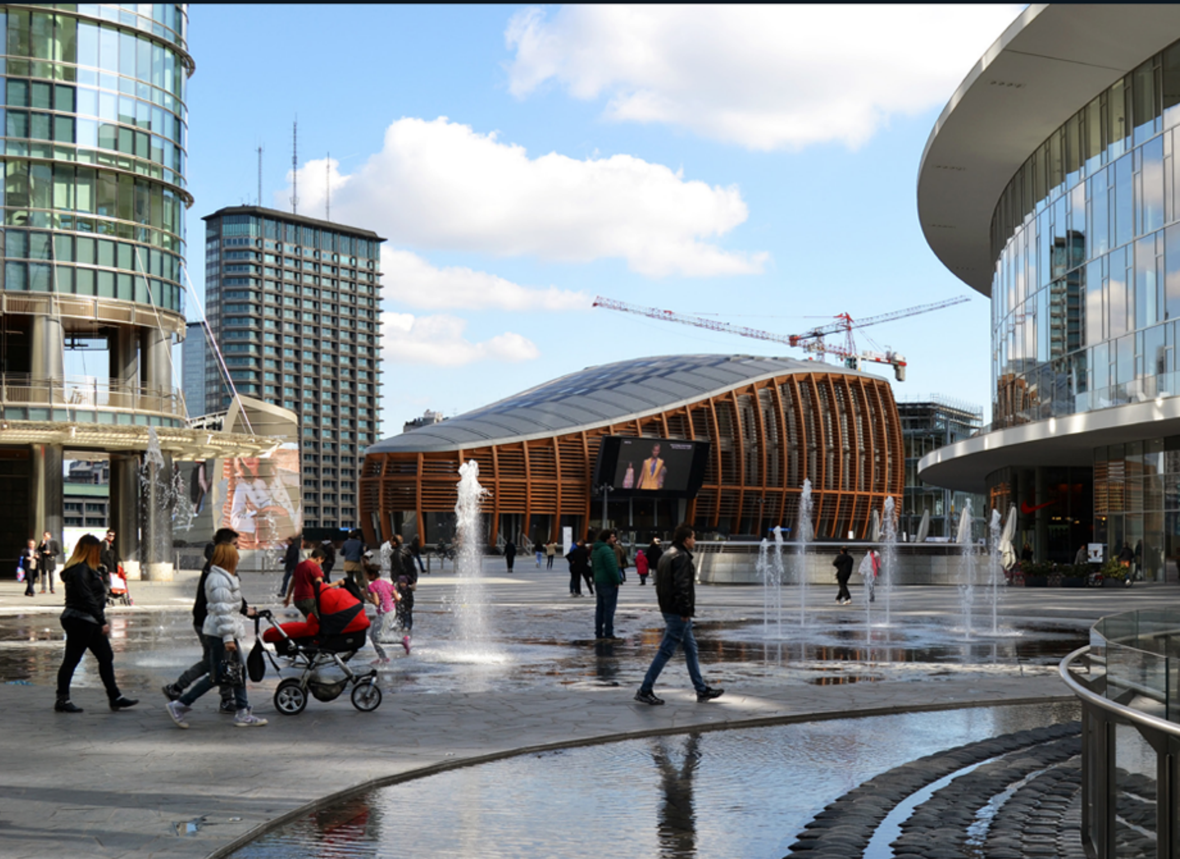
EDITED BY MARIO PARIS

Making Prestigious Places

HOW LUXURY INFLUENCES THE TRANSFORMATION OF CITIES



ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

ROUTLEDGE

Making Prestigious Places

Making Prestigious Places investigates the spatial dimension of luxury, both as a sector involving activities, operators and investments, and as a system of values acting as a catalyst for recent urban transformations. Luxury shares a well-established connection to the city, as a place of production, consumption and self-representation, and continues to grow despite economic difficulties. This edited collection includes case studies from Europe, North and South America, Asia and the Middle East to create a dialogue around these developments and the challenges presented, such as the tension between the idea of prestige and current values in urban planning, the discussion between academic reflections and operational practices, and how these interact with the long-term economic and social dynamic of the city. With rich analysis and a preface written by Patsy Healey, this book will be an important addition to the discourse on luxury for urban planners and researchers.

Mario Paris is PoliMI International Fellow and Contract Professor in Urban Planning and researcher of URB&COM lab at the Politecnico di Milano, Italy. His research focuses on the role of luxury stakeholders in recent urban transformations and an advanced spatial analysis of current metropolitan dynamics.

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How Luxury Influences the Transformation of Cities

Edited by Mario Paris

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2018
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Paris, Mario, editor.
Title: Making prestigious places : how luxury influences the transformation of cities / [edited by] Mario Paris.
Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2017. | Series: Routledge research in planning and urban design | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017007950 | ISBN 9781315312453 (hardback)
Subjects: LCSH: Urbanization. | Luxury. | Prestige. | Consumption (Economics)--Social aspects.
Classification: LCC HT361 .M35 2017 | DDC 307.76--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017007950

ISBN: 978-1-138-23252-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-31245-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by HWA Text and Data Management, London

To the people I love,
To the places I care about
(although they are not "prestigious")

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Preface

Patsy Healey

When I was asked to write a *Preface* for this book, I was both intrigued and worried. I was intrigued because I had been thinking about those who search for luxury and prestige in our societies in a very general way as the practices of global elites. I was worried, along with much of the academic urban literature, that these practices, and the development processes which catered for them, displaced many less fortunate folk in our cities, as well as contributing to the deeply worrying inequalities of our times. My focus, which I have tried to express in my own book, *Making Better Places* (Healey, 2010), a title echoed by this present book, has been on understanding and intervening in how places evolve in order to promote the flourishing of the many, rather than the few, with an emphasis on people's daily life concerns with how to get by in today's urban contexts.

Reading this book challenges easy assumptions about the impact of development aimed at a 'luxury' market. It has reminded me that an understanding of contemporary life and how it plays out spatially needs a rich ethnographic understanding of the evolving lifestyles and preoccupations of all groups which co-exist within urban contexts, as well as a grasp of the power which different groups can wield to realise their aspirations. The very rich, famous and influential have of course a great deal of power. This book opens up a window on the preferences and practices of such people and those who seek to shape and cater to their tastes and demands, and the complex diversity among them.

Many of the chapters in this book underline that the scale, nature and wider impacts of areas in cities where such people cluster cannot be read off from simple generalisations. As the next chapter explains, a key aim of the book is to challenge the many assertions in the urban literature about gentrification and displacement. It argues that urban scholars and planners need to look more closely at the way high status enclaves evolve within specific urban contexts, the variable ways which efforts to create such areas through redevelopment projects play out in different places and times, and how these affect the overall social and spatial patterning of urban life. The various chapters then explore whether such processes always generate adverse consequences for the rest of us. Do they always lead to displacement and gentrification? Do they sometimes lead to innovations in lifestyles and fashion which then spread out more generally? Some decades ago, a study comparing socio-spatial change in London and Paris noticed that where dual-income professionals decided to live had a major impact on the opportunities available for other groups (Preteceille, 2000). These days, such groups are pushed out from city cores by the extraordinary hike in house prices. Are the very rich now the spatial shapers of cities?

Setting out in search of the practices of the very rich, famous and influential is however fraught with problems. All the chapters struggle with definitions. Should the focus just be on global elites, as S. Sassen (1991) has pioneered in her work? Or on just the very rich, able to buy into wherever their taste wanders? As the authors try to tie down their focus with definitions, they draw on different disciplinary traditions, from urban design, fashion and marketing to sociology and history of art. Exploring meanings of luxury, prestige and high status, some interesting tensions evolve. Long-established rich elite people prefer to avoid visibility, clustering in neighbourhoods but without much in the way of external display. Others, in the classic way of the *nouveau riche*, pursue an opposite strategy, seeking to display their wealth, and may thereby create destinations which others come to gaze at. The redevelopment projects of the 'urban renaissance' of recent decades have often sought, not always successfully, to create such destinations, using high-end shopping, 'archistar' buildings or culturally alluring arts venues.

Many of the examples described here are from Italian cities, and especially Milan, a key global centre of high-end fashion and design. Some of its development projects are positioned within this cultural awareness and intensively discussed as art forms. Some other land in its tissue gets developed, however, without any process of discussion and/or interaction with citizens. Milan seems a good example of a city in continual movement, spatially reconstituting itself, as different sets of relations rise to dominance in the city's economic, social and cultural life. As A. Bourdin, in the penultimate chapter, comments, in such a dynamic context, the search for 'the new', for the 'latest fashion', is continual. This implies that, in a rich relational way, the spatial patterning of urban areas is constantly in flux in terms of both land value and social labelling, with some areas increasing in value, and becoming more attractive, other areas becoming less attractive, and some areas left neglected or abandoned.

For urban planners and managers, the critical question is when and in what way such spatial re-patterning processes matter. Much of the critical urban literature emphasises the inequalities and social injustice of spatial processes which concentrate urban interventions in locales only accessible to the affluent and well-connected, a critique directed at both urban megaprojects and the 'new urbanism' movement. Yet is it possible that the benefits of such investment can be made to flow out more widely across a city? And do such projects sometimes act as models – for example, of more environmentally sustainable practices, which then shape interventions across a city? What kind of governance 'steering' could help to maximise the wider benefits and minimise the displacement effects of investments aimed at creating 'luxury' locales and 'prestige' destinations?

Clearly, expert urban designers and planners can create social, financial and ecological value through the way existing, new and redeveloped areas of cities are designed and managed. It may also be possible to capture and redirect some of the value generated by the creation of elite destinations through the shrewd design of regulations and tax regimes. These could aim to expand and maintain public realm assets, improve general connectivity across a city, and build up resources to enable investment in parts of the city neglected by private investment interest. Many cities, including Milan, have attempted such an approach (Mazza, 2004). Such interventions inherently play a role in shaping urban land and property markets. But they tend to follow the market-shaping role of property development investment, which in turn tends to follow the movements of those setting the lifestyle trends of the affluent.

More ambitious city governments seek to locate the tools of regulation and taxation within the context of a city-wide spatial strategy. Despite all the critique of 'comprehensive development plans' to be found in the planning literature of recent years, city governments which seek to shape how the social-spatial patterning of their cities unfolds need some kind of overall spatially-articulated strategic concept and a strong commitment to public interest values beyond merely 'promoting growth' (which too often means just promoting any kind of development). Such strategies may exist in planning documents, as 'visions' or 'aims and objectives'. But a strategic concept which shapes how markets evolve needs a long-term existence, and to be locked into the thinking of many actors through time (Healey, 2007). Examples of such market-shaping strategies can be found in London, where the idea of re-balancing the city's growth to spread east as well as west emerged from the 1960s, or Portland, Oregon with its ideas of developing a more compact urban pattern, and Vancouver's neighbourhood design approach which grew from its most prestigious neighbourhood to spread across the city, or Barcelona's work in re-valuing its rundown city centre. In such contexts, spatial planning strategies not only shaped specific development projects over time, but also shaped how the development industry itself operated.

Such market-shaping strategies require real political courage and technical sophistication. They involve capturing value from luxury locales to invest in other parts of the city. They may also set in train a socio-spatial dynamic which withdraws value from some places, especially where there has been an overblown speculative boom in land and property prices. In some cases, it may be appropriate to let a locale lie neglected, thus creating opportunities for the bohemian insurgents so much associated these days with creative arts and culture innovations. This implies a complex balancing act between 'caring for' the public realm and social-spatial dynamics of all the locales across a city and a rich awareness of the specific opportunities and challenges of each one, as they shift and change.

The essays in this book help to cultivate such awareness through its focus on a particular, but very significant, kind of locale within cities, and especially big metropolises. Urban planners and scholars need to set such inquiries alongside concerns with how the marginalised get by in cities, with the socio-spatial patterning of 'ordinary life' in cities (Robinson, 2006), and how these multiple daily life experiences co-exist and intersect in cities. Each city will be different in this respect, but across all our societies we face intense challenges as the financial inequalities between the very rich and the rest of us become more obvious and extreme. Addressing these inequalities is not just a matter of appropriate taxation and regulations. It is also about the bargain that is struck in every city between opportunities to promote 'luxurious lifestyles' and responsibility to attend to the flourishing of all a city's inhabitants.

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From luxury to prestigious place-making

An overview

Mario Paris and Li Fang[1]

Nowadays, a consolidated tradition and some current trends related with a deep change of approach mark actions and strategies of those stakeholders involved in luxury – as a sector and as a system of values – and, when they interact with space, their role in processes of place making and creation of identity.

This chapter points out the reasons for considering luxury as a field of research for urban studies, framing the topic and suggesting some key points to read through and link the different chapters of the book. At the same time, it focuses on the multi-disciplinary approach needed to comprehend this topic and its impacts, which involve social, cultural, economic and territorial aspects.

Therefore, in this reading luxury is a driver of change in the city (colonizing or regenerating some fragment, grafting new functions on industrial or residential buildings, etc.) and in its metropolitan territory (creating new centralities and new territorialities, implementing the network of existing natural and cultural excellences, promoting local tastes and character to the global public, etc.).

Luxury as a field of research for urban studies

During the past twenty years, and even more so since 2008 and the financial crisis, contemporary society has experienced a period of social, economic and technologic pressures. In this period, consolidated structures have been weakened by tensions and flows (Bagnasco, 2003) and we are dealing with a turn which involves culture and space. These processes have broken up the modern social and institutional orders and the conditions on which Western societies used to rely. Hence, new trends and behaviours (sharing economies, social polarizations, etc.) have direct impacts on urban transformations, and spatial governance must deal with new challenges, such as the need for sustainable urban development, the global competition in economy, culture and tourism, or the issue of urban attractiveness and new demands in regard to quality of life by citizens (Fang, 2015a).

Therefore, the aim of this book is not to propose another pretentious – and probably weak, like many others – explanation of the current socio-economic situation or its impact on the city. On the contrary, the book addresses a specific aspect of these changes and tries (i) to analyse luxury as a traditional component of the human environment and the urban culture and (ii) to comprehend – in the word's double meaning of to 'understand' and to 'take together' (Governa & Memoli, 2011) – how it influences recent transformations in metropolitan areas. This operation is important for two reasons: on the one hand, because it shows how luxury has a strong – and visible – impact on cities; on the other hand, because it is one of the traditional concepts and tools of our discipline, and which, as urban studies scholars, we should update if we want improve a diverse understanding (Amin & Thrift, 2005) and create new needed interpretations (Balducci & Fedeli, 2008) of current territories.

For this reason, we approached the issue of luxury as a cross-cultural semantic field (Dubois, Laurent & Czellar, 2001) which contains an articulated set of many components and meanings. This position requires authors to take a more open and sensitive approach but, at the same time, it enables them to understand that luxury is a 'fuzzy' topic, and that when specific disciplines concentrate only on one aspect, they lose the complexity and richness of its impacts. Several scholars have tried to define luxury in more precise terms. However, according to K. Heine (2012), their conclusion has been that luxury can be anything and nothing, and every society has its own notion of it. In this regard, T. Urkmez and R. Wagner (2015) argued that the definition of luxury is so subjective that scholars working on the topic must take account of regional, temporal, economic, cultural and situational relativities. We have rejected this challenge, and for this reason, we have treated this subject as a broader field encompassing physical, intangible and metaphorical elements; and we have construed the concept of luxury considering all these aspects together. In this book, when the authors speak of luxury, they sometimes focus on operators and financial actors based on brands and industrial groups, when they produce, distribute and sell goods, and when they deliver services to a specific target of clients. At some other times, they highlight immaterial aspects related to the images and values used in marketing by global brands to produce specific needs, desires and experiences among consumers.

Private companies have a very specific view on what constitutes a luxury product (Gardyn 2002; Taittinger 1988). D. Mortelmans (2005) summarized it in three essential characteristics as envisaged by T. Veblen (1899): scarcity, extra value, and high quality. K. Heine (2012) used six characteristics to define luxury: price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness, and symbolism. These conceptions identify luxury as a feature of particular goods or products, and they have the advantage of adapting the definition to specific socio-economic contexts. However, although this approach frames the idea of luxury of fashion brands and producers, these are just some of the actors involved in this sector which comprises real estate agents, facilities providers, etc. Moreover, the term 'luxury' often denotes the character of perceptions, experiences, and places more than it does material features. This lack of precision in defining the reasons for considering something luxurious generates opportunities, ambiguities, and – as we shall see in the book – a strong differential rent for some stakeholders.

As a literature subject, the luxury field has been explored in several domains: philosophy (which involves a large debate about luxury: Plato considered it to be a weakness of society; J.J. Rousseau, Voltaire, G. Lipovetsky and J. Serroy, and more recently A. Appaudurai and Ch. Berry showed different positions about this topic); management, marketing and economics (e.g. A. Benoist, R. Harré, D. Allérès and B. Dubois and P. Duquesne); psychology and culture of consumption (e.g. S. Kemp, A. Carlin and L.M. Visconti or M. Featherstone); architecture of retail places (e.g. L. Crewe et al., Vernett and de Witt, M. Karrholm); tourism (e.g. A. Bauer, C. Thurlow and A. Jaworski or J. Urry); and history (e.g. J. Castarède). Surprisingly, luxury has been largely ignored as a topic in urban studies and planning research (Fang, 2014); or worse, it has been discussed in rather ideological and mono-directional terms, discarding its potentials and the innovations related to it.

After three decades in which operators pushed for transversal expansion and horizontal brand diffusion (globalization), they radically changed their approach because of the saturation of the market for physical goods, shifts in consumers' preferences (from possession to sharing, etc.), and the need to diversify the portfolio of investments for emergent groups. In the last five to ten years, new trends have marked their strategies. They are based on a new sensitivity to the places and contexts in which local tastes, their narratives and specific features become opportunities for business. Luxury has followed these tendencies by showing an unprecedented interest in the spatial dimension, and players have changed their traditional parasite strategies (colonizing some of the most visible and important areas of cities by paying rents that other actors cannot afford) to other approaches. Today, luxury brands and groups are involved more than ever in urban changes through the economic, cultural and social activities that they develop in parallel with their strategies as companies and financial actors. In our opinion, it is now necessary to take account of luxury's role in urban/territorial transformations in a different and constructive way that goes beyond ideological approaches and reductive simplifications ('It is all about gentrification', etc.).

