kong⁷⁴. The large multi purpose building has been designed by the Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki and is made up of three main event spaces. The urban placement of the building is reflected in the three voluminous parts on the roof that point to three different directions, each representing a local geographical feature: the sea, the mountains and the city. At the same time the shapes symbolize the opening to new horizons and the mission of SWCAC to spread culture

⁷⁴ <http://www.maki-and-associates.co.jp/details/index.html?pcd=142>

and innovation to Shenzhen and the world. The building is a mix of galleries, museums, shops, and events areas, all tied together by Design Society⁷⁵.

The Center, that has opened its doors to the public at the beginning of December 2017, is home to a cultural hub called Design Society. Its structure is that of a design museum, featuring galleries and design spaces, but Design Society is also a civic and community center and features a theater and many event spaces. The aim of the hub is to keep the creative industry's fervor in the Pearl River Delta alive and provide a design platform able to enhance the interaction of Chinese design culture with the world⁷⁶. A first attempt to put together Chinese design with arts from the world has been the opening of Victoria&Albert Gallery at Design Society in the Sea World Culture and Arts Center which, as I already mentioned in the previous chapter, is one of the biggest international projects ever endorsed by V&A and in the Chinese creative industry. Together with *Values of Design* in the V&A Gallery, other two exhibitions have marked the opening of Design Society and SWCAC at the end of 2017: *Minding the Digital* in the Main Hall, and *Nurturing Dreams in Recent Work: Fumihiko Maki+Maki and Associates* in the Park View Gallery⁷⁷.

⁷⁵ V&A at Design Society, Shekou

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/va-at-design-society-shekou>

⁷⁶ Design Society, Shekou, Shenzhen, Brendan Cormier, November 2017

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/shekou/design-society-shekou-shenzhen/>

⁷⁷ Mengoni, L., *Design Society opens in december 2017*, October 2017.

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/shekou/opening-of-design-society-in-december-2017/>

ID Town *yixiang guoji yishuqu* 艺象国际艺术区

ID Town creative cluster is located in Dapeng New Tourist district, in the East part of Shenzhen. The building where the project takes place was born as the headquarters of the Hongwa Dyeing factory, a textile dyeing and printing factory built in the end of the 1980s. That has been one of the most flourishing period for the newly established Special Economic Zone, which economic basis was provided by the hundreds of manufacturing industries that were growing in the area. At the beginning of the 2000s Shenzhen started its process of transformation from manufacturer to service provider, and this change implied a crisis for all of the factories that were active in the city, as happened in Shekou industrial area as well: a lot of them were relocated, other were closed⁷⁸. In 2003 Hongwa stopped its operations, and the 20 acres factory space has been left empty and abandoned for about 10 years. In 2013 the area was chosen by Shenzhen Urban Renewal Bureau as a location for a project of urban regeneration of industrial areas, and after the purchase of the building by MJH (Manjinghua) Group the construction of ID town started. MJH Group chose O-office Architects studio to lead the first project of the ID Town, and they created a masterplan that started with the construction of an art gallery and included the realization of an entire complex of buildings that would have constituted a commune. The Z gallery, together with seven private artist studios, has been built in the former cloth purification workshop of the factory, and has been conceived as a black

⁷⁸ Du, J., Industrial strength: Galleries and youth hostel, iD Town, Shenzhen, China by O-office, December 2017. www.architectural-review.com

steel box floating on the ruins of the former workshop. The facades of the box are made of wall-doors that rotate and sliding glass doors, to create a versatile environment that could adapt to different events and seasons. The private studios are boxes in line with the design of the gallery, and represent both the incubator and showcase of the artist's works⁷⁹.

Fig.3 Z Gallery in ID Town



Source: Designboom

In 2014 O-office also completed the project of the ID Hostel, that at first was created for people visiting the creative district and tourists traveling in the beach area around the complex. At the end of 2017

⁷⁹ Z Gallery in ID Town, march 2014
<http://www.archilovers.com/projects/122119/z-gallery-in-id-town.html#info>

though the architect office announced its plan to transform part of the structure of the hostel into a student dormitory⁸⁰.

The third part composing ID Town as it is today is the MJH Art Gallery, also completed in 2014 in the former packing area of the factory. The building consists of a two room gallery space with exhibition areas, meeting spaces and an auditorium. Despite its original purpose, the structure is used today as an event space more than a museum⁸¹. The three spaces are at the same time in contrast and in balance with the old industrial buildings structure, and the modern design insertions interact with the original base of the factory. Since the project has been completed in 2014 the creative district has hosted many events such as fashion shows and music festivals, and it is also home to small businesses and workshops gathering an audience that has become an effective community (or commune, as O-office had planned in the original masterplan) in the last three years. At the present time the expectations for the future urban development of the site are high: according to the masterplan the district will see the construction of 18 new buildings in the next 20 years⁸².

⁸⁰ Du, J., *Industrial strength: Galleries and youth hostel, iD Town, Shenzhen, China* by O-office, December 2017. <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/industrial-strength-galleries-and-youth-hostel-id-town-shenzhen-china-by-o-office/10026241.article>

⁸¹ Ivi.

⁸² Hudson, D., *O-office turns an abandoned factory into iD town: the creative art district*, September 2014. <https://www.designboom.com/architecture/o-office-abandoned-factory-id-town-creative-art-district-392014/>

Dalang Fashion Valley *dalang shishang chuanyicheng* 大朗时尚创意城

Dalang Fashion valley is located in Dalang, a neighbourhood of Baoan district in the north area of Shenzhen. Population in Dalang area is mainly made of young migrants and for many years the area has lacked infrastructures and public facilities. In 2006 the Dalang neighbourhood office was established with the aim of reevaluate the area changing its urban structure. One of the main goals for the area was to shift the focus of its economy and urban asset from manufacture to service provider, and the main project involved in this change would have been Dalang Fashion District. The construction of the Fashion Creative Park began in 2003 and in 2011 the municipal government and Longhua district government included it in the landmark projects of the 12th Five Year Plan for the development of Shenzhen⁸³; the goal was to open the Park's doors in 2013. As the name itself says, the core industry of the district is fashion, but other industries such as media, publishing and arts are included. From its opening in 2013 the cluster has gathered about 100 between domestic and foreign enterprises that today have positioned their head quarters there.

⁸³园区深圳系列 18 大浪时尚创意园 国际时尚硅谷, June 2017
<http://bbs.szhome.com/30-10002-article-252580-0-1-1.html>

Fig. 4 Dalang fashion Valley



Source: Shenzhen News

The creative hub is divided in four major areas: Area A is the industrial functional area hosting the headquarters of fashion enterprises; Area B is the commercial district, providing catering, accommodation, entertainment and consumption services; Area C is the economic zone, with the R&D departments, business incubators and other facilities; Area D is the Ecological district and consists of a Park embracing the periphery of the Valley. The district is in fact surrounded by nature and it is exploiting its strategic position and high quality ecological resources to create an eco-friendly environment with leisure activities to attract tourism⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ 广东省首批特色小镇示范点名单出炉. 龙华大浪时尚创意小镇上榜, August 2017. http://www.sznews.com/mb/content/2017-08/30/content_17156971.htm

At the moment Areas A and C are fully operating and the first one is home to 22 fashion brands head quarters, while the total creative cluster hosts in total 50 businesses between shops and enterprises. The other areas though are still on their way to be completed, and it has been estimated that the supporting facilities to the existing enterprises such as testing center and international fashion center will be ready for the opening within a year⁸⁵. The fashion district keeps on receiving support from Longhua District Government and the Municipal Government, that are issuing special funds for the area to continue its development process.

Dalang Fashion Valley does not only include industrial and commercial areas: the creative cluster also hosts some important fashion events and exhibitions such as the “Shenzhen International Brand Fashion Fair”, “Shenzhen International Fashion Week” and “Big Wave Cup China Women’s Design Competition”, that have become core activities for the Park. Talking about positioning and planning, the district is considered an example for creativity-led urbanization in Shenzhen, paving the way for a new type of urban development for tourism and consumer industry. With the help and encouragement of the government the Park is expected to grow exponentially in the next years, but what it needs now to strengthen the garment industry chain and the service industry, in order to provide a stronger basis for the future development of the enterprise.

⁸⁵ Ivi.

4.2 The case of OCT Loft Cultural Creative Park *huaqiaocheng chuangyi wenhua yuan* 华侨城创意文化园

The discourse of creative industry and clusters development in China is often related to the idea of a top-down approach by the government or real estate developers, that might result in the construction of spaces in which creativity and culture are eventually discouraged to give space to the business aspect of the enterprise. This focus on capital and investment might result in a process of gentrification⁸⁶, leaving behind creative minds and the value of creativity. The OCT Loft Cultural Creative Park, together with other few realities, represents an exception to this situation. The Park has become today the biggest creative district in Shenzhen, and one of the largest and most influential in China. In the following paragraphs I will provide an overview of the origins of the Park and the policies behind its success. I will then focus my attention on the urban development of the area and how its creative enterprises are influencing the city of Shenzhen today.

4.2.1 The origins

The development and success of OCT Loft as a creative cluster is the result of the rapid urban and economic changes that the city of Shenzhen has gone through since it became a Special Economic Zone. Urban space has been subjected to continuous changes and the city had to transform itself at a very fast pace to keep up with these changes, becoming a fluid environment always in motion. This urban

⁸⁶ Sonn J. W., Chen K. W., Wang H., Liu X., *A top-down creation of a cultural cluster for urban regeneration: The case of OCT Loft, Shenzhen*, Land Use Policy Vol.69, pp. 307-316, Elsevier, 2017.

flux led to a reevaluation of abandoned areas with a big potential that gradually brought to the growth of the creative clusters phenomenon. Located in Nanshan district, in the South of Shenzhen, OCT Loft is a cultural creative cluster based in the Northeast part of Huaqiaocheng, covers an area of more than 150000 square meters and it is owned by a state-owned enterprise, the *Huaqiaocheng Jituan Gongsi* 华侨城集团公司 or Overseas Chinese Town (OCT) Group.

OCT Group

OCT Group is a Shenzhen-based large-scale state-owned holding company that owns tourism, real estate, and electronics manufacturing businesses⁸⁷. The company is especially known for its involvement in the tourism business, of which is one of the largest companies in Shenzhen. OCT Group is also a very influent real estate developer, role for which it has been given the status of state-owned “key enterprise”⁸⁸: this status implies that the Group’s decisional power was as strong as that of Shenzhen’s government. OCT has originally been established by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council in 1985 to provide business opportunities to Chinese people returning from Overseas during the 1980s⁸⁹. Originally OCT’s main task was to develop manufacturing industries that provided production services through the “three plus one” trading mix⁹⁰, and in just 10 years the

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⁸⁸ A status given to some of the largest and most important state-owned firms in China. This status within the government hierarchy is higher than the status of the City of Shenzhen, which is a sub-provincial-level city.

Ivi.

⁸⁹ O’Connor, j., Liu, L., op.cit.

⁹⁰ The “three plus one” trading mix allowed investors could use free land for a period of 15 years to set up custom manufacturing businesses with their own supply of materials, designs and samples.

company has been able to gather more than 50 enterprises in the area, including electronics firms such as Konka Group and a large number of light-industry enterprises⁹¹. In the 2000s a lot of that manufacturing companies decided to leave Nanshan district because of unbearable labour costs, before being forced to close their businesses; this way a lot of industrial complexes in the area were left empty. At the same time, as the city was growing, that site acquired more and more potential for other types of activities. After having witnessed the decline of that area as an industrial complex OCT Group, that in the meantime had become one of the most influential state-owned enterprises in Shenzhen, was looking for a way to give new life to that abandoned building complex.

4.2.2 Renovation and upgrading

The choice to focus the new project of OCT Group around culture and creativity has been crucial for many aspects. When the project for the OCT Loft was conceived Nanshan district had just been chosen for becoming cultural center of Shenzhen, as specified in the city's Fifteen-year Urban Plan of 1996⁹²; the idea of the "loft model" came instead after a visit of the board members to Vancouver, where many loft spaces had been reassigned for creative uses. The name of the creative cluster refers in fact to the "loft apartment" lifestyle, which is the same OCT Group wanted to create in their factory buildings. At the same time owners of the He Xiang Ning Art Museum expressed their

Ivi.

⁹¹ Sonn J. W., Chen K. W., Wang H., Liu X., op.cit.

⁹² O'Donnell, M. A. (1999). Path Breaking: Constructing Gendered Nationalism in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. *Positions*, 7(2), 343–375.

willingness to build a contemporary art gallery in the area where the OCT Loft is today: that event, together with the creation of the OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT)⁹³ in the same period, created a series of favourable events for the transformation of that industrial space into a creative hub. Renovation works started in 2004, and the project was assigned to Urbanus Architecture&Design, an architectural firm from Hong Kong which also happened to be one of the first enterprises to move in the newly created district. That same year OCT Group was given the title of first “National Culture Industry Demonstration Base” by the State Ministry of Culture, showing how the Group and the Loft were reaching success even before the actual establishment of the creative cluster⁹⁴.

The first area to be renewed was the one that today is defined as the South Park, in which from 2005 OCAT is located. The aim of Urbanus designers was to keep the structure of the building as authentic as possible so that it could maintain the spatial and architectural asset of an industrial complex; they added new elements to the existing structures to adapt the original infrastructures to the new purpose of creative hub and gave new life to the empty spaces between them for commercial activities like cafe, design shops, ateliers, bookshops and other smaller facilities to settle. What the design studio didn't take care of was the internal design of the single shops, which was left to the artist to think of by themselves: this process took a while to be completed, but this way the conversion to the OCT Loft became a natural and spontaneous process in which every element could freely

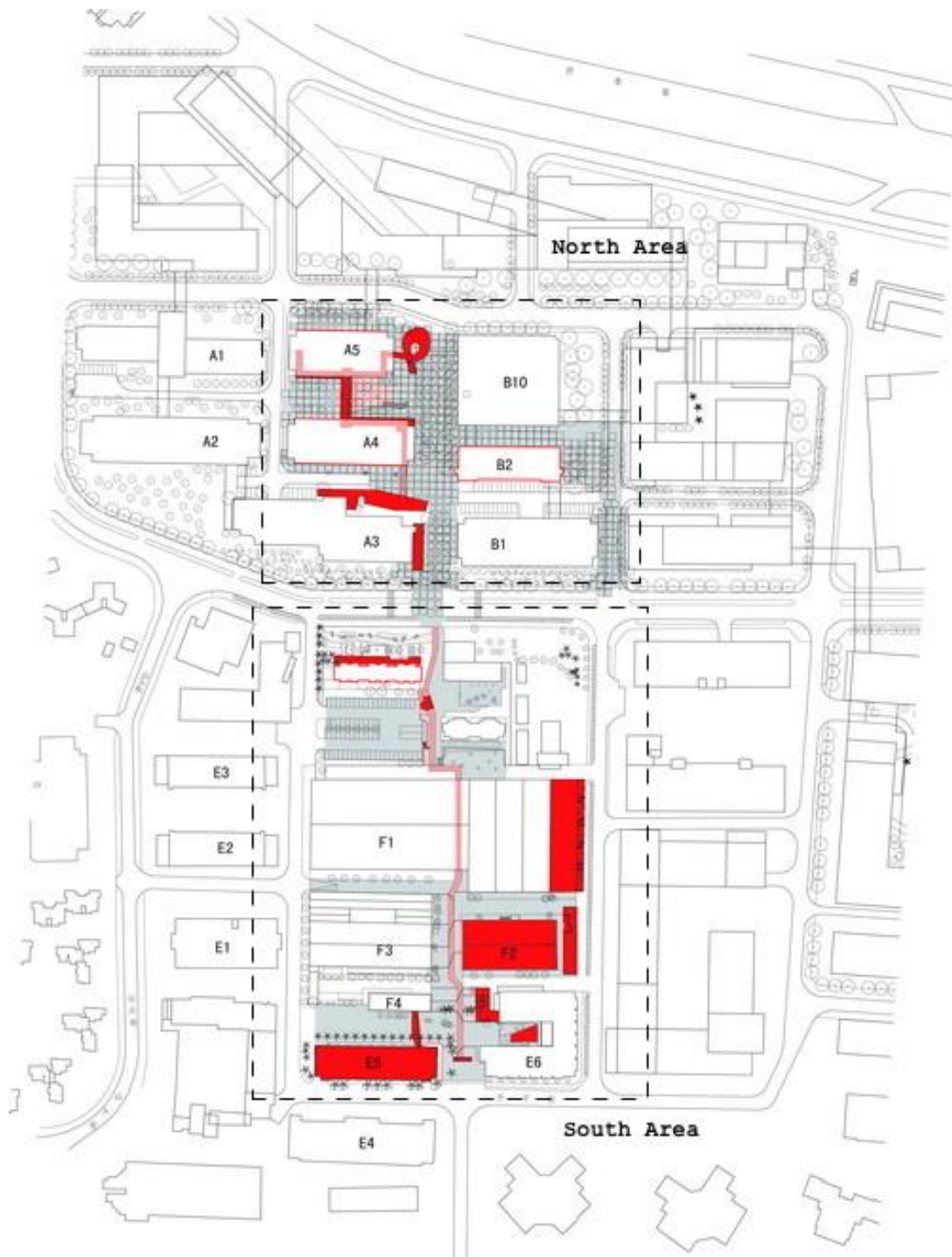
⁹³ O'Connor, J., Liu, L., op.cit.

⁹⁴ Yuan, Y., Chen C., *An Ecological Model for the Cultural-Creative Cluster: A Study of Shenzhen's OCT-LOFT and Its Creative Management*

give its contribution to the change⁹⁵. The idea behind the regeneration was to make the buildings look like temporary spaces that could be continuously adapted to new changes (Costa, 2013). It was the idea of an interactive development: adapting buildings to the contextual environment so that they could be flexible enough to change with trends and make the enterprises develop together with the creative Park. The OCT Loft was officially opened in January 2007, and at that time it already hosted 20 operating enterprises. That same year the Group, that had witnessed the immediate success of the cluster, decided to upgrade it with the creation of a new space, the North Park, that officially opened on May 2011.

⁹⁵ O'Connor, J., Liu, L., op.cit.

Fig.5 OCT Loft Masterplan



Source: Urbanus

Fig.6 OCAT Gallery in the South Area



Source: Urbanus

The Southern and Northern Area of the OCT Loft present different characteristics, both from a functional and design perspective: while the South Park is more commercial and has lower buildings, the North Park has a more industrial attitude conveyed by the higher buildings. The different architectural features of the two areas influence their attitude and also the type of activities performed. The South Park has a more social appeal and it has been designed also to attract the public and enhance tourism. The North area is more focused on the design aspect and less on the social one: North Park is in fact mostly dedicated to art workshops and exhibitions. The biggest exhibition space in this area is B10, which is complementary to OCAT in the South Park: the two spaces had a crucial role in giving to OCT Loft its design and cultural appeal, showing how the planning of the cluster has been led by a cultural purpose since the beginning (Costa, 2013).

Fig.7 Overview of the North Area



Source: Urbanus

4.2.3 Analysis of OCT Loft

With the completion of the upgrading of North Park the success of OCT Loft has grown exponentially. The Creative Cultural Park has been focusing its business on three main areas: exhibitions and cultural related activities, commercial activities and tourism. The main art centers of the Loft are OCAT (F2 in Fig.5) that today is a polyhedral exhibition center, Building A3 (A3 in Figure5), B10 music & art space (B10 in Fig.5) and T street, situated in *wenchang nanjie* 文昌南街 in the North area. This street hosts the “T Street Creative Market”, an open air arts and crafts fair taking place twice a month⁹⁶. Commercial and touristic activities are mostly performed in the South Area, where

⁹⁶ OCT Loft, 艺术地图. http://www.octloft.cn/map_type/activity/

tourists and visitors can find art shops, bars and restaurants. According to a 2015 survey, the respective shares of creative industry enterprises and retail shops were 74% and 15% of 165 establishments in the North Park, while they were 52% and 45% of 56 establishments in the South Park⁹⁷.

The success of Oct Loft can be confirmed not only by the continuously growing annual output performed by its firms, but also looking at the growing number of creatives that want to become part of the creative cluster every year. What makes OCT Loft the most functional and successful post industrialization creativity-led urbanization project in Shenzhen and one of the most acclaimed in China today? The first element to be taken in consideration is the context in which the Cultural Creative Park has been conceived: Shenzhen's economic and urban development happened at a pace that has never been witnessed before in China, and this has implied an even faster opening to innovation and novelty. In addition, the decision of OCT Group to focus on the design element in the development of the Park has been strategic given the situation of fast growth and continuous change the city of Shenzhen was going through at the beginning of the 21st century.

As said previously in this chapter The Oct Group has always put design and creativity in the center of the planning of OCT Loft using these elements as a common thread to keep consistency during the whole development process. Since the final opening in 2011 OCT Loft has grown into a cool destination not only for Shenzhen's creative class but

⁹⁷ Zhou, J., Lei, Y., *The spatial character of cultural and creative industrial park—the case of Shenzhen OCT Loft*, 2015.

also for local consumers and tourists who consider it one of the coolest destination in the city today. Being OCT Group an expert of tourism and entertainment even before OCT Loft was born, they designed the place so that it could be appealing for different targets: the atmosphere of the Loft today, especially in the South Area, is a mix of sophisticated shops and fancy restaurants that perfectly blend with the business aspect of the Loft, creating that “coolness” factor⁹⁸ that is hard to find in other creative clusters in Shenzhen.

The presence of an influent enterprise like OCT Group has been fundamental in making the OCT Loft as successful as it is today: the Group has always controlled the enterprises that became part of the cluster in order to keep a high standard and a consistency in the target that it chose. In addition the enterprise has been successful in managing and controlling the creative class in the Loft and their projects without influencing their creative process: that’s a risk that creative clusters run when managed by a real estate developer, but this strategy has been successful for the Loft so far. Although Common view on the management of creative enterprises goes against this type of approach, management of the OCT Loft has shown that complete freedom of the creatives in a creative enterprise is not going to bring to any positive outcome on the management of the enterprise. Executives at the OCT Group have confirmed that creatives are not always able to manage themselves and their activities, so a control from above is necessary in order for the business to work⁹⁹. According to the strategies of OCT Group complete freedom is not necessarily going to generate creativity, that needs a certain level of control in order to be

⁹⁸ Sonn J. W., Chen K. W., Wang H., Liu X., op.cit.

⁹⁹ Ivi.

effective. That is another of the ingredients that make the OCT Loft a successful business today. It is clear then that choice of target industry and control over selection and monitoring of the enterprises influenced OCT Loft success, but the two elements need to be contextualised considering the environment in which the creative cluster has developed. The design industry has been chosen as a core target because it was expanding fast in Shenzhen and the city needed space for new implementations, but usually urban redevelopment projects are more likely to take place in countries where industries are declining; that is why it might seem more risky to choose a growing industry. In addition, urban regeneration projects usually focus on maximizing profits choosing to implement prestigious firms with big names; that was not the aim of OCT Group when they chose the first tenants to implement in the Loft: at the beginning they wanted to show they were able to successfully deal with this kind of projects and not focus on making profits¹⁰⁰.

Given the elements that led to the successful development of OCT Loft it is not hard to understand why it is a unique example of creativity-led urban development. A project like the Loft could be developed only in cities with similar conditions to Shenzhen, but most culture-led urban regeneration has always been done in deindustrialized cities with advanced economies that have not experienced the same growing path as a city like Shenzhen. In addition in China, like in other growing economies, it is common to give up on short-term goals to focus on

¹⁰⁰ Ivi.

future earnings, which instead could be considered as a wrong strategy for countries with a different type of economy¹⁰¹.

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Conclusions

My work evolves around the analysis of the worldwide phenomenon of the creative city and the impact the adoption of the creative city model is having on urban, social and economic asset of cities today. The thesis starts from a research on the development of the creative city and the related concept of creative class in Western countries and explores the mechanisms that led to the adoption of the same models in China, with a focus on the city of Shenzhen.

The first chapter provides an overview on the origins of the concept of creative city and how it has changed the urban and social asset of cities. I focus on how the concept of creative industry has been defined in Europe and on the factors that enable the creative economy in cities today. The overview has been necessary to lay the foundation for the creativity discourse in China, country that has transformed the concept of creative industry adapting it to its developing economy. Government and policy making both had a crucial role in the transformation of China in a creative economy. The main concern of the country's central government was to establish China as an innovator in the global economy and let go of its label of mass production manufacturer, and the transformation process is still going on today.

It is interesting to notice how the process of adoption of the Western concept of creativity has been influenced by the chinese social and cultural heritage: in the second chapter I focus my attention on the analysis of the translation of concepts such as innovation, culture and creativity and how they have been absorbed by China starting from the global discourse of creativity.

The process of absorption of creativity related concepts by Asian countries is the result of globalization and opening to global markets. This brought to a change of the urban assets of cities, of which Shenzhen provides an unique example. The city has gone through an unprecedented urban development in China that took place at a very fast pace, leading to the transformation from a fishing village to SSEZ and creative hub. Geographical position and historical background have been central in boosting the city's economy and making it the international trade power it is today. In the third chapter I went through the growth process of the city, focusing on the government policies that allowed economic and urban growth from the 80s to the beginning of the 21st century and analysing how these fast changes paved the way for creativity to establish as a driving force in both urban and economic development.

Shenzhen has been the first chinese city to implement a "city based on culture" approach and that made the city a leading creative force of the country. The city has used its position as a global trade force to build a strong creative economy that today is mainly evolving around creative clusters. Urban-led regeneration in China was a way for the country to shift from the idea of manufacturing production as a main driver for the country's economy to a service economy based on innovation. The creative spaces in Shenzhen have become the main expression of how creative industry has changed the spatial and economic asset of the city: together with the objective of becoming "capital of creative design", the city also aimed at redesigning the urban space through creative clustering.

The last section of my research attempts to understand what is happening today in Shenzhen in terms of creativity-led urban development. In order to find answers that could give a complete view of the current state of affairs of urban change in the city I analyzed the main source of urban regeneration in Shenzhen today: its creative clusters. The city has one of the highest concentrations of creative districts in China: only Nanshan district hosts 15 Creative Parks, and other types of creative space are spread throughout the city including creative sectors such as creative design, animation games, digital media, movies and performances, high-end printing, culture software and culture tourism. I provided a brief analysis of the clusters that had the biggest impact on the city's urban and cultural innovation in the last years to underline the willingness of both the Government and private investors to keep investing in the creative sector and also to show how Shenzhen is driving the creativity-led urban regeneration scenario in China today reconfirming itself as one of the most creative centers of the country.

Shekou district has been delivering creative cultural innovation through urban regeneration for a long time, providing both cultural and creativity oriented activities in its two main areas of the Shekou industrial space and Sea World. The latest urban upgrading though is worth underlying and reconfirms the importance of Shekou district as a cultural and creative center: last December the Shenzhen Sea World Culture and Arts Center opened its doors to the public. This is one of the most ambitious projects Shenzhen has ever carried on in the creative industry sector; the big structure that hosts both art exhibitions and a cultural center is also home to the Victoria & Albert Gallery. The

project not only is the British Museum's first international collaboration at a high level but it also represents one of the biggest art projects connecting China, Europe and their cultures today.

ID Town in the new district of Dapeng is a modern urban regeneration project happening in a former dying and printing factory. The creative cluster hosts galleries, art studios and a hostel. The project is young but the future perspectives are ambitious: the cluster is expected to grow with the construction of 18 buildings by 2020.

Dalang Fashion Valley is another project that is shaping the future of urban space in Shenzhen today. The idea behind the creative hub is to cluster all the activities related to the fashion industry in Shenzhen in one area, including design, publishing and media. The district is divided in functional areas and, being surrounded by nature it is also exploiting its geographical position to create an eco-friendly environment with leisure activities to attract tourism. The project is an example of the innovative path Shenzhen is going through with creativity led urban development today.

Becoming a successful city that is able to gather creative capital and talent exploiting them to gain a competitive advantage is the main idea behind the translation of the global discourse of creative city from the West to Asia. The solution for creating an environment that fits creative class and at the same time is able to bring back to life declining areas of the city is creativity-led urban planning, an approach to urban space that has become a trend for many global cities in developing economies. The establishment of creative enterprises and thus the creation of creative clusters is the most efficient way for modern creative cities to reach the above mentioned goals, and the

creation of OCT Loft is the most striking example of how this process is taking shape in China.

This is the reason why I chose to carry out the analysis of this case study: OCT Loft is shaping urban space and economy in Shenzhen with its mix of social, cultural and economic development and the understanding of its dynamics provide the perfect example of the direction creativity led urban development is taking in China today. The analysis I provided focuses first on the urban aspect of the project; I described the processes that led to the creation of the Loft by OCT Group, its renovation from industrial area to creative cluster and the upgrading project. This type of analysis showed how the presence of top-down approach in planning from the OCT Group influenced the development of the creative cluster. The regeneration of the OCT Loft happened in the same period in which the idea of creative industry started to spread in China, but the project carried by OCT Group has reflected from the beginning the idea of exploiting creativity as a urban developer and it was not just a revolutionary act to react to the post industrial era. The cluster was a long term project oriented to a quality development of the space and not to a fast growth with a mere lucrative objective.

The second focus of my study is on the internal structure of the Culture Creative Park, the activities performed there and the interrelations between them. The Loft provides a mix of cultural, social and commercial activities that make it an attractive destination not only for the city's creatives but also for visitors and tourists. Nevertheless the concurrency of all these aspects is not completely balanced as it should happen in a creative cluster. The commercial and touristic aspect

seems to prevail on culture and creativity, and it is not surprising if we think of the involvement of OCT Group in touristic enterprises since its foundation. This stress on the consumistic dimension might seem a contradiction when thinking of the purpose of creative clusters in Western literature; but if we think about the goal to move from “Made in China” to “Created in China” at the base of creative industry development in China a focus on the consumer and the services he can enjoy in the urban space is consistent (Costa, 2013).

The success of the Loft today can be mainly addressed to two factors: first is the choice of design as the core industry of the cluster, that has been strategic since the city of Shenzhen was undergoing major spatial changes at that time and design was the fastest growing industry in the city. Secondly, the strategy of choosing the enterprises to implement in the Loft based on their reputation and on the services performed instead of focusing on earnings has helped shaping a creative cluster with a consistent organization.

Thanks to OCT top-down approach focused on slow and consistent growth more than mere profit oriented strategy OCT Loft became a crucial contributor to the settlement of creative class and change of urban space. The Loft still contributes to city updating in Shenzhen today.

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