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Fashion district in the creative city

Antwerp and its Fashion Hub

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Introduction

In recent years, the urban cultural policies and major projects of cultural investments have been undertaken to rehabilitate the image of many cities and gave birth to processes strongly focused on competitive promotion of these urban areas, in which often the economic and commercial dimension tends to prevail over the cultural aspect.

Large cultural projects are included in plans of urban regeneration in order to redefine the image of the city, build a new identity in which culture, creativity and innovation find a deeper rooting within the flow of economic activities and touristic promotion.

Creative cities are places young people, creatives, artists and professionals of creative industries want to be in, visit and explore, take inspiration, build a network and eventually move their activities.

Their workshops, galleries, restaurants, bars are the “most superficial manifestation of a creative environment” (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999:31) and at the same time the immediate sign of a dynamic and vibrant lifestyle.

Beyond the ‘surface’ of this lifestyle there is the existence of a whole sector of art and creativity which is able to generate employment and outputs in the services of cultural industries (Sassen 1995, Tay 2005). There are policy decision makers, from local or national governments able to get the inputs from the urban environment or international events and answer with initiatives concerned with the distribution of resources between global and local demand (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999).

Moreover, the “creativity” of a certain city is also about how local urban spaces can be rejuvenated, reimagined within a competitive global framework (Abbas 200).

But what is the significance of the term ‘creativity’ we put under the lens of a research about its implication in a place so concrete as the urban tissue of a city?

In the past it was associated with the work of intellectuals, philosophers, artists and musicians but when contextualized in the modern society, it becomes clear it’s not limited only to this definition.

In a fast paced and globalized world, as it is our today, where the new technologies have contributed to the creation of an “information society” John Howkins argues that thinking about an “information society” is no longer enough. He suggested that in the information society “we need information. But we also need to be active, clever, and persistent in challenging this information. We need to be original, sceptical, argumentative, often bloody-minded and occasionally downright negative – in one word, creative”. (Howkins 2005).

This work starts from a first overview of the concept of creative industries, it will be researched the relation of these industries with the urban environment and the public policies. In the specific, the creative industry of fashion design will be related to the city of Antwerp urban environment and the process of branding it as a “fashion city”.

After an outline of Antwerp fashion design history and evolution, will be highlighted the role of the principal private and public institution, from the 80s ITCB to the recent activity of FFI, in the process of capitalization and incorporation of this specific creative industry in the public agenda.

The third part will be focused on the analysis of the “fashionable quarter” as an urban area involved in strong transformations and at the same time full of cultural components, where are present all the various stages of the fashionable goods production chain: production, distribution, consumption, communication and the related services of cultural distribution.

The people working in the Antwerp fashion system don't act only as producers but also as consumers of its services, from boutiques to book shops, from art galleries and photography ateliers to restaurants and cafes, making the system a complex articulation of elements.

The changing use of existing buildings and the transformation of the urban outlook follows the aesthetic demand and new urban tastes shape a completely new form of cultural production.

Studying the Antwerp fashion quarter taking in consideration these elements meant trying to capture its symbolic and economic strengths, its territorial and entrepreneurial resources, and its lifestyles.

The methodology used for this work , especially for what concerns the first part, was based on the study of the sector literature, while for the Antwerp case have been taken in analysis precedent studies, later supported by new considerations.

Moreover, the opportunity to have an experience of living and working in the real core of the fashion headquarter, at the MoMu museum has been an invaluable opportunity to live the spirit of the fashion quarter from the inside and meet the real protagonist of this creative hub.

1.Creative Industries and the Creative Ecosystem

The leading role of Creativity has emerged as an essential resource to be competitive in the global world. In recent years, creativity together with innovation and knowledge are differentiation factors that influence ideas, products, services and paces leading to competitive advantage in all field of economy.

The Economy of Culture in Europe report emanate by the European Commission in 2006 states that *“Creativity is a complex process of innovation, combining some or all of the following dimensions: ideas, skills, technology, management, production process as well as culture. Creativity has the ability to benefit almost all economic sectors”*. (European Commission 2006)

The concept of Creative Ecosystem elaborated by the Portuguese think tank on spatial development INTELI it is very helpful. The creative ecosystem is an environment of excellence focused on creativity. It combines **Creative People** (creative class and entrepreneurs), **Creative Economy** (creative industries and clusters) and **Creative Places** (creative districts and cities). It is supported by specific **Creative Policies** (European, national, regional and local strategies) towards sustainable creative frameworks.

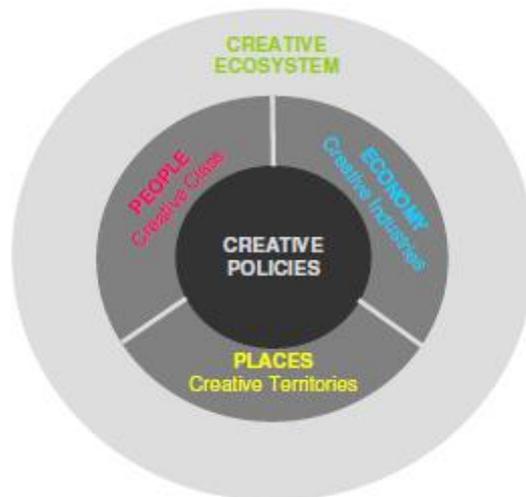


Figure 1.1. The Creative Ecosystem. Source Inteli 2008

The work in this chapter will mainly move through this model to better understand the different elements of the ecosystem, outlining the most important development in national and regional realities in Europe, and the main literature contributions to the elements system.

1.1. Definition of Creative Industries

Coined in the 1940s by members of the Frankfurt School, the culture industry indicated the apparatus that, thanks to mass communications, was able to produce, by assembly line processes, a virtually inexhaustible, stereotypical set of words, images, and sounds (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947).

It was a machine aimed at benumbing consciousness and exploiting a passive mass of workers in their free time through entertainment, making them consume standardized and noncritical cultural products sold by an inferior aesthetic appeal.

Today, though the mechanisms of mass culture production have become increasingly powerful, they coexist with smaller communication enterprises. Large networks may be linked to smaller ones and, sometimes, sudden changes in power and size may occur. Standardized entertainment is not the only kind available, and it is inextricably intertwining with less standardized elements.

The first clear attempt of planned capitalization and definition of Creative Industries by a government can be found in the decision in 1997 of the British Labour government, headed by Tony Blair, to establish a Creative Industries Task Force (CITF), as a central activity for the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS).

The role of the Task Force was to investigate and map those sectors considered to be part of the UK creative industries, measuring their contribution to Britain's economic performance and identifying policies decisions to embrace for their further development.

The creative Industry Mapping Document, produced by the UK DCMS in 1998, identified the creative industries as a growing sector in UK economy, with an employability of 1.4 million people and generating an estimated £60 billion a year in economic value added, or about the 5 per cent of total UK national income (DCMS 1998). In some cities of Britain, such as London, the contribution of creative industries was even greater and every five new jobs created one was directly or indirectly related to creativity.

The UK Creative Industries Mapping Document defined the creative industries as "those activities which have their origins in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have their potential for wealth and jobs creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS, 1998).

The same document identified 13 main sectors as constituting the creative industries:

Table 1.1. DCMS’s 13 Creative Industries Sectors in the UK

Advertising	Interactive Leisure software (electronic game)
Architecture	Music
Arts and antique Markets	Performing arts
Crafts	Publishing
Design	Software and computer services
Designer Fashion	Television and radio
Film and Video	

Source: DCMS, 1998

The theme of creative industries playing a vital role for Britain’s economic future has been strongly sponsored both for Tony Blair and from 2007, Gordon Brown mandates.

Chris Smith, the Minister of Culture and Heritage, in launching the second DCMS Mapping Document in 2001, underlined again the importance of Creative Industries, saying that these Industries have moved “from the fringes to the mainstream” (DCMS, 2001). Their work continued in developing the sector and led to the development of related policies in areas such as education, regional policy, entrepreneurship and trade.

When we refer to these episodes of the British Governments of ’90 it is necessary to focus on the political importance of these decisions and the bigger designed project which moved and sustained them. The Blair government took the opportunity to reorganize policy institutions and, in the specific case the Department of National Heritage was renamed Department of Culture, Media and Sport, bringing the art, broadcast media and sport together with one administrative domain. The decision to bring together the art with media is seen by various experts as a clear move towards more integrated approaches to European and international cultural policies. Then, the second more significant change in this convergence of two sectors was the engagement with digital technologies to strengthen and boost the cultural and creative British capital with the opportunities offered by the new engines of the economic growth. (Flew, 2012).

Finally it was given to creative and cultural economies the right importance for the economic growth and, highlighting the importance of this sector for job creation, cultural policies finally had the same importance of economic policies in the Government’s agenda.

From a political point of view, “creative industries” was itself a successful British export, and, as underlined by Wang (2008) a successful marketing exercise.

But how in practice, the British Government quantified and determined the economic value of creative industries? Early documents, as the Creative Industries Economic Estimate for 2004 can be seen in Table 1.2. provided a map of Creative Industries still at a cognitive level, with again the list of the 13 main sectors, the contribution to UK national income (Gross Value Added – GVA), their average annual rate of growth, their contribution to exports, and the number of people employed in these industries. This categorization draws together industries that are very different from one to each other: highly capital-intensive as film, radio and television or highly labour-intensive as crafts, antiques, fashion and music, and combines sectors driven by commercial imperative with others less influenced by the business cycle.

Critics to this model, such as Hesmondhalgh (2007) questioned why sectors such as heritage, tourism and sport were excluded from the list. Considering that a lot has been done in the past to include the Sport to the Department, it is more surprising not to see included what has been named GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector in these original policy documents especially because of the clear economic value of Britain’s cultural institutions as British Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, Tate Modern, British Library etc.

Table 1.2 Economic Contribution of UK Creative Industries, 2004

Industry	Contribution to UK GVA (%)	Annual rate of growth 1997-2004 (%)	Value of exports (£ million)	Number of people employed
Advertising	0.7	3	1,100	223,400
Architecture	0.5	2	570	108,200
Art and antiques	0.06	7	2,200	22,900
Crafts	n/a	n/a	n/a	95,500
Design	0.5	n/a	550	n/a
Designer fashion	0.05	2	n/a	115,500
Video, film and photography	0.3	0	940	63,800
Music and the visual, performing arts	0.5	2	150	236,300
Publishing	1.2	2	1,500	253,300

Software, computer games and electronic publishing	2.7	9	4,700	596,800
Radio and television	0.9	8	1,300	108,700
Total	7.3	5% average	13,000	1,824,400

Source: DCMS,2007.

Having considered the limits of the early list-based approach to Creative Industries, two other report has been developed by UK policy makers to provide an alternative interpretation and map of these industries. The first was “*Creating Growth: how the UK Can Develop World Class Creative Business*” developed by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) in 2006 and the second was a report prepared by the 2007 report prepared by The Work Foundation, “*Staying Ahead: the economic Performance of the UK’s Creative Industries*” (Work Foundation, 2007). Both attempted to develop a more logical and articulated approach for the comprehension of these sectors.

NESTA approach distinguished the sectors in four macro areas (Figure 1.2):

1.Creative Service providers, who are professionals who deliver services to other businesses and organizations, such as advertising agencies, design and architecture studios, PR and Marketing agencies.

2.Creative Content providers, who produce IP protected outputs which are distributed to consumer/audiences. These creative content enterprises include film, television, and theatre production companies, computer and videogames development studios, music labels, book and magazine publishers and fashion designers.

3.Creative Experiences Providers, who sell the right to consumers to experience specific temporary activities as exhibitions, theatre performances or locations in a specific time and place. These providers are cultural institutions, tourist promotions, festivals, cinemas, opera and dance production companies.

4.Creative Originals Producers, who are involved in the creation, manufacture or sale of physical artefacts, whose value is given by the perception of cultural and creative authenticity, uniqueness, most of the time produced in limited production. To this category can be addressed designer-makers, visual artists and crafts.

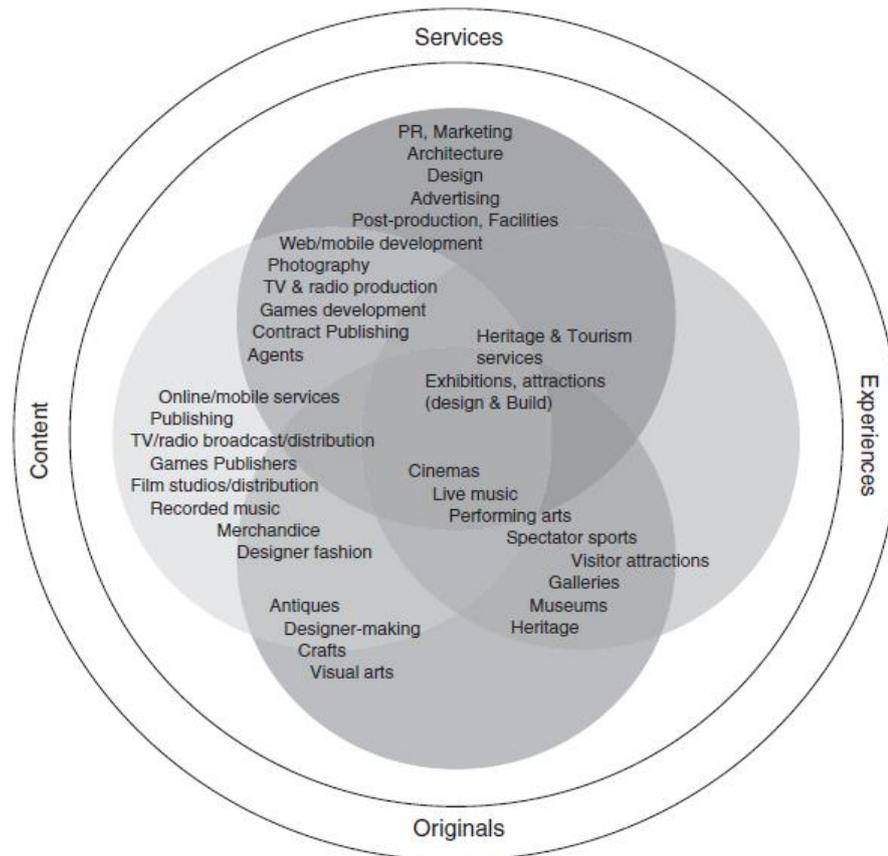


Figure 1.2. NESTA model of Creative Sectors

Source: NESTA, 2006:55

It was argued that this model gave more relevance to the growth and profitability deriving from content providers and creative service providers activities, it highlighted the importance of Internet in opening new platforms and channels for global distribution and being a tool for employment growth. Creative service providing sectors, increases in client demand meet the growing supply of staff and services, especially for what concerns IP and IT services. For all these reasons NESTA proposed a model of creative industries which “better reflects the perspective of private investors” (NESTA, 2006: 55).

The Work Foundation report “*Staying Ahead: The Economic Performance of the UK’s Creative Industries* (Work Foundation, 2007) produced what is known as the concentric circles model of the creative industries. From a central core of creative fields where the commercial outputs possess a high degree of expressive value and copyright protection it irradiates to Cultural Industries where the activities involve a mass reproduction of expressive outputs, then the Creative industries and activities, whose performances are based on the expressive value of the previous one. The outer circle is represents the rest of the Economy whose manufacturing and service sectors benefit and exploit the expressive outputs generated by the creative industries. (Figure 1.3)

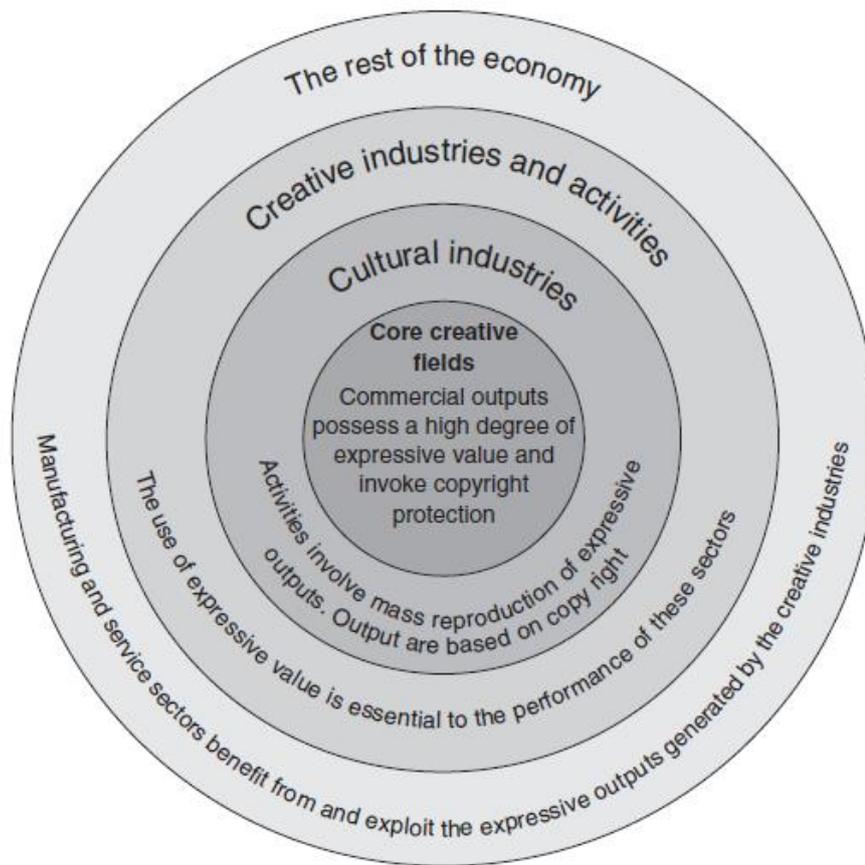


Figure 1.3. The Work Foundation “Concentric Circles” Model

Source: Work Foundation, 2007: 103

Expressive value is defined as “every dimension (in the realm of ideas) which, in its broader sense, enlarges cultural meaning and understanding” (Work Foundation, 2007: 96) The origin of the term can be referred to the work of David Throsby (2001) who defined it as a mix of different elements, such as the aesthetic value, symbolic value, social and historical value and is used to differentiate sectors of industries on the basis of the use they make of this expressive value. An important distinction in the Work Foundation report is made between Cultural Industries such as film, music, video games, performing arts, and Creative Industries as advertisement, design, fashion, computer software. This distinction can be considered as a turning point in the field of cultural policy, first because identifies in the core of the creative field a high concentration of expressive value involved at the moment of creation of artistic products, then gives a more specific identity to the activities and services produced by the so-called Creative Industries, which involve the more functional and business related aspect of creative production. At the external circle of the model we find the rest of the economy which benefits and exploits the outputs of the previous ones.

As notably pointed out by Flew (Flew 2012: 27) “While this distinction has been used in policy documents elsewhere, it is a difficult distinction to maintain, and the concept of expressive value itself does little to clarify the distinction”, and is still far from giving a definite conclusion to the issue of defining Cultural Industries and filling in the gap between the governmental policies tools and the real economy of these faster growing and changing sectors.

1.1.2. The United Nation Perspective

The United Nation has been playing an important role in the creative industries policy development at an international level, specifically through the activity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nation Commission on Trade, Aid and Development (UNCTAD). Since 1970s UNESCO linked culture to development, especially for what concerns the strengthening of culture in developing countries and in recent years it promoted the principles of cultural diversity and its preservation with the Convention on Cultural Diversity. The Convention provides legal instruments for signatory states to take measures to protect and improve the specificities of their culture and both material and immaterial heritage. (UNESCO, 2005).

In 2009 was published by UNESCO the update of the Framework for Cultural Statistics (UNESCO, 2009). The aim of the update, after the first edition in 1986, was to ‘enable the measurement of a wide range of cultural expressions irrespective of the particular economic and social mode of its production’, and to ‘allow the production of internationally comparable data’ (UNESCO, 2009: 9). The update of the Framework since 1986 include the growing importance of culture for the economic and social development, the advancement of digital technologies used in this sector, the impact of globalization and the growth in international cultural trade and the need of a more precise mapping of the cultural sectors. For what concerns the nomenclature, UNESCO refers to cultural industries to indicate both cultural and creative production activities and defines them ‘industries which combine the creation, production and commercialization of creative contents which are intangible and cultural in nature’, they include ‘printing, publishing and multimedia, audiovisual, phonographic and cinematographic productions as well as crafts and design’ (UNESCO, 2006). The creative industries included in the previous ones are ‘those [industries] in which the product or service contains a substantial element of artistic or creative endeavor and include activities such as architecture and advertising’ (UNESCO, 2006).

While UNESCO has been more involved in matters of development, access and inequality in cultural sectors, UNCTAD has been more concerned with the role of creativity as a way to foster economic growth in developing countries.

As emerged from the High-Level Panel on Creative Industries, organized by UNESCO in São Paulo, Brazil in 2004 ‘Creative Cultural assets and rich cultural resources found in abundance in all developing countries , based on inexhaustible human creativity and intangible assets, could be transformed into economic value and a source of economic development through the formation of coherent and integrated sectoral policies that include a rapprochement between culture and trade policies. The age of globalization offers new opportunities for developing countries in this area while at the same time containing potential threats to cultural diversity and creativity...a balance [has to be] sought between achieving national cultural objectives and achieving international trade policy objectives’. (UNCTAD, 2004).

For the definition of cultural industries UNCTAD avoided a distinction between the core cultural industries and others activities related to culture and creativity and identifies nine main domains that operate in the sectors of heritage, arts, media and functional creations, as can be seen in figure_ .

The definition of the term creative industries is identified in:

- The cycle of creation, production and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs;
- A set of knowledge-based activities, focused on but not limited to the arts, potentially generating revenues form trade and intellectual property rights;
- Tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value and market objectives;
- At the cross-roads among artisan, services and industrial sectors;
- Comprising a new dynamic sector in world trade (UNCTAD, 2008:13).

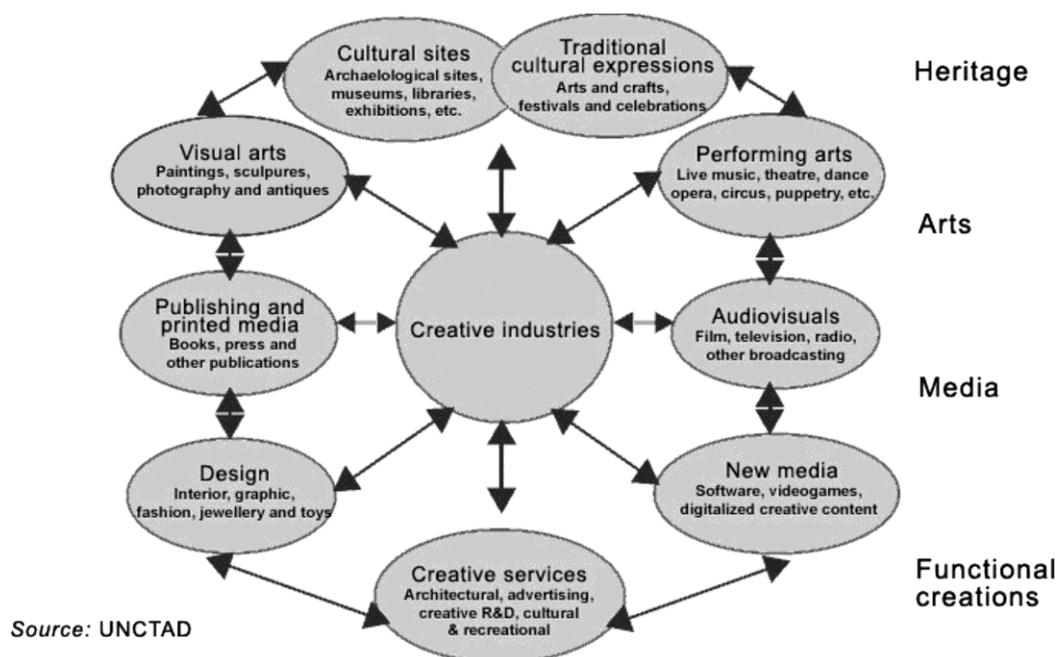


Figure 1.3: Classification of Creative Industries

UNCTAD (2008) Creative Economy Report - The Challenging of Assessing the Creative Economy: towards Informed Policy-making

As creativity, innovation and knowledge are becoming the main drivers of economic development of cities and regions, a new creative economy is emerging: “In the contemporary world, a new development paradigm is emerging that links the economy and culture, embracing economic, cultural, technological and social aspects of development at both the macro and micro level. Central to the new paradigm is the fact that creativity, knowledge and access to information are increasingly recognized as powerful engines driving economic growth and promoting development in a globalizing world.” [UNCTAD, 2008].

1.2. Creative Industries in Europe

Since its foundation after the II World War, culture has been seen as a key element for European Union's identity and international diplomacy, being considered as 'an "ambassador" for European values (tolerance, democracy, diversity and pluralism, etc.) and its "way of life" (KEA, 2006:29).

The project of keeping alive the cultural identities and differences of the various countries, to quote the motto "United in diversity", has successfully been applied at the level of international law, for what concerns the trades of cultural goods, with the principles of General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) and the strong support to the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.

In 2006 the European Parliament asked the European Commission to 'clarify what constitutes the European vision of culture, creativity and innovation and to elaborate political measures...in order to develop European creative industries, incorporating these in a genuine European strategy for culture' (European Commission, 2010:4). It is clear in this call the desire of identification and definition of creative industries in Europe and the need of pragmatic strategies towards creativity.

The Economy of Culture in Europe was the study developed by KEA European Affairs in the same year stated that in 2003 cultural and creative sectors contributed with the 2.6 to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the European Union (KEA, 2006). According to this study there was an increase of 8.1 per cent of the sector between 1999 and 2003, which was 12.3 per cent higher than that of the whole European economies. It was observed that 4.7 million people were employed in these sectors, which was the 2.5 per cent of the whole European workforce, with an 1.17 million working in cultural tourism. KEA analysis highlights the contribution of cultural and creative sectors to GDP for each European country, with the largest contribute in France with a 3.4%, than Norway with 3.2%, Denmark 3.1%, Finland 3.1%, the UK 3% and then the Netherlands 2.7% and Germany 2.5% which indicates a correlation between the size of the national economy of each country and the contribution of cultural and creative sectors. Moreover it was noticed that the fastest rates of growth were in the newest members of European Union, especially those of the former Soviet Bloc of Eastern Europe, which have experienced a high growth between 1999 and 2003 of 67.8% in Lithuania, 56% in Czech Republic and 29% in Romania.

For the development of the study on the economy of culture in Europe, KEA took as a model to better understand the sector the 'concentric circle model' created by Throsby (2001) and the Work Foundation (2007), and described in the first paragraph.

CIRCLES	SECTORS	SUB- SECTORS	CHARACTERISTICS
CORE ARTS FIELD	Visual arts	Crafts Paintings – Sculpture – Photography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non industrial activities. • Output are prototypes and “potentially copyrighted works” (i.e. these works have a high density of creation that would be eligible to copyright but they are however not systematically copyrighted, as it is the case for most craft works, some performing arts productions and visual arts, etc).
	Performing arts	Theatre - Dance – Circus - Festivals.	
	Heritage	Museums – Libraries - Archaeological sites - Archives.	
CIRCLE 1: CULTURAL INDUSTRIES	Film and Video		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial activities aimed at massive reproduction. • Outputs are based on copyright.
	Television and radio		
	Video games		
	Music	Recorded music market – Live music performances – revenues of collecting societies in the music sector	
	Books and press	Book publishing - Magazine and press publishing	
CIRCLE 2: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND ACTIVITIES	Design	Fashion design, graphic design, interior design, product design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities are not necessarily industrial, and may be prototypes. • Although outputs are based on copyright, they may include other intellectual property inputs (trademark for instance). • The use of creativity (creative skills and creative people originating in the arts field and in the field of cultural industries) is essential to the performances of these non cultural sectors.
	Architecture		
	Advertising		
CIRCLE 3: RELATED INDUSTRIES	PC manufacturers, MP3 player manufacturers, mobile industry, etc...		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This category is loose and impossible to circumscribe on the basis of clear criteria. It involves many other economic sectors that are dependent on the previous “circles”, such as the ICT sector.

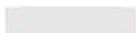
 : “the cultural sector”
 : “the creative sector”

Table 1.3. European Union Model of Cultural and Creative Industries.

Source: KEA, 2006.

This model distinguishes between a Core Arts Field, whose outputs are like prototypes, with a high potential of copyright works and not related to industrial activities. This core field is divided into three main sectors: Visual Arts, Performing Arts and Heritage.

Then we find the first circle which identifies the industries whose outputs are exclusively cultural, still based on copyrights but opened to industrial activities and aimed at massive reproduction. This circle is divided into five sectors: Film and Video, Television and radio, Video Games, Music and Book and Press.

The second circle is the one of Creative Industries and Activities such as Design, Architecture and Advertising. In this case the activities are not necessarily industrial, and may be prototypes, their outputs are based on copyrights or other intellectual property inputs and are characterized by an high involvement of creativity. Finally, the third circle is the one of the industries related to the previous ones and involves sectors such as Information Technologies, PC manufactures, mobile industry, etc.

The same model, developed by Throsby (2001, 2008b) and the Work Foundation (2007), has been also used for a more recent paper developed by the European Commission in 2010, the Green Paper on “Unlocking the Potential of the Cultural and Creative Industries”. In the introduction and description of the objectives and scope of the work, the Commission gives the definition and distinction of Creative and Cultural Industries:

“Cultural industries” are those industries producing and distributing goods or services which at the time they are developed are considered to have a specific attribute, use or purpose which embodies or conveys cultural expressions, irrespective of the commercial value they may have. Besides the traditional arts sectors (performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage – including the public sector), they include film, DVD and video, television and radio, video games, new media, music, books and press.” This concept is related to the definition and context of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. (European Commission 2010). “Creative industries”, on the other hand, ‘are those industries which use culture as an input and have a cultural dimension, although their outputs are mainly functional. They include architecture and design, which integrate creative elements into wider processes, as well as subsectors such as graphic design, fashion design or advertising’.

At a peripheral level the Commission include what the KEA work defines “Related industries”, all those industries which ‘rely on content production for their own development and are therefore to some extent interdependent with CCIs. They include among others tourism and the new technologies sector’ (European Commission 2010).

Another interesting aspect confirmed by KEA study was the increasing rate of employment in the European creative economy, with a high level of self-employment, part-time jobs, people with more than one job and usually with university-level education (KEA:73).

This trend is confirmed by the MKW study commissioned for the European Union in 2001 which estimates that the annual employment growth in cultural occupation from 1995 to 1999 was 4.8 per cent, four times the rate of average EU employment growth (MKW, 2001:87). It was estimated that the 4.6 per cent of the European workforce was employed in cultural sectors in 1999, with the fastest rates of growth in Northern European countries such as Finland, Denmark and Sweden. Nonetheless the characteristics of the employment of this sector could be seen as a paradigm of a big change in European labor market, considering the rate of self-employment of cultural workers at the 40.4%, three times the average of European self-employment (14.4%), the average of cultural workers with a high-level education (47.2%), more than the double of European workforce as a whole (22.5%) and the high percentage of temporarily and contract jobs (MKW, 2001:85-89). European economy has experienced, since the 1970s, a decline in traditional manufacturing industries, which was also the principal foundation of its economy. Due to the re-location of production in developing countries, the formation of a global production network and the de-industrialization of certain cities, regions and nations some the whole continent has experienced a major decline of employment and contraction of economic growth.

On the other hand the evidences emerged from KEA and MKW reports highlighted a sort of shift to a tertiary and more immaterial kind of economy, confirmed by the rising employment in alternative sectors such as cultural and creative industries and let Europe be an interesting foreground for understanding the development of these industries and the policies debates surrounding them.

1.3. Creative Industries in cities spatial development. The Concept of Creative Cluster.

As we have seen a growing interest in governmental policies for the concept of Creative Industries, it is interesting to focus on the real potential of these sectors applied in the urban context and the opportunities that creativity can open for the urban development of cities.

One of the ways this creativity can find its arena has been identified in recent literature of cultural economics in the idea of Creative Cluster.

The first appearance of Cluster concept can be brought back up to Alfred Marshall who identified positive externalities occurring from the co-location of firms and workers in related businesses and drew attention to the geographical dimension of industrial specialization. This specialization was used to explain the ongoing growth of particular regions which developed economic dynamism based on a specific industrial specialization at the expense of other regions. Although other economists elsewhere analyzed the concept of cluster applied to the geographical growth of nations or regions, is with the work of Michael Porter from Harvard Business University during 90's that the concept has been promoted to encourage the regeneration of deprived areas of cities (Porter, 2005).

Porter defined Clusters as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field” and identified three origins of competitive advantage arising from the location within a particular cluster:

1. Production supported by specialized knowledge, skilled labor and specialist inputs developed in a complementary relationship among firms and industries, moreover the role played by universities and training institutions supports this knowledge transfer.
2. Innovation opportunities, deriving from proximity to buyers and suppliers, interaction with others in the business and the challenging pressure to innovate in context where cost factors facing competitors are broadly similar.
3. Emergence of new businesses, helped by a better access to information about opportunities, a better accessibility of resources required by business start-ups (e.g. venture capitalists, skilled workforce) and less barriers to exit from previous businesses.

Apart from all the interconnections between firms involved in the production process (companies or industries related by skills, technologies, common inputs, etc.) he adds ‘many clusters include governmental and other institutions – such as universities, standard setting agencies, think-thanks, vocational training providers, and training associations- that provide specialized training, education, information, research and technical support.’ (Porter, 1998: 78).

Considering the global dimension of contemporary economy, Porter stressed that competition between companies is far more dynamic than the past, while principal problems used to be input costs or the supply for cheap labor, now these companies can mitigate disadvantages through global sourcing, letting the old notion of comparative advantage less important.

On the other hand, competitive advantage gains more importance in how firms make more productive their use of inputs, which requires a higher investment in innovation, and as Porter defines it the “paradox of global economy”, this competitive advantage must be found *outside* companies better than *inside*. Cluster identifies the vital role played by business environment outside companies and some world known cases as the entertainment in Hollywood, finance on Wall Street or consumer electronics in Japan are the examples that competitive advantage is geographically concentrated.

In particular, his theory focused on positive externalities originated by location within a cluster, such as spillover benefits of being in particular locations and the presence of related and supporting industries.

Porter’s theory was extremely ahead of times, especially for what concerns the geographic economic dynamism nowadays, and is still used as a point of reference for contemporary studies on this subject, but at the same time it still presents some limits. As properly highlighted by Jinna Tay in her “Creative Cities” an issue not resolved by Porter’s work is the relationship between creativity and innovation in the development of economic dynamism of cities and regions. (Tay, 2009: 224). Therefore, is there a connection between the cultural vibrancy of cities and regions and their economic dynamism? And what are the best ways for governments to combine industrial and cultural development?

A possible answer to this issue can be found in the concept of city Networks and how the government policies can meet this “net” to help its natural dynamism, but the solution of the problem is far from being solved.

As argued by Terry Flew in his latest work on Creative Industries “The motivation behind creative cluster development have been many and varied, and the mix of policy rationales has generated some recurring tensions. One is that clusters are often easier to describe and observe than to draw from in order to provide a policy formula for their development” and “A further issue is that it is unlikely that a whole city would constitute the basis for an industry cluster”(Flew, 2012: 148).

So it seems that the best model for a creative cities is to identify a specific area or district and develop a specialist cultural quarter.

As defined by Simon Roodhouse a cultural quarter is ‘a geographical area of a large town or city which acts as a focus for cultural and artistic activities through the presence of a group of buildings

devoted to housing a range of such activities, and purpose designed or adapted spaces to create a sense of identity, providing an environment to facilitate and encourage the provision of cultural and artistic services and activities' (Roodhouse, 2006:22).

Hans Mommaas reviewing a map of creative clusters in the Netherlands identified five main motivations for city policies actions to promote creative clusters development, which collect all the positive aspects pointed out by the recent literature in the field:

1. To promote the brand identity and attract investors and professionals, thanks to the co-location in the same geographical area. To quote Porter's theory, a way to empower the market attractiveness of a place for its position.
2. To stimulate a less subsidy-dependent approach to the sustainability of cultural organizations and a more entrepreneurial approach to art and culture.
3. To sustain cultural democracy and diversity to create alternative circuits out of the art establishment.
4. To foster strategies to support the creation of micro-businesses and start-ups in the creative industries.
5. To find a new use for empty and old buildings or industrial disused areas as creative work spaces and cultural centres.

Although Mommaas analysis gives to the creative cluster the identity of a 'fuzzy concept' (Mommaas 2009:52) and highlights all the positive benefits coming from the idea of the cultural cluster, there are still many ambiguities around the term itself, its definition and identification and especially the ability of urban city planners to recognize its potentiality and put them into practice.

Cultural cluster oriented city policies can give a more central role to culture in urban development strategies and give recognition to consumption activities, lifestyle and entertainment when it comes to urban planning and destination of new areas. Moreover, the foundation of new cultural infrastructures can be an attractor for tourism, further investments and can contribute to the renovation of cities' image.

On the other hand, as identified by Bassett et al.(2005), creative cluster policies can present also various problems of uncertain distinction between art and cultural sectors and the others more orientated towards leisure and entertainment activities or business services, this problem can also be found at the base of UK government definition of Cultural and Creative Industries, as can be seen in early DCMS deliverables.

An inner contradiction in policy agendas can arise between economic development and issues of social inclusion, especially in cases of urban renewal, where is often hidden the interest of private and real estate investors and the risk of gentrification of entire areas.

Probably the first contradiction relies on the concept of cluster itself, we can distinguish between a “horizontal cluster”, where a number of firms in the same industry have co-located in a certain area to reduce the overall costs, as the wine industry in Northern California, and “vertical clusters”, where the business system is created by a value chain of buyer and suppliers connected by social and knowledge networks which turn out to be critical for location decisions, such as the ICT/electronic hub of Silicon Valley.

These two different kind of location decisions are an evidence of how Porter’s theory of agglomeration is not the only possibility of clustering.

The history of clustering policies during the 2000s has confirmed that there is a high grade of success in the development of clusters inside or around global cities as New York, Paris or London because of the larger amount of well paid professionals, services, infrastructure and large-scale urban agglomeration already available.

It was also observed that a cultural pre-existing background is most of the time a fertile ground for a successful cluster development, while a ‘top down’ approach based on a direct action of planning by an authority or private investor is most likely to fail, especially in cities lacking of a real, strong artistic and cultural base. (Scott, 2008)

Through Mommaas’s work on cultural clusters we can observe that more likely a consumption-oriented planned cluster presents a ‘top down’ governance structure, as compared to ‘more production-oriented clusters tending towards a higher input from the historically formed cultural infrastructure itself’(Mommaas, 2004) this has come to be termed as ‘bottom up’ governance structure.

1.3.1. The Branding Strategies

The moment a cluster is created, either from a ‘top down’ governance structure or by an autonomous ‘bottom up’ approach, can be named or identified in a certain area of a city or region if the public or, in the process of place branding, the ‘customers’ recognizes it.

Place-branding is the process of applying the branding process, in the same way it is applied to commercial products, to geographical locations and is a developing activity within advertising and marketing (Olins, 1999). In the recent years there has been a growing interest for this topic and a big number of major publications has been edited about this issue, moreover there has been an increase in the flourishing of place-identity specialists and most of the cities, especially from emerging countries had consultancy from place-identity marketing specialists. The growing interest and importance through urban branding strategies is partly supported by the idea that competitiveness doesn’t rely anymore only on material conditions, like natural resources or built infrastructure but the competitiveness between regions and cities is a consequence of intangible factors as the ability to attract and retain talented and creative labour and to provide interactive milieus where new ideas can grow, etc.

Despite the multidisciplinary and complex process of city branding both public and private actors have in recent years been busy branding cities and creating new images for them.

The ways the process is put into practice are various and much different one from each other, but in general is possible to distinguish between strategies which tend to either focus on material aspects of the place, as its built environment and infrastructure, or immaterial aspects of the place: slogan, identity, traditions, language, etc.

The research conducted by Johan Jansson and Dominic Power on city and regional branding in the Nordic City Region identified three main strategic areas in which actors have tried to establish a change aimed at creating new city images and brands. These strategies are based both on the material and immaterial character of the project. The three categories are: 1) Branding through signature buildings, events, flagship projects etc; 2) Branding through planning strategies, urban redevelopment, institutional and infrastructural support; 3) Branding through advertising, myths, slogans, logos etc. (Jansson, Power, 2006).

The three categories don’t have to be looked separately, but the branding strategy is more frequently a combination of the three applied in an interrelated process.

The first category is based on advertising a city through spectacular buildings or events and these signature works at different levels (on a local, national or international level).

Often the work of planners and city authorities has been concerned with renovating the built and infrastructural environment of their areas. The built environment has often been used as the symbol or image to promote a city or a region. For this reason public initiatives to relaunch the image of certain part of the cities have often involved the restoration and manipulation of the built environment. Emblematic buildings have the power of symbolic tangible value and a marketing and advertising approach to them has been proven by history as an example of attractiveness success.

The symbolic power of building has been used in the past by monarchs, churches, governments and business companies to capture the attention, to attract tourists or to become a magnet for investments and either by accident or designed on purpose, started to be 'the most powerful symbol of what the place stands for' (Jansson, Power, 2006: 27).

Sports events like the Olympic Games with the upgrading of city infrastructure and the building of Olympic villages and arenas (Barcelona) or since the 1851 World "Expo" Fairs (London with the Crystal Palace) had caused enormous attention on the cities where the events were hold and for those occasions was given birth to architectural project which are still part of the skyline of our cities nowadays.

Buildings such as the Eiffel Tower and the Great Pyramids are an intrinsic part of the idea we think and interpret their home countries/cities. Moreover it quite common in order to place the city in our mind or other people memories to recall to their symbolic buildings.

Considered all these reasons the architecture plays a vital role in urban regeneration and it turned to be a form of advertising among policy-makers and urban developers.

A successful example of signature building which has helped to give a new image to a city is Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. The Basque city, after the investment from the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation from a run-down industrial city turned to be an international renown cultural center.

Although the Bilbao case can be interpreted as a direct consequence of Guggenheim, what has started to be called the 'Bilbao effect' became extremely appealing for other municipalities and policy-makers. However, especially in the recent years, the idea of the iconic or signature building have been strongly criticized especially for the difficult aim of creating a real iconic building in a period when every big city has one, but probably the most relevant critique which can be pointed out is the characteristic of the iconic building itself, which most of the times is isolated from the city context, like a 'cultural monad' doesn't refer to the cultural and historical background of the place where it is designed for.

The alternative to the symbolic building is the flagship project which involves a more diffused area of a city or, most of the time, a peripheral area. The activities involved are often based on local

historical heritage or artistic resources and some examples can be found in the promotion of tourism in several old British industrial cities, the Liverpool case is symptomatic of this kind of policies: the investment on its Pop music tradition, being the city of Beatles and the opening of a branch of the Tate Modern has an organic project to rebuild the city international weak reputation.

Other ways of 'city advertisement' which go beyond iconic buildings are also high profile or important event repeatedly happening in a city agenda: music festivals, art events as the Biennale of Venice and Frieze Art Fair in London or the Paris Fashion Week.

Together with the 'Bilbao effect' another counter-indication of flagship projects is what Alan Bryman called the 'Disneyization' of urban landscape (Bryman 2004) which is the term used to express the homogenization of the urban space in the same way the Walt Disney Company theme parks are conceived, where every project usually contains the same ingredients as a sort of shopping mall for bohemians and culturally interested people.

The second category alludes to the possibility to use projects of requalification of certain areas of cities or planned transformations of the city itself as urban branding strategies. We have constantly big examples of depressed areas of the cities which are turned to be virtuous examples of requalification or formerly industrial cities which are actively working on changing its structure to force the demands of a new cultural or knowledge intensive economy.

These types of transformation plans usually link more areas of urban, social, infrastructural development in order to re-imagine the city or the region and include it in an integrated platform which gives a new image, brand and reputation to the area.

In this specific case is required a particular ability to read the territory, to organize both physical and image renewal and to coordinate a wide range of interests coming both from the public and the private sector.

In the creation of these kind of cluster the focus can be on a certain subject, such as the technopoles, science parks or can have the aim for the requalification of urban declining areas, docklands and outskirts and use this redeveloped areas as virtuous symbols of a changing urban tissue.

The regeneration issue becomes both a tool for changing the social and economic structure of a certain area or the entire city and at the same time, builds an entire new expression of the city's future and direction.

Moreover, in the last ten years has been registered a regionalism trend in planning and territorial policy which involves as key policy goal the cooperation in a wider regional setting, especially for smaller administrative units and local actors this trend is seen as way to connect them to a broader ecosystem and recast them in a larger regional identity. At the same time, it appears crucial for the local actors to possess the organizational tools and model to handle such a complex environment

which sees at the same time involved various governmental bodies, political decisions, private interests such as business companies, landowners and building companies, and public interests of the inhabitants and interest groups. (Jansson, Power, 2006).

Then the third category is related to pure advertising with the aim of changing or relaunch the image of the city on an external and/or internal audience. In this case the work is completely devoted to the marketing and advertisement techniques in the same way a new product is launched on the market. In most of the cases public sectors actors don't have the tools for this operation and often resort to external consultancy from advertising agencies or famous artists. The most recurring tools are advertising in the media as press, radio and television, but also brochures and free gadgets at exhibitions and events, or road side adverts. Then there is the whole world of internet with social networks and viral techniques. But the most immediate symbol of a city is probably its slogan and logo, which, such as a company brand logo, works directly as a bell ring to the sight of the customer. The design of a good logo is directly a guarantee of success for the city or otherwise a bad logo can influence negatively the city reputation for many years. A couple of examples of successful logos can be the worldwide famous 'I Love NY' logo commissioned by the city of New York during the 70's to clean the increasingly bad reputation of the city as dangerous and dirty which was badly influencing the investments and the tourism. The other one can be the 'A' of Antwerp city, commissioned to Keith Haring in 1987 during his visit to the city, and still used with success nowadays.

Finally, the best strategy for a logo is the identification of a convincing 'story' to tell which is not the mere work of professional branding builders, but the result of the involvement of the local stakeholders, local businesses, city companies and citizens recognize themselves in the story or find it narrated on the walls of their city, in the same ways the Antwerpenaars find on the walls of the local Modern Art Museum the Keith Haring graffito as a testimony of his stay in Antwerp in 1987.

1.4. Creative Class

Who are the protagonists of the creative environment of the cities? Who are the real actors of the cultural hub of a city and the attenders of cultural events?

Cultural economists and experts in the last years have focused their attention on how cities can be catalyst for art and cultural activities, artists and cultural operators and how the city policies can meet this phenomenon.

Probably the most famous and discussed theorist of what has come to termed the 'creative class', Richard Florida with his first work "The Rise of Creative Class" in 2002, has had a massive influence on bodies that practice regional and city planning.

As nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth century saw the dominance of industrial capitalism, and the second half of twentieth century was dominated by the immaterial bureaucratic business, in the words of Florida the twenty-first century sees the 'creativity' as a 'decisive source of competitive advantage' in the global economy.

A knowledge based economy sees innovation as a vital factor in maintaining the current level of welfare, and, as long as knowledge based firms are less concerned with production costs, they are more influenced by a variables of factors which go from geographical proximity, market, culture, to relational affinity and institutional variance.

Creative professionals represent the 30-45 per cent of the total workforce in western countries and consists of a wide range of different occupations, going from artist, designers, engineers, healthcare employees, teachers and public sectors professionals. This big variability comes from the ability to use a creative mindset to solve everyday problems on their jobs.

As 'creativity comes from people, and while people can be hired or fired, their creative capacity cannot be bought or sold, or turned on and off at will' (Florida, 2002:5). This statement focus the attention of the immateriality of the creative knowledge, which can be practiced and applied in every place, city, region or company of the world. The reasons why an artist, a designer, a 'creative' in general, would move in a certain city instead of another is not anymore given by the opportunity 'to find a job' according to the classical laws of urban economic geography, but takes in consideration other variables.

Florida's theory states that creative people search for places to live and set up their activities where is more likely to find urban amenities, a vibrant cultural life, a varied nightlife and a multicultural reality where to find inspiration and social cohesion.

On the basis of a strong connection between innovation and regional growth, regions have to attract and retain talents to foster business and economic development, creativity has to be one of the key

issues in city policy makers agenda. As the Creative Class contribute to an open, dynamic, personal and professional environment, the latter, in turn, attracts more creative people, as well as business and capital.

A place with high concentration of creative workforce is characterized by three main factors: *talent*, *technology* and *tolerance*, according to what is called the ‘*Three T’s Index*’: talent is the concentration of highly educated and multicultural people, technology is the concentration of high technology firms and industries, finally the tolerance parameter is given by the proportion of homosexuals, artists and ‘high bohemians’ among their population. The combination of the three has a synergic effect as ‘each is a necessary but by itself insufficient condition: To attract creative people, generate innovation and stimulate economic growth, a place must have all three’ (Florida, 2002:249).

The tolerance parameter is probably the most debated concept in Florida’s theory, measured with what is called the ‘*Gay Index*’ and ‘*Bohemian Index*’, is based on the premise that diversity attracts different kind of people, with different ideas and skills and a variegated environment is more creativity stimulating.

On the base of studies developed by Florida and colleagues studying trends in regional development, they noticed that though some regions present a concentration of good universities, international firms and a good economy environment for start-uppers and new businesses, they are unable to stimulate growth. One of the reasons can be addressed to the lack of a social climate in the specific region or city: lack of diversity, elite groups of people in which is difficult to enter for newcomers, stereotyped social aggregation for religion, working sector, cultural background, and sexual tendencies sounds unappealing for the creative class.

Florida’s theory is mainly United States based, the most dynamic cities in US are those such as Austin, Portland, Boston, Seattle. But when it comes to a global point of view, his theory seek a disconnection between cities and the country they are a part, as the city-region become an attractor for talents more than the country itself. Consequently, though nations compete to attract creative talents, creative people choosing their eventual next location think about regions or cities such as Silicon Valley, Toronto, Vancouver more than countries as Denmark, England or Sweden. (Florida, 2007: 10).

1.5.1 Critiques to the creative Class Model

Starting from the Florida hypothesis (2002), many authors and many politicians bit hastily arrived to the conclusion that the culture can become 'the' solution for the construction of an alternative model of economic development for the postindustrial context.

He suggests that attracting and retaining high-quality talent through a singular focus on projects such as sports stadiums, iconic buildings, and shopping centres, would be a better primary use of a city's regeneration of resources for long-term prosperity.

The central element in developing cities and regions economically viable and innovative solutions should be sought in ability to attract a wide spectrum of high professionalism intensity of human capital, the so-called creative class. To achieve this, the city must work to build a cultural climate that promotes diversity and invest in facilities for entertainment and free time, promoting an idea of the city that offer services and recreational opportunities around the clock.

A too uncritical and unconditional adherence to this approach however, tends to neglect the possibility of a trade-off between perverse attraction of talent form the extern and development of local talent, or the possibility that many of the investments and projects attracting the creative class to the city, adopting policies this type, are also responsible for the exclusion or even the gradual expulsion of local artists from the upgraded areas, causing cases of gentrification and segregation which can get to foresee of a new type of dual model of development.

Zukin (1985 and 1995), in particular, is critical toward the culture-led urban regeneration processes because believes that the objectives of these interventions are mostly speculative and the economic perspective tend to involve art and culture in a marginal and essentially instrumental way. Zukin complaint on the typical effect of rapid increase in the economic value of some rehabilitated urban areas which, as already suggested, ends to eject those same artists that initially gave rise to those characteristics of attractiveness on which the city has built its strengths.

Donald and Morrow (2003) point out that many local policy makers, and somehow Florida himself, tend to confuse tolerance with the cultural consumption, as eloquently show some examples of great urban festivals of ethnic origin which achieved great success and visibility in terms of contribution to the local level of economic activity and entertainment offer, but did not really implied any kind of substantial involvement to the local cultural reality, thus transforming the fact of ethnicity in local color and cultural event in a theme party.

Somehow, the tolerance don't have to be confused with the most comprehensive selection of ethnic restaurants in a city where, instead should support the dialogue between values and vision which is proper of a multicultural and mature reality.

Moreover in the idealization of the creative city, many experts forget to analyze the social problems which remain present or are emerging, just following the idea of the concentration of creativity as the key for success they forget the development of the existing resident population.

There is, in the end, no guarantee that a city striving to attract talent from the outside, produces better results in the long term, than a city that strives to elevate and strengthen the level of the local talent.

1.6. Fashion and Design as Creative Industries.

As already seen in the precedent paragraphs, the list-based approach to Creative industries has demonstrated already some limits, especially for what concerns the boundaries of the sectors and what should be included or excluded in the list of sectors connected to creativity.

One example is the British DCMS list of creative industries which includes antiques and crafts, but excluded the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum) sectors, sport, tourism and other parts of entertainment industries.

As notably pointed out by Terry Flew, there are still some aspects of the list-based approach that need to be further elaborated: the increasing complexity of global production value chain of cultural products which involve creativity in their processes and creativity as a value-adding element in a much wider range of products.(Flew, 2012).

The Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) Industries work almost as a paradigm for these two main issues. Clothing manufacture has migrated from the industrially advanced nations of North America, Europe, Australia to the developing nations of Asia, Latin America, middle East and North Africa where the low costs of manufacture and globalization let the relocation be almost an imperative. On the other hand, the process of designing fashionable clothes remains a distinct activity from its physical production, the actual manufacture and, to refer to the second issue raised by Flew, a part from the design skills required it involves something more “intangible” that can be referred to ‘creativity’ and can be the peculiarity of specific brands or designers.

The production of clothing is traditionally divided into “pret'a porter” and “haute-couture”, in the classic definition of French origin, but the study of fashion as artistic production has to be considered relatively recent is considered to be a relatively recent mainly due to the commercial, “consuming” approach that has always characterized clothing as just an utility.

The flourish of fashion studies in major universities, colleges and research studies around the world have contributed to two major innovations: the first is that there has been a sort of democratization of this type of study, which were previously a prerogative of an elite group of professionals who carried out research in the field of fashion history only for taking inspiration for their job, the second is that it has opened up a world of research and social-anthropological studies about the relationship between the fashion product and social environment of a particular country or territory.

1.6.1.Fashion as national identity

As already seen before a distinction occurs between the designing process of fashion design and the manufacturing phase, which, due to the globalisation and the higher cost of manufacture in advanced industry countries has been relocated in different areas of the world.

Contrary to this phenomenon particular metropolitan centres such as New York, London, Milan and Paris have sought to maintain a global appeal, with design occurring to be independent from clothing manufacture.

But, are we still able to recognise from a dress the style of its creator and refer it to a specific context atmosphere or country identity?

The study of fashion as a manifestation of national identity mainly follows two different approaches. The first sees fashion as a tailoring feature of the production of a specific country, this first assumption is difficult to reconcile with an increasingly globalized world where the creators take inspiration beyond their national borders as much as in their country of origin.

The second approach says that fashion is built as a national discourse. For example, "Belgian style " exists only when someone identifies it, recognizes it as a specific identity.

This perspective seems the most promising for the analysis of contemporary fashion, considering that it allows researchers to trace the formation of the discourse and of the actors involved. (Martinez, 2007).

The definitions of "French fashion" or "Italian fashion" through their formal features is still the dominant approach and usually these definitions are accompanied with stereotypes such as "The French fashion is chic" or "the Belgian style is deconstructionist".

Who should be traced back to this diffusion of stereotypes? Both art and design historians support the idea of national production as often reduced to a handful of inherent characteristics based on cultural traditions or on the common formal features. In addition to these there are other actors involved in this process: institutions, promotional strategies, mass media and fashion professionals taking part to the theory that the creative process is ruled by logic of the world divided into nations. The centers of this identification are the cities and their urban fabrics, which still work, even in a globalized world, as expressions of social movements and concrete tissues where the various identity expressions find their place.

In recent years for what concerns city policies and in particular city branding, fashion has been successfully useful for this purpose by city government, which noticed the raising of an identity and a local spirit.

2. Antwerp Fashion: History and development of the Cluster

Since the Middle Ages, Flanders region and in particular the city of Antwerp, have been the territory of an important textile industry with activities of weaving, dyeing, finishing and trading in cloth. The after centuries mainly following the rules of fashion set mainly in the close city of Paris, Antwerp developed its distinctive fashion style during the second half of the 20th century.

For a broader and detailed view of the evolution of the history of fashion sectors will be followed the path already traced by Martinez in his work about Antwerp avant-garde fashion evolution, and will be further developed with the recent evolutions after 2007 and recent activity of FFI. (Martinez, 2007).

It will be distinguished between three main phases: starting from the late 70s crisis of the textile industry at the beginning of the 80's it will be described the reconstruction of the sector with the institution of the Institute for Textile and Clothing of Belgium (ITCB) and its service component initiatives such as the campaign Dit is Belgisch/C'est belge (This is Belgian) or the Golden Spindle competition.

Then the emergence, in the late 80's of a Belgian Fashion avant-garde as an organic movement, which wasn't related only to fashion production but was organized as an organic, auto-produced cultural movement and was the incubator of the Belgian style as we recognize it nowadays.

The second phase of 90's will see the government and official institutions awareness of fashion design protagonists and the first attempt to exploit and capitalize the phenomenon with clear policies of development and promotion. During those years the city of Antwerp went under the branding process as a fashion city. This status of a fashion capital was created with the logic of great events and organized tourism. It will be seen how former characters of the fashion scene and new actors joined this process and opened the city of Antwerp to the international awareness.

Then the early years of 2000 then will be the moment when was finally possible to identify in the area around Nationalestraat the real physical core of the fashion district: the renovation of ModeNatie and the location of the main institutions of fashion practises in Antwerp under the same roof was the political decision which gave to the network its point of convergence.

Those were the years of the celebration of the history of Belgian fashion but at the same time started to emerge the necessity to look at the future of the sector, especially facing all the difficulties of the world economic crisis and the evolution of this specific economic sector.

In the moment we write, FFI as part of the governmental Flanders District of Creativity, in partnership with the main Belgian company working in the area of manufacture, distribution, retail

and marketing of fashion in Belgium, is the current main actor for the promotion of fashion brands and especially new designers who face the job market for the first time.

Antwerp fashion historical overview

First Period: Reconstruction of the Sector

-First half of 80's

- 1981 Restructuring plan for the textile and clothing industry in Belgium; Institute for Textile and Clothing of Belgium (ITCB).
- 1982 Golden Spindle competition
- 1983 Dit is Belgisch/C'est belge (This is Belgian) campaign started

-Second half of 80's

- 1988 First issue of BAM magazine ('Belgian Avant-garde Fashion').
- "The Antwerp Six" at British Designer Show in London
- 1989 End of the textile plan
- Opening of Dries van Noten's flagship store 'Het Modepaleis' on Nationalestraat

Second Period: The Process of Antwerp as a Fashion Capital: political, cultural and economic capitalisation of avant-garde Belgian fashion in the urban context office Antwerp

- 1992 Strategic Plan for the Antwerp Region
- 1993 Belgian federalization; end of the Institute for Textile and Clothing of Belgium.
- Antwerp holds the title of European City of Culture
- 1997 Flanders Fashion Institute (FFI) is founded
- 1998 First edition of FFI's annual initiative Vitrine Opening of Walter van Beirendonck's flagship store 'Walter' in Antwerp
- 1999 Opening of Ann Demeulemeester's flagship store in Antwerp
- 2000 Walter van Beirendonck designs the uniforms of the city staff
- 2001 Fashion event *Mode2001 Landed-Geland*
- Antwerp Tourism Office includes Antwerp Fashion Walk within its tourist program.
- Exhibition 'Belgian Fashion: Antwerp Style at the Museum' at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) in New York.

Third Period: ModeNatie and the celebration of Antwerp Fashion

- 2002 **Mode Natie** building opens; it contains the Fashion Museum, the Fashion Department of the Royal Academy of Art and the Flanders Fashion Institute
- 2004 Flanders Fashion Institute joins FDC-Flanders District of Creativity
- Antwerp Chamber of Commerce includes fashion in its touristic offer
- 2007 exhibition 6+ Antwerp Fashion held at the Flemish Parliament
- Economic crisis
- 2013: Happy Birthday dear Academie, celebration of 50 years of Fashion department of the Academy

2.1.1.First Period: reconstruction of the sector.

The Foundation of the Flemish design fashion industry can be traced back to 1970s when there has been a huge crisis in the Belgian textile and ready-to-wear industry. Belgian textile production benefitted over the centuries for an international fame and quality of products, but a series of internal and external factors broke down this historical success, causing between 1970 and 1980 a sharp drop of profit margins and the loss of more than 100.000 jobs.

External aspects can be addressed to the competition from cheap labor countries, with the consequent delocalization of production to these countries, the Third Industrial Revolution and the collapse of the monetary system in 1971 are seen by Ann Moons as some of the reasons of the crisis. The internal aspects were the lack of management and professionalism within enterprises, which were mainly family run companies, obsolete production technology, lack of skilled professionals and labor force, but most of all, the need for innovation and creativity to meet the demand of qualitative and distinctive products and to build a new image of Belgian fashion (Moons, 2007).

The Belgian government tried to find a solution to the economic crisis, persuaded also by numerous social and communal instances, started from a large-scale and detailed analysis of the sector. The Minister of Finance Will Claes presented a five-years textile plan in order to re-launch the sector, foster its strengths: the high quality of products, flexibility, reliability and customers service and correct the weaknesses rose during the crisis: innovation, creativity, marketing and international appealing.

The primary goal of the plan was to recover the competitiveness of the firms through the reconstruction of their capital, the modernization of their production technology and the production of 100.000 jobs. The investment was of 22,7 billion Belgian francs (687 million Euro) and was officially approved on August 1980. Although the plan had a national orientation, about the 80% was reserved to Flanders, to compensate the federal assistance to Walloon steel industry reserved in the past.

The plan consisted of a financial component (496 million Euro) for the companies technological and financial reorganization with loans and participations.

A service component (141 million Euros) which consisted of initiatives within the sphere of marketing, innovation, education, research and development (e.g. the campaign “Fashion this is Belgian”, the “Golden Spindle” award). Finally a social component (50 million Euros) to alleviate eventual layoffs. (Van Waterschoot, 1984)

The plan was only put in action and implemented at the end of 1981 and came in a crucial moment of economic and cultural transition for Belgium. Those were the times of a strong political instability caused by the pressure from the European Community, the growing politicization, bureaucracy and, above all, the regionalization which will let the plan survive until 1993.

As reasonably pointed out by Ann Moons in her research about the evolution of Belgian Fashion, the textile Plan was more than just an economic tool for the development of an industrial sector, but, especially for what concerns the service component of the plan, it was the “catalyst for a drastic change of mentality that substituted conservative Fordist approaches to fashion production with innovative, post-Fordist and avant-garde concepts of production” in this way ‘Textile Plan was an early expression of economic transition in which production activities refocused from lower to higher product segment’ (Moons, 2007:74).

The big strength of this policy measure was the necessary structural re-orientation of the sector and the improvement of the quality of the products, to do so, it was preferred over the mass production a high segment and niche-oriented production which focused its strengths on the high quality of Belgian products of the past and the innovation coming from the new generation of creatives and designers.

In 1981 ITCB (Instituut voor Textile en Confectie, België) which will be the main body for services and initiatives for the promotion of Belgian fashion.

One of the main protagonists of the scene in those days was Helena Ravjst, a fashion teacher and ex-employee of the confection industry who instituted the *Golden Spindle* competition to give the opportunity to new avant-garde designers, scouted from the local academy, to produce their collection using textiles and production tools from Belgian manufactures and provide the occasion for companies to meet their need of innovation and new ideas.

The first edition of the Golden Spindle took place on a small-scale in the autumn of 1982 at the Ghent town hall. A group of seven students from the Academia was selected and Ann Demeulemeester won with her silhouettes inspired by a ‘state of a poet’ and the show was later repeated at Middlkerke seaside casino and at the Belgium’s embassy in London.

The 1983 competition moved to Brussels and gained a lot of press attention showing seven very characteristic collection with inspirations from the army garment and 1900 workwear, Dirk Van Saene won the competition and in this occasion Martin Margiela received an honourable mention from the foreign jury, presided by Jean Paul Gaultier. The presence of a world-renowned designer gave the competition an international atmosphere and the positive feedbacks he gave to those very high quality and fresh looks boosted the confidence of the new born Belgian Fashion Spirit.

The following editions of the show started to be repeated in different locations as the Grand Palais in Paris or on a trade mission in Osaka, while the 1985 show was repeated in Munich, Tsukuba and Paris.

The raising success of Belgian designers started to be used by the government as a reference to show-off abroad, although the real investment by the government in their work and the financial support remained minimal: the prize of Golden Spindle consisted nothing more than a platform for their design, the opportunity to have a fashion show professionally organized and the presence of the press and TV publicity.

The platform was a good training for the designers to gain experience and confidence, consequently the market opened its doors and they started to collaborate with fashion firms, in Belgium and abroad.

Another initiative of Helena Ravjst was the campaign '*Mode, dit is Belgisch/C'est belge*' (Fashion, this is Belgium) to promote the new concept of Belgian fashion, and encourage the consumers to purchase local textile and clothing.

The use of such a title which sounded like a presentation to the rest of the fashion system, with the statement "This is Belgian", is symptomatic of the ITCB willing to identify Belgian production in a way that would have helped the market to recognize itself and promote its products while the consumers would have met the offer of Belgian fashion as a 'brand'.

The first advertisement of the campaign had the motto 'No saint in their own country' to point out the phenomenon of Belgian designers becoming famous abroad without being recognized in their own country. As Karen Van Godtsenhoven, curator at MoMu fashion museum, states: 'Ravijst wanted to raise the consciousness of Belgian fashion and tackle the passivity of the industry and make them realize that creativity was the only key to survival' (Van Godtsenhoven, 2013: 82).

In 1984 she launched the magazine '*Mode. Dit is Belgisch*' which combined advertisement for Belgian labels, editorials styled by the designers and press features on the Golden Spindle. The Six often figured with interviews and personal articles in which they reflected about the evolution of their style and art. The photo-shots were often a mix between their own creation and commercial brands, in many occasion the commercial clothes matched with Dries van Noten, Marina Yee and Dirk Van Saene works, which most of the times were completely revolutionized, losing their original use and turned to serve artistic purposes.

Helena Ravjst death, in 1985, caused a profound shock in fashion community, especially for the important connecting role she fulfilled between the rebellious attitude of the group of designers and the governmental body of ITCB. Her position was filled by her assistant Michèle Beeckman to

continue her legacy, but the attitude of the designers, every day more hostile to the market rules and reticent to find a common ground of dialogue with ITCB.

They often invested their own money in Golden Spindle collections and refusing to work with Belgian textile and preferring to buy fabrics from Italian companies.

The role of ITCB, under Ravjst legacy, as a coordinator of actions of networking, management, education and training was incredibly up-to-date for that time, and can be compared, resulting even more successful, with some of the fashion plans nowadays, especially if we consider the small budget (10 million Belgian francs) destined to promotions such as the Golden Spindle and the magazine 'Mode, dit is Belgisch'.

Undoubtedly, the plan's service component achieved, in the short period, to find a new dynamism for the sector and to promote the new idea of Belgian Fashion, but if we look at it in the long-term perspective, the historical evolution has demonstrated that this was not enough for an overall cultural and economic success.

2.1.2. Second half of 80's. The rise of Belgian Avant-garde

The new wave of fashion designer soon felt the distance between their work and the instances coming from ICTB and the 'Did is Belgisch' magazine which came out to be too much mainstream and not able to meet the real innovative spirit of their art. One episode cited by Martinez at this regard is the 1986 article "Styling: the misunderstanding" ("Styling: het misverstand"), in which fashion designer Walter Van Beirendonck had to explain to the public the use of horns and angles wings in his recent fashion reportage only as narrative accessories, which weren't supposed to be worn in the street. (Crabbe, 1986: 38–39).

For this reason, in 1988 was first published 'BAM!' (Belgie Avant-garde Mode, Belgian Avant-garde Fashion), a unique magazine showing all the power of these new fashion forces. It combined news from different art fields such as cinema, theatre, visual arts, and was clearly characterized by the typical style of the Belgian artists: a strong attention to youth subcultural, androgyny, ethnic and oriental influences, fetishwear, pin-up girls and a non-conventional approach to the idea of 'good taste'.

For the first time the designers were free to express themselves without sharing the space with the whole fashion production in Belgium, but, most of all BAM! wanted to recognize internationally the new state of Belgian fashion and set it apart from the consumption approach it was still relegated.

BAM! was still financed by ICTB and, when the public funding were over, was privatized with funds from *Marie Claire*. Despite its short life, the magazine was an important tool of experimentation for the group of designers of Six generation and the new students of the Academia, it boosted a national fashion consciousness and built a more concrete Belgian style confidence.

Unfortunately, a major problem was still running between the designers and the ICTB: the impossibility of communication and a real connection between the two. The Antwerp designers were still seen as rather eccentric and difficult to deal with, on the other hand ICTB was considered too much commercial and obsolete, the designers kept on refusing to buy fabrics from Belgian company and were aiming to go abroad to show their collections.

London was calling, Dirk Bikkembergs and Dries Van Noten had the idea, supported by Geert Bruloot, (one of the protagonist of the fashion scene with his shoes shop Coccodrillo and promoter of Antwerp Six) to go to a fashion fair at the Olympia in London to meet the buyers and sell their collections.

Walter Van Beirendonck joined the mission to London while Ann Demeulemeester sent her sunglasses collection and they all rented a booth on the fourth floor at the British Designer Show.

Fashion agents and buyer soon noticed the great talent of those youngster Belgian designer, whose name was so difficult to pronounce that the press baptized them, with a name which turned to be legendary: the 'Antwerp Six' (Walter Van Beirendonck, Ann Demeulemeester, Dirk Bikkembergs, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Van Saene and Marina Yee) then later on, the critiques will include Martin Margiela calling them the 'Six + 1'. Most of them were already famous in the Belgian avant-garde scene, being the Golden Spindle their first 'window', but when the rest of the world saw the fresh and unconventional spirit of their style and the great care they reserved to materials, the international press praised their work consecrating it to the fame.

After London it was Paris turn, in 1988 Hotel Saint James and Albany at the Tuileries became the new showroom for the Six of Antwerp, from now on Dirk Bikkembergs started his menswear collection produced by Italian manufacturer Gibo which also produced Jean Paul Gaultier. Dries Van Noten who have been producing his menswear collection since 1985 opened his flagship store at the Modepaleis on Nationalestraat and started designing his successful womenswear collections. Martin Margiela debuted with his namesake collection breaking all the conventionalities about shapes and volumes, Ann Demeulemeester, Dirk Van Saene, Marina Yee and Walter van Beirendonck all started their own fashion labels which resulted to be since the beginning extremely successful. Moreover Geert Bruloot opened the Louis store in Antwerp exclusively selling labels by Antwerp Six.

The latest years of 80s saw the definitive consecration of Antwerp Six, the starting of their solo careers brought also the consequent split up of the group.

Those were also the year of an interesting phenomenon: the failure of ITCB, officially took apart in 1989, and the foundation of the Six fashion labels brought to an identification of Belgian fashion mainly with Flanders area, and especially with the city of Antwerp.

Cathy Horyn, New York Times journalist, wrote in 2007 an article with a very symbolic title 'Identity in Antwerp fashion: This is how it really is', referring to the group of Six and the next generation of Antwerp-trained designers 'these are people with a strong sense of identity, a feeling for ordinary life and an unshakable sense of personal character'. (Van Godtsenhoven, 2013: 101)

2.2. Second Period: The Process of Antwerp as Fashion Capital

The first years of 90s saw an important turning point in Belgium politics. The foundation of the federal government and the consequent increase of regional governments' jurisdiction were seen as an opportunity to better manage Flanders' own resources and image.

In 1992 the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce outlined a *Strategic Plan for the Antwerp Region* and the president of the chamber together with Antwerp mayor Bob Cools decided to found a new agency for the promotion of the province and its capital: the Maatschappij voor de Vernieuwing en de Promotie van Antwerpen (Agency for the Renovation and Promotion of Antwerp). The agency brought together the provincial government, the city council and some members from the University of Antwerp and can be considered the first real act of consciousness towards the emerging sectors and an attempt to boost the competitive resources of Antwerp. Seven economic pillars were recognized by the plan: port, industry, diamonds, tourism, computer, environment and small-medium enterprises.

Fashion was still not included in the list, although shopping facilities were already attracting numerous visitors and a that time survey conducted by the Tourism office showed that tourists and casual shoppers considered the retail offer 'good'(69%) or 'satisfactory'(26%) and the voice 'clothes' was at 38% over the total expenditure.

The year after the Board of Minister of European Community gave Antwerp the title of *City of Culture* and the Flemish executive saw it as an opportunity to export the young and dynamic Flemish identity. The program *Antwerp 93* had the goal to affirm the city reputation from an international point of view and to promote a multicultural atmosphere together with contemporary art events, its slogan was 'Can Art save the world?'

Finally fashion had a part in this process, the international attention on Belgian fashion and the great success of Antwerp Six couldn't have been ignored much longer, the process of including fashion in the agenda of high-cultural event was just starting and Linda Loppa was appointed to conceive and lead a fashion project for *Antwerp 93* cultural event.

She had been teaching at Fashion Academy since 1981, being herself an ex student, and retailer of renown fashion labels. Her contribution consisted in a series of exhibitions which went under the name 'Fashion 93' and placed at the Saint-Felix Warehouse, a 19th-century building next to the Antwerp port. The main goal of her activity was to connect fashion design with other disciplines in a sort of continuation of the work initiated by BAM! magazine. With the slogan 'We not just make clothes' she wanted to express the world of ideas behind designers collections and she truly believed in fashion designers as "trendsetters, almost artists, because they approach research

similarly as well as translate influences from outside their creations” (Rosseels, 1993:25). In the same period, the graduate shows of Fashion Academy were attended by an increasing number of visitors and fashion journalists: three shows hosted at the former Handelsbeurs (Stock exchange building) in mid 1990s, to present that year graduation show attracted approximately six thousand visitors. (Mode 2001 Landed-Geland:34).

Inspired by the positive spirit arose with the great success of the latest years and the warm welcome received by ‘Fashion 93’ in the 1993 agenda of City of Culture, Annick Bogaert, manager of the Tourist Plan, started thinking of a way they could meet the expectation of tourists coming to Antwerp attracted by its fashion offer. (Goyvaerts 1998)

With an initial subsidy of 1 million Belgian francs (24,000 Euro) from the Ministry of Culture of Flanders, the *Antwerp Fashion Society* was founded and was later nominated as the *Cultureel Ambassadeur van Vlaanderen '97* (Cultural Ambassador of Flandres) in the same year the society changed its name into Flanders Fashion Institute (FFI).

The main promoters of FFI were Linda Loppa, still a prominent figure of the fashion scene and at that time also director of the fashion department at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the retailer and first promoter of Antwerp Six Geert Bruloot, Patrick De Muynck, teacher and ex-student at the Academy and the fashion journalist Gerdi Esch. The idea behind FFI was to continue the work initiated by ITCB and give birth to an agency for the promotion of new fashion design talent, to act as an intermediary between these and the fashion market and to introduce the avant-garde fashion into everyday life. (Martinez, 2007).

The process of urbanization, the attempt to take fashion to urban level and make possible to citizens and foreign visitors to appreciate the latest outcome of Belgian fashion started in 1998 when FFI organized the event *Vitrine*, which had to be presented later on annual base. The event was later interpreted by critiques as a compromise between a Fashion Week, which have never been organized in Antwerp until nowadays, and a way to take fashion to urban level.

Designers were asked to display their works in different spots of the City, in shop windows or art galleries such as Jurdi Persoon who displayed a silhouette in the spinning door of a department store. The result was a good success of high fashion at a urban level, a sort of mix between a museum exhibition, not limited by buildings walls, and a Saturday afternoon of shopping. The unity between commercial space, exhibition space, urban and social space was seen as a winning policy to take high fashion closer to people and the city of Antwerp itself. In the words of Gerdi Esch with *Vitrine* they wanted “to underline the link between fashion and art. We also want to escape from the free-time corner where fashion often is relegated” (Goyvaerts, 1999: 48–49).

Moreover, the unconventional urban intervention of *Vitrine* tried to confirm the high cultural aspect of fashion by reproducing, what Martinez compares to Situationist like interventions, the act of challenging the idea of retail, exhibitory and public space, not anymore considered as separate categories but as elements of a common ground, was seen by the City Council, and its illuminate consultants, as the perfect formula to transform Antwerp into a fashion capital and bring design fashion closer to the citizenry.

Vitrine event was accompanied by a guidebook which mapped all the streets and alleys of the city with shopping, restaurants and hotel addresses and the visitor had the opportunity to book guided tours to shops and department store in the same way they could have booked a guided tour of museums and art galleries. Later on the Tourism Office of Antwerp will include the *Antwerp Fashion Walks* among its tourist offer, which will also be used for the activities of FFI.

These can be considered the predecessors of the contemporary examples of guided maps of the city, such as the “Antwerp Fashion map” or its 2.0 extension, the smartphone application “Fashion Antwerp. Your ultimate fashion experience”. (see chapter 3).

In October 1997, the city councilor Hugo Schiltz announced that the city would support the project of a Flemish Fashion Institute “to promote [Antwerp] as a fashion center both in Belgium and abroad. The City wants to contribute in this way to the international fame that the fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and some Antwerp fashion designer have achieved” (De Morgen, October 24, 1997). The plan was to create a centrally located, multi-functional complex: the *ModeNatie*, to host the FFI headquarters, the Provincial Textile and Dress Museum, and the Fashion Department of Royal Academy of Fine Arts. The participation to the Tourist Plan got both the Province and the city government involved in the project.

In Shiltz’s vision, the *Modenatie* project would have to attract tourism and boost employment figures. As the major investor, the city invested 2.5 million Belgian francs (64,000 Euro) for a preliminary study in 1998 and 105 million Belgian francs (2,520,000 Euro) to renovate the *ModeNatie*. (Antwerp City Council, October 22, 2001). The complex was planned to be finished in 2001, the year in which the tourist service of the city of Antwerp had programmed large events related to fashion.

The biggest event was “Mode 2001 Landed-Geland” , planned by the city and managed by a newborn event organization called *Antwerpen Open*, which was an independent organization for cultural projects, but supported by the city, responsible of the 1999 successful Van Dick celebration.

Mode 2001 Landed-Geland was an all-around the city exhibition to celebrate the new fashion headquarter and the city new fashion hub. The curatorship of the program was head by designer

Walter Van Beirendonck and presented four exciting exhibitions to celebrate Antwerp and fashion with an international feel.

- *2Women - 2Vrouwen* was about the dialogue between two protagonists of the revolution of the fashion history in the twentieth century: Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel and Rei Kawakubo (Comme des Garçons). The former Royal Palace on the Meir was the inspiring backdrop for the exhibition.

- *Mutilate?-Verminck?* Presented at MUHKA museum, was an overview of the different ways the human kind deals with his body and all the most extreme and bizarre forms of fashion, body decoration and body modulation. Corsets, body painting, to skull deformities, 'lotus' feet and different interpretations of the human body in different cultures made this exhibition one of the most successful of Mode 2001.

- *Emotions-Emotions* was based on the idea that the emotions are often the breeding ground for creativity. For the occasion hundreds of famous international fashion designers, visual artists, architects and designers were asked to describe their most emotional memory of clothing or fashion. All those short videotapes with personal stories showed with quantity, originality and spontaneity how the clothing choices have a special meaning in everyday life.

For the occasion the former gymnasium of the police tower was turned into a lounge exhibition area and the visitors had the opportunity to enjoy a panoramic view of the city from the top of the tower.

- *Radicals-Radicals* finally had an open-air exhibition on the Scheldt banks near Eilandje. A twenty foot high billboards with three-sided rotating panels were arranged in a circle. Each board showed three photographic fashion statements of a famous national or international designer. The visitor could stand in the middle and walking along the dike could enjoy the remarkable view of the harbor.

Probably the biggest eye-catcher during Mode2001 was the city surface completely covered with color patches. The B-architects studio was commissioned to design the integration of these 'advertisement' in the urban landscape. The result was astonishing: from flat color panels covering building facades, to grass and flower beds in the middle of squares and streets corners, the city was a triumph of colors fields. In the course of the following four months, coloured fields and flower beds were lavishly placed throughout the city, emphasizing the event.

A good occasion to watch the city from a different perspective was given at the top floor of the police tower, where visitors could take off and land by helicopter at the height of the Radicals installation. (Mode 2001 Landed-Geland).

The objectives of the cultural event were the tourism, identity, representation, irradiation of Antwerp fashion, but what emerged from the review on the results, mainly based on the press

response, was that most important achievement was the image of Antwerp as “a creative, contemporary and hype city” (Verbergt, 2001:27).

City councilor Eric Antonis affirmed that “Mode2001 had maybe attracted fewer visitors than the Van Dyck year (1999) however the intention was never to attract many people. It is city marketing, not a cultural project. We show the many faces of Antwerp. Why is Barcelona that popular? Because it is a city that dares. The international interest is enormous. The Times is thinking of elevating Antwerp to city of the year! ...we seem more extroverted and more adventurous. Nevertheless, we are sometimes threatened by provincial features. With such a fashion year, we can call ourselves, by right, a metropolis, where something does happen” (Goossenaers and Weiss, 2001).

Eric Antonis in that occasion also recognized the achievement of fashion events, and especially the ones of Antwerp '93, as important successes to relaunch the image of Antwerp and presented it ‘a flourishing city’, in the delicate political time when the international press saw that the extreme right was gaining ground in the City Hall (Goossenaers and Weiss, 2001).

The first years of 2000s, thanks to big events such as Mode 2001, finally gave fashion design the proper recognition and entered the agendas of Antwerp political elite.

In 2004, the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, after a period of 12 years of ignoring attitude, added fashion to the list of the seven structural elements supporting the image of the city, the other six were architecture, art and culture, diamonds, water, restaurants and shopping (Kamer van Koophandel Antwerpen- Waasland, 2004: 9).

2.3. Third Period: The ModeNatie and the celebration of Belgian fashion

For the occasion of Mode 2001 Landed Geland, ModeNatie headquarter inauguration was planned to be part of the big event. Unfortunately, because of slow working in the renovation and some added problems such as fire, the restoration was finished in September 2002.

The description of the work and the importance of the location of the fashion headquarter in the heart of fashion district will be further described in the third chapter. Nonetheless at this point it is possible to state that finally, at the beginning of the 21st century, fashion design is recognized as one of the leading sectors of Antwerp attractiveness.

An interesting phenomenon occurred during this period: the identification of Belgian Fashion with Flemish fashion and the consequent identification with the city of Antwerp.

The creation, after Belgian federalization, of an institute as the Flanders Fashion Institute, designed to promote the evidences of mainstream and high-end fashion, met the natural background of that 'fashion milieu' concentrated around the Fashion Academy and brought to the restriction of the interest from a national, or better regional, to a local and city level.

As from one point of view the Antwerp hub was more experienced and known at international level, had the force to gradually assimilate the concept of 'Belgian fashion' until the moment that 'Belgian fashion' became exchangeable with the term 'Antwerp fashion'.

An example of this further identification can be the exhibition 'Antwerp 6+' curated by Kaat Debo, the director of MoMu museum and held in the exhibitions rooms of Flemish Parliament. The choice of such location is a clear evidence of the affirmation of the predominance of Antwerp as the first incubator of fashion creativity.

Another big exhibition involved the idea of strong relationship that links the results of the fashion production to the history and events of the city of Antwerp.

The events related to the exhibition 'Happy Birthday Dear Academie', celebrated the 350 years of the Fine Arts Academy and the 50 years of Fashion Academy (8 September 2013-26 January 2014) was first of all the celebration of Antwerp itself and its history, strongly linked to the events of its historical art and fashion institutions.

3. Antwerp Fashion District.

In this part of the work has been tried to identify the fashion district from a visual and material point of view. When we talk about city branding and requalification of the image of cities, we first obviously refer to the immaterial value that a city has as attractor of interest, but, as already seen in the first chapter, the literature has included in city requalification, also, and probably with more importance, the urban planning and the 'rewriting' of the territory.

In the following chapter, after a brief introduction to the touristic offer of the city materialized in four main urban areas, will be tried to specify the main characteristic of the fashion quarter, from an artistic and architectural point of view and the historic passages which brought to its formation.

The methods used for the analysis include: the study of maps, historical pictures, the examinations of available reports of the Tourism Office of the city. Then the opportunity to work for a period in the headquarter of the fashion district (Modenatie) has helped for a direct observation of the urban area and gave the opportunity to meet the protagonists of the creative hub, that 'creative class' living and nurturing the district with their work and activities, but also with their spare time and leisure activities.

The study of the district took to the mapping of the main concentration and the spots of fashion consumption and showed how the urban tissue is not just a static acrylic fabric, but an organic changing reality which is able to reorganize and reformulate itself or even go under period of depression and crisis.

After the visual examination of the district the second aim of the this chapter is the analysis of the actors and institution populating and nurturing the life of the district with their work and activities.

The good evolution and development of the Flemish fashion industry will be seen through lenses of a model which involves three main elements: capital, cultural management and networks or hubs.

The network will be seen as a key element of concentration of symbolic capital for the transmission of creativity and value, the Actor-network theory to study this transmission and the way it's distributed.

3.1. Introduction to the city of Antwerp

Located in the right-eastern bank of the river Scheldt Antwerp is the capital of Antwerp Province of Belgium and is connected to the North Sea by the Westerschelde estuary. The city seaports in one of the biggest in the world, only second in Europe after Rotterdam, and has made Antwerp, thanks to its big maritime traffic, one of the most important city of the Low Countries.

The big 'haven' of Antwerp did not contribute only to the flourishing of economy through its but, since the Middle Ages, Antwerp has been also the place of encounter for big personalities of the arts and culture: philosophers, scientists and painters contributed to its international reputation as an 'art city' until nowadays.

In the modern times, the city of Antwerp is still the centre of industrial activities and attractor of working immigration mainly destined to the harbour chemical factories, but has experienced, as long as many western cities, the shift to a tertiary and more immaterial kind of economy. Despite the IT conversion in economic transaction and the decentralization of productive processes the city is still the main attractor of economic exchanges, power and concentration of those professionals who rule these processes and attire a complex labor force. The physical meeting places still have an important value in the life of the city and can be considered complementary to the electronic world, or better they reciprocally influence their value (Sassen, 2000).

Together with the rising employment in the tertiary sector there was a big increase of new jobs in alternative sectors, as what we call the 'creative industries'.

Since the end of the of 90's, supported especially by the positive atmosphere of the new government with the Flemish Liberal and Democratic party (Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (VLD)) the city of Antwerp have tried to capitalize the value coming from these creative activities. The local tourism office today continues to build on its rich history the position of Antwerp as a modern metropolis.

Being the city tissue the object of the first analysis of the fashion cluster, has been identified the city center of the city included in the red traces on the map, which correspond to the ancient medieval walls and nowadays covered with the main road connecting the north to the south of the city: the Lei. Then have been identified the most interesting chronological events and the principal figures related to its touristic and cultural offer.

486.564	inhabitants
31	museums
3	UNESCO world heritage sites
1.163	monuments and sights
52	Rubens paintings on permanent exhibition
85	art galleries
119	antique shops and art traders
5.296	stores
56	theatre & concert halls
1.392	restaurant & cafes
4	diamond exchanges
34	number of nationalities at Antwerp's Fashion Academy
62.381	number of sea cruise passengers



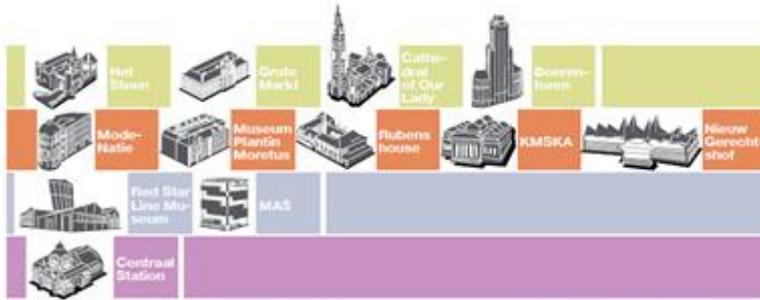
ANTWERP IN TIME

- 150-270 A.D.** gallo-roman settlement
- 726** firsts mention of the name Antwerp
- 1221** Antwerp receives town privileges
- 1352** start of the construction of the gothic cathedral of our lady
- 1555-1713** spanish era
- 1555** Christopher Plantin opens his printing house
- 1561-1565** construction of new townhall
- 1576** spanish fury
- 1585** fall of antwerp and closure of river Scheldt
- 1590-1610** Antwerp school: Rubens, Van Dyck, Jordaens
- 1605** Abraham Verhoeven published the first newspaper ever
- 1713-1794** austrian Antwerp
- 1795-1814** annexation with france and the 'great works'
- 1803** Napoleon orders the modernization of the port
- 1815-1830** dutch period
- 1830** independence of Belgium
- 1836** Antwerp opens its first rail link
- 1872** the Red star line is founded
- 1885** World Expo I in the Zuid district and inauguration of the Straightened Scheldt quays
- 1890** opening of the Royal museum of fine arts Antwerps | KMSKA
- 1894** World Expo II in the Zuid district
- 1920** olympic games in Antwerp
- 1923** airport built in Deurne
- 1927-1932** construction of Boerentoren
- 1930** World Expo III in the Kiel district
- 1977** Rubens year
- 1986** 'Antwerp six' debut in London
- 1993** Antwerp cultural capital of Europe
- 1999** Van Dyck year
- 2001** Antwerp fashion year-fashion 2001 Landed Geland
- 2004** Rubens (re)discovered
Antwerp is nominated book capital by UNESCO
- 2007** opening of rail tunnel from Antwerp's central station to Damplein
- 2011** Antwerp european youth capital
- 2013** Antwerp european sports capital, world outgames



Map 1. Antwerp city center. Sources: Google Maps Antwerp Tourism & Convention website.

ANTWERP



RUBENS DISTRICT

Core historical centre, Cathedral and Grote Markt

FASHION AND DESIGN DISTRICT

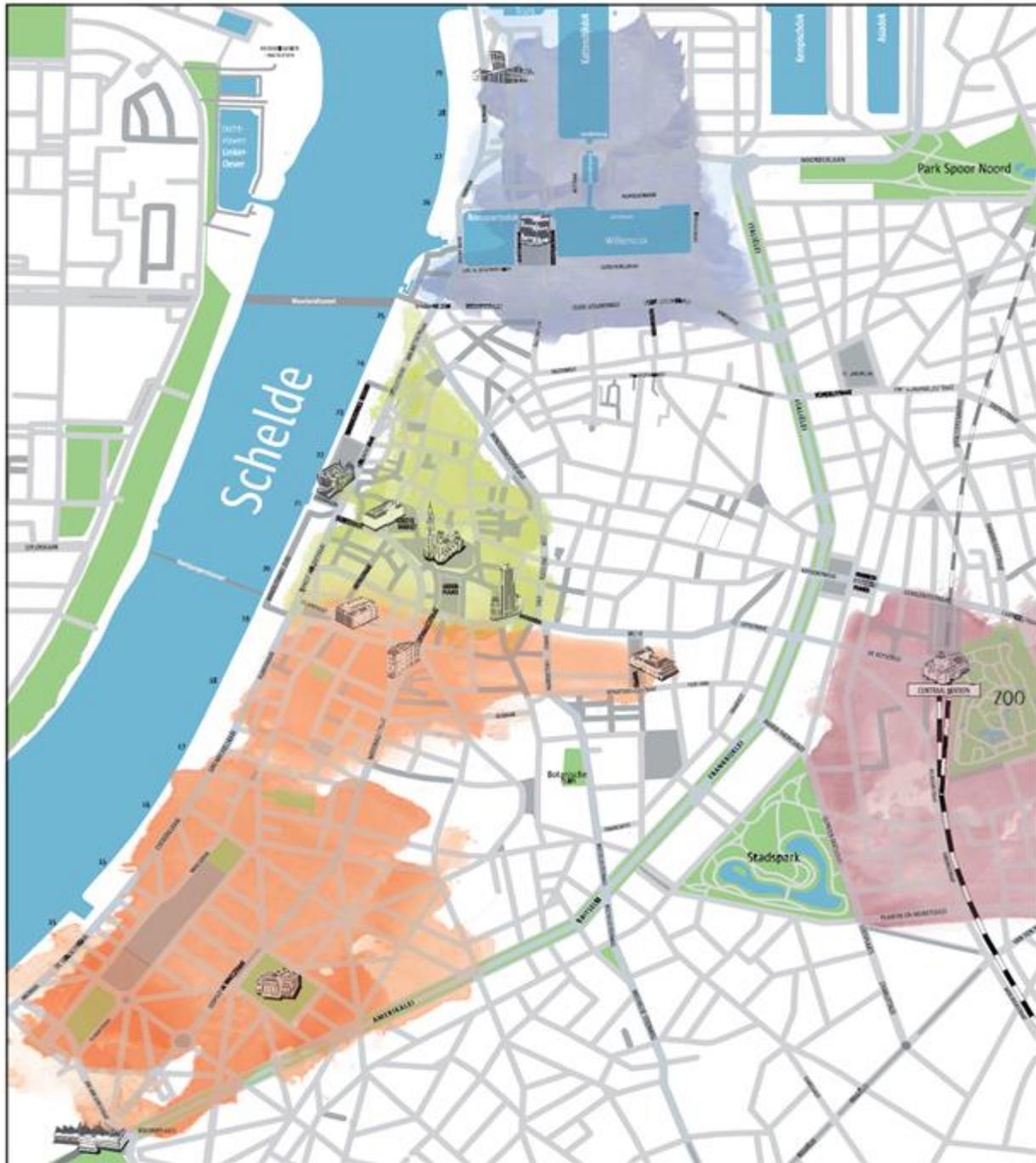
Nationalestraat and surrounding alleys, Zuid

MARITIME DISTRICT

Harbour requalified area | Eilandje district

DIAMONDS DISTRICT

Jewish quarter and Station area



Map 2 Antwerp 4 districts. Source elaborated from Antwerp Tourism & Convention map.

In the context of city branding and tourism marketing techniques to develop the touristic offer of the city, we can identify four main drivers of the cultural attractiveness of the city, which have been marked in the map 2 with four main colors to distinguish their areas of interest:

- **Maritime District - blue**
- **Diamonds District - pink**
- **Rubens District - green**
- **Fashion District - orange**

Around these core themes, the visitor can pick one of the path to discover the city or create his own path to design his visit. These four main themes can be identified on the map around their specific urban areas:

3.1.2. Maritime:

The River Scheldt has always been one of the main protagonists of Antwerp life since its origins in Gallo-roman period, when the city was founded along the cradle of the river, the Scheldt is still very present in the city's existence.

In the north part of the city, along the river, we can find the Eilandje District.

Eilandje, which means 'small island' used to be an almost dilapidated neighborhood, a forgotten corner of Antwerp. In the 80's the inhabited areas of the island have been marked as a revaluation area but it's only in the latest years that interest of developers and investors grew.

Now it is a good example of city requalification of depressed quarters: former warehouses are converted into large modern lofts, as the Felix warehouse, or restaurant and apartments and the real estate speculation is a consequence of the gentrification of the quarter.

The project of renovation of the marina included mooring for 250 yachts and the opening of various cafes and restaurants along the quays, these are the favourite meeting places for locals and tourists, alike the waterfront is often the destination of summer walks with a great view over the passing boats, the cruise ships that have moored at the terminal, the natural landscape on the left bank and the notable architectures along the quays.

Of relevant importance are the Renaissance building, the Hessenhuis, which has now been restored including an exhibition space, a café and a restaurant. Furthermore, the old **Red Star Line** buildings were turned into a museum in 2012: its exhibition reflect on the history of the shipping line and its passengers who migrated to America.

One of the most magnificent projects of the area is the new born museum **MAS Museum Aan De Stroom** opened in May 2011. Designed by Dutch architects Neutelings Riedijk, the 60-metre high building takes inspiration from the sixteenth-century warehouses, which are so typical of this port city. An ethnographic, folklore and shipping related collection is distributed along the nine floors red bricks construction, the roof top has a 360° view over the city which can be admired until a late night hour. The museum with its bar terrace and various dedicated pavilions around has become a point of reference for Antwerp night life.

3.1.3. Diamonds

These precious stones have been cut, polished and traded in Antwerp since 1447.

The diamond district is distributed in an area of 1 square kilometre around Central Station, where everyday 1.800 dealers come from all over the world to this international market place for diamonds.

The art of polishing diamonds is concentrated in the hand of few people and since the ancient times has been prerogative of the Jewish orthodox community which jealously keeps the secret of their art.

From **Central Station** it's possible to walk to the 'Diamond Square Mile' where diamond workers, jewellers and diamond merchants busily negotiate from one transaction to another walking through shops, showrooms and exhibitions. Every year the 80% of the world's rough diamonds, 50% of the cut diamonds and 45% of industrial diamonds are taken to the city, which makes Antwerp the world principal business centre of this sector the others are Mumbai, Singapore, Honk Kong, Delhi and New York. (Tichotsky, 2000: 254).

The luxury shopping destination isn't restricted only to the station area, in the city centre is located Wouters&Hendrix studio, a jewellery designers duo who became world known for their traditionally crafted production, while at the Diamond Pavillion, near MAS Museum, it's possible to discover the history behind the supremacy of Antwerp as the main world centre for diamonds and the evolution in the centuries of her role in the diamond trade and industry.

3.1.4. Rubens

What we call the 'Rubens factor' identifies the historic centre of the city where the historical figures of Antwerp history left the intangible and indelible sign of their life.

Together with the world known philosophers, scientists and artists who were born, lived or passed by the city the most notable figure is **Peter Paul Rubens** (1577-1640).

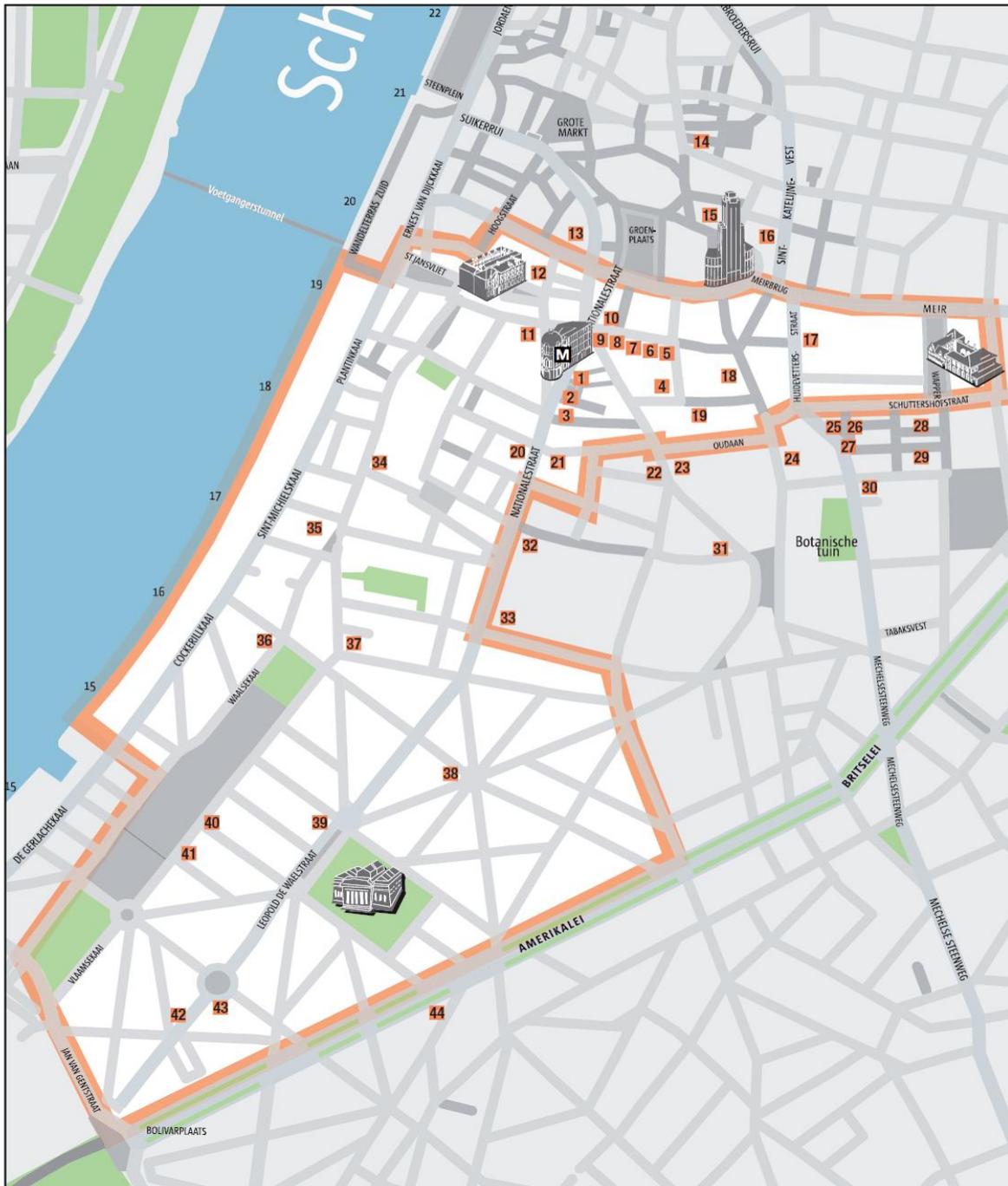
The virtuous legacy of the baroque painter can be followed in a path that goes from the historic heart of the city, the Grote Markt, where in the Cathedral of Our Lady can be admired a series of paintings by Rubens such as the 'Elevation of the Cross' and his 'Descent from the Cross'. At the Rockox House, in Keizerstraat, a temple dedicated to the arts by Nicolaas Rockox, patron and friend of art icons, the works of art of Peter Paul Rubens sit side by side with the ones by Peter II Brueghel, Jan I Brueghel. Finally, on the Wapper can be found the **Rubens' House**, where the artist lived with his family for over 25 years and stored his impressive art collection in beautiful art rooms. Hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the world are attracted year to admire the beautiful garden, the artist's workshop and the incredible collection draws.

FASHION DISTRICT

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Morrison | 12 Vrijdagmarkt6 | 24 Wouters & Hendrix |
| 2 Copyright Bookshop | 13 Stephan Schneider | 25 DVS |
| 3 Renaissance | 14 The Public Image | 26 Coccodrillo |
| 4 Anna Heylen | 15 Xso | 27 Delvaux |
| 5 Louis | 16 Theo Somers Optiek | 28 Essentiel |
| 6 Acne | 17 Xandres | 29 Graanmarkt 13 |
| 7 Step by step | 18 De Groene Wolk | 30 Just in case |
| 8 A.P.C. | 19 Alex Schrijvers | 31 Rosier 41 |
| 9 Huis A. Boon | 20 Garde-robe Nationale | 32 Labels Inc. |
| 10 Dries Van Noten,
Het Modepaleis | 21 Seven Rooms | 33 Elsa |
| 11 Thiron | 22 Nathalie Vleeschouwer | 34 Viar |
| | 23 Ra | 35 Your |

M ModeNatie

-  Flanders Fashion Institute
-  MOMU
-  MOMU Library
-  Fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts



Map 3. Fashion District. Source Elaborated from 'Fashion in Antwerp. Your ultimate fashion experience'

3.2. Fashion

Fashion design became one of the main attractors of tourism and leisure activities in Antwerp, in 2004 the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce added fashion to the list of seven structural elements supporting the image of the city and started to be used as one of the branding elements of the city's touristic offer.

As analysed in chapter 2, the opening of ModeNatie headquarter in 2002 and the consequent concentration under the same roof of the principal incubators of fashion creativity in Antwerp: the Fashion Museum, the Fashion department of Royal Academy and the Flanders fashion Institute gave the decisive physical core to the fashion district.

The district is delimited in an urban area which has at West the bank river, at North the Groenplatz and the Meir street, the East side follows the area around Nationalestraat, Kammenstraat and Lombardenstraat until the Ruben house and the Bourla theatre. Finally the south side ends in a sort of 'v' corner delimited by the Amerikalei and the Palace of Justice. (map 3).

Imagining a possible tour of the district the visit can start from the Groenplaats following down the Nationalestraat, this street was historically the commercial area of the city with clothing shops and department stores, where the Antwerpenaars high class used to shop for special occasions.

With the advent of fashion avant-garde and the raising importance of notable designers as the 'Antwerp Six', the Nationalestraat became the attractive place for the opening of their shop and department stores.

Dries van Noten's flagship store, the '**Modepaleis**' (10) can be seen as a pioneering example: in 1989, the shop opened near Antwerp Cathedral in a renovated Belle Epoque building at Nationalestraat. Van Noten is the third generation in a family of tailors; his father had two upscale fashion boutiques in Antwerp and his grandfather refurbished second hand clothes and had a shop selling some of the very first *pret-à-porter* garments. Nowadays is one of the most successful Belgian designers internationally recognized for his painterly mixes of prints and the sartorial approach in the cut of his coats. 'Het Modepalais' preserved the strong atmosphere of 19th century elegance in the interior and layout and is such a hotspot during the district fashion tours that fashion journalist Agnes Goyvaerts wrote in 1998 that Japanese tourists who come on holidays to Europe, have noted 'Antwerp: Modepaleis' high on their list (Goyvaerts, 1998: 30).

In 1998, Walter van Beirendonck opened his flagship store 'Walter' some 100 metres from Dries van Noten's Modepaleis shop. Besides the commercial space for the clothes, the shop window zone

hosted the 'Window' art gallery, where artist Narcisse Tordoir initially showed his works. (Cuyt and Armon, 1998).

Following down the Nationalestraat is possible to find various shops such as the '**Garde-robe Nationale**' (20), a boutique focused on Belgian designers collections and the '**Seven Rooms**' (21) white loft, a combination of shop and art gallery with all the latest news in the field of visual art and design.

At the end of Nationalstraat **Ann Demeulemeester**, opened her flagship store in 1999 (39), designed by architect Paul Robbrecht the store looks at the other side of the road the **Antwerp Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA)**.

In the same area, 200 meters far from Ann Demeulemeester stand the Photography Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the architect Bob van Reeth's most renowned works: the Roosmalen Villa and the restaurant Zuiderterras next to the river in a continuous dialogue between art consumption and shopping experiences.

A parallel path to Nationalestraat can be taken following Kammenstraat and Lombardenstraat until the Ruben house and the Bourla theatre. In that area is possible to find others important store which contributed to make the history of the district and are always up to date on the new tendencies of the fashion market and upcoming designers. Some of these most notable shops are **Delvaux** (27), an historical Belgian firm of leather and luxury goods, **Essentiel** (28) a new fashion brand specialized in basic and colourful clothes. The shoes shop **Cocodrillo** (26) is one of the oldest in the area, founded by Geert Brulot, which, together with **Louis** (5) was one of the first shop to sell the 'Antwerp Six' collections.

Famous brands are placed side by side with new and vintage designers together with hip streetwear stores defining the shopping axis of the district where every year fashionistas from America, Japan, China, Italy and beyond are attracted by the five fashion routes from boutiques to flagship stores.

The Antwerp Office of Tourism has developed the **Antwerp Fashion Map** which is a useful way to move around the fashion district, followed in the recent year by a smartphone application "**Fashion Antwerp. Your ultimate fashion experience**" downloadable from iTunes or Google Play at the cost of 2.69€, the App updates about the pop-up stores which are not on the map and fashion related events.

The precedent can be find in *Vitrine 98* and its guidebook, which being included by the Tourism Office of Antwerp in their touristic offer, became one of the principal attractions for city visitors. In addition to this, in 2001 was published the *Antwerp Fashion Walk* guidebook, on the occasion of 'Mode 2001 Landed-Geland', which became one of the promoting tool for shopping experiences in Antwerp. In the guidebook, several routes interconnected the shopping spaces with art museums

and architectural landmarks becoming a successful experiment for the identification of a fashion district and the design of an urban area for fashion consumption, both cultural and merely commercial. (FFI, 2003).

The *Fashion Walk* is interesting tool to analyze the role of the political intervention (the Tourism Office of Antwerp combined with FFI support) in the translation of fashion design from a commercial private consumption to a common ground of experience.

Designer fashion contributed to create what Suttle defines the ‘cumulative texture’ in a historical moment when the rise of a creative economy was sought out as a sector of investment for the city of Antwerp (Suttle: 1984). If the local culture try to reflect a specific economic regime, fashion design resulted to be the perfect connection between the present ‘dynamic’ vision of Antwerp and its historical and tourist-appealing relations to Rubens and diamonds.

From an intertextual analysis of fashion offered as a touristic attraction, the relationship with other tourist routes shows that fashion, as a site of private consumption, is placed on the same level of other sites of public consumption, since this proposal is offered jointly with other tourist routes such as ‘Rubens’, ‘Diamond District’ and ‘Maritime life’ (Martinez, 2007).

In similar way, from an intratextual approach that is through designing a path which links together venues and alleys, the guidebook destines to fashion a place not only in the urban plan of the city, but also in the urban history since both the following circuits and the architectural peculiarities are historicized. Thus, the route raises the shopping venues to the category of museum or patrimony in a landmark of streets as Nationalestraat and secondary alleys as Everdijkstraat where the shopping experience is connected with art related spaces such as art galleries and museums, both in the same place or in a spatial dialogue (as Ann Demeulemeester with the Royal Fine Art Museum) and is taken from a semi-public status to a level of collective consumption.

3.3.ModeNatie.

The very heart of the fashion district can be considered the **ModeNatie** housing in the past the store called *Old England* which used to sell men's and children's clothes while the upper floors were occupied by the Hotel Central, now is the core incubator of fashion creativity in the city.

ModeNatie housing the **Mode Museum**, the **Fashion Department of the Royal Academy of Art**, the **Flanders Fashion Institute** and the bookshop of art and architecture called **Copyright** is now conceived as a unique concept where creativity, dynamics and passion for fashion find their place. (Modenatie.com)

It is conceived as forum platform for students, designers and fashion enthusiasts where is possible to debate, confront and reflect about fashion issues and at the same time a beautiful place to meet.

To better understand the conception of the building and its various destination is relevant, at this point, to describe the main events of its historical evolution over the last two centuries and the various destination of its floors.

3.3.1. History of ModeNatie building

The old name of Nationalestraat during the 19th Century was Boeksteeg street and the Drukkerijstraat was called Voddenstraat. The Boeksteeg was one of the longest streets in Antwerp going from the Ijzerenwaag to the Kronenburgstraat and all around the streets there was a labyrinth of lanes and alleys. Today a tavern called 'Boeksteeg' recalls those distant days.

In 1876 was commissioned from the Antwerp City Council to Hubert Pierquin, the work of demolition of the street and the surrounding alleys. The objective was, as happened also in many other European cities, the opening in the city tissue of a Paris-type boulevard measuring 15 m wide and 700 m long, whose extension went from the Ijzerenwaag to the Groenplaats. This street was called Nationalestraat and was designed to connect the Groenplaats with a completely new district in the south of the city.

The South (Zuid) had to become an district designed on the model of Parisian arrondissement with many wide streets flanked with patrician houses.

In 1884, the statue of the Belgian poet Theodoor Van Rijswijck decorated what remained of the small Ijzerenwaag square.

After ten years Alphonse Van De Put bought from Hubert Pierquin the piece of land opened with the widening of the Boeksteeg and turned into a building complex with properties to lend. The architect Ernest Dieltiens, who was also teacher at the local Royal Academy of Fine Arts and responsible for the construction of the Church of St Norbertus in Antwerp, designed the project.

In 1894 the haberdasher Pierre Einmahl placed his fashion business in the new building of Nationalestraat. While the ground floor hosted his store called 'New England', an outlet of ready-to-wear clothes for boys and gentlemen, on the other floors A. Bardelli started a luxury hotel, the 'Hotel Central'.

During the first decade of 20th Century the premises of the building were enlarged and, also due to the lack of business, the rooms of the 'Hotel Central' were remodelled and the 'Compagnie Générale Coöpérative Charbonnière', a corporation dealing in coal, coke and briquettes joined by other 28 firms, found its place around and above the 'New England' haberdashery.

In the following decades the association of war invalids, a currency exchange and the gas and electricity supplier Compagnie de l'Électricité de l'Escaut (De Schelde) completely took over the 'New England' haberdashery.

The building housed offices, administrative services and a showroom for electric fittings. In 1950, IMEA radio distribution company also moved there and from that moment the Antwerpenaar

started calling the building simply 'Den Ellentrik'. Finally, during the 60's, De Schelde company sold the building to the city of Antwerp.

Only after almost fifty years the idea of the foundation of an international fashion centre started to be designed when, at the end of 1997, the city Council decided to place there the Flanders Fashion Institute.

During the end of 90's the building was regularly used as location of promotional events and showcases promoted, among others, by FFI such as *Vitrine* and *Fashion For Van Dyck* (during the Antwerp Van Dyck year 1999).

In 1999, the renovation work of the building was commissioned to the Ghent architect Marie-José van Hee, but before the actual starting of the works, the building was kept to host various fashion events: during *Vitrine 2000* the façades were used to hung huge canvasses showing pictures of famous Antwerp designers, while still in 2000, the ground floor of the building hosted the graduation show of the students of the Fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

In August 2000, the official start of the renovation of ModeNatie was announced under the direction of the Ghent architect Marie-José Van Hee.

The name 'Modenatie' is referred to the Antwerp dockside and maritime businesses that gathered themselves around certain specific productions or organizations. Some similar examples are the Katoen Natie (cotton warehouse) and the Hessenatie (blouse warehouse).

Marie-José Van Hee main intervention was the opening of a covered corridor running straight across the main triangular patio and through which the natural light is filtered to the ground floor. A new wooden staircase entirely covered in merbau wood gives the building a new vertical passage.

Mode 2001 Landed Geland, the all-around city curated by the local designer Walter Van Beirendonck (see chapter 2) was planned to be the occasion for the official inauguration of the building and the celebration of the fashion headquarter and the city new fashion hub.

Due to the slow process of restoration works, the opening of the building was postponed and consequently the façade was recycled to be the one of the coloured fields which covered the whole city: a fluorescent yellow huge panel shocked Antwerp in the morning of 17th May 2001 (Antwerp Open).

In December of the same year the **Copyright Bookshop** was the first concern to open its doors in the new building.

The building was ready as of May 2002 and in the same month the offices of the Flanders Fashion Institute officially moved to ModeNatie. The Fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Artesis Hogeschool moved into the building during the summer to start the academic year 2002-2003 in the new location.

Finally, on 21st of September 2002 the new fashion museum MoMu of the province of Antwerp was inaugurated with a big festival.

3.3.2.MOMU- Fashion Museum

Before moving into the new building of Modenatie, MoMu was the Antwerp provincial Museum of Textile and clothing. The new location in 2002 gave the Museum the right visibility and set it at the centre of the fashion quarter, transforming it in something completely different form a traditional textile and clothing museum, but a real point of convergence between historical costume studies and researches on contemporary fashion and socio-anthropological phenomenon.

Since the beginning of its new 'life' in Nationalestraat under the guidance of Linda Loppa, and with her successor Kaat Debo in 2007, has been opted for a dynamic approach to its clothing collection. The inside space of the museum doesn't has affixed arrangement or distribution of the spaces, but varies with thematic exhibitions on specific designer or fashion related contents.

3.3.2.1.Historical Collection

The history of the collection at the Fashion Museum began in the 1930s, when a local group historians and collectors set up a museum around the Flemish civilization.

Although their ambitious plan for a museum with indoor and outdoor sections, covering all aspects of the Flemish cultural history was never really realized, after the years, through gifts and loans especially in the field of decorative arts, a comprehensive collection was establish. The museum was housed in a castle Sterckshof in Antwerp, which is owned by the Province.

Textiles and clothing never formed an important part of the collection, but the lack of a clear and rigorous acquisition, differently to the one conducted today in most of the museums, let the amount of costumes, accessories, fabrics and supplies textile steadily grow.

At the end of the 1940s the curator Joseph de Beer, who was interested in the history of the Belgian cotton printing, started the acquisition of important file objects and records of the Ghent cotton printing Voortman (1790-1890).

During the 1950s, the Province new curator Piet Baudouin laid emphasis on the decorative arts. In temporary exhibitions textiles and costume were rarely on the agenda, but nevertheless there were topics covered that were outside the prevailing trends.

In 1967 was organized a lace exhibition. In those years, the topic of lace was a niche subject, the traditional lace industry, typical of West Flanders and in the specific, around the area of Bruges, was almost extinct, nobody used lace and lacemaking had not yet started a revival as popular hobby, as it is today.

However, the exhibition was a success and was made the decision to expand the museum Belgian costume collection with an organic policy of acquisition. A small library on textiles and costume was instituted and Lode Truyens-Bredael, a local textiles and lace producer, donated his library and his extensive documentation to the museum.

3.3.2.2. Textile Museum Vrieselhof

In the early 1970s Sterckshof castle in Antwerp had become too small for the preservation and presentation of many collections. Those collections took on a life of their own.

The Fiber Art Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and the numerous courses in traditional textile techniques took a young generation back to the artisan production of textiles.

In that atmosphere, the textile collection was located in a separate building, the castle-Vrieselhof in Ranst Oelegem.

“My own relationship with the museum”, says Frieda Sorber, the current curator for collection and donation, “began with the move to the new location. Due to lack of staff and money the largest part of the collection have never been properly documented. That work was an absolute priority, together with the first attempts to create the growing collection and better storage conditions Also beacons were put to a targeted acquisition policy. Clothing and textiles with a Belgian origin or use was preferred. In addition, the main elements of the collection: clothes and lace, a first attempt made to fill a historical presentation of the 17 gaps the century (side) and from the 18 the century (costume) would complete. When the costume collection of the Antwerp Museum Folklore in 1983 was destined as a permanent loan to the new museum, there was an increase of more than two thousand objects that have been collected from the beginning of the 20th century and had formed a valuable addition especially for fashion in the 19th century”.

“The presentation of such objects in the museum spurred a lot of people to donate clothing and textiles either for sale or to offer - things they, often for sentimental reasons, preserved for many years. Over the time, the museum depot a true collective wardrobe of our society, with both extraordinary clothes for very special occasions to ordinary everyday clothes. The archive and the garments of the Valens fashion house in Brussels (mainly the period of the 1950, 1960 and 1970) showed that in Belgium was still working a high quality craftsmanship, while, at the same time, the request raised that much, that the production of handmade lace and embroidery on a larger scale was no longer profitable.

Following an exhibition made with the material from Valens archive, donated to the museum by Ms. Roeis daughter - seamstress in Antwerp from about 1910 to 1960 - dresses and materials from the workshop her mother to the museum. The fabrics, lace, buttons, buckles and accessories from Roeis sewing workshop witnessed a form of couture that has virtually disappeared today. For centuries, tailors and seamstresses played a vital but sadly few documented role in Belgian fashion. In cities such as Antwerp was possible to find, usually at home or in a small sewing workshop, excellent seamstresses works. Many of them had a very good sewing training for haute couture and showed a strong eye for beautiful dress. They went to Paris twice a year to attend the fashion shows and brought those new ideas with a fashionable and demanding clientele. Ms. Roeis brought models of designers such as Lanvin and Madame Jacques Fath, and reproduced them for her customers or clothing agents, with materials she had purchased in France”.

3.3.2.3.The lace collection

The lace collection was significantly expanded through acquisitions. During the first years in Ranst Oelegem a lot of pieces were from families that had preserved them for their future generations. Boxes with carefully folded strips or finished pieces were a familiar dowry. There choosing the best and / or most interesting objects for the collection was always a pleasant task. The thus acquired valuable collection included laces from the 17th to the early 20th century. Sometimes buying pieces was far more difficult. In the 1970s, there were no networks of antique dealers and auction houses were regular clothes or fabrics were auctioned. Christie's in London was probably the first auction house to organize a public sales of garments and textiles. In 1980, we took part to the auction of a sizeable private collection, thanks to the purchase on that auction the collection nearly doubled. The new acquisitions ranged from strips of Belgian lace from the middle of the 19th century, still in the original box of Charles Frederick Worth, to an early-18th-century board of bobbin lace from Brussels, to early-17th-century tablecloths. Then at the end of the 1980s a collection of Belgian lace from the early 1900 was donated by the family of an American lace collector who live in Belgium during the 1920s. The showpieces of this ensemble of more than one hundred objects are four custom dresses made in bobbin lace and needle lace.

Descendants of two Belgian lace firms from the early the 20th century also made generous donations: Jeanne Luig, who did business in Brussels and Aalst, donated to the museum the archive of his company: hundreds of negatives on glass of important pieces of lace.

Fanny Diercxsens-Auberge (Turnhout) founded her lace firm La Campinoise back in 1919. Out of the thousands of lace patterns, drawing and business correspondence emerges a vivid picture of the daily work of a former lace production company, whose disappearance was the respond to the needs of a changing society”.

3.3.2.4.Liers Embroidery

The strong tradition of open weave embroidery and beaded embroidery in the city of Lier has never been in the past the object of lot of attention. Lier has however been for many years a centre of bead embroidery on clothing, and Lierse ladies bags were exported to many places around the world in the 1950s and 1960s, as in the years 1920 dresses with beaded embroidery from Lier formed an important branch of the market sector.

In the course of the years archives and objects of various Lierse firms have been acquired in the museum collection. The handmade or semi-industrially manufactured textiles guidebooks are often very specific and their precise use is sometimes hard to figure out, unless one is well aware of the technical aspects of the various textile crafts. Determining the function of each small tool in the contents of a Brussels bullion workshop took several years to completed. The Cornely-Bonnaz embroidery machines, used in Lier since ca 1860 could only be understood with the help of one of the few Belgian specialists of this sector, he gave the museum staff immediately a crash course in the use of the machines. “Almost every textile technique has the potential to be reused in new and unexpected ways” says Frieda Sober from the conservation department of MoMu, “keeping the tools and the knowledge of old technologies is a bridge to the future”. (Frieda Sober comments retrieved from the official website of the museum).

3.3.2.5. Contemporary Collection

The wide interest in fashion in the 1990s and the international reputation of a number of young Belgian designers led naturally to a new orientation in the museum.

Since the late 1990s the collection of contemporary fashion has been rapidly extended and a new chapter was added to the relationship of our society with clothing and textiles.

The collection of contemporary fashion has an strong significance for a museum, it's the snapshot of the present time, the image that a cultural institution wants to give to the future generations. on the one hand through donations and by purchasing built.

The acquisition policy of MoMu mainly focused on the work of the Belgian designers. Most the Belgian designers usually present their collections during the Paris fashion week: parade or presentation where the entire collection is shown to "buyers" and press and where the orders for the next season are placed. Fashion Museum is also present at the showroom and buys objects for its collection, either individual objects or accessories, or full silhouettes that give a clear picture the image that a designer collection has in that specific season.

“The choice to purchase can be controlled by several factors such as the technique used, the materials, the coupe, the image collection, or objects that clearly reflect the signature of the designer”(Sober, 2007).

Also donations are an important part of the acquisition policy for MoMu. In addition to gifts designers every season faithfully donate to the museum such as one or more silhouettes, also donations from private individuals are included in the collection, ranging from individual objects to full wardrobes.

The condition of the donation is that the items always has to be offered in addition to the existing collection. For example, a wardrobe can contain valuable information about a certain person, and tell us more about his life or society and social position. A wardrobe is interesting as a snapshot of a particular historical period. Examples can be the aquisition at the end of 1990 of partial wardrobe of Linda Loppa, until early 2007 Director of the Fashion Museum, and the one of Christine Mathijs, until her death in 1999, associate of Dries Van Noten.

Another important gift was made by Geert Bruloot, former manager of 'Louis', the first Antwerp designer store for Belgian designers. The archive contains objects of Belgian designers but also a remarkable collection of the British milliner Stephen Jones. Bruloot bought on a regular basis hats at this renowned designer, not to sell in its stores, but as collector items. At the opening of the Fashion Museum in 2002 he donated his entire collection as a long-term loan to the museum. While the emphasis in the acquisition policy is based on the work of Belgian designers, gifts from

international designers are also accepted. These are often implemented in the framework of the themed exhibitions.

The contemporary collection has to be considered an open source for students, curators and experts of fashion content related subjects. To highlight the idea of an open network between the different institutions of the Fashion District, the recent collaboration with the Fashion department of the Academy, which has its spaces at the floor above the museum, is an interesting example. Took in consideration the lack of a Department physical archive with the work and thus historical information get lost, it was decided to make an annual selection of the works of the students and archive them in MoMu archive. This selection provides both drawings, graphic materials such as sketchbooks, and preparatory work as pattern studies.

3.3.2.6. The virtual museum and Europeana Fashion

One of the biggest problem of the museum collections is its inaccessibility to the public, or better, the lack of a dedicated space to show the permanent collection. This limit has at the same time a positive and a negative implication: the positive is that an archive stored cloth is better preserved than shown in a room full of people and under a constant light, the negative one is that the visitor has only a partial view of the whole museum collection.

For these reasons, and with the advent of the digitization for cultural contents, the construction of a database of digital images overcame to the problem. Since 2000 it was available on the museum website a database with more than 15,000 objects which were already in the manual inventory and where accessible directly from the web, its name was CFA Contemporary Fashion Archives.

The next step, should have been the development of virtual exhibits, on the example of Valentino Virtual Museum and the introduction of interactive media programs. For the moment a new project has been carried on by the Museum library team and with a pool of European experts in digital library contents, the so called **Europeana Fashion Project**.

Europeana Fashion represents a network of 22 partners from 12 European countries, the partners are the main European leading institutions and museums related to fashion culture and is founded with the support of the Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Program (ICT-PSP) of the European Commission.

The consortium of partners provides, aggregates and is supported by a plan of dissemination of material about the history of European fashion; it includes more than 700.000 fashion-related digital objects, ranging from drawings, pictures, videos, fashion exhibitions catalogues, and all the so called 'ephemeras' such as posters, drawings, catwalks invitations, flyers exhibitions, etc.

The Europeana Fashion project started in March 2012 and will end in February 2015. (www.europeanafashion.eu)

3.3.2.7. Contemporary Exhibitions

Every year, during autumn and spring time the museum two exhibitions are inaugurated, these show a selection of pieces from the collection alongside pieces on loan. The starting point for each new exhibition is an overall concept, focussing not merely on clothing but on an entire context: the designer's various sources of inspiration, links with other art disciplines, and so on. No static glass cases, but a dynamic room that is tailored to the needs of each exhibition. This vitality is the very strength of the Antwerp Fashion Museum.

The objective of the Fashion Museum is promote Belgian fashion, and tries to work close with the designers philosophy. Exhibitions are experimental, always according to artistic director Kaat Debo who usually start to work in an empty space.

The international reputation of the museum is given by the exhibitions and the way they communicate fashion. In some months, 51 percent of the visitors came from other countries than Belgium, notably France and Britain. Put it on an annual basis museum plus minus a million euros. Of the province received 200,000 euros for staff costs. Revenues come from tickets, rental location and exhibitions and sponsorship. (eg. Akzo Nobel, schools and the Flemish community). Sponsorship is only a small part of the revenues.

This year autumn exhibition has a particular resonance. Since the 8th of September 2013 until the 16th of February 2014 MoMu showed the exhibition '50 Years Antwerp Fashion Department'. The exhibition is part of a bigger event which involves many projects related to celebration of the 350 years of the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

The exhibition is an all-around retrospective on the role of Fashion Academy to the formation of the 'Belgian Style' and the trademark left in the brilliant career of its students. The education program is examined through the iconic figure of women such as Mary Prijot and Linda Loppa, the role of

the craft techniques and the importance of the drawings in the preparation of a piece are wonderfully shown in the white capsule-like gallery of MoMu.

Then the historical legend of ‘Antwerp Six’ is narrated from the point of view of their friendship and the influences of the 70’s and 80’s young culture on their behavior and their first paces in the fashion world. The description of their careers evolution , as the one of other well-known ex-students as Veronique Branquinho, AF Vandervost, Christian Wijnants, and Peter Pilotto highlights how their education at the Antwerp Academy is still readable through the strings of their clothes.

On the occasion of celebration of Happy Birthday Dear Academie, MoMu, the event agency Antwerp Open and the Flanders Tourism Office presented the project “Antwerp Icons”. Twelve renowned designers, all graduates of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, have chosen an iconic piece from their archive. MoMu, the Fashion Museum of the Province of Antwerp invited photographer Ronald Stoops, make-up artist Inge Grogard and fashion designer Dirk Van Saene to interpret these garments in a styling with printed bodysuits which refer to the signature of the designers. The large format photos pop up at various locations all over the city on piled block containers, this is a nice example of alternative reuse of harbour containers and the visitor is invited to find them walking all around the city (Happybirthdaydearacademie.be).

3.3.3.Fashion Department of Royal Academy of Art.

Probably the most important incubator of creativity in Antwerp is its Fashion Academy. The trade to the designers at the Fashion Academy. After Rome and Paris, the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts, founded in 1663, is the oldest academy in the world while its fashion department was founded in 1963. Every year the number of application is around 400 people from all over the world, and only after a tough selection 13-14 people are allowed to enter the academy. The students graduated until now are from 34 different nationalities. Although the presence of other fashion school in Flanders, for instance the Fashion Academies in Ghent or Brussels, but only the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp is considered really cutting the edge in fashion education. Since its first director Mary Prijot to her successor Linda Loppa the academy has always put so much importance on the knowledge of craft skills. Students are encouraged to achieve their utmost potential and expand their skills as well as developing an artistic signature on which they can build their future career.

In the words of Gerdi Esch the Academy of Antwerp "... is a laboratory. The students are often visionary, without their knowing it, feeling it or realizing it. That laboratory feeling, that creativity, is something you have to develop as strongly as possible. If you don't have that creativity, you will never make an interesting, wearable collection, at any level" ('Fashion Antwerp Academy 50' 2013).

The annual presentation of students works at the end of the year is a mayor event in the fashion sector, literary a real show. It attracts every year 6,000 visitors, including headhunters, fashion professionals, international press and buyers and also new professionals of the sector as fashion bloggers and 'fashionistas'. It's not just a get together of the Antwerp fashion scene protagonists, but also a lot of foreigners are coming to assist it.

3.3.4.Flanders Fashion Institute (FFI)

The activity of FFI in the recent years has been professionalizing as a platform which connects young designers and fashion firms to the market and let them grow from an international point of view. It is always connected with Belgian fashion current state, advises fashion designers and labels on business topics, promotes them abroad and coaches a selection of young designers with high potential to develop their business or start up with their own labels.

FFI aims at a fashion sector with more and mature companies with local and international fame.

To achieve this, FFI informs about Belgian fashion, advises fashion designers and labels on business topics, promotes them abroad and coaches a selection of young designers with high potential.

As already seen in the second chapter, the institute used to have a particular focus on Antwerp while nowadays its interest is much wider. In 2006 it was absorbed by the Flanders District of Creativity: the Flemish government organization for entrepreneurial creativity which renamed a new board of directors and a new business plan for the Institute, now, following the guide of the government is more focused on Flanders employment and promotion. The Board has representatives from the creative industries, the service economy, the insurance industry and an observer of the Flemish government. Members will include companies as Deloitte and McKinsey. The objective of the FFI is to promote the employment in the fashion industry and promotion of new brands.

It is also thank to the governmental support that the FFI started the pioneering role when it comes to co-operation. “But that takes time”, says Director Edith Vervliet: “The cooperation between designers and the industry needs to be further promoted”. Vervliet mentions in this context the Belgian clothing producer Creamoda which is interested in working designers. Such producers are hard to find, because it costs a lot of effort from both parties and is not without risks.

The president of Creamoda Erik Magnus also sees advantages of collaboration: “Clothing manufacturers and designers are willing to reach out a helping hand to debuting on the scene, in exchange for their support, they hope for a lasting partnership”.(FFI, 2011).

The FFI performs the function of liaison within the Antwerp Fashion City. From an independent function it brings parties together and provides coaching to young designers on how to produce their own collection or how to create a business, notions of finance, HR, logistics, participation in trade fairs. One of these project is PLATO organized in collaboration with Voka (Chamber of Commerce) and Antwerp Waasland. Starters in the fashion industry and experienced professionals are brought together in order to transfer knowledge and exchange experiences. Participants have the opportunity to brainstorm in an open and confidential environment with a group of fellow designers and are being supervised by experienced professionals. The cycle consists of 1 starting day and 9 evening sessions. Anne Chapelle, CEO of 32 BVBA (Ann Demeulemeester, Haider Ackermann) and Martine Goossens, CEO and executive coach (Kaat Tilley-Escape-Goost-Palladio), were the guests of the 2009 edition (ffi.be).

3.4. Analysis of the Cluster

After the physical and urban analysis of the fashion district, in this paragraph we look at the strengths of Antwerp as Fashion City, which greatly based on its niche position in the designer artisan fashion. This is a luxury segment, whose achieved position is based on individual creativity and craft knowledge, on the ability of fashion houses and distribution companies sees around itself the involvement of a more complex environment of interdependent determinants such as government bodies, cities, private investors and public interests. It will be examined whether the development and boom of Antwerp fashion design is the result of a stroke of luck or the product of well-targeted government policies, or better the outcome of a conjunction of coincidental events and the active intervention of specific actors.

After seeing in the precedent chapter the evolution of the process of branding Antwerp as a “Fashion City”, in the following pages there will be the attempt of an analysis of environment of the Antwerp fashion cluster as it is nowadays and will be shown the main player of this environment.

The appearance of Antwerp Fashion City is large, much larger than the economic importance of the fashion industry.

The fashion cluster in Antwerp is relatively small, in contrast to large fashion cities like Paris, London and Milan, but the episodes of its history in the last fifty years have demonstrated the formation of a cultural infrastructure, before than the industrial one, which was only lately combined with a political intervention. If agglomeration is not the first evidence of clustering, in the manner Porter referred to in his theory, it is clearly evident that the ‘proximity’ was a strong advantage for the Antwerp Six at the beginning of their careers, while the common cultural background at the Fashion Academy was the ‘knowledge pot’ to nurture and share innovations and ideas.

3.4.1 Antwerp Fashion Design Industry

When it gets to analyze the fashion cluster from a broader perspective it gets clear that the success of a specific designer or company is given by the convergence of different indicators, whose emergence we already saw appearing in the previous paragraphs.

For the analysis of this specific fashion industry has been adopted a model developed by Ann Moons at Vrije University of Brussel called the **Golden Triangle of Success** which distinguishes between the **Capital** involved in the specific industry, the **Cultural management** and the **Networks** or **Hubs**. (Moons, 2007).

The interrelation of these factors is necessary for a cultural and economic success, but is at the same time necessary to remember the principal destination of the model: the creativity core, represented by the designers, whom is required a considerable action and a predominant role. The collection of capital and management skills, the accessibility to networks and the interaction between them are the interdependent elements which can't stand alone but influence each other: networks help more easily the access to capital, good management makes the production more profitable and the capital influences the networks . In addition to the system, the combination of these determinants finds its boost in the government policies and in what Moons address as “unforeseeable events involving luck, hazard and coincidence”. (Moons, 2007:76).

The concept of ‘capital’ refers first to the financial capital but also to what can be considered as ‘cultural capital’. The concept of Cultural capital can be related to all the immaterial aspect of the artist creation of which the fashion design is part: all the education, technical skills, know-how, taste and education, all those values which are prerogative of the actors involved in the circuit of the artistic process. When related to the distinction Bourdieu does in his theory expressed in *The Social Structure of Economy* is possible distinguish between the following types of cultural capital: the **creative capital** which involves the knowledge, taste, idea, then the **commercial capital** (marketing and business techniques involved in the of fashion goods), the **organizational capital** (logistics and distribution), **technical capital** (machines and technical skills), **informational capital** (access to informations of the market) and **legal capital** (mainly copyright). (Bourdieu, 2005).

As illustrated by Leadbeater and Oakley (2005) a new generation of entrepreneurs has emerged with a networked production which combines in the production creativity, collaboration and networking and applies it to various industries sectors. The base of this specific cultural production is based on one hand on the individuality of the designer, on the distinctive feature of his style and

on the other hand to the shared working practices and the commercial declination of his/her creativity.

The fashion designers as cultural entrepreneurs, often are supported by a big motivation and passion but often lack in what is necessary for a successful business: the management and business skills. One of the biggest challenges of designers, especially at the beginning of their activity as a fashion company is the right balance between the artistic and creativity aim of their work and the commercial value and profitability required by the market.

If creativity is the basic of the work of a designer, at the same time it not sufficient by itself. The biggest struggle for a designer is to meet the demand of the market being still able to produce clothes which are culturally significant and represent the specific sign of his style. To make this thing possible, the financial capital should be invested in products which are both culturally and economically valuable. One of the main problem of a fashion company is also the high production cost of clothes, which added to the labor cost of production, takes to the excessive cost of the final output, keeping the 'designers clothes' a niche/luxury product destined only to a sector of the clothes market.

Examples of successful Belgian companies are for example BVBA 32, the company of two famous Flemish brands Haider Ackermann and Ann Demeulemeester, the latter created approximately a turnover of 10 million Euros in 2003 while in 2006 the turnover or BVBA amounted to 15 million Euro. (Annual Report BVBA 32. Fiscal year 2003 and 2006)

Dries van Noten is another famous story of Belgian success internationally recognized, his company achieved a 24.5 million Euro turnover in 2003-2004 while 2006 this turnover increased of 4.5 million euros.(Annual Report Dries Van Noten Inc. Fiscal year 2003-2004 and2005-2006).

These designers brilliant success is the demonstration of how the business skills and the creative capital don't rely only in the ability in one individual, but the surplus value of the creative management counts on the collaboration of a team of different professionals: Ann Demeulemeester is a designer while Ann Chappelle (BVBA 32) is a fashion manager and Marc Gysemans (Gysemans Clothing Company) is an expert of finance and manufacturing. (Moons, 2007).

Leadbeater and Oakley (2005) distinguish three main steps in the starting of a fashion company: the exploratory period (start-up phase and exploration of the market), the growing period (the phase of growth and professional systematization), finally the expansion moment (phase of growth in the market and rational investments). One of the major problems a designer meets in the expanding of his company is exactly the phase of growth, the requisites of the competitive market are probably the major 'limit' in discouraging the cultural entrepreneur during the expanding period.

A possible solution to the problem could be, according to Leadbeater and Oakley, the intervention of government action with the creation of intermediaries and actors which play the role to mediate between the independent producers and the global market.

Although the formation of a designer is merely related to the artistic background a proper basic education in matters of business management and marketing techniques could also help to better interpret the environment around themselves and the processes of the fashion market.

In the recent years something notable has been made in the education field, various fashion Academies have extended their programs offer with classes of fashion management with can be flanked to design courses per se, or become a specialization for student from other fields.

Again Leadbeater and Oakley state that education isn't sufficient by itself, but the major inputs come from already graduated students and experienced peers with whom the young designer can identify and find guidance and inspirational support.

These peers can also play a more fundamental role, they can become colleagues and partners in a new company or the occasion of sharing ideas can take to the formations of others inputs and businesses ideas.

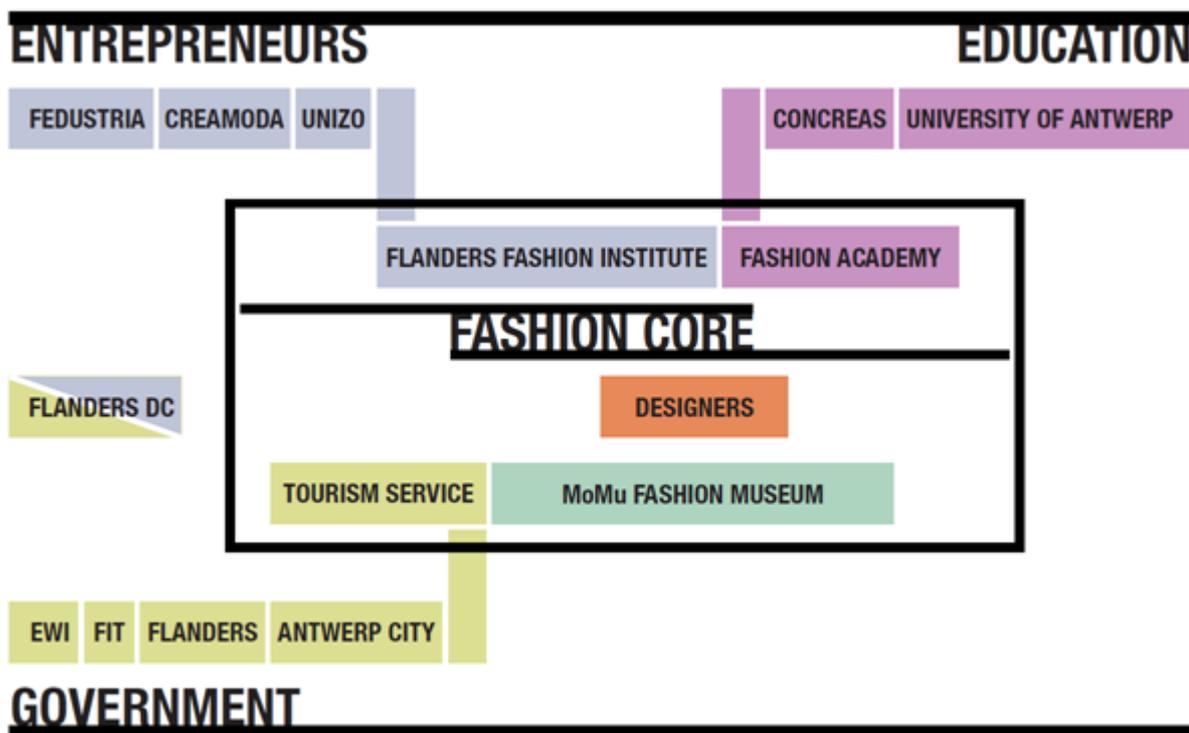
3.4.2 The Network

And here is involved the third element of the triangle of influence: the Networks and Hubs.

The ‘creative community’ has a vital role in the creation of the so-called soft infrastructure, a net of social and informal networks which stimulates the designers production, it offers ideas, contacts, know-how and furthermore can stimulate opportunities of collaborations and competition taking to a more dynamic access to the market.

The city environment and specifically some institutions and individuals are the rich soil for the formation of these creative communities and networks.

The combination of the three elements of the triangle of success are expressed in a scheme which keeps the designers at the center of the core of the fashion system, surrounded by the **Entrepreneurs** (the **Capital**) and the **Government Institutions** (Policy). A third element has been placed in surrounding environment, the **Education** element which has a vital role in the interpretation of Antwerp fashion Cluster, all these elements are in a triangular relationship.



The Entrepreneurs are represented by the mayor companies of production of fabrics and distribution of fashion product: Creamoda, Fedustria and Unizo among others, all business organizations in the field of fashion and clothing. These companies are linked to the designers by the active role played

by the Flanders Fashion Institute whose objective since its foundation was to promote Belgian fashion internationally and locally, now it provides a platform to connect the Belgian designers to the fashion industry.

During the evolution of the capitalization of fashion design by the City Government (in the scheme represented by the City, the Federal Government, the Department of Economy Science and Innovation (EWI) and Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT)) we saw as the mayor actor of this process the local Office of Tourism, nowadays the Antwerp Tourism & Congress headed by Annik Bogaert is still the main actor in the promotion of the city fashion Design. **Flanders District of Creativity (Flanders DC)** is placed in the middle between the Government sector and the Business sector because of its nature of an agency founded by the Flemish Government in 2004 to promote creativity among Flemish entrepreneurs and help creative businesses to develop.

Finally the Education is represented by the main institutions of education as the University of Antwerp, although the principal place for education in fashion is the Antwerp Department of the local Royal Academy. The role of the Academy is not limited only to the education but has an a vital role of promotion and can literary launch the career of a new designer. Took in consideration that Antwerp never had a Fashion Week, the graduation show with the presence of the press, buyers and notable guests can really act as springboard for the students. The last year exhibition was for instance particularly remarkable; for the celebration of the sixty years of the Fashion Department the members of the jury where the designers who went down in the history with the name 'Antwerp Six' accompanied with the New York Times fashion journalist Suzy Menkes and the designer Jean Paul Gaultier.

On this occasion the collection of the Korean student Minju Kim and the one of the Canadian Deven Halfnight Leflufy, amongst others, were particularly appreciated that the first some month later won the H&M design Award and the latter started a successful collection now distributed by mayor retailers such as Opening Ceremony.

The network of the Flemish design fashion industry can be a good example for the application of the Actor Network Theory, developed by Michel Callon and Bruno Latour in 1986 which defines the network as a mobile connection of various relations between different actors. In the case of Flemish Fashion they consist in the designers, the Fashion Academy, journalists, bloggers, retailers, managers, start-up platforms as the FFI, etc.

The interrelations of its actors can vary and the network can contract and expand, depending on the entrance of new actors while some others gain power inside the network in this way the network is never geographically restricted and static. (Callon 1986).

The principal processes involved in the connections are the *translation* and the *alignment*. The translation is the mechanism used by an actor to enroll other actors in the network speaking on the behalf of others, the so called translator-spokesperson. An example can be the one of a designer sending the invitation to his show to a famous journalist, or a young student who tries to enter the famous Fashion Academy of Antwerp or gets an interview to start the training in a famous fashion company. The decision to place under the same roof the major agencies for the promotion of the ‘Belgian style’: the Academy, the FFI and the Fashion Museum in the Modenatie building, or to do it exactly in the same street which was the ancient market place for clothing and fabrics trading or a shop owner trying to sell the collection of the latest famous designer etc. all these are situation in which is involved the process of translation. Alignment is on the other hand the success in achieving those goals and positions.

Necessary for an alignment are the nodal points of passages: those actors which are essentials for the actor-network, these are called the ‘hubs’ and take with themselves what Bourdieu calls the “huge amount of symbolic capital”.

During the end of 80’s with the actions taken by the Textile Plan, the role of the ITCB (Belgian Institute for textile and Clothing) acted as an important hub between different actors, considered that its primary goal since the foundation was the mediation between industry and designers.

The ITCB and the various events as the Golden Spindle or the ‘Mode, dit is Belgisch’ campaign and magazine were obligatory passages through which all the artists had to pass, making this way the institute and the actors around it indispensable to the Flemish designers actor-network.

Nowadays the Flanders Fashion Institute, as the successor of ITCB, still plays an essential role in the network as hubs, while the Fashion Academy is still one of the most prestigious schools in the world, and it is easier for its students to be hired by famous fashion houses or to obtain the support of FFI to start their business after their education trainee.

At the same time journalists, designers and stylists hold a big amount of symbolic capital: the contact with a prestigious fashion house and a period of training there is an important card of presentation for a young designer, the positive media attention helps the commercialization of his collection while a negative attention can impede or even arrest the expansion plans of a fashion company. As can be seen, the functioning and efficiency of the circuit of fashion production is strongly influenced by the designer networks, so the role of active networking can be considered, together with the ability and skills of a fashion designer and the luck factor of being at the right place at the right time, a strong element of success.

Conclusions

What is the government's role in this scheme? What is its contribution to the formation of the network and the consequent materialization in the city of Antwerp?

During the evolution of the history of fashion design in Antwerp, since the formation of the Textile Plan to its evolution into the activities of the Flanders Fashion Institute we saw that the role of the government influenced the determinants of these actors (mainly sponsoring its formation) but never took over the role of the market and the natural development of the network.

From a financial point of view the role of the State could be the creation of measures to stimulate and support the fashion business, focusing on the potential strengths of the sector and activating financial policies as loans and participations (e.i. CultuurInvest).

Considered the events behind the ITCB and its decadence in the long run, the financial support has to be combined with other supporting policy measures, for instance through the promotion of training and education, the restoration of places which can be common places to work and share ideas, through the fiscal incentives or with actions of clustering and networking which can be acted with organized offices.

Finally the efficient policy must be based on the collaboration and complementary work of different departments as tourism, social welfare, education, culture and economy and at the same time on different geographical levels: local, regional, national and international with the aim to create a common and transversal frame and structure of policy.

At this regard the promotion of projects such as the restoration and requalification of the ModeNatie building and the support given to big exhibitions projects as the Mode 2001 Landed-Geland or the latest 'Happy Birthday Dear Academie', demonstrated the clear political intervention on the fashion subject, but was that possible without the emergence of the 'Antwerp Six' phenomenon and the presence in the city of one of the most famous fashion academies in the world?

Obviously not, as we have seen in the evolution of this work the city government realized only in the last ten years the real potentiality of this creative industry; a phenomenon which was emerged already at the end of 80's with the Avant-garde fashion and was evolving by itself in a complete independent way.

The city of Antwerp was able to 'catch the flow', to see what was happening in the city (probably more from the pages of Vogue America than from the sidewalks of Nationalestraat) and convey it in the right channel, brand it with the right spot.

Although the success of this story is impossible to state that this was the right formula, every city has different story to tell, is like a book all the world can read but only the inhabitants have the right keys to fully understand its language.

Although the study of Florida got a huge response and is often invoked by cultural planners as the demonstration that culture is objectively the key success factor for the City seeking success in the future economy immaterial, in fact, the correlations identified in the research is not in itself proof of the existence of a precise causation.

Transforming the hypothesis of a right formula, the magic potion for cities, in a incontrovertible evidence on which to base a methodology reliable for the development and growth of the urban future, is therefore a strong force.

To conclude is interesting to quote the words of the fashion journalist Suzy Menkes, from the New York, written for the inauguration of the 'Happy Birthday dear Academie' exhibition. The article with the title 'A Sense of a Place' perfectly express what is the feeling evoked by the fashion creativity in the city of Antwerp:

“There is a particular shade of blue – the colour of a rain-washed sky – and a rust that is a little duller than Italian terracotta, which are both associated with Antwerp fashion, and you might see them in a fur scarf or a wool coat in a catwalk shop of Dries Van Noten.

Both colours are not only traced through the many different collections in the respectable and modest Belgian style that come into prominence with the Antwerp Six in the 1980's: they are also the colours found in the work of Pieter Breughel the Elder, such as the burnt orange of the servers' jackets with a single splash of blue in *The Peasant Wedding*, 1567.

With a history that goes back to the Middle Ages, it is hard to separate Antwerp designers from the physical presence of their city. In the clothes of today, you still seem to find the textures of wood and stone that appear on the buildings with Gothic spires – those thin spikes reaching up to a sky more often leaden with low clouds than lit up with an expanse of blue.

Like Cristóbal Balenciaga, the designer who was so closely associated with Spain that you could feel the influence of his birth country in the architecture of his couture collection, Belgian designers seem engulfed in a sense of place...

...The mystery of modern Antwerp is this: now that there are instant travel connections and a 21st century period of multi-culture, how is possible that Belgian designers remain so relatively uninfluenced by any other fashion aesthetic such as that of the French, Italian or even Japanese? Despite being situated in the centre of Europe, they still have a very singular vision. Japanese designers who came to prominence during the 1980s presented a striking and intriguing contrast to

the Antwerp designers. A 'Tokyo Six' did not exist – nor did the idea that emerging designers such as Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo of 'Comme des Garçons' or Yohji Yamamoto might be viewed as an entity. To this day, Japanese designers stress their uniqueness and reject the idea that they have a group identity.

By contrast Antwerp designers were not only grouped together, but even seemed to enjoy this 'cousinhood'... Since the period when Belgian designers were discovering an identity, until today, the initial aims and ideas seems to have survived. In the current digital world that connects via cyberspace, personal and national identities are still strong in Antwerp”.

Suzy Menks, 'A Sense of Place' in 'Fashion Antwerp Academy' (2013)

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