When luxury interacts with spaces, it influences the lifestyles and everyday routines of the people who live in them, also if they are not VIPs or premium customers. Owing to the financial power and visibility of the groups involved, those actions represent opportunities for local governments and local agents, so that stakeholders interact with the political agenda and local/regional planning debates.

As recognized by M. Karrholm (2012: 1), the traditional spaces of retail such as city centres and outlying shopping malls are either increasing in size or disappearing. Thus produced are new urban types and entire environments totally dedicated to retail. The proliferation of new retail space brings about a re- and de-territorialization of urban public space that also includes the transformation of materialities and urban design, and even of the logic and ways in which these design amenities meet the needs of retailers and/or consumers. Within this framework, new trends and factors related to the consumer society increase both the complexity of the territorial reality and the system of spatial practices developed by their users.

This book follows this approach, but it enlarges the focus. For this reason, in this book we deal not only with luxury shops, but also with the heterogeneous urban environment related to luxury that involves spaces for the production of goods and services, places for their consumption, hotels and housing blocks which admit specific lifestyles, and all those common/shared places – public or not – used or colonized by luxury that attract tourists and visitors.

Therefore, luxury is the common denominator of several recent dynamics and transformations in metropolitan regions and cities. For all these reasons, we consider luxury to be an important field of research and a factor that urban studies should take into account. This book collects the results of our efforts to understand this specific topic and the related risks and opportunities for cities and territories.

A traditional relationship: luxury and the city

Historically, luxury has been closely related to the city. Nobles and, after the industrial revolution, a growing upper-middle class represented the reference target for the producers and retailers of premium goods. The luxury market and, often, luxury productions (art, artisanship, design, new creative productions, etc.) have been urban elements. Given the role of proximity, in order to provide goods or services to their customers, they took place in the centre of the city. In W. Christaller's (1933) terms, luxury goods and creators have been a 'central' feature based in prime locations. But this relationship has relied on more than simple economic variables; according to L. Mumford (1937), cities have been the stage of the social drama and, therefore, privileged spaces for self-representation. This role was evident in the main squares, high streets, arcades and passages which traditionally hosted public life and social encounters. Retailers, and among them *haute couture* boutiques (Pimlott, 2007), always guarded spaces of this kind, locating in them shops that contributed to the city's urban life. The urban novel of the nineteenth century pointed out these aspects and, together with the social, economic and political bases of Western society, also described its space (Alvarez Mora, 2015). In this literature, filtered by the neo-Marxist approach, work in the changing city is a driver of wealth, poverty and complexity, and luxury retail played a prominent role within this field. It did so in Zola's novel *Au bonheur des dames* (1883), in which the French author argued that to change the economy – and thus their economic situation – investors must change the city. For this reason, two bourgeois entrepreneurs created a department store which erased traditional local retail, and they used this tool as a driver for their social and economic advancement. Traces of these processes are still visible in consolidated European cities, such in Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris (France), Sloane Street in London (UK), or via Montenapoleone in Milan (Italy); these fragments still maintain their function as retail spaces for luxury goods. They have become a landmark for customers, symbolic spaces of luxury in the city. For operators, these locations are still important because of their capacity to create an identity and a narrative about brands and companies – so much so that they are converted into a real heritage (Dion & Borraz, 2015) in terms of both economic value and marketing.

A number of authors have studied these enclaves, and their contributions show several different but consolidated points of view and approaches to these places.[2] Therefore, in this book we use this knowledge as a reference but we focus on other, alternative, spaces. At the same time, it is important to underline three important features of those clusters which characterize the relationship between luxury and cities. First, they occupy some of the most privileged places of the city, surrounded by urban landmarks (churches, theatres, etc.) and recognized public spaces (squares, boulevards, piazzas), and close to high-class residential neighbourhoods. These choices depended on several reasons, related to the practical functioning of activities, but also to the need of the operators to take advantage of the positional value of some specific spaces and their symbolic role within the urban pattern. Second, the public of these clusters consists of three specific types of target users: rich inhabitants, tourists, and city users. Traditionally, operators selected locations to intersect their flows, and this mix of 'local taste' and global customers marked the space and the offers located in them. Third, those clusters of retail activities, consumption of goods and services represented a product based on traditional approaches of companies and players aimed at responding to modern market needs. The commercial and financial effectiveness of those agglomerations has become a sort of model for the colonization of cities, also in places – for instance, 5th Avenue in New York or North Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills (CA) – far from Europe and its characteristic urban tissues. The results show the reciprocal power of luxury brands and customers to shape the images and living practices of specific places, leaving evident traces in cities. Moreover, these geographies take over the central urban areas and spread around the peripheries and into the countryside. According to G. Dematteis (1998), this movement provides spaces for specific leisure activities (sports, relaxation, etc.) that mix historical traditions of the Mediterranean aristocracy (with their villas and country houses) and the suburban imagery of the British suburb (recovering a privileged contact with nature, and so on).

We cannot simplify here the recent processes of the city's 'explosion' (see Portas, Domingues & Cabral, 2011; Font, 2007; Graham & Marvin, 2001; Monclùs, 1998; Ascher, 1995) or explain all its complex transformation by considering only the role of luxury. But there is considerable evidence of the importance of space in the evolution of luxury and the pervasiveness of its territorial effects. At the same time, one of the most important outputs of our inquiry will be the strong reciprocity of the relation between luxury and the metropolitan – or post-metropolitan (Soja, 2011) – environment as one of the key factors in the recent evolution of operators' strategies based on moving from traditional locations or returning to consolidated urban spaces, or integrating these two approaches, but often re-discovering the 'power of place'.

Luxury transforms space: from exclusiveness to prestige

Over the past two decades, consumerism has promoted an optimistic attitude and a process of de-moralization of luxury; and, together with shopping, these activities have become a sort of 'ceremony of collective affirmation' (Lippolis, 2009). In the introduction to their book, Y. Gabriel and T. Lang (1995; X) pointed out that cultural theorists have increasingly recognized the spirit of our age not in modes of production, government, class structure or art but in modes of consumption, lifestyles and identities. Among these, luxury has gained even more visibility. In parallel, the financial and economic role of this sector has constantly grown since 2010[3] and become even more evident in the local and global economy (Díaz-Bustamante, Carcelén & Puelles, 2016; Hennigs et al., 2013; Jung Choo et al., 2012).

Therefore, luxury – according to E.W. Soja (1996), D. Harvey (1996) and H. Lefebvre (1991) – contributes to processes of social construction of space and its components. This influence is even more evident if it is observed in urban environments. In consolidated cities, in parallel with the traditional colonization of the most prominent and central spaces – which continues – several original phenomena can be appreciated. Luxury is a key factor in a number of operations of regeneration and/or refurbishment of existing neighbourhoods (i.e. Hackney Walk in London, or the Atlantic City Tourism District in New Jersey) and buildings (such as the Fondaco dei tedeschi in Venice) where, often, programmes include mixed uses (with offices, headquarters and company campuses, housing) and attempts at social innovation (involving culture, leisure and creative functions).

At the same time, especially – but not only – in Asia and emerging markets, luxury operators act as investors and/or developers of real estate (Fang, 2017), and they take part as agents in processes of urban growth (among others, see the YarraBend masterplan for Melbourne, that will became the first world's 'Tesla suburb') or the construction of luxury clusters related to shopping mall/lifestyle centres (as in Village Mall – Avenida das Américas in Rio de Janeiro, Sin Kong Place in Beijing or Mecenatpolis in Seoul).

Between these two extremes, various examples show this change of approach by luxury operators. This is the focal point of our analysis: currently, they play a more active and involved role in the city, taking part in actions. Luxury is a catalyst generating several opportunities (visibility, events, new heritage and shared spaces, etc.) and not only parasitizing its historical or urban values. Obviously, these operations involve risks and ambiguities, such as new forms of gentrification or expulsion of inhabitants, or a repetition of consolidated interventions in the city and in its peripheries developed by new players.

The book provides an original 'eclectic atlas' (Boeri, 2011: 51) of these operations and through it, we may understand how and in what terms luxury influences the transformation of the city. The final result is an interesting set of experiences and contributors, who within their chapters, have tried to define all those examples with a sort of tentative taxonomy, taking borrowed terms and concepts from other fields and, sometimes, re-interpreting consolidated ideas of urban planning. This 'need of definition' shows a lack of cultural studies about this specific topic and an absence of solid tools in this field. Within this heterogeneous system, we can point out two principal trends, based on the subsistence – or subversion – of traditional luxury approaches.

On the one hand, luxury-driven transformations exhibit the paradox underlined by Ch. Berry (1994: 4), who pointed out that luxury stakeholders (producers, sellers, retailers, etc.) want to sell as much of their product as they can; at the same time, they push for the exclusive character of their goods. Berry's studies stressed the importance of 'exclusion' to connote products of this kind, and the way in which they are used to create distinctions among different groups, or classes, of people that marketing and economy experts call 'segmentation'. According to P. Bourdieu (1984: 2), consumption is a process of communication based on specific codes, and thanks to their natural skill in understanding them, humans read encoded messages. Traditionally, the – not so hidden – message relative to luxury consumption relies on distinctions based on accessibility of those goods or services, and their unreachability becomes a significant part of their emblematic power and their role as status symbols.

Thus, the transformation of space based on this traditional approach relies on the same dimensions as other luxury products: rarity, price, and extraordinariness. This way, the production/transformation of places passes through a number of interventions, supporting each single operation with a strong marketing campaign that stresses the symbolic values of living/consuming/using those new spaces, as well as the scarcity of those environments and their uniqueness. By regulating supply and demand, operators control the price of the space, ground rents, and the real estate market. But they also work on symbolic aspects (Fang, 2015b). Several products of this approach embody this strategy, which also uses specific ploys to define differences, limits and distinctions between customers, users, guests and inhabitants and other people, welcoming the first and excluding the others.

As said, this strategy works through processes of exclusion or expulsion (of inhabitants, users, etc.) from spaces, and their isolation and/or polarization. Those spaces became gated communities or restricted districts, and they pertain to a molecular geography of segregated spaces within the metropolis.

In this case, luxury takes advantage of urban qualities and power, extracting extra value from transformed spaces without reciprocating in terms of physical commodities, services or immaterial valuables to the whole city, but focusing only in goods and spaces consumers. Recent experiences in Doha (Qatar) and Middle-East countries, but also Belgrade's waterfront (Serbia) or the Battersea Power Station area in London (UK) show how widespread this approach is.

On the other hand, a number of scholars working in the economics and marketing field have devoted a great deal of time and effort to understanding recent dynamics and processes related to luxury. To be mentioned in particular are the results of recent studies (among them Wierzba, 2015 and Ricca & Robins, 2012) that highlight a change in the strategies of luxury operators whereby they attempt to open new segments and attract new targets (not just the classic luxury market). These strategies are far from the idea to exceed the price barrier to luxury, and the Marxist utopia of classless societies, as well as from trading-down processes in which luxury operators increase their market by decreasing the price of their offers. This approach relied on different marketing tools to improve the brand image of companies, as well as their soft power on local and global scales.

In their recent works D. Allérès (2006, 2005) and J.S. Vickers and F. Renand (2003) identified within the luxury field different classes, in which luxury is accessible, intermediate and inaccessible (or extra-luxury). According to the expectances of users/customers, operators supply diverse services and goods, modulating the qualities of their products but also using alternative messages in their communication and their marketing. As E. Corbellini and S. Saviolo (2009) pointed out, accessible luxury offers high-quality products and services with a good quality/price ratio, guaranteeing design, innovation and brand values, but often without the support of a strong tradition in specific fields, or the personality of a specific designer or testimonial, and strong marketing intended to improve the luxury value of the goods. Extra luxury offers expensive single items, tailor-made services with specific and innovative design, premium raw materials and excellent manufacturing by a few important producers known worldwide. Their market is far from mass-market channels – often they are not distributed by shops – and includes personalized services. Between these two extremes lies the intermediate luxury in which mass-production and limited editions involve a high level of quality and design for the goods, and where the materiality of the products matches a high level of recognizability and power of the brand image.

One of our assumptions is that luxury operators playing with those categories also working in city transformations, and this plural standpoint enriches the complexity of results of their actions in urban space. In contrast to the first approach, the transformations involve not only the dimensions of the price and the rarity of spaces, but also other luxury features, such as the qualities and symbolism of places. Sometimes, the creation of these spaces relies on trading-up processes (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003a) in which spaces are modelled on design, setting, marketing and brand communication of specific luxury brands. In this case, as in goods production, this heritage of knowledge and brand image supports the valorisation of specific spaces, and the increase of their financial, hierarchical and symbolic role within a city or a territory. Examples of these operations are the recent opening of the Foundation Louis Vuitton in Paris, the Etihad Tower project in Abu Dhabi (UAE), or numerous other examples in which space values rely on the presence of some brand.

In some other cases, these processes follow approaches based on 'masstige strategies' (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003b) which combine high perceived prestige for spaces – based on channels and marketing strategies – with reasonable prices in order to attract the mass of middle-class consumers (Parguel, Delécolle & Valette-Florence, 2014; Truong, McColl & Kitchen, 2009). Examples are the Fondazione Prada in Milan (Italy) or several transformations of peripheral spaces in metropolitan contexts.

This approach produces spaces radically different from the others, and they show an innovative intent by operators which create cross-linkages with local opportunities and potentials. Global actors used to deal with international market and transversal strategies adapt their actions to specific conditions and/or take advantage of paramount locations. Furthermore, contributors insist in their chapter on this new dimension, which links space – as local economy, built fabric, specific culture and traditions – and luxury. This dimension overtakes the consolidated idea of luxury and it shows an evolution in the approach and the strategies of the operators, which seek to change their image as sellers of superfluous, extravagant and unnecessary – and expensive – goods. Their action is intended to integrate their consolidate scopes, and enlarge their market to the field of art, tourism, lifestyles and culture. In this sense, the operators switch from the exclusiveness of luxury as a consolidated idea to something different, what we may call 'prestige' and which acquires a cross-border dimension (Fang, 2015c).

In social sciences, according to V. Kantzara (2007), "the notion prestige denotes symbolic value expressed as a quality of honor and esteem that individuals and social groups may attain on the basis of desirable traits and achievement. (…) Prestige is related to status, and both concepts denote processes and outcome of social evaluation that define standing in society".

In J.H. Barkow's work (2014, 1989) on M. Weber's contribution (1964), prestige is the respect and approbation accorded to one by others. In marketing terms, according to F. Vigneron and L.W. Johnson (1999), consumers develop meanings for goods and services, alternative to the traditional ones. These new values – prestige-oriented – depend on the interactions with people, object properties, and hedonic values. In their focus: "The consumption of prestige goods is viewed as a signal of status and wealth, and whose price, expensive by normal standards, enhances the value of such a signal (perceived conspicuous value)" (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

Following M. Baik (2015), studies of prestige measurement define prestige goods as products or brands with symbolic and pragmatic benefits much higher than those of the same level or kind.

In general terms, prestige is the result of an evaluation that takes into account several different aspects, influenced by social, economic and environmental conditions and through them the object of the assessment acquires a value.

This assessment relies on perception, as a medium between the material value of something and its final quotation. This means that prestige relies on a dimension deeper than the mere economic one. Several studies devoted to this topic observe the behaviours of chimpanzees and their interactions (see e.g. Horner, 2010), and scholars have underlined the role of the prestigious component in establishing a hierarchy or social order within groups. Those who possess prestige have stronger charisma and arouse a higher level of interest within their social context. Consequently, prestigious goods strongly motivate customers to willingly pay more to own them (Baik, 2015) because they support the desire for social affirmation of their possessors. Within the book we focus on a territorial aspect of this question, analysing impacts and users' practices in prestigious places.

Prestigious place-making?

In 1976, in his interpretative study of human experience (Seamon & Sowers, 2008: 45), R. Relph defined 'places' as the fusions of human and natural order and he pointed out that they are the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world (p. 141). In his analysis places are defined by the experiences and the intentions of the communities that live inside them, when they interact with their particular settings. Space, filled by material objects, activities and meanings has specific identities and these specificities influence the everyday life of its inhabitants. For this reason, designers, investors, public actors and other stakeholders have a key role in the creation of experiences when they shape places. There is a double dimension on this relationship: one, technical and transversal, in which through specific tools and wills they set up the material dimension of places; the other, more 'software' and oriented, relies on the interaction between needs and constraints of every specific space. The risk related with this active role is a simplification in which professionals entrust to a supposed "precisely mathematic procedure that treats the environments we live in, like some great that we do not yet quite understand without paying attention to local structures of meaning and experiences and (…) their different levels of meanings" (Relph, 1976: 146). In this sense and following the principles of place-making, the contributions of planners and designers should focus on characters and opportunities specific of every place and work and improve the sense of belonging of their inhabitants (also if they are just temporary) in order to 'make better places', as P. Healey – one of the great inspirations of this book – wrote in 2010.

These inputs, filtered by the intentionality of technicians, should provide diverse stimuli in users of spaces, and through them, create specific identities (De las Rivas, 1992), their genius loci (Norberg-Schulz, 1980).

In regard to the topic of this book, we re-frame (Goffman, 1974) this approach and analyse the potential of luxury to create specific stimuli for places, and if they can – and how – convert a space into a 'prestigious place'. This issue is all the more important because, in parallel with the intentionality of developers, which has a precise target, it involves the role of users-inhabitants, which should perceive places in the same way (Fang, 2015d). Sometimes, places designed to have a particular attitude ('monumental', 'public' or 'friendly') arouse other feelings in their inhabitants. This shows that the creation of places involves something more than the simplistic use of an array of technical tools (they are necessary but not sufficient). At the same time, users inhabit places (Heidegger, 1971) adopting behaviours that are often independent from the will of the designer of those places. This spontaneous flourishing of various activities within the space emphasizes the role of inhabitants in the signification of places. These two points apparently reduce the importance of design in place-making. But, in my opinion, they stress the need for definite intentionality and a clear strategy form how design actions and interventions. At the same time, they demonstrate the worth of those who, working on space, achieve its targets.

By working on the physical and technical features of spaces (place-making) and their effects on the imaginations and needs of their users (place-marketing), operators stimulate specific feelings and perceptions in their inhabitants (Castello, 2010).

At the same time, the action of luxury stakeholders does not only concern spaces for consumption or retail; it also regards the occupation/colonization of different parts of the city, and it does not solely affect main streets and the most iconic consolidated places. Today, luxury operators need spaces in which to locate their headquarters and offices, their exhibition halls or places to show their archives (like the Armani Silos in Milan), which means that prestigious places can also be workspaces or urban equipment. At the same time, recent years have seen a multiplication of campuses where production, logistics and creative industries, but also museums, concert halls and cultural activities mix together (e.g. the Rolex learning center in Lausanne, The Mall at Millenia in Orlando (FL), Istinye Park in Istanbul, Limegrove Lifestyle Centre in St. James, etc.). The settlement of these original – and often unique – clusters often became an opportunity for luxury operators to transform the city as sponsors and as developers but not as Maecenas, because they take advantage of the media echoes of these actions.

As said, working on prestigious places means avoiding the repetition of ready-made formats and interacting with local contexts, considering their needs and taking advantage of their potentials. Operators, each from its own point of view – often related to scale and financial power – seek to create vibrancy and variety for those spaces. Luxury, with its specific rituals and seasonalities, sometimes becomes a driver for the insertion of alternative rhythms and living practices in consolidated territories, so that they become fragments of urban tissue which contain multiple spatialities

(Ascher, 2001) and are able to re-activate parts of metropolitan landscapes (like in the 798 Art District in Beijing). In these cases, the challenge for private companies and designers is creating not just vibrant retail spaces, but places full of urbanity (Fang, 2017), although they are far from consolidated urban environments. This feature – which is often cumulative rather than serial, inverting the relationship proposed by R. Sennet (1999) – relies on the density of activities, inhabitants – although temporary – and meanings which marks these spaces, and on the intensity of goods, data, energies, investments and information that flow through them.

Due to their complex nature and the difficulties related with the artificial creation of urbanity, these aspects represent a test for developers, and for this reason it is an interesting topic for academics to reflect on, also because it is a task in which space's design, management of places and policy-making processes are jointly involved.

The result is a new system of such places that can be read on two scales. On the one hand, the global scale is to do with the system of creative cities (Landry, 2000; Landry & Bianchini, 1995) and creative classes (Florida, 2002). Recently, together with some consolidated world-cities, there has been a rise of new creative centres related to emerging markets, and located in strategic contexts, where luxury operators take part in the affirmation of these evolved cultural districts (Bonomi, 2016). This first scale involves territorial features (accessibility, connections, attractiveness) which the operators consider in their strategies. Finally, a new global map of prestige involves places apparently far from each other but all of which are part of a network in which central neighbourhoods of consolidated European cities belong to the same system as Middle-East shopping malls, Alpine spas serve the same clientele as Florida golf clubs, or a visit by bus to a transformed factory in Tuscany ('The Mall' Outlet Center at Reggello, FI) is an alternative to a shopping trip to New York or Paris for larger and larger groups of clients. But this atlas is a catalogue of spaces that attract people not necessarily interested in luxury goods or services. This book shows how complex, evolving and constantly changing this map is.

These luxury fragments also have a local dimension – the second scale – and they interact with the close geography of contemporary cities and its functions, its flows, its rhythms and its communities in many different ways. According to their spatial/geometrical position (more or less central, more or less accessible, more or less connected, etc.) or their role in urban/regional patterns these new or regenerated aggregates play a territorial role.

Obviously, each space works in a particular way and operators adapt their programmes and formats. For this reason, they stress the uniqueness – and the prestige – of the experience of being a user of a specific environment more than the exclusiveness due to its price. But in this case luxury interacts with the consolidated territorial hierarchy, isolating some fragments of the urban structure (inserting new citadels, gated communities and golden ghettos), regenerating some abandoned areas of the city and – sometimes – creating new centralities and shared places for inhabitants. In addition, various contributions within the book also show the heterogeneous set of actors involved in these operations (major luxury brands, little – but aggressive – experimenters, groups and associations of small stakeholders, hybrid entities, etc.) which represent potential 'prestigious place makers'.

Genesis of the book, aims and structure

As a visiting PhD candidate, Li Fang held her 3rd year PhD Committee annual seminar (entitled 'The role of luxury in the creation of metropolitan centralities') at Politecnico di Milano (Italy) in November, 2014. The editorial project related to a book about the current relationship between luxury and the city, started as a part of this event. For more than six months, we drafted together several versions of this chapter and the book structure, and we invited other authors to join us. Therefore, when she left the project due to time constraints and the end of her visiting period, I assumed the role of editor of this book. Somehow, Li showed the current relevance of luxury as a research topic in urban studies within the Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani of Politecnico di Milano, and I was pleased that through this project we exploit and share our different expertises, in research and in operation fields.

Working on this issue together with the contributors, we noticed that among the huge number of studies focused on the territorial dimension of luxury, we found only a few authors able to deal with this topic in a way which is, according to B. Secchi (2000), technically pertinent for urban planning. Most of the scholars who addressed the issue of luxury worked in other fields, such as economics, marketing and/or consumption analysis. Their analyses were relevant but they entirely disregarded the territorial dimension of phenomena. Within the small group of planners or architects who deal with this topic, we recognized a sort of prudery about discussing luxury effects on contemporary cities, and a predominance of ideological approaches in which fears about the perverse effects of luxury transformations blind the analysis, preventing it from discussing in current terms various ongoing actions now changing our cities.

Within the book, each author or group contributed a piece on a specific aspect, starting from their own background: architects, sociologists and urban planners, historians, and artists but also public entities, local associations and semi-public stakeholders. This furnishes an international perspective on multiple territories and case studies on various cities.

The purpose of this book is therefore to open a debate rather than to give definitive answers. It tries to involve operators, academics and all those stakeholders that may be interested in these transformations. The contributors therefore have two profiles (academics and practitioners) and I invited them to discuss and share their ideas. These dialogues revealed a twofold tension. More and more researchers in the area of planning are aware of the obsolete images and ideological approaches of their academic activities. For this reason, they think that operational knowledge would be a useful support to innovate and update consolidated concepts in the planning discipline. On the other hand, decision-makers, in both the private sector and the public realm, often need support in dealing with phenomena that lie outside their specific or sectoral field and involve a more complex and transversal knowledge. For this reason, the purpose of this book is to create a common ground among different experiences and approaches to 'prestigious place-making' and to the social, economic and territorial effects of the relative actions in the medium and long term.

With this book we would like to clarify which actors and which interests are involved in luxury-driven transformations, and their territorial externalities. For this reason, we also considered risks, conflicts and open questions related to these kinds of phenomena. This was possible thanks to the open – but critical – approach we use on this research, that helped us to deal with this topic avoiding V. Gregotti's (2006) '*estetica della constatazione*' (aesthetic of witness), so common in previous contributions on the issue, in which luxury has been neglected or morally/ideologically judged but its interaction with existing cities has been ignored.

The book is organized in two parts, in order to drive readers gradually into the topic, focusing on specific aspects of the question.

In the first part, entitled 'Concepts', we introduce some basic ideas and the actors that take part in the development of prestigious places. This is possible thanks to the help of J. Roberts and J. Armitage, who clarify current trends in luxury, underlining its recent de-moralisation, which is one of the bases for the switch from exclusiveness to prestige, and the effects of this process on place-making. Milan is a testing ground for the following contribution, in which P. Pucci and G. Fini describe the spatial results of the work of luxury operators, creating an ideal map of the physical traces in its metropolitan area. In their chapter, they emphasize the role of public actors as a potential interface which interacts with private stakeholders and deals with opportunities and risks, reflecting on real cases from both the central city and its urban region. M. Sepe underlines the point of view of the inhabitants of these spaces, and life in prestigious places, establishing a relationship between their material characters and the experiences of people who live in them. A. Pavia reflects on the role of designers in place-making and how specific demands ("make it 'impressive'!", or 'comfortable' or 'premium') by clients represent a challenge for architects. In particular, A. Pavia underlines the role of urbanity, based on walkability and mimesis with consolidated living practices, as a key factor in the success of these operations, also when they happen in peripheral of sprawled contexts. With her contribution, F. Guerisoli broadens the focus and stresses the range of actions of luxury stakeholders, which involve art and alternative forms of patronage and how these sponsorship activities often play a role for the city on a double scale. On the global scale, the support of art, foundations and events has a direct influence on the urban attractiveness for tourists (Fang, 2015e), investors and media; on the local scale, events, museums, performances and festivals contribute to urban regeneration in various ways. This analysis shows the set of various and interrelated interests of luxury companies in supporting different kinds of art activities.

In the second part of the book, entitled 'Reflections', the authors interact with these ideas, producing critical considerations on the impacts of luxury-driven operations in specific socio-economic and spatial contexts and on the benefits and drawbacks of these processes. Following a perspective which ranges from the fragment to the metropolis we have four contributions. The first, by L. Castello, focuses on places as elements in urban systems. The analysis involves several specific aspects related to consumption, such as its pervasiveness and its influences on the experiences of inhabitants. L. Castello points out that all these factors stimulate the experience of users of places and the growth, within cities, of specific practices related to physical and symbolic values of space. In the second contribution, C. Morandi focuses on two cases within the city of Milan (Italy). Her analysis, based on the neighbourhood scale, emphasizes the weight of the agglomeration of luxury-related activities within the municipal structure, and how such activities can affect the use of space but also the imagery of these clusters and, at least, the global reputation of the city, producing a specific – and often artificial – identity. J.L. de las Rivas Sanz returns in his chapter to the archetype of the historic city. He points out several problems with the simple use of technical/disciplinary tools to create an artificial sense of place, as sometime happens when luxury players work as pure real estate investors and mimetically create cities (buildings, squares, open spaces, etc.), but not urban life. He underlines the potential, but also the difficulties, of the generation of shared/public spaces by these operations, and their possible role within cities and territories. In his chapter, A. Bourdin moves from the scale of the city to that of the metropolis. He recognizes the interrelationships between luxury and urban areas, as a field of analysis and space of work and consumption. From a global perspective, luxury and metropolis are two sides of the same question and they need each other; they are part of the same culture but do they create specific places?

The final chapter points out some remarks about all this material, reflecting on whether it is possible – and how – to interact with luxury-driven transformations of space.

Finally, this book provides a contribution to the field of urban studies about this complex and fascinating issue and is addressed especially to those who, starting to use our approach, will try to answer this question.

Notes

1 This chapter is the result of the interaction of the two authors. Mario Paris wrote the whole text involving some concepts proposed by Li Fang – where quoted – or developed by the two authors during the initial phase of this editorial project.

2 Among the countless contributions, we signal three recent events which underline the rich multi-disciplinary debate on the relationship between luxury and space: the conferences entitled 'The space of luxury: places, spaces and geographies

from the renaissance to the present', organized by Warwick Business School in London in 2015; 'Space is luxury', 24th AESOP Annual Conference in Helsinki in 2010; and the exhibition 'What is luxury?' held at London's Victoria and Albert Museum in 2015.

3 In a financial context where crisis is still slowing the economy, the growth rate of the luxury goods market was 4–6% in 2014 (Data: Bain & Company, 2014).

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Part I
Concepts

1 Luxury

From the idea to the reality of prestigious places

Joanne Roberts and John Armitage

Introduction

In 2015, London's Victoria and Albert Museum (hereafter V&A), in association with the Craft Council, staged an exhibition entitled 'What is Luxury?' The exhibition was sponsored by Northacre, a company that engages in the design, development, and marketing of prime residential sites in London (Northacre London, 2016). Interestingly, the V&A's website describes Northacre as a "noble force in landmark residential development, which has been at the forefront of the revival and development of buildings of historical significance and stature for over 25 years. Northacre's reputation is built on its intrinsic understanding of luxury combined with a passionate attention to detail and working with the finest craftsmen, values that chime with the content of What is Luxury?" (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2015). Clearly, as in the past, luxury and property in prestigious places are today closely aligned – a theme that we will return to in the final section of this chapter.

The V&A's exhibition addressed the question of the meaning of luxury and speculated on how this meaning might evolve and manifest itself in the future (Wierzba, 2015). As any visit to the exhibition revealed, luxury is a complex yet malleable term. In this chapter, we examine the idea of luxury before considering how this concept relates to the reality of luxury in present-day prestigious places. Indeed, we highlight the important transition of the idea of luxury from a morally dubious socio-cultural construction and activity to a fully de-moralized economic commodity. In so doing, we offer reflections on the consequences of this ideational transition for the making of real luxury places in the contemporary era.

The idea of luxury

The idea of luxury is generally associated with expensive, elegant, rare and refined products and services of the highest quality as well as with a rich, comfortable and sumptuous lifestyle. Certainly, such products and services are frequently related to excess and often viewed as superfluous, extravagant or an unnecessary indulgence. Yet, any attempt to define luxury reveals it to be an essential but multifaceted idea with a still open conceptual history (Armitage & Roberts, 2016a). At its limits, the idea of luxury is employed, on the one hand, as in its initial usage, to denote 'negative' luxury, as of threatening social virtue, or, following the classical philosophical paradigm constructed by Plato (Plato, 2007), the Romans, and early Christianity and so by extension to our own individual human luxury, not as an achievement but as something pejorative. On the other hand, luxury can be employed to imply the ingenuous tricks undertaken by lavish real estate agents and niche consumption practitioners that, in their very market forms and economic meanings, delineate contemporary human society as socially 'de-moralized' rather than moral. For C.J. Berry (1994), for example, the classical and early Christian comprehension of luxury as an abnormal contravention was slowly superseded by its de-moralization that has ended in its extensive (mis)use in the sphere of contemporary media. Occasionally, this additional meaning is then generalized to create triumphant descriptions of the mood or disposition of a typically economically defined social group (e.g. luxury property developers), place, era, entire society, or country. Luxury can thus be used to express the depravity of a formerly virtuous manly life or personality, the splendour of a specific location, a phase of moral or intellectual development, the economic existence and customs of a socio-economic group, a socio-historicization of values or a wide-ranging period. For instance, in the contemporary era, we talk about luxury food and drink, such as champagne truffles; luxurious celebrity homes, like Hollywood star John Travolta's Florida mansion, 'Jumbolair', which has 'parking facilities' for his Boeing 707 and Gulfstream jets; luxury fashion brands, such as Chanel and Gucci; luxurious leisure activities, including sumptuous yet exclusive holiday destinations; and 21st-century opulent magazine advertising.

Perhaps one of the most useful ways of examining such a changeable concept is along the lines of Berry's explanation (1994) of its European usage over the last two thousand years. Berry proposes that in its most prevalent use the value attached to luxury is a vital constituent of any society's self-interpretation, and he argues that luxury has altered across the centuries from being an effectively negative concept, inflaming social life (Adams, 2012), to a perception of 'well-being' in terms of economic wealth (Smith, 1982). Any investigative focus upon the concept of luxury, then, must engage with the interaction between the ideas of social need and economic desire and with various classes of luxury, such as food, housing, clothing, and leisure.

Of fundamental conceptual and historical significance to these perceptions of luxury is the cultural attitude taken towards the transition to modern mass or industrial luxury goods and services, or, in the 21st century, the advanced de-moralization of luxury goods and services and the lack of debate concerning contemporary social needs in the consumer society (Baudrillard, 1998). So, for instance, luxury brand scholars and media commentators rarely concern themselves either with the ethics or with the growing inequality upon which the luxury industry depends (Armitage & Roberts, 2016a). This is in spite of the negative consequences of the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the one per cent (Piketty, 2014; Dorling, 2014), inclusive of the wholesale removal of poor residents from public housing to refashion such locations into private luxury residential developments exclusively for those with the financial means required to afford the multi-million pound price of access (Owen, 2015).

Yet cultural, political, and philosophical debates about luxury products and services in this most recognizable sense have indeed taken place and been supplemented and stimulated by the socio-economic development of social needs and economic desires of the present period (Armitage & Roberts, 2016b). Luxury goods and services have consequently been defined regarding this historical-political form of society, yet again in classical terms that see social needs as opposed to economic desires. The subsequent defence of the concept of luxury as equal or essential to genuine ethical, religious, or even civilizational values and social identity sets social needs – predominantly a discerning tradition of categories of essentials – against the economic desires of, first, the modern mechanical and materialist order of industrial society and, second, the postmodern digital and immaterialist order of post-industrial society.

So, for instance, in the novels of T. Smollett (1721–1771), among those of other authors of the same period, luxury is rallied to serve a less than liberal and more of a radical conservative historical and political philosophy. According to J. Sekora (1977), for example, Smollett was the final, most obstinate, and most persuasive supporter of the classical philosophical standpoint, which insisted on clear moral differences between the social classes. For instance, Smollett's last work (2008), *Humphry Clinker*, considered by many to be his finest and wittiest novel, was an out-and-out condemnation of the 'luxury' of the lower classes who, in his view, desired economic goods and services they could not and should not have.

In contrast, a 'democratic' assessment, such as the 'accessible' or 'mass' luxury of Starbucks coffee or Mercedes automobiles, might be preferred. This encompasses a radical change of meaning and of the terms of appraisal of several contemporary luxury goods and services. Nevertheless, all these interpretations share the supposition that luxury markets can have an active, determining effect, particularly upon middle or 'aspiring' class ideas, attitudes and experience. Intrinsically, they differ from the view that understands luxury as subordinate to and as a reaction against other mass processes in the society and the economy, which are believed by some to be more basic and decisive than luxury itself. This latter stance has been related to the well-known Marxist model of an economic base and ideological/luxurious superstructure (Berry, 1994).

However intricate, then, the meaning of luxury is, we argue, it is also increasingly critical to ideas of the objects of study (often high-priced goods or service categories), the methods of knowledge accumulation, and contemporary goals of academic research and disciplines (including philosophy and economics, along with the more understandable anthropology, sociology, urban, literary, historical, new media, and cultural studies). Its usage and meanings in these settings may be conflicting (does any high-priced good or service in any category count as a luxury?) and relatively explanatory of certain goods and services or evaluative ('uniqueness' springs to mind). Possibly the most important conception of luxury goods and services in traditional academic work, particularly in philosophy, historical, and political studies, if not in economics, has been Berry's definition (1994: 41) of luxuries as "those goods that admit of easy and painless substitution because the desire for them lacks fervency". This author goes on to comment that luxury goods are "not a separate category superadded to a fixed determinate set of basic necessities" and that this "fact also explains why it is intelligible that one person's luxury can be another's (instrumental) necessity" (Berry, 1994). For him, then, the idea of luxury must be viewed as an interpersonally relative concept, even if luxury goods and services are frequently seen as synonymous with 'superior' goods and services, and through which, unavoidably, a social order is defined and maintained, developed, experienced, and explored (Berry, 1994). This relative conception is motivating a contemporary notion of luxury goods, services, and practices as establishing rather than merely communicating a particular social order wherein our social needs and economic desires appear countless.

However, it would be untrue to imply that there is an agreed definition of luxury goods and services in the current period. Indeed, we do not accept Berry's definition of luxury goods and services as admitting "of easy and painless substitution because the desire for them lacks fervency". Moreover, we have, elsewhere, offered an alternative definition of luxury goods and services not as painless substitutes lacking fervent desire but as alienating surrogates saturated with the urgent sense of a life determined by external forces, and consequent lack of control or authenticity and oneness with ourselves (Armitage & Roberts, 2014). In the contemporary era, we argue that it is necessary to re-acknowledge the power of Herbert Marcuse's critical theory (Marcuse, 1964), which leads us to restate his earlier critique of the minority of the elite classes, who irresponsibly follow their economic desires or 'false' social needs, that is, those social needs that are repressive through being forced upon people by certain social groups, through the acquisition of, for instance, luxury urban mansions, perfume, and haute couture clothing. But we must do so in terms now of this minority's globalized, increasingly non-white elite, non-western class formations, and female-centred bias towards the wild quest of satiating its economic desires or false social needs through the procurement of luggage accessories, wine, and chocolate in China, the Middle East, Russia, and South-East Asia (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Moreover, we question Berry's conception of 'easy substitution' and trouble-free replacement, or the desire for this, in the realm of luxury goods and services. The irregular meanings of luxury goods and services are now more willingly comprehended as the necessary perception and manifestation of a diverse range of interpersonal yet relative conceptions of human existence across different worlds and spheres from bottled water and high fidelity music to live-in domestic servants and personal financial brokers. We are brought consequently to a many-sided and discursive model of luxury as unnecessary, conducive to enjoyment and ease, costly, difficult to acquire, extravagant, and to the debates this in turn inexorably produces.

Clearly, there are many debates circling around the idea of luxury. Yet, in the next section, we simply focus on what we call the reality of luxury goods and services. This is because, for most people luxury is not an idea but a reality. This reality is realized through the production or consumption of luxury or through encounters with representations of luxury in any number of locations and media outlets. To explore the reality of luxury, we focus on the key characteristics of luxury goods and services in the contemporary era.

The reality of luxury

As noted, the de-moralization of luxury from the 18th century onwards was driven by the recognition that the demand for luxuries offered a positive stimulus for productive activity with consequences for increased employment and national economic prosperity (Smith, 1982). M. Berg's study of the rise in the consumption of luxuries like glass and chinaware and their role in stimulating the Industrial Revolution in 18th-century Britain provides support for the argument that there is a strong connection between economic growth and luxury (Berg, 2005). Indeed, W. Sombart's analysis goes further by crediting the growing production, distribution, and consumption of luxury goods and services with the rise of capitalism (Sombart, 1967). In the contemporary era, there is no doubt about the impact of luxury goods and services on the economy at local, national and global levels. The global market for luxury goods and services is expanding rapidly. Its value exceeded €850 billion in 2014, having grown at a rate of 7 per cent on the previous year (D'Arpizio et al., 2014). This expansion is accounted for by increasing incomes in the advanced countries, especially among the wealthy, who have been relatively unaffected by the global financial crisis of 2008, and the expanding middle classes in emerging countries. Moreover, the luxury sector has been highlighted as a key driver for growth in Europe (ECCIA, 2012; Foray, 2010).

This is because luxury as a commodity can be bought and sold in the global marketplace. Luxury has a price, but, unlike most normal goods, the price is not determined solely by the forces of supply and demand. For if a particular luxury was sold in a competitive market, the natural forces of the market would encourage greater supply as demand expands, leading to competition among firms to find increasingly efficient ways of satisfying this demand through the use of large-scale production and the application of cost-saving technologies. Such competition would result in an eventual decline in price. Yet, the price of luxury cannot fall, or, at least, cannot be allowed to fall too much, even if the costs of production fall. While there is a fine line between luxury and prestige goods in the market, a key characteristic of both is that the price is higher than for normal goods and there is a certain degree of symbolic value and rarity attached to their consumption; indeed, if luxuries were commonplace, they would cease to be coveted as luxurious or as symbols of status. Certainly, Karpik's analysis (2010) of singular goods or services has relevance for the appreciation of the market exchange of luxuries. For this author, the standard variables of economics, including scarcity, demand, differentiation and utility, fail to account for goods and services that are multidimensional, incommensurable, and whose value or quality is uncertain. Rather, the appeal of such singular goods and services is determined more by judgement and taste than by price. As L. Karpik argues, objects and experiences with uncertain value determined by taste cannot be explained by traditional neoclassical economics. In such cases, choice is determined by judgement founded on the evaluation of knowledge from trusted sources, including personal networks, expert rankings, brands, critics and general marketing and sales activities.

In the market place, the symbolic value of luxury has become reified in the form of the luxury brand, normally condensed into a distinctive logo, which also offers an easy way to signal conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899). Indeed, a huge literature has developed concerning luxury brands and their management. This literature is a reflection of the expanding value of the luxury sector and a growing number of executive degree programmes concerning luxury and its marketing and management are now available in higher education institutions across the world (for example, Essec, 2016).

However, when we explore the meaning of luxury from a business and marketing perspective, we find an interpretation that centres on the reality of luxury in the contemporary economy rather than one that considers the wider philosophical debates surrounding luxury, such as those touched upon in the previous section of this chapter. For instance, luxury brand theorists M. Chevalier and G. Mazzalovo (2012) argue that luxury goods and services must meet three criteria:

- Firstly, they must have a strong artistic content. It is not sufficient for a luxury good or service to work effectively and efficiently, it must also have a strong aesthetic quality. Indeed, the visual impression of a luxury can be more important than other qualities. For instance, a Ferrari car offers a stunning visual impression and, although regarded as a luxury means of transportation, it may not provide the most comfortable or fuel-efficient journey.
- Secondly, luxury goods and services must be the result of craftsmanship. This is because customers wish to purchase goods and services that are designed and hand made by highly skilled craftspeople. It is this hand-crafted quality that gives a luxury its unique and therefore desirable character.
- Third, luxury goods and services must be international because consumers expect luxury purchases to be valued by people in cities across

the world. Consumers of luxury are globally mobile and for luxuries to be effective signals of status they must be recognizable as such beyond a specific local context.

The link between art, craftsmanship, and luxury is hardly surprising or new. Works of art and the products of craftsmanship normally require high levels of skill, time, and expensive materials. Hence, their consumption has been the preserve of wealthy individuals and institutions. Nevertheless, changing income levels and techniques of production have made these products increasingly available to a wider range of individuals, especially since the 1980s. M. Chevalier and G. Mazzalovo's suggestion (2012) that for something to be a luxury it must also be international is very much a consequence of globalization. It is also embedded in a business perspective on luxury, which is concerned with market size and expanding the geographical reach of luxury brands as a means to produce sustainable profits, particularly among the large luxury sector multinational conglomerates, such as the LVMH, Kering, and Richemont groups. Hence, the rise of the luxury conglomerates has been accompanied by the proliferation of luxury retail stores and shopping malls in all the major global cities.

Of course, if luxury is international, it must be acknowledged as such in various different locations and different cultures. This suggests that there is a homogenizing process. Yet if luxury is socially constructed and we live in a diverse social world, how can luxury be recognized across the globe? The answer is that international recognition of items as luxury occurs among a global elite who often have more in common with one another than they do with their national counterparts. A wider population aspires to join these elites and they satisfy their aspirations by imitating elite consumption behaviour.

Luxury is also classified in terms of its accessibility by D. Allérès (1990), who identifies three levels of luxury, namely, inaccessible (exclusive unique items), intermediate (expensive replicas of unique items), and accessible (factory produced and in large production runs). Additionally, the intensification of the commercialization of luxury has encouraged the democratization of luxury, with the proliferation of terms like 'new luxury' and 'mass luxury'. Indeed, Michael Silverstein and Neil Fiske refer to 'masstige' (a combination of 'mass' and 'prestige') as luxury for the masses (Silvestrein & Fiske, 2003). According to J.N. Kapferer and V. Bastien (2012), this proliferation of terms is the result of, on the one hand, the efforts of traditional brands to trade up, and, on the other hand, the drive for profits among corporate luxury brands by offering goods and services to a wider market. Brand extensions to lower cost items, for instance, the development of perfumes by haute couture fashion houses like Christian Dior, and particularly lower cost products such as eau du parfum, enable such global luxury brands to expand their customer base and thereby improve their revenues. The drive for profits is also evident in the fragmentation of the production process, such that the design of luxury goods and services may involve significant artistic inputs and craftsmanship, but the final products and services can be mass-produced in low-cost locations without any loss of quality (Thomas, 2007). Moreover, globalization has given rise to highly profitable niche luxury markets that can be reached through the Internet and social media platforms (Anderson, 2009) as well as in the airport transit lounges through which the wealthy pass en route to their next destination. Regional and national niche luxury markets can now be aggregated into highly profitable global markets in which producers are able to gain economies of scale, yet because their products are distributed across the globe, they remain relatively exclusive. This shift to mass luxury has been followed by the emergence of the idea of meta-luxury (Ricca & Robins, 2012) and über luxury (Quintavalle, 2013) as counters to the trend towards luxury for all and to make a critical distinction between mass-produced luxury goods and services and those luxuries that remain exclusive and the result of high levels of skill and craftsmanship or those accessible only to the Ultra High Net Worth Individuals.[1]

Luxury: from the idea to the reality of prestigious places

In this chapter, we have considered the idea of luxury, an idea that, as the V&A's exhibition on 'What is Luxury?' so clearly demonstrated, remains open to debate. We have also considered the reality of luxury in the contemporary era, a reality that is exemplified by prestigious places, including those designed, developed, and marketed by luxury property companies such as Northacre. Of course, the reality of luxurious places has a long history. For instance, places of religious observance have, for several millennia, displayed rare and precious items in sumptuous surroundings to honour deities and their representatives on Earth while creating wonder and awe among worshipers. Similarly, the palaces of sovereign rulers, including emperors, kings and queens, and even governments employ luxury goods and services to demonstrate their power (Jacobsen, 2011). Most notable among the locations of luxury historically was the palace of Versailles on the outskirts of Paris in the 17th century, where Louis XIV purposely employed the production, distribution, and consumption of luxury goods and services to assert and maintain the absolute authority of the French monarchy. Yet, places of luxury are also to be found in public buildings and palatial museums, such as those established for the benefit of the general populous in the 19th century, including the V&A in London. In these prestigious places, luxury serves a public-collective purpose beyond the individual enjoyment of excess and indulgence.

Since its de-moralization in the 18th century, the idea of luxury has become, and continues to be, a real and growing sector of economic activity and the places of luxury have become synonymous with the market, whether in the shops of London's Mayfair, Paris' rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, or Beverly Hills' Rodeo Drive. Indeed, the growth of the luxury market has influenced the development of cities through the creation of new sites of luxury such as exclusive shopping malls and flagship stores. Luxury retailers are enhancing their brands' territorial and commercial impact through the development of unique landmark buildings (Kärrholm, 2012). By employing famous architects to design 'signature' buildings, they seek to communicate their brand while simultaneously increasing its cultural capital (Sharr, 2016). This is aptly illustrated by Prada hiring R. Koolhaas and Herzog and de Meuron to design iconic stores in New York and Tokyo respectively. Consequently, luxury retailers, individually and collectively, are shaping urban territorial spaces across the globe, giving new meaning to old places and augmenting or even instigating the production of new prestigious places (Castello, 2010).

Yet luxury markets are also present in virtual spaces, such as online shopping platforms like Net-a-Porter. The dynamics of such spaces and how they interact with the real places of luxury stores, actual streets and shopping malls have yet to be fully appreciated. Moreover, given the socially constructed nature of luxury, we can find it in seemingly innocuous places where people indulge in small luxurious treats, such as a box of Belgian chocolates while watching a movie at the cinema or in their own homes on a Saturday evening (Mansvelt et al., 2016) or, in conspicuous form, through the use of a Stuart Hughes £5 million iPhone 4 Diamond Rose mobile phone in the semi-private space of a luxury home, limousine or executive jet (Armitage & Roberts, 2014). Hence, the places of luxury become ever more varied as luxury goods and services diffuse from the centres of religion and power to locales of wealth and on to the places and online spaces of mass consumption and social media such as Louis Vuitton's Facebook page, Chanel's Twitter account, and the 'Rich Kids' of Instagram.

Yet, as the V&A's 'What is Luxury?' exhibition reminds us, while a definition of luxury is difficult to discern, it is the elites rather than the masses who offer us the most persuasive interpretations and accepted meanings of luxury. Moreover, such definitions are made possible by the exhibition's sponsor, Northacre, which, at the time of writing, was promoting its 1 Palace Street, Buckingham Gate, London SW1 project. A residential development incorporating a Grade II listed building opposite the home of the Queen of Great Britain, Buckingham Palace, 1 Palace Street includes 72 apartments, underground parking, a communal courtyard garden, a restaurant, extensive leisure facilities, and a full concierge service. As "an exceptionally private residence in the making next to Buckingham Palace" (Northacre London, 2016), we can be sure that this particular prestigious place will epitomise both the de-moralized idea and the commercial reality of 21st-century luxury.

Note

1 In their World Ultra Wealth Report, Wealth-X and UBS (2014) define Ultra High Net Worth Individuals (UHNWI) as those individuals as having a net worth of at least US$30 million.

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2 Two geographies of luxury projects

Opportunities, risks and challenges for public policies

Paola Pucci and Giulia Fini[1]

The focus on the role of luxury projects in urban transformations is introduced with reference to two specific geographies recognizable in the Milan Urban Region.[2] The first geography refers to consolidated urban fabrics where luxury projects create small-scale conversions and micro gentrification[3] on a block or house basis, replacing older housing and shopping stock with new-built luxury developments. The second geography is characterized by exclusive segregated districts where luxury projects create new urban centralities for leisure activities or residential gated communities.

In order to propose a taxonomy, these two geographies are used to identify the main features of the heterogeneous and episodic processes of urban transformation driven by luxury projects and to discuss the challenges and consequences for the constitutive dimensions of urbanity in a specific urban context like the Milan Urban Region.

While these geographies of luxury projects represent only a small fraction of overall building activity, identifying ideal-typical models of luxury development makes it possible to reflect on what conceptions of urbanity are generated by these micro-scale transformations, as well as on how to integrate luxury into urban policies in order to enhance the positive effects of private investments undertaken to guarantee exclusive privileges and, at the same time, in order to assess the ‘flip side’ of luxury (i.e. gentrification processes, selection of urban populations and urban practices, transformation in the times of use of urban places).

In our approach, the reorganization of spaces through luxury developments is read from two viewpoints: as an attempt to produce and regulate particular behaviours and subjectivities (Huxley, 2006: 772) by introducing social separation and intensified security architectures; but, at the same time, as an opportunity to re-shape urban neighbourhoods and also to be used for real estate development purposes.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. In the first section, we propose two specific geographies of urban luxury projects and their main features in terms of scales of urban transformation and effects on open spaces. Then, in the following section we test the ideal-typical models of luxury projects on our case study represented by the Milan Urban Region. Lastly, in the conclusion we reflect on the policy implications from two perspectives. The first concerns the conditions associated with the concepts of urbanity and publicness, and with them the role of the local authority in shaping public access to services and open spaces that have been privatized by growing private ownership. The second perspective concerns the relationship between the molecular transformations driven by private capital and the ability to bring them within a strategic framework in which the link between private exploitation and the common good is not lost.

Two geographies of luxury projects

The relationship between luxury and urban transformations, as well as the luxury and new or emerging lifestyles that change the material shape of portions of the city and their urban rhythms, can be understood in the Milan Urban Region in light of two specific geographies.

The first geography concerns a constellation of micro-settings consisting of consolidated urban blocks where luxury projects create small-scale restructuring on a house basis. As these 'molecular' transformations replace older housing and shopping stock in restricted areas of the city, they primarily appear as 'high-profile visible products' which create the meaning of quality as a deliverable objective founded on a mixture of financial, architectural and urban speculation where the description and pre-conception of a luxury product is often more important than the final result. Compared with 'flagship projects' as expensive and glamorous developments to change the image of an area, these projects are often less celebratory and iconic; but they are still able to play an influential and catalytic role in urban renewal, regenerating the urban economy and encouraging investments.

In many cases, these luxury projects create secluded places and a kind of micro gentrification pattern through perforation of the city. But at the same time they shape the way in which the city is imagined, representing a good opportunity to improve the urban landscape and the urban liveability of some neighbourhoods.

In this geography, the apparent 'democratization' of the luxury upgrading of parts of the consolidated urban districts gives new meaning to public spaces, introduces new urban rhythms determined by private operators, selects urban populations, and influences urban practices.

Besides the real estate development of blocks of the city, the joint creation of 'quasi-public spaces'[4] provides space usable by viewers or consumers; these hybrid and compound spaces, which may not be completely closed or may be only internal, and which are neither totally public nor entirely private, become vehicles of gentrification, paths to consumption, and attempts at marketing within the context of globalizing cities. These are spaces where people are spectators and where public space becomes "a collective theater where 'something' happens (because) there is no more 'something' of the collective"[5] (Koolhaas, 2006: 23); the public space is monitored and privatized.

These interventions generate more and more privately-controlled spaces (Zukin, 2000; Mitchell, 1995; Davis, 1992; Sorkin, 1992) to guarantee the greater attractiveness of the city centre for new social classes considered crucial for place-based competition (Ranci, 2015).

By creating a set of new geographies within the city, luxury projects open up a field of actions (Marquardt et al., 2013: 1541) to re-shape the consolidated urban districts in three main ways.

The first set of actions comprises stereotypical solutions whereby luxury is presented in forms of housing and commercial spaces that encapsulate the values of the hyper-mobility society that created them, and whose users engage with the city through new forms of public and pseudo-public urban space.

The process of stylization in search of luxury, exclusivity and prestige that has spread worldwide is the social practice of distinction (Bourdieu, 1979) of living mobile lives (Elliott & Urry, 2010), the feeling of being at home of global élites wherever they are (Elliott & Urry, 2010; ch. 4). In this process, sites are branded, themed and collected.

According to T. Jefferies (2010: 325), the super-high-rise apartment and the new-built luxury space "were recapitulated as an object of desire, a Neo-modern icon (…) (made by) architectural objects with a remarkable homogenization of collective taste. (…) These new spaces rely on balancing lifestyle individuality and corporate identity, reflected in the architectural form of new building exteriors and the development and refinement of new forms of aesthetically commodified urban space, leveraged as a developer delivered by-product of lifestyle-led urban living".

A second type of action pertains to archetypical solutions involving the reuse of buildings of architectural heritage with cultural value and representing the loci of the power and wealth of the 19th-century bourgeoisie. In this case, layering and imprinting are uneven: they range from historic buildings that regain use as representative spaces, through offices of private foundations, to industrial archeology transformed into exhibition spaces, and museums into private collections.

The third type introduces singular solutions, for which the value of a place as defined by its icons is a key feature, and which generates unexpected and bizarre results driven by the desire to produce 'statement' buildings and 'quality' places. The recent skyscrapers built in Milan seem driven by the intent to emphasize the uniqueness and exclusivity of their form, the brand that realizes them. They represent a collection of self-referring objects, only in some cases held together by the open spaces design.

Beyond the diversity of the projects in terms of features, scale of intervention, and developers pursuing different strategies (city-branding, self-promotion of a single operator, real estate investments), these three ideal-typical models of luxury transformation are the product of neoliberal strategies for urban regeneration through public-private real estate projects, and often of self-promotion by one operator that colonizes spaces and changes them without any public urban programme, as evidenced by several projects in the Milan Urban Region.

These are incremental processes, ruled by private capital that transforms parts of the city, giving rise to exclusive private spaces next to facilities for the city: for instance, spaces for contemporary art like those created by Fondazione Prada in an old distillery built in the early 20th century in the southern sector of Milan, or the Armani/Silos, the new space-museum in Milan founded in a building originally used as a warehouse by a large multinational company.

In the renovation or rebuilding of new luxury spaces, central city locations and the driving force of commercial investors have been widened; the renewal and upgrading of peripheral neighborhoods have been initiated by private investors through interventions which are specific yet able to trigger widespread redevelopment processes and supported – sometimes with a delay – by local governments seeking, in the end, higher tax revenues, doing so on the basis of the so-called 'third wave' gentrification model (Hackworth & Smith, 2001).

These developments have intensified the ambiguity of urban nature as both an element inherent to the functional public realm, but also as a means to enhance property values because the management of hitherto public spaces has been increasingly taken over by quasi-public agencies or private foundations dependent on individual or corporate benefactors (Gandy, 2006: 69).

In an uncertain socio-economic and financial framework characterized by limited opportunities for public intervention, these schemes promoted by private investors have also been understood as operational spaces to restructure urban spaces, to participate "in the governing of urban populations" (Marquardt et al., 2013: 1552).

Although essential, these forms of public space provision and urban service management require rethinking the concept of 'publicness', as well as the relationship between a singular project promoted by large private developers and large-scale urban strategies.

Considering publicness as a relative concept that needs to be understood as a result of changing patterns of distribution of rights across urban spaces shaped by social, economic and historical processes in which societal objectives for public, semi-public and private spaces are negotiated, defined and secured, the alternative forms of public space provision and management have to be undertaken in a general legal framework where issues of rights, access, accountability and image have been addressed in the public space. In so doing, governance arrangements based on contracts, legal agreements and performance management mechanisms are needed, rather than traditional public sector processes of policy delivery and accountability.

The challenge for the local authority is to assess how publicness is constructed and maintained through these luxury arrangements and what the implications are for the roles and nature of public spaces and services in the city.

The urgency of this assessment is also linked to the rhetoric often used and driven by private interests, such as the urban creativity discourse that serves as an umbrella concept to market the contemporary city and to foster its attractiveness (Vanolo, 2008: 381).

The second geography is characterized by exclusive enclaves where luxury projects can play a double role as new urban centralities for leisure or as residential gated communities expressing the so-called 'secession of the rich' in a privatopias perspective (McKenzie, 1994).

In this geography – where exclusive segregated districts disassociate themselves from the surrounding city – the distinctiveness leads to selection in terms of socio-economic status, as well as in terms of aspirations for a new urban lifestyle where comfort and security are pervasive in the design and amenities of buildings and private open spaces. Thus "privatization spreads across the urban landscape and the regional metropolis is embedded with a carceral archipelago of fortressed new enclosures" (Soja, 2011: 685).

The criterion used to construct these luxury districts is therefore exclusivity and its 'spatialization' (Lefebvre, 1976: 23), the purpose being to deliver a space appropriate to accommodate specific and exclusive activities and social practices, denying spatial fluidity in favour of a functional and symbolic privatization. The emergence of these exclusive segregated districts is explained in the literature on the basis of very different conditions and reasons:

- On the one hand, in the so-called 'politics-driven approach', these luxury enclaves are the result of an exclusive attitude which causes social polarization and territorial exclusion (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005). They are the material expression of an ecology of fear (Davis, 1992) emphasizing the segregation process, in which spatial boundaries are determined by the presence of militarized space and dichotomized (Davis, 1998). They thus produce two forms of ghettoization: the experienced form and the voluntary form (Bauman, 2000).
- On the other hand, according to the 'market-driven approach', a luxury district emerges as a result of a rational choice, as a response to the mechanisms of resource allocation and production of public goods and services. It is a market-led solution to benefit from certain assets following the principle of restriction (club economy).

This model – often stigmatized in the literature as a spread of neoliberal politics that opposes a new critical theory (Brenner et al., 2012; Brenner & Theodore 2002; Davis, 2002) – communicates adherence to shared morphological and functional aspects in space.

Unlike the previous geography, where "the distinctiveness of neighbourhoods is invoked as a catalytic environment that can be opened up and further used for real estate development purposes" (Marquardt et al., 2013: 1552), these luxury developments exhibit intensified security architecture: residential spaces detached from the surrounding city by security technology and architectural layout (Atkinson, 2006; Butler, 2007; Kern, 2007; Atkinson & Blandy, 2005).

Exclusivity and voluntary separation, implemented according to selection by high real estate values, are arranged through architectural solutions and distinctiveness services; these new luxury developments are often confined and bounded spaces, enclaves with controlled and restricted access, and a physical demarcation of the border between the private reality of housing and the 'outside'.

The spatial appropriation processes transform local public goods into club goods where legal, economic or cultural norms are employed to exclude certain groups.

Even if, as Webster (2002: 397) argues, most of what we normally regard as 'public' could more accurately be regarded as the club realm, because "cities naturally fragment into many small publics, each of which may be thought of as a collective consumption club", in these exclusive spaces, the manifestation of the club realm provides new forms of association and community organization, displaying new devices in a sort of 'negative citizenship' (Mazza, 2015: 155) based on the principle of non-interference in the rights of others, and on the pursuit of goals and private interests within the law.

Following McKenzie (1994), it deals with configurations of self-sovereignty characterized by common ownership of spaces, by accession of each buyer to the association of which s/he has become a member, as well as by a regime of restrictions defined according to internal regulations.

In this model, the sociability of individuals and the sharing of spaces, the production and the perception of safety, as well as the management of the common good, are based on internal institutions that serve as community organizations.

According to some authors (Secchi, 2013: 37), these places are in a "state of suspension of the legal institutions of the State to which they belong"; they are the places for new and ad hoc kinds of governance in the form of "community contracts" shared by their inhabitants through an agreement of mutual solidarity.

Within the Milan context, these self-selecting micro-residential districts arise from concentrations of high incomes in small areas, which give rise to a kaleidoscope of enclaves (Secchi, 2013: 48) that make the molecular geography of the Milan Urban Region more complex (Lanzani, 2011: 203).

Behind the two geographies of luxury projects: spaces and projects of transformation in the Milan Urban Region

Observation of the Milan Urban Region – an area of Italy important for the trade of luxury goods and products related to the Italian fashion and design sectors at both national and international levels – enables identification of a variety of situations and spatial conditions connected to the two geographies of luxury projects presented above. These situations contribute strongly to modifying the features and functions of the metropolitan area, as well as its spaces, practices, and populations which frequent the places.

Since the 1970s the city of Milan and its surrounding territory have played an important role in the production, design, and trade of luxury goods, acting as a catalyst for many national companies, and since the 1980s, for international companies as well. It is therefore possible to identify a variety of conditions due to the relations established between the operators of the luxury sector and the Milan territory. Some of these consist in transformation projects already carried out and concluded (which have had a certain success and relevance in the international press); others are transformations currently underway and characterized in an economic and management condition partially different from those of the past.

The first geography: the reuse and transformation of buildings and consolidated urban fabrics

With reference to the first geography of luxury projects – and, more specifically, to the three ways in which projects and processes related to luxury are changing the consolidated urban fabric – a variety of situations are emerging in the Milan area in which operators related to the design, production or commerce of luxury goods have contributed to transforming the urban tissue.

In some areas, strict commercial specialization, i.e. related to high-range and luxury products, has simplified the existing functions and activities in the entire urban fabric and the related public spaces, as well as simplified practices and uses of the area. As described below, this kind of situation has arisen in the Montenapoleone district, where the space has been branded, themed and colonized by high fashion and design brands and where the limited residential environment is completely exclusive and separate from the commercial context.

By contrast, in the Tortona district, which is the second case considered, the luxury operators have contributed to a singular redevelopment of the area which has gradually led to deep transformation of the features and image of the urban fabric accompanied by soft phenomena of gentrification. Whilst the first district (Montenapoleone) can be related to the ‘stereotypical solution’, this second transformation process is identified as ‘archetypical’ in that it relates to the recovery and reuse of buildings of architectural merit or testimonial value.

In a less extensive and consistent, but nonetheless significant, manner, the third type identified – the ‘singular’ one – identifies important transformations which highlight the uniqueness and exclusivity of the operation, image and form that are produced through a collection of singular objects. Linked to this type are some of the exclusive residential projects under construction in Milan, as well as other important projects of requalification such as the recent Prada Foundation or Armani Silos.

With reference to these three modes of interaction between luxury operators and the urban fabric, some Milan experiences are now described in order to show different outcomes and the need to orient urban policy in relation to the construction of spaces and luxury issues.

Stereotypical solution: Montenapoleone Fashion District

The famous high-fashion district of Via Montenapoleone (delimited by the street of the same name, Via Manzoni, Via della Spiga, and Corso Venezia) is emblematic of the first transformation type: the stereotypical one. Located in the heart of Milan, a large number of high-class shops have been opened in the three streets and in those nearby during the past 30 years, thus making the *Quadrilatero* one of the most famous districts in the world; on its own, the area produces 12 per cent of the GNP of the city of Milan. Although it was already an important business street in the early 1950s, the area owes its success to the strategic alliance developed since the 1980s between the city administration and the fashion and design firms. This has resulted in remarkable levels of investment to favour and promote these activities as part of "Milan's emphasis on fashion and design as a strategy of post-industrial change, consolidation of a new economy and of its brand identity as a world city" (Knox, 2012: 194).

The high-fashion operators located in the Montenapoleone fashion district are almost exclusively devoted to the sale of goods. Other recent hybrid commercial formats – with dedicated spaces for the display of products, organization of events, or the sale of food – have not been developed. If these format variations are present, they are nevertheless exclusively designed for specific users: those who already attend the show rooms or boutiques. They are not considered as hybrid modes to attract or diversify users.

The exclusive features of the district result in spatial and architectural solutions aimed at limiting access, marking the inside and the outside of boutiques, and showing the brand's importance in the high-fashion market according to marketing and positioning strategies. Unlike the following case, the space division does not refer to, and no longer wants to reflect, the old production spaces; rather, it is intended to strengthen the images of wealth, exclusivity and richness: "this zone appeared and felt differently to other Milan central zones (...) the shops are unwelcoming and exclusive. They were not meant for normal shoppers, but for show, or for very rich tourists" (Foot, 2001: 129).

Over the years, this impression has partly diminished due to growth in the high-fashion market and the presence of tourists and users who are very diverse from each other but still attracted by luxury goods. It is, however, still largely accurate, and it is reflected in the multiple architectural solutions of the singular interventions and of the public spaces.[6] Only occasionally the boutique spaces are opened up to different types of activities or uses on behalf of different users. This is the case of exceptional events which take place during the Salone del Mobile week exhibition, the Milan Fashion Weeks, and the Vogue Fashion Night (although these events are very restricted, with each of them occurring only once or twice a year).

Moreover, the extreme specialization of high-fashion commerce has simplified the urban practices and has led to a paradoxical depletion of the public and connective space. Via Montenapoleone features these phenomena in all their extent and problematic issues, in a more emphatic manner compared with many shopping streets of other Italian cities.

The extreme specialization of the ground floors of buildings corresponds to a void on the floors above them, which are used for more exclusive and private business or trade, for goods storage, for multi-floor stores. The public space, carefully designed, controlled and monitored with video cameras and private security guards, simultaneously reveals a set of very limited practices, a completely fragmented use, and a strong standardization of people and rhythms. Real estate operators have promoted exclusive use of the space, whereas the real estate values have progressively selected the residents, business activities, services and offices that can support the district's exclusive vocation.

The opportunities and critical issues showed by this district are therefore twofold. On the one hand, the district plays an important economic role in the city, together with promoting a remarkable image of the territory acknowledged worldwide (connected to fashion, design, and excellence production). On the other hand, very strong sectoring has entailed a limited selection of activities not only connected to high-fashion business but also often supported by international finance and capital not directly related with the territory, its transformation processes and needs.

The interactions among the city, luxury operators and high-fashion business are revealed in its complicated aspects as well, although they are not immediately perceived as such. The creation of a no-friction zone, the removal of social and cultural conflicts, fragmentation and exclusiveness as elements characterizing the space and practices in fact define a suspension of, or a detachment from, a dense and structured notion of urbanity beneficial to a wider group of citizens.

Archetypical and alternative kinds of intervention: Tortona district

On the other hand, the urban development and the role of fashion and luxury operators have been quite different in the area known as Tortona in southwest Milan, an area close to Navigli and the Porta Genova railway station. Tortona was traditionally a manufacturing area, where the industrial past, with its spaces dedicated to production, storage and goods processing, is still recognizable in an urban fabric consisting of traditional *case a ringhiera*, production spaces, walls and 'factory fences' that separated the interior work areas from the outside city spaces.

However, these urban fabrics have become the ideal location for the many Milanese fashion, luxury and design operators that are now located in the Tortona district. Initially, they moved into the area in a sporadic and intermittent manner, benefiting from the large abandoned production surfaces. Later, they deliberately chose this area as a creative and communications district for brands related to fashion, luxury goods and design, following an incremental and polarizing process that exploited the proximity of similar activities without a coherent general strategy (another typical aspect of the Milan planning and transformation processes, as shown by Bolocan, 2009). As a result, the Tortona district has become one of the emblems of the Milan de-industrialization process, characterized by the transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist economy, that began in the 1980s. In Tortona, the productive fabric and the reservoir of knowledge related to design, fashion, high-artisanal and luxury products, have progressively redefined urban spaces and the spaces of the productive system, understood in this context as the various process factors (creativity, communication and marketing). In accordance with the classic de-industrialization process, the Tortona area has undergone gentrification and branding processes marked by the "agglomeration of fashion and design services, creative industries, and the related wider activities" (Knox, 2012: 266).[7] Former areas of industrial production have become the headquarters of high-end Italian fashion and design companies. Integrating or replacing some areas with newly-created volumes, redefining the private interiors, new connections and forms of inside–outside separations have modernized the lots.

A number of fashion operators were forerunners of this process. Besides the important Superstudio transformation (by Ferri and Lucchini), Giorgio Armani redeveloped the former Nestlé industrial area as the location for its Armani Foundation. Redesigned by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, the building is equipped with spaces for exhibitions, a theatre, catwalks and brand showrooms. During the 1990s – in this case thanks to the public administration of Milan – the former Ansaldo factory was turned into a service area for the Teatro della Scala, with spaces for storage, workshops and rehearsals. Alongside the early processes of gentrification there was also some major redevelopment of residential real estates: the Tortona 37 project designed by Matteo Thun; the redevelopment of Riva Calzoni designed by Antonio Citterio and Partners for Ermenegildo Zegna (with the construction of offices, laboratories and brand showrooms); and the latest creation of Superstudio+, 8000 sq.m of multifunctional spaces for events, exhibitions and conventions dedicated to fashion, communication, and design.

Consequently, the transformation of the Tortona area has seen a progressive functional aggregation of the established businesses benefitting from the spatial and productive ties created; the above-mentioned companies were joined by numerous other brands, e.g. Hugo Boss, Diesel, Esprit, as well as professionals in the fashion and luxury products sector. Taking advantage of the large areas and new onsite services available in the reclaimed warehouses, other fashion industry operators set up their own businesses: showrooms, fitting areas, promotion and advertising spaces, fashion design schools and hotels, as well as exhibition spaces, including the Arnaldo Pomodoro Foundation.

The streets of the Tortona district and its adjacent neighbourhoods are thus now characterized by previous industrial spaces and buildings that have been modernized by fashion brands: mixed-use buildings where the former working class lived, along with new high-end residential projects. The result is a remarkable articulation of the urban fabric with alternating private and semi-public parts, the connections and the texture of the open spaces. It is a 'porous' district thanks to the presence of large reclaimed and articulated internal spaces – where, however, freedom of passage and accessibility are not always possible due to the limitations imposed by many private companies.

From the point of view of the people and businesses that reside in the district, it has certainly been subjected to processes of gentrification, so that it is difficult for the original residents and merchants to resist the changes and improvements made by the fashion and creative industries.

At the same time, these processes have also led to the settlement of a young generation of people connected in various ways with the production activities established in the district: fashion, but also photography, design, publishing, and events planning, in addition to the opening of new businesses and proximity to some private design and fashion universities. Perhaps the most evident result of this process – one which demonstrates how consolidated the change has been – is the Milanese Fuori Salone Week when the Tortona district becomes one of the busiest areas of the city, visited by tourists, the curious, and industry experts: a process that has grown and also been taken advantage of to the point that the same operators are now looking for new, alternative and more affordable areas.

Recent singular interventions

Besides the district transformations mentioned above, mention should be made of some very recent singular building or block conversions: the inauguration of Fondazione Prada (designed by OMA-Rem Koolhaas) and Armani Silos (design by Tadao Ando). In the former case, the project involved redevelopment of a former distillery; in the latter, recovery of the grain silos of the earlier Nestlé factory. The new surfaces (respectively 19,000 sq.m and 5,000 sq.m) are dedicated to company offices, art and cultural activities: in a broader sense in the former case, directly connected to the brand in the latter. These transformations can be identified as both archetypical, given the reuse of abandoned buildings, and as expressions of the singular intervention model, given the value of communication and marketing that they bring. Both are very important for the sequence of spaces reactivated, the actors involved, as well as the iconographic, media and architectural dimensions that characterize the transformations (the opening ceremonies were reported by the international press and many newspapers).

In both cases, it is of interest to verify whether an attempt has been made to conceive more complex or inclusive spaces – through definition of common principles, rules, or specific requests by the Municipality – for such kinds of intervention, which are subject to the pressures of privatization and exclusivity even when they are open to the public. The first level of interaction between public and private actors should be the structuring of a sequence of spaces important on both the local and urban scale. A second issue is the identification of hybrid spaces and services offered by the Foundations but open to the community, in which the two spheres work together to redefine collective services and forms of management. On the other hand, the impacts on the territory and the structuring of relations with the surroundings can be observed over a longer period, since these interventions have just been concluded.

Moreover, the transformation of individual buildings through specific iconographic interventions is often ‘reclaimed’ by luxury operators as evidence of their economic contribution and added value to the territory. In this regard, however, the urban policies and a close-view technical analysis could clarify the distance between the private actors’ aspirations and the construction of the urban space. The spatial relationship within the city and its surroundings, the fine adjustment of functions and services, the containment of gentrification processes, constitute a new field of urban design and policies that can make the difference and add value from the mutual relations between the public and the luxury actors.

The second geography: archipelagos and enclaves of exclusive residential interventions

It is possible to recognize in the Milan urban region both consolidated experiences of exclusive residential districts and enclaves (created beginning in the 1970s, and initially promoted as exclusive residential areas) and a variety of more recent transformations in the urban tissue that contribute to defining a molecular geography of the territory. This specific urban area – characterized by economic investments at both national and international levels and by a high concentration of luxury operators in comparison to other Italian cities – therefore serves as a clear example for other European regions increasingly characterized by the presence of discrete and fragmented urban patterns, and which are taking shape as a set of archipelagos and enclaves in relation to different functional purposes – not only residential, but also commercial, logistic, and productive (see Secchi, 2007: XI–XV).

To describe the features and aims of the luxury and high-level residential clusters in the Milan urban region – comparing recent interventions and already completed projects – we focus on three main aspects:

- The relationships that exclusive residential interventions can establish with the surroundings (if these occur);
- The imagery and the values on which the projects are conceived and commercialized: the real estate and residential demands to which interventions want to respond;
- Finally, observation of the dynamics and nature of the already completed projects allows us to measure the distance between an academic debate, often sophisticated, and the effective conditions and trends of these residential clusters.

In the Milan urban area, there is a well-rooted presence of exclusive residential neighbourhoods intended to satisfy upper or middle-class demand.[8] The projects implemented since the 1970s are sizeable and indicate a gradual selection of real estate companies able to handle large-scale transformations (De Pieri & Scrivano, 2001: 3). This group includes the cases of Milano San Felice (8,000 inhabitants, constructed in 1965–1970), Milano 2 (6,087 inhabitants, 1970–1978), and Milano 3 (10,500 inhabitants, 1970–1980) in the municipalities of the first belt suburbs. More recently, other unified and exclusive projects have been carried out in the Milan area: Cascina Vione (in the Basiglio area, built in 2008–2011), la Viscontina, and Rovido (in Buccinasco, during more recent years). In the consolidated urban fabric, recent areas of transformation such as City Life or Porta Nuova propose mainly high-level or luxury residential units, with a growing presence of international owners (in the case of Porta Nuova, rising from 2 per cent of the total market purchases in 2010 to 36 per cent in 2015).

Engaging in some generalizations, a part of the debate in the literature focuses on how suitable it is to identify some of these projects as gated communities, therefore highlighting the presence or absence of fences, the more or less accentuated separation from the surroundings, and the use of internal services and collective spaces by non-resident users. It would be more meaningful, instead, to ask a broader question about the type of urban fabric and society model that these settlements propose and are contributing to define (Bianchetti, 2014).

In the Milan area, in fact, it is possible to identify all the different varieties of districts that have a more or less exclusive status: exclusive residential enclaves and other housing developments – mainly based on economic selection related to the cost of the property and specific regulations concerning the use of common services and areas – but also ‘contractual communities’ (Brunetta & Moroni, 2011) that are more or less open or related to their surroundings.

The first group includes the projects already mentioned: Milano 2, Milano 3, and la Viscontina. These are isolated but not fenced, and also characterized by specific regulations concerning the use of services. The category of contractual communities (leaving aside the issue of whether or not the term ‘gated communities’ is appropriate) includes the San Felice project, where the contract concerns management of some services not provided by the municipality but on a voluntary or contract basis. This is also the situation in Cascina Vione and Rovido, two districts presenting a more limited dimension.

Some of the issues and solutions recurring in these exclusive settlements have already been underlined above when the second geography of luxury projects was illustrated. These features relate to the space design conceived to select and host only specific activities and practices, to the reduction in spatial fluidity, to the limitation of the public space in favour of forms of privatization or contractual relations.

In several cases, however, it is not only the technical and architectural choices in themselves that characterize the interventions, but also the use that is made of them: "the distinctive feature is rather the manipulation of architectural and urban design solutions, as part of a rhetoric and commercial message" (Ferrari, 2015; De Pieri, 2013). This communication is not only commercial, but also cultural, and therefore social and political. In other words, it is the construction of a specific narrative of the luxury residential interventions – with the goal of answering specific questions and social issues – which must be at the core of the reflection. Consequently, it is not sufficient to describe the space; it is necessary to reflect on the imagery that exclusive and luxury interventions aim to draw and implement, inquiring into what residential need has been satisfied, both in previous decades and more recently.

During the 1970s, the success of these projects was dictated by the choice of "living in a place that offers services and quality that cannot be found anywhere else in Milan" (De Pieri & Scrivano, 2001: 5). The desire to move away from 'congestion and smog' and to construct a new status was also present; moreover, the emphasis on exclusive and extremely comfortable flats or houses was very high in all cases. In the most recent projects, the same themes and rhetorical discourses are flanked by security, separation from strangers, protection, and the 'community building' desire and narrative.

A first element of differentiation is instead the model to which the exclusive residential projects explicitly refer. Milan 2, Milan 3 and San Felice follow the pattern of independent and autonomous neighbourhood units. The references are to the garden city or the suburban neighbourhoods of the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, created after World War II. Technical solutions – not related to any disciplinary research and often isolated from real needs – are used primarily to build and communicate an image of quality (Ferrari, 2015).

According to the layout solution, apartment buildings or villas are arranged along uniform secondary roads that branch off from the central core, where services or common green spaces accessible from the pedestrian level are located. The green surfaces, which are always large, are not only spaces for children but also places for meeting and socializing. Green and child spaces are kinds of surrogates for public space, considering that in these projects schools and playgrounds are the real services offered to residents (De Pieri, 2013: 5). For smaller districts the models are the suburban villa (as in Viscontina) or historic farmhouse (as in Borgo Vione). Therefore, it is not the complexities and possibilities of the contemporary city – with also its risks and variety due to differences – that are recalled; rather, the message is that of a protected space, green, isolated and exclusive, where uniformity and affinity among residents are the bases of the new community.

The distance from the urban core, the role of the landscape, and the use of services by non-resident users are further elements of interest. The distance from the city centre is not just physical; it is a distinctive feature of the settlements and a constitutional aspect of exclusivity. The lack of historical or spatial relations with the territory is often deliberate. These settlements are not built along the main transport links with already urbanized areas; rather, they are separated and isolated districts, autonomous projects with new organic forms. The landscape is built from scratch; the lakes are created ad hoc, and the planting is artificial, not rooted. Because of a process of stylization and an aesthetic approach to nature, there are no spaces which mediate, filter and connect with the surrounding landscape and natural elements.

A final feature important for interpreting exclusive residential enclaves is the use of services and public or collective space by non-residents. To be noted is that there is considerable rhetoric regarding this issue (see e.g. Moroni & Brunetta, op. cit.), spaces and services are also presented by both promoters and scholars, as accessible for many users, inclusive and supporting for new forms of community. In some residential enclaves (e.g. Borgo Vione), only residents are allowed to use equipment, with occasional access by external users. In other cases, access is restricted to green equipment, commercial and educational services for children and young people, used by residents and outside users (Milano 2). The use of more composite services (e.g. sports facilities) is conditional on payment of an annual membership fee or related to condominium charges; for this reason, some enclaves are termed 'super-condominiums'. In Milano San Felice services are private, but in some cases their public use is allowed, which demonstrates "the tension between the ambitions of settlement's autonomy and the constraints imposed by our national legal system" (Beretta & Chiodelli, 2011: 23).

It should be verified if and how these projects are opportunities for territorial exchange and relations, as well as a real kind of service provision through contractual forms of community according to a horizontal subsidiarity approach (Moroni & Brunetta, op. cit.). The set of solutions, in fact, even if not completely gated, contributes to constructing an urban space that is fragmented and isolated. Society should thoroughly understand the fascination generated by these lifestyles and new forms of community. It is a field certainly to be explored with the observation of space, but even more with reflection on the interaction between the audience and luxury and high-range real estate actors. The aim is to clarify specific demands, ambitions and needs for reassembling weak opportunities and risks produced by these transformations.

Challenges for public policy

The above-described geographies of luxury developments and their physical translation into the experiences of the Milan Urban Region raise two challenges for public policies. The first concerns the conditions associated with the concepts of urbanity and publicness, and with them the role of local authorities in shaping public access to services and open spaces privatized by growing private ownership.

The second challenge is the relationship between the molecular transformations driven by private capital and the ability to bring them within a strategic perspective in which the link between private exploitation and the common good is not lost.

With reference to the first challenge, the constitutive dimensions of urbanity in both geographies of intensive and extensive transformation by luxury projects are called into question, with effects on the legitimacy of public action.

According to J. Lévy and M. Lussault (2003), urbanity is a combination of density and diversity. Reading their variable combinations in luxury projects aids understanding of the different gradients of urbanity in those projects. In the first geography – small-scale conversions and micro gentrification on a block or house basis within consolidated urban neighbourhoods – density and diversity can coexist in the open spaces created jointly with some of these interventions. In these open spaces, the disjunction between the public use of privately owned spaces introduces a domestication (Zukin, 1995) of these spaces, attractive to certain users but not others, thereby "reducing the risks of social difference and promoting the virtues of familiarity" (Jackson, 1998: 180).

According to J. Allen (2006: 453), domestication "is another version of an excluding power, rather than one which works through the more subtle means of inclusion. It is essentially about using urban design techniques to keep certain kinds of less civil elements out".

The production of private spaces for public use,[9] accompanied by a reduction of the public intervention in the production of the 'public city', has had effects on the shapes and uses of those spaces. These contrived spaces (Goss, 1993) re-shape the meaning of 'public', multiplying and diversifying the possibilities of private actors to be involved in the production of public spaces (Fleury, 2010). The condition characterizing these semi-public spaces is not only that they are confined or supervised/controlled spaces, often with restricted access, but also that power is exercised through "seductive spatial arrangements", an expression of so-called ambient power (Allen, 2006: 442).

Recognizing the public sphere and transforming the concept of public good (Low & Smith, 2006) challenge the public policy in order to ensure stratified temporalities of uses in the open spaces produced by luxury projects as a condition for achieving the urbanity of those places.[10]

Because open spaces are products of different uses over time that can pertain to different 'communities of practices'[11] (Wenger, 1998), they can acquire multiple and multi-dimensional identities in the exclusive spaces of luxury projects, only if they are inhabited by different urban populations[12] (Martinotti, 1993).

The constitutive features of the open spaces – "always under construction; (…) always in the process of being made, never finished, never closed" (Massey, 2005: 9) and exposed to continuous changes – are re-written through user codes by luxury projects; the splinters of public[13] in their temporary and changeable form are managed through spatial arrangements with which "possibilities are closed down by degree through their ambient qualities" (Allen, 2006: 445).[14]

Different conditions ensure urbanity in exclusive segregated districts – our second geography – where also the urban metrics are rewritten as tools to measure and manage distances: measurement standards and modes of travel.

Whilst density can act as a condition to ensure a plurality of choices for a selected community, selection based on the homogeneity of status erases diversity.

The principle of co-optation as well as selective exclusion are manifest in a spatial device, to prevent the entry of some, and to give visibility to the group's members, defining rules of behaviour within it (Secchi, 2013: 18).

These voluntary socio-spatial segregations interfere with the decision-making process regarding the control of and access to common spaces or services where the use of such facilities can be managed by one class that is politically more influential than another.

In these cases, determining if and how to integrate luxury into urban strategies can be an important opportunity to reflect on the tools with which to enhance the positive effects of private investments made to guarantee exclusive privileges and benefits. At the same time, it becomes an opportunity to assess also the flip side of luxury and the measures with which to manage it.

Hence the challenge for urban planning is to find mechanisms of regulation able to capture and re-invest, for the wider community, the increase in land value generated by these exclusive properties and their private goods, and which are inspired by the same mechanisms of self-regulation and self-provision of urban services and infrastructures that are adopted in these contractual communities.

The first challenge for public policy in luxury developments introduces the second one. This concerns the strategy for negotiating distributional shares of the prospective increases in land values.

Given that at a time of financial and economic crisis collaborative solutions may be important for transforming a scarcity of resources, especially for public actors, into opportunities, it should be recognized that public administrations can adopt transformative practices due the fact that they focus on the structural problems in society (Albrechts, 2010).

The challenge is to understand whether and how small-scale luxury projects, promoted by single developers, can be coordinated and can play a meaningful role on a large scale, as well as whether and how they can be driven by co-design processes to amplify the urban services supply.

Recent research has focused on the possibility of new partnerships, including government, the private sector and civil society, with the purpose of 'valuing people' in the implementation of urban services so as to innovate the way in which those services are financed and sustained (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011: 42).

In this framework, it becomes necessary to assess not only the impacts that these new mechanisms may have on public finances, but also the public administration innovation process, because these transformations entail the renewal of urban service business models and public administration mechanisms and practices.

If the co-production of urban services in luxury developments could become the arena for discussing and changing the operational mechanism of the public administration, these possible mechanisms would be detached from the tried and tested forms of on-going collaboration among different stakeholders and the continuous adaptation of the strategies implemented through the learning and adjustment process.

The nature of investors and the ubiquity of their investments within a global geography require new skills in public administration and a re-thinking of public business models, because the production of services through luxury projects cannot be treated on the basis of traditional negotiation mechanisms.

Notes

1 This chapter is the outcome of joint reflection; Paola Pucci is the author of the first and third sections; Giulia Fini is the author of the second section.

2 The Milan Urban Region is an urbanized area which extends beyond the institutional borders of the metropolitan city of Milan. It is characterized by a complex settlement model and a plurality of settlement and living environments.

3 According to the first definition by R. Glass (1964), gentrification denoted simultaneous processes of physical, class and socio-cultural change and increases in the land value of central city neighbourhoods resulting in the direct displacement of lower-class households. The ensuing debate revealed more complex dimensions of the phenomenon influenced by factors such as social class and which drive process changes. Among these dimensions are the consumption preferences of certain middle-class households, or the role of the banks and real estate developers as the main investors (in N. Smith's rent gap theory, 1979), or the so-called 'third wave' gentrification in which the renewal and upgrading of peripheral neighbourhoods are supported or even initiated by local governments seeking higher tax revenues (Hackworth & Smith, 2001).

4 "Privately owned but publicly used interior spaces found in shopping malls, airport terminals, the atrium lobbies of hotels and office buildings and convention centers" as defined by Cenzatti and Crawford (1993).

5 For example, consider all the issues related to the temporary reuse of certain buildings; the difficulty of following up urban transformations; the need to redefine public-private partnerships in service management; the role of creative activities and related spaces, which has grown substantially in recent years. These are spaces and issues related to the luxury transformation that the public administration and other institutions, together with private operators, must

directly promote or regulate with an increase in awareness and knowledge of the limits and opportunities of this type of relationship.

6 This district has been called a 'semiotic district' because of its specialization in "products whose economic value is based largely on the meaning people give them rather than their functionality" (Knox, 2012: 197).

7 This system was made up of private and public institutions, industries, designers, studios, warehouses, and a series of services linked to the production and advertising of design goods and ideas (Foot, 2001: 124).

8 For the projects realized in past decades see for example: Villaggio dei Giornalisti, Maggiolina district or 'La Veridiana' neighbourhood (Zanfi, 2013).

9 Studies on the privatization of public spaces take two aspects into account: the privatization of public space in relation to the role played by space consumption and enjoyment in social practices (Sennett, 1974; Walzer, 1983); the role of private actors in the production and management of public spaces (Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1995).

10 "Avec l'urbanité, on intègre l'espace public comme ressource cognitive et affective, l'engagement des corps qui s'y produit, la civilité qui permet leur gestion, l'exposition à l'altérité, la sérendipité, et la créativité que ces deux dernières rendent possible, tout un ensemble de liens faibles" (Granovetter, 1973).

11 The term 'communities of practices' is employed to focus attention on the fact that urban populations cannot be reduced to predefined and fixed categories since they belong to multiple categories. For this reason, it is important to consider populations not as static categories (inhabitants, commuters, city users, etc.), but as "groups of subjects that, temporarily and intermittently, share practices of daily life" (Pasqui, 2008: 148). Hence they can be considered communities of practices that generate particular space–time geographies.

12 Moving away from the classical approach of social ecology, Martinotti (1993: 137–139) suggests we "conceptualise metropolitan development and emerging social morphology as the progressive differentiation of four populations (inhabitants, commuters, city users, Metropolitan businessmen) that characterize the metropolis".

13 Bianchetti (2011: 82) writes: "non vi è più 'un' pubblico, a partire dal quale definire – come era per il passato – orientamenti e legittimità del progetto, piuttosto ci sono schegge di pubblico".

14 According to Allen (2006: 445), ambient qualities refer to "something about the character of an urban setting – a particular atmosphere, a specific mood, a certain feeling – that affects how we experience it and which in turn seeks to induce certain stances which we might otherwise have chosen not to adopt".

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3 Experiencing prestigious places

Contemporary forms and modalities

Marichela Sepe

The increasing importance of the use of experience in urban regeneration and the design of contemporary places is inducing cities to engage in constructing suitable images and symbols of their transformed areas in order to match the new trends, also luxury ones (Hudders, Pandelaere, & Vyncke, 2013). As O.B. Jensen (2007) states: “The idea is understood to involve selective storytelling, or attempts to re-imagine the city (Eckstein and Throgmorton, 2003). It has to do with coining concepts and articulating difference and identity. Seen in this light, urban branding is evocative storytelling aimed at educating its recipients to ‘see the city in a particular way’. However, branding for identity construction also means branding for alterity construction (Czarniawska, 2002)”.

The experience of a place may thus become an integral part of a product experience. The enhancement of products (Splendiani et al. 2013) “assumes a meaning which goes beyond the simple sale of material goods. It covers the supply of complex experiences (...) enriched by intangible elements capable to stimulate and involve the sensory and experiential component of consumption. It deals with attracting people to the places where local products are made by inserting the products in the most extensive offers covering the entire territorial system of reference”.

The experience may also be used for the spectacularization of a place and its commercialization, as in the case of ‘brandscapes’ (Klingman, 2007). In this case it is important not to clone places in the same form everywhere because they inevitably come to resemble each other without being able really to engage the people who move into them (Lehtovuori, 2010).

In this regard, prestigious places are places where luxury appears – and is ready to be consumed – in specific forms; places characterized by elements (architectures, urban furniture, etc.) able to evoke in their users the perception of a sophisticated atmosphere and a high-quality standard of living.

Starting from these premises, the aim of this chapter is to propose two main forms of the possible experience of prestigious places: innovative paths, and high-quality product paths (Ache & Ilmonen, 2010). In both cases, respect for place identity is crucial. In order to introduce these topics, the chapter will illustrate the definitions of both place identity and experience in their broad meanings. Luxury, in the multiple forms in which it is expressed, constitutes for its user a special object/product/service which is difficult to obtain. Current users are becoming more and more choosy and exigent about both the product they buy and the experience of buying, what surrounds the product acquired. For this reason, luxury factories are changing in accordance with new needs, sometimes transforming the existing place identity.

Place identity

Place identity is a complex notion which can be related to different questions, and which is changing according to new needs and uses of places (Sepe, 2013a).

H.M. Proshansky et al. (1983) link the various kinds of relationships between people and their experiences: "Thus, place identity is the result of a constant, and often subconscious negotiation between individuals and the potpourri of experiences, objects, and even idealized places they encounter during their lives".

In this regard, M. Southworth and D. Ruggeri (2010) point out that D. Stokols and S.A. Shumaker (1981) coined the term 'social imageability', which derives from the shared meanings generated by the involvement of individuals with a place. This term leads to the concept of place attachment. Researching the effects on identity of displacement and detachment from familiar places, sociologist M.J. Milligan has identified what she calls 'locational socialization', through which one's active involvement with a place generates shared meanings (1998; 2003: 383).

M. Southworth and D. Ruggeri (2010) observe that "Place significance may also result from historic or political events. But places with strong public identity need not have strong visual identity. (...) While strong visual form is not essential for identity, it can provide a framework for attaching meanings. Place identity has greatest power when visual form, individual and social meaning come together". According to K. Lynch (1960), "(S)ense of place in itself enhances every human activity that occurs there, and encourages the deposit of a memory trace". M. Castells (1997: 60) proposes that urban movements are based on three factors combined in different ways: "urban demands on living conditions and collective consumption; the affirmation of local cultural identity; and the conquest of local political autonomy and citizen participation. Different movements combined these three sets of goals in various proportions, and the outcomes of their efforts were equally diversified. Yet, in many instances, regardless of the explicit achievements of the movement's participants, but for the community at large. And not only during the lifespan of the movement (usually brief), but in the collective memory of the locality. Indeed (...) this production of meaning is an essential component of cities, throughout history, as the built environment, and its meaning, is constructed through a conflictive process between the interests and values of opposing social actors".

These various definitions suggest, as observed by M. Southworth and D. Ruggeri (2010), that this concept "should be thought of as a gradient that includes several dimensions and should be as complex as the processes at play in every neighbourhood. It should account for aesthetic appeal and imageability, but be expanded to include social considerations, the discourses and meanings that are shared by community members". This means that other more nuanced definitions of place identity may be identified. "It can be found by looking at a range of places, from the historic downtowns of our cities to the everyday landscapes of suburbia, using a variety of methods, including physical form analysis, observations, interviews and other sociological methods. This new definition should consider the need for memorable and imageable environments, expressions of shared social values, new forms of non-place communities, and the multiple mechanisms by which meanings are embedded and communicated in the landscape."

In this sense, the key role of experience helps to link place identity with both personal emotions and the territorial system. Therefore, the experience of places where the luxury product is suitably related to the place identity is able to create memorable prestigious places.

From product to experiences consumption

D. Kolb et al. (1984; 1971), one of the foremost experts on experiential learning in the field of psychology, defines learning as the 'continuing education of the individual'. Learning benefits from various connections created among education, work, and personal development. The individual thus acquires a system of skills through experiential methodologies, which lead to the development of educational goals adhering to the real world of work. Experiential learning is a modality of learning which is based on experience, understood in its cognitive and sensory senses. By experimenting with situations, tasks and roles, the subjects, as active protagonists, use their expertise to pursue their goals. In the field of economic studies, 'experiential' acquires a more extensive meaning. From the 1980s onwards, three periods can be distinguished in which distinctive patterns of consumer behaviour in terms of experience evolved. The term 'experiential' was introduced in 1982 "as an approach that focuses on the symbolic, aesthetic and hedonistic nature of consumption, and which is based on the conception of the experience of consumption as an activity aimed at searching for amusements and sensations" (Capitello et al., 2012). It was later shown that the rational and emotional component can coexist with and influence the degree of satisfaction, introducing an experiential vision in the consumer. Recognition of the importance of variables such as the emotions that bring pleasure and the need actually to use a given product, as well as the action of purchasing itself, meant that they became important components of product design. As R. Capitello et al. (2012) note, new concepts were introduced, such as the 'shopping experience' (Falk & Campbell, 1997; Rieunier, 2002), 'Internet shopping experience' (Menon and Kahn, 2002), and 'customer experience aimed at creating competitive value'. In the 2000s, new studies on customer experience have proposed a holistic experience combining the customer and the company's offer so as to yield the optimal experience in the gaining of knowledge and in product buying. While this approach can give a company a significant competitive advantage, it requires an especially thorough study of the offer in terms of experience. It also requires the company to be able to differentiate its offer to meet different needs; this leads to customization and an increase in time and costs compared with traditional offer designs. Decisive factors in this regard are, besides the quality and reputation of the product being offered, the attractiveness of the place and the functionality of its services, and intangible values such as tradition and the hospitality of the population (Capitello et al., 2012). Place experience thus becomes an integral part of the product experience. The enhancement of products (Splendiani et al., 2013) acquires a meaning that goes beyond the simple sale of material goods. It extends to the supplying of complex experiences enriched by intangible elements capable of stimulating and involving the sensory and experiential component of consumption. Place experience has to do with attracting people to the places where local products are made by including products in a more generalized offer addressed to the entire target area. The overall supply does not consist just of single products; rather, it consists of a system where one or more enterprises, local institutions, or entertainment facilities promote a new image of the area. Demand thus turns into demand for experiences, and this, in turn, requires appropriate hosting structures.

The construction of a local system to support experiential activities requires the definition of appropriate network modalities. A study by S. Splendiani et al. (2013), although it actually deals with the promotion of local products, outlines a pattern that can be extended to other types of cultural 'products'.

As M. Montella (2009) explains, "In the case of local systems for the promotion of local products, the most appropriate organizational models present 'variable geometry', according to different thresholds of efficiency and effectiveness that characterize different kinds of internal processes to the network".

Two methods of network construction can be identified. One is characterized by a bottom-up logic of organization consisting in the convergence of different actors on a shared idea of task management with a view to carrying out a common project. The second method is mainly top-down; the construction of the system provides a governing body that manages the aggregation of the different actors and planned activities, and is expected to last over time (Golinelli, 2002).

The purpose of the resulting supply system is to make the user no longer a passive subject of standardized economy, but rather an active subject involved in the production and consumption processes, as well as being able to create value. The concept of value is also extended to local stakeholders, who contribute to construction of the network. Value is thus "created jointly between the parties involved (...) transcending the boundaries between functions and specialized disciplines and taking a holistic view that, at the district level, implies a marketing network where there are no buyers and sellers, but partners who exchange resources to carry out jointly interdependent activities aimed at the preparation of experiences" (Splendiani et al., 2013). The 'exhibition' of experience has an operative potential in supporting the development of creative forces. This approach originates in the studies of the economist Florida, who argues that the more cities are able to seem attractive to the creative class of workers and managers in the various economic sectors such as art, design, fashion and advanced technologies services, the greater the likelihood that those cities can successfully face the challenges of competition among cities imposed by globalization (Florida, 2002; 2005; Landry, 2008; Sepe, 2014; 2013b). Indeed, the creative city is a city able not only to attract creative people from outside but also to create an attractive environment – comprising culture, excellence, luxury and quality – in which creative people can find many stimuli to express themselves. In this case, both tangible and intangible capitals become necessary to contribute and develop these places. In particular, luxury becomes an element of excellence, and excellence is translated into richness of territory in the sense of a cultural resource. In the creative milieu, clusters and districts capable of strengthening the cultural urban structure can be developed (Carta, 2007; Florida, 2005).

Prestigious places: towards different kinds of experience?

As said, luxury, in the multiple forms in which it is expressed, constitutes for its user a special object/element/service which is difficult to obtain.

This value of luxury is the basis of many commercial strategies which change according to whether the good is a globalized or quality-handcrafted product. Whilst in the former case the marketing strategy is entrusted to the brand and is usually similar in all places, in the latter it is expressed through the specificity of the product, and use will be made of an image which differs according to the typicality of the place (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008; Roberts & Armitage, 2015; Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

In both cases, factories which produce these products conduct detailed research on how to define their presence in a particular place and on how to present their products. In the case of a globalized brand, it is easy to find places where more than one brand is present: malls, commercial boulevards and streets, luxury districts, airports (Morandi & Paris, 2015). It is possible to recognize these places because, usually, they display several brands; and due to the commercialization of luxury goods, the retail spaces are located in buildings and places which possess a good architectonic, or at least building, quality.

Urban furniture, the general state of conservation of the buildings which host these brands, and shop windows are in harmony with the excellence of the goods which they have to promote. The differences which can be observed are a certain standardization of outlets, malls and airports; and greater care for aesthetic details in luxury streets or commercial districts.

In the case of globalized products, even though these are not commercialized in the places where they are manufactured, the most successful of them are those connected to the history, culture and tradition of the territory of commercialization. Illustration of the history of the brand, with images recalling its creation and process of industrialization, together with the illustration of products – in particular the 'icons' – connected to the local environment related to it in various ways (architecture, urban furniture and/or other products of excellence) is a linkage between the tradition and innovation of luxury understood as a product of the place's culture.

As regards high-quality handcrafted products, these are usually commercialized singly or in thematic routes; for instance, wine districts, goldsmiths' streets, etc.

In any case, albeit in various ways, luxury brands try to create in consumers an emotion or illusion which goes beyond the purchase of the product. In the case of the globalized product, the main illusion is that of being part of the luxury world in which people use these goods on a daily basis. As said, the place which hosts those brands will present urban furniture, shop windows and billboards where the person who ideally uses these products is represented; for instance, an actress or a celebrity, who in turn drives a luxury car or flies business class, etc.

The enhancement of the place's identity is in this case stronger when the quality of the architecture and in general of the place is associated with the particularity – although globalized – of the product. It is more difficult for this to happen in malls, which are often characterized by standardization, although this aspect has been changing in recent years, with 'archistars' called to design multifunctional urban containers with a mix of retail and leisure (Rabbiosi, 2013). There follow descriptions of these different kinds of paths.

Innovative paths

In the contemporary city, in parallel with the traditional places of socialization (squares, main streets, etc.), there have arisen urban structures which vary in size, quality and shape but have in common the aim of favouring a prolonged use substitutive of that of public spaces.

These urban or extra-urban structures reflect the new combinations of functions which are arising to satisfy the needs of different categories of users.

Among these, three main categories can be identified. The first comprises shopping malls, outlets of luxury brands, and multi-screen cinemas where the functions – including entertainment – are mainly connected with shopping. The second includes airports, railway stations and motorways. This group is characterized by mobility and transport functions connected with shopping as well. The prevalent scheme in shopping centres is constituted by the shopping structure, a huge parking facility, and other connected amenities (Mello, 2002). Because the parking facility allows people to arrive easily and stop for a long time, it plays a fundamental role in the success of these structures.

Furthermore, some outlets and shopping malls are increasingly taking features from theme parks, giving rise to a new mix which is both scenic and functional. As S. Mills (1998) has said, "The Mall of America in Minnesota already seems to have taken the shopping experience to levels that could have embarrassed even Walt Disney. Is this shopping with entertainment or a theme park with massive purchasing opportunities?"

In addition to these facilities, multi-screen cinemas have become predominant, replacing single-screen cinemas. Function often prevails over shape, and the presence of parking, even though not observable in all these structures, is an important element of success. Most of the multi-screen cinemas are located within shopping centres or villages created by the big film production companies.

Furthermore, a more recent generation of multicontainers is emerging. These are above all commercial – often with luxury products – or tourist-commercial extra-urban spaces equipped with large-capacity parking areas and where several functions (which include cinema and luxury shopping) able to satisfy numerous needs at the same time are linked but do not represent any one in particular (Torres, 2000). Referring to the phenomenon of 'bundled' urban environments, S. Graham and S. Marvin (2001) have pointed out that "invented street systems within shopping malls, theme parks and urban resorts, often with strong tie-ins to leading sports, media and entertainment multi-nationals (Disney, Time-Warner, Sony, Nike, etc...)" have been created in order to "exploit merchandising spin-offs. Such developments cover increasingly large footprints and developers attempt to bundle together the maximum number of 'synergistic' uses within a single complex – retailing, cinemas, IMAX screens, sports facilities, restaurants, hotels, entertainment facilities, casinos, simulated historic scenes, virtual reality complexes, museums, zoos, bowling alleys, artificial ski slopes, etc.".

Airports and railway stations become places where people spend time not only waiting for departure but also shopping, meeting people, working and engaging in various activities. Often, above all in airports, there are many shops with luxury brands. These places are designed more and more to offer a variety of facilities in order to attract people.

The increasingly frequent, large-scale use of spaces by greatly increased flows of people has generated a process of global competition among cities which involves concentration and specialisation in enhancing attractiveness to large masses of people. These are the places on which competition among cities, as well as economic and social interests, will be increasingly focused (Torres, 2000). As M. Crang (1998: 128) pointed out, "although enclosed environments have multiplied, there has also been a renaissance of the city in all parts of the city itself as an arena of consumption". One of the reasons is a process of urban regeneration which is transforming deindustrialized areas into new spaces of consumption. Different kinds of places have emerged, including new waterfronts – such as Hafencity in Hamburg, the Albert Dock in Liverpool, Arabianranta in Helsinki, Abondaibarra in Bilbao, to cite some examples in European cities (Sepe, 2009). In these cases, the waterfront's transformation with new emblematic architectures and urban spaces designed by 'archistars' are the starting points for revitalization of not only the image of the area in question but also the whole city. The new buildings and public spaces become the brand of the new areas, as in the case of the Guggenheim museum of Bilbao, the Tate Gallery in Liverpool, and so on, and the attractiveness of the city is often – but not always – related to the establishment of luxury brands.

In other cases, the transformation is more focused on the regeneration area: "What were once landscapes of labour become landscapes of leisure; former docks and factory sites become arts centres, are renovated for accommodation or form the sites for new festivals" (...) In Manhattan, S. Zukin (1982) identified this with the return to the city by 'professionals', often in creative or media industries, taking up living in the lofts of SoHo. Conflicts can emerge over the different meanings groups ascribe to urban areas – over both residential and commercial development. Thus, London's Spitalfields market redevelopment produced diverging views on whether the market should be kept as a local facility, an updated national market or as a tourist attraction".

High-quality local product paths

The second type of prestigious place is the one related to paths for experiencing quality products. The aim of the organization of experiential paths is to raise awareness among the inhabitants of a given place, and to promote an area innovatively through its quality products and cultural values.

Prime examples of experiential paths are 'typical paths'. These are intended to promote local high-quality products with an emphasis on the experiential dimension and the resources offered by the area of which they are an expression. The purpose of typical paths is to present a product and thereby reap social and symbolic benefits.

The paths centred on the experience of high-quality typical products are examples of negotiation among the various forms of exploitation of the resources of an area, creating places of excellence and distinctiveness. They are also important opportunities for the development of disadvantaged and marginalized areas because they can catalyse the interest of institutions, producers, and inhabitants in joint projects. The actors involved, motivated by the idea of addressing what they have to offer to a broader context of users, strive to build a network of relationships with manufacturers and other entities participating in the initiative to promote an area. The success of the strategy depends on the willingness and ability to coordinate of individual producers. Their synergy can yield real added value and open up experiential vistas (Nocifora et al., 2011; Splendiani et al., 2013). Ongoing initiatives throughout Europe, including some in Trentino in North Italy, are prime examples of this approach, demonstrating how these routes are capable of raising interest. Websites on high-quality wine trails provide detailed information on the different approaches of an area and its products, enabling the user to decide on the type of experience being offered to him or her.

The experiential component of an itinerary with high-quality products has been studied more recently by architects and planners who, in the wake of K. Lynch (1960), have developed theories on the perception of place. As reported in a study by M.M. Degen and G. Rose (2012), the English agenda has given considerable attention to the quality of urban design, the assumption being that it arises directly from people's place experience: "a good design can help to create lively places with a distinctive character, streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and at human scale, and places that inspire a positive atmosphere, thanks to the imagination and sensitivity of the designers" (DETR/CABE, 2000). The authors also stress the importance of urban transformations of the built environment as a reflection not only of political, economic and cultural changes, but also of the "everyday experience that people have of the urban space". The senses are part of people's everyday lives; and the sensory experience acquired in a place makes us remember it in a more or less pleasant and distinctive way (Lefebvre, 1991).

Urban studies agree that, increasingly, the goal of project action in the urban space is to alter the experience of that space for its residents. Urban environments are increasingly designed to be distinctive, so as to create memorable sensory experiences for the people who use them. Even people who visit ordinary urban centres can describe a number of emotional experiences concerning those places based on one or other of the five senses. These experiences may differ greatly from one place to another, and they may also vary in relation to factors such as the use of vehicles or the experience of a place on foot. The sensory experience of the products may also be used to spectacularize a place and commercialize it, as in the case of 'brandscapes' (Klingman, 2007).

To complete the experience of a place and its urban environment, we need, as N. Seremetakis claims (1994), to resort to acts of memory. Recalling how a place appeared different in the past relates to a given environment in its current form, but it also connects with what it looked like in the past.

When a neighbourhood is perceived as being similar to any other town centre or shopping mall, it is defined as a 'type' rather than a unique urban environment. As E. Eizenberg argues (2010), "the continual remembrance of other places and previous visits to the same place, both assimilates a person into the experienced place and constantly makes reference to other places elsewhere" (Degen, Rose & DeSilvey, 2008).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown two main ways in which it is possible to experience prestigious places: innovative paths, and high quality local product paths. While in the former case the quality of the architecture and urban design are fundamental factors in order to obtain non-globalized places, in the latter, the focus is on the quality of the product and illustration of the artisanal process or realization. In all the cases, both respect for place identity and the quality of spaces and buildings contribute strongly to the liveability and prestige of the area.

The construction of experience starts with the bottom-up or top-down creation of networks. While in the former case, a combination of businesses, stakeholders, and institutions arises to allow the participation of different actors at all stages of the process, in the latter case the creation takes place by decision of a network which conveys interests, actors and economies.

Important in determining the new representation of places and districts is the role of communication – deriving both from media and participation processes. Citizens and inhabitants perceive luxury districts and places in different ways according to their involvement in the field. Therefore, working in different ways in construction of these places, or in the luxury machine and so being a protagonist of it (purchasing or living in a quality environment) is an important factor of success of the operation. On the other hand, these may represent an element of conflict for the inhabitants if they are not involved in the organization of the place or in the interest of these kinds of goods. Tourists and visitors are in general satisfied in using and experiencing these places because they are only their consumers and beneficiaries. Indeed, more and more travel agencies organize tours devoted solely to visiting luxury districts or local product itineraries also in the framework of cruises; and the organization of suitable paths has become a factor in a city's quality and competitiveness.

It is also vital to understand the previous and coexisting images of those areas. As M. Greenberg (2000) observes, "the branding strategy, in a complex manner, bears witness to the way in which the 'word city' is overlaying the 'built city'. In a dynamic process of socio-spatial dialectics (Richardson & Jensen, 2003), the city becomes the frame upon which its physical surface is inscribed with new ways of playing the global competitive game. At the same time the city is represented in images, texts and logos and is thus embedded in a certain logic specific to the urban intervention".

E-commerce growth is slower than the traditional retail for luxury goods, because these require a stronger physical and perceptive contact with the object by the user. To this end, although many international commercial chains of luxury goods are studying strategies to recreate the special atmosphere needed to sell and purchase these products, the sale of these goods in situ is currently more successful. This advantage is attributed to the places of selling, and for this reason their organization – both urban and aesthetic – must be designed suitably, contrasting aggressive marketing actions aimed only at rapidly achieving commercial objectives.

Furthermore, the planning of prestigious places cannot be separated from the interpretation of the territory as a cultural system resulting from an ensemble of historical, economic, and social processes. In such a system, the contribution of the cultural factor must be considered propulsive, not only for its qualitative meaning, but also and especially for the role of *trait d'union* of a number of actions taken to protect and enhance places. Even though globalization is one of the main dangers in innovative itineraries, the proper planning of quality architecture and public spaces could prevent it by creating a suitable mix between innovation and culture.

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4 Walking as a luxury activity

Andrea Pavia

Every Christmas, I fly home to visit my family in Rome. Almost ritualistically my father and I take long walks through the historic city centre. At night, we go for a *passeggiata*, which literally translates as "going for a walk". But the proper translation has a much richer sense: the meaning of *passeggiare* in Italian is more than just walking, for embedded in it is the idea of strolling for enjoyment and leisure. *Passeggiare* is a very common activity among Italians. It has been a part of our culture for millennia. Our cities, or at least the older parts of them, have grown and developed around this primordial activity predating even Roman times. When I go for a *passeggiata* with my father we walk for hours. We have no particular destination in mind and we let ourselves get lost in the city. Like two flâneurs, we wander in the labyrinth of the old fabric. As we walk through the narrow streets and plazas, the city lures us ever deeper into the core held by its monumental walls, walking far beyond the typical quarter-mile threshold.

Place-making

For centuries, it was through walking that humans perceived space, measured it, and understood it (Pavia, 2015). This fundamental relation between the act of walking and the form and life of cities obtained until the last century. The inexorable rise of the automobile and mass transportation systems changed the urban form, introducing a new way of life and new ways to perceive and understand space. Rapid modernization imposed demands that traditional pedestrian patterns could not accommodate. In existing urban cores, new urban planning principles overlaid organized grids onto the organic urban fabrics and segregated formerly integrated uses. Today, in many cities walking has become a marginal and discouraged activity; what was once a central organizing factor of city life is increasingly confined to being a luxury activity for the citizen-consumer. This transition has occurred extremely quickly relative to the evolution of urbanity, and almost everywhere it is regarded with indifference. Both in the past and present centuries, cities around the globe have been constantly designed and redesigned for cars. The outcome is, in the best cases, a rational yet generic and soul-less built environment and a loss of spatial identity and a sense of place.

Of course this critique is nothing new; place-making as a counter-reaction and a design philosophy grew and took shape in response to the drastic car-culture driven transformations of the 1950s and 1960s. Arguably, in the US we can trace its roots in the groundbreaking work on the interdependence of urban design and social life by the urbanists J. Jacobs and W.H. Whyte (recently carried on by the Danish urbanist J. Gehl). J. Jacobs advocated citizen ownership of streets through the idea of "eyes on the street" and Whyte expounded the elements essential for creating social life in public spaces. The term "place-making" came into use in the 1970s among professionals dealing with city making, and it assumed even stronger ideological connotations within the contextualism and postmodernism theoretical backgrounds of the 1970s and 1980s. J. Campoli (2012), in her resourceful hands-on book, *Made for Walking: Density and Neighborhood Form*, also singles out all the qualities of the pre-car world city fabric that make a welcoming walkable environment: continuity of the urban fabric and the street edge; spatial enclosure; the human scale; architectural diversity; landmarks; transparency and permeability on the ground floor; narrow parcels; and a mix of uses.

More than 50 years later, our urban environments are as car-oriented as ever, so that the critique is still extremely relevant. Furthermore, today we are witnessing two unprecedented global trends. As regards the first, 2008 marked the year when 50 percent of the global population passed from living in a rural environment to living in an urban or semi-urban one, with this number projected to increase significantly in the next 50 years (UNFPA, 2007). As to the second, by 2016, 1 per cent of the world population will control more than 50 per cent of the world's wealth (Oxfam International, 2015). This means unprecedented urban growth and densities, mounting social disparity, and the capacity of a narrow private elite to control and orient development for large portions of real estate. As a result, the magnitude, the time frame, and the inequality of development today are much greater, faster and more pronounced than ever before. As a consequence, the retail industry exhibits a progressive consolidation of the top development players and large growth in the luxury and outlet mall sectors (Reingold & Wahba, 2014).

In the current debate, place-making is understood by landscape architects, architects and urban planners as an approach to the design of the city that is rooted in the nature of place identity and generated by the local context. It describes the process of creating public or private spaces like squares, plazas, parks, streets and waterfronts that will attract people because they are enjoyable and appealing. They become so by providing a unique emotional experience that gives the individual a meaningful relationship with the place: a relationship that may be of excitement, laughter, relaxation, amusement, love, joy, or surprise. Like Proust's madeleine, successful places are also the ones able to trigger involuntary memories, so that we recollect our past experiences without a conscious effort. These qualities are becoming increasingly important in today's consumer society as means to differentiate and create value in private developments. On a more aspirational level, place-making is understood by some professionals as a way to involve and strengthen the local community and to foster a sense of belonging and identity. For others it is primarily a participatory activity. A. Krieger (2006), in his famous article "Where and how does urban design happen?", defines place-making as "the provision of distinctive, lively, appealing centers for congregation to alleviate the perceived homogeneity of many and large contemporary urban areas", in other words, the construction of a sense of place. From a pure architectural prospective, the goal in place-making is to design the space around and between buildings – "the in-between void" – as an element of primary importance and as the driver of the spatial composition in which the buildings themselves act as backdrops. A second key element is the design of the void according to the desired walking patterns that connect with its immediate context. This approach is clearly in opposition with the traditional/modernist modus operandi of architects, who create buildings as elements of object form, where the space around and between these physical elements is usually of secondary importance.

Prestigious places

Luxury is traditionally defined as a material object or service conducive to sumptuous living, usually a delicacy, elegance, or refinement of living rather than a necessity, but also something pleasant and satisfying. Luxury places in the retail industry can be defined in two ways: as areas in the city where the clustering of high-end retailers happens, typically in central streets or plazas, and often filled with integrated activities of luxury players (art, services, etc.), or in shopping centres with a tenancy mix of anchors and in-line luxury stores. Such stores carry iconic brand names that have brand value and image. They represent a luxury lifestyle and are very limited in availability and almost exclusively present in major tourist destinations.

Across the US many shopping malls are struggling because of stagnant middle-class incomes, overbuilt pre-2008 retail space, and online competitors like Amazon.com and outlets like Costco. While luxury and high-end malls are still lucrative developments for a few big developers that are now consolidating, several recent real estate operations have been undertaken to regenerate suburban middle-class malls and reposition them as high-end products. Because of the limited number of possible sites in a city, and because of the draw generated by the brand identity and immediate recognition as a "place to see and be seen", a development centred on luxury and high-end commerce (which targets the top 20 per cent of consumers) can become an opportunity to produce more than just a place for a fulfilling shopping experience. It can be a meaningful urban centrality able to foster civic engagement, and to jumpstart and drive urban regeneration and economic development within its proximity. The most successful developments of this kind – ones able to position themselves as new urban centralities – are typically those which recognize that the luxury and high-end retail market works differently in different contexts, and which have not tried to replicate the same model but have adapted and grown organically from the local milieu. When place-making techniques are applied to the specificities of the luxury retail market, architects and developers are challenged to create not only spaces that attract, engage and provide shoppers with a gratifying and unique visit as part of the luxurious experience, but also new communal spaces for the larger community. Even if the specificities of the luxury retail market differ in different parts of the world, the elements of place-making and experiential design are in many respects global because they relate to the specificities of the human scale, senses and spatial perceptions, and to human social behavior in that most cultures require a place to gather, relax and be entertained. D.E. Rogers (2014), former co-design director at The Jerde Partnership, points out that "a compelling built environment resonates with the culture, taps into collective desires and imaginations, physically connects with the city and enhances its surroundings". Focusing on these principles, a luxury place can become prestigious and thus transformative and influential for the broader community. It becomes a new centrality, a destination in the community's mental map, a place that people want to visit again and again. Successful place-making creates relationships between people and places, reflecting the human experience. Prestige arises from the identity and reputation that will be attached to the place because it possesses a status for the public. A place may become prestigious and thrive without possessing a luxury component (places are often first "recognized" as prestigious by ordinary people), but it may subsequently position itself as an ideal location for a luxury retail cluster.

A living catalogue

The late Jon Jerde was, in Southern California, among the first to understand the interdependence between the act of walking and the construction of a sense of place, and he was at the forefront in applying the place-making method to the shopping mall architectural typology. He called the framework of walkable patterns "the armature" on which the communal elements and the architectural programmatic elements are attached. Jerde thought that "humankind was disengaged from the whole by the effects of modern urban design and planning" (Anderton, 1999: 58). After travelling through Europe and being amazed by the communal spaces of old cities, he developed his place-making philosophy – "creating memorable places that pulse with life and community" – and he applied his method by using entertainment and shopping as catalysts, reinventing the shopping centre as an experiential and entertainment destination. Jerde's projects were influenced by R. Bradbury's essay "The Aesthetics of Lostness" (Bradbury, 1988): building a city where people could spend an afternoon, getting safely lost, just wandering about, a city for "shopper flâneurs" (Bradbury & Weller, 2014).

For designers all over the world, his early works – the Westfield Horton Plaza redevelopment in San Diego completed in 1985 and the Universal City Walk development in Los Angeles in 1993, among many others – are now archetypes of successful pedestrian-oriented developments centred on commerce and entertainment for ordinary people. Westfield Horton Plaza, a five-level outdoor shopping mall, was the first profitable downtown retail centre since the establishment of the suburban shopping model as originally designed by V. Gruen in 1956, and a radical departure from the standard paradigm of mall design. From an urban planning standpoint, Horton Plaza is still a prestigious place, a civic asset that generates and shares pedestrian traffic, and was instrumental in jumpstarting the revitalization of the nearby Gaslamp District.

Today, 30 years after the opening of Horton Plaza, the typical model of enclosed shopping malls is in rapid decline. Deadmall.com provides an interesting and alarming documentation of closed and abandoned shopping malls throughout the US. The stand-alone shopping mall has failed to connect to daily life activities, as well as to the fabric of a city and its culture. Many malls have become stale and obsolete; according to some estimates, 15 per cent of malls will close by 2024 after years of overbuilding (Wahba, 2014). Many of the failing malls have reinvented themselves through remodelling, opening up to their context, adding high-quality restaurants, and attracting new high-end and luxury retailers. One of the most successful examples of this kind of high-end renovation in Southern California is Santa Monica Place designed by The Jerde Partnership and located in the heart of downtown Santa Monica at one end of Third Street Promenade. In 2010 the once enclosed mall reopened and was repositioned as an open-air, high-end shopping destination providing clear connections and continuation with the surrounding city fabric and an upper deck with city views. Pedestrian pathways running through the project link gathering spaces, retail and restaurants. The new mall has attracted numerous luxury retailers, including Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton, Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom, as well as cafés and fine restaurants.

In Southern California many high-end shoppers prefer open-air lifestyle centres designed around walkability and place-making and with innovative programme placement. They thus reveal a desire for complex urban environments and collective spaces. The Americana and The Grove are two of the best-known examples of this recent kind of development by Caruso Affiliated. They offer a mix of high-end and luxury retail, dining with entertainment, planned around lush privately-owned public spaces and parks, and they reconstruct the qualities of mixed-use urban living in the heart of car-centric Los Angeles (the Americana also offers residential and office uses on its upper levels). Both developments are organized around the idea of a city centre, with a mix of architectural styles, building heights and materials used, as well as broad open spaces at the project's centre and an internal electric-powered trolley car system. The Grove is today one of the most successful high-end shopping destinations in the US in terms of dollars per square foot, and tour buses are starting to skip Beverly Hills and Rodeo Drive in its favour. The Grove is becoming a prestigious place in the mental map of Angelinos. A similar example, but on a larger scale and in a more suburban location, is Victoria Gardens, a 1.4 million square-foot retail centre in Rancho Cucamonga constructed by Forest City Enterprises. This open-air lifestyle development is planned with an urban grid framework and has become the downtown district for the community. It offers mixed-use development centred on high-end commerce, entertainment and a civic and cultural centre, and a rich array of privately-owned public spaces.

In the past few years, the globalization process has also generated an exponential increase in the export of these place-making models internationally. Jerde's method has been carried forward and further developed around the world by his eponymous firm The Jerde Partnership. Among the many projects undertaken, two developments, both built in Japan in the last 15 years, stand out for their remarkable ability to resonate within the context and, while responding to the market demands, respond to needs for space identity and communality translated into complex experiential places. Namba Parks, completed in 2003, is an office and shopping complex located in a dense commercial district of Osaka, Japan. It consists of an office building and a high-end shopping mall with a large privately-owned rooftop public park. The development was conceived as a 24-hour destination; and recognizing that landscape enhances the experience and memory of a place, it provides a highly visible and enjoyable green component, a unique destination for the local community and tourists alike, in a city where nature is sparse. Fifteen years since its opening, the project represents a model for dense lifestyle mixed-use centres and an international reference for designers. Roppongi Hills is an urban centre located in the Roppongi district of Minato, Tokyo, also completed in 2003. A large and integrated 24-hour live, work, play, and shop destination that incorporates office space, apartments, shops, restaurants, cafés, movie theatres, a museum, a hotel, a major TV studio, an outdoor amphitheatre, and some parks. Here the place-making approach is expressed through the idea of constant climbing through an urban hillside, climbing to discover places, creating a unique experience with ever-changing view corridors and a variety of discovery paths to choose from, so that the urban flâneurs become safely lost in the district while reconnecting with the surrounding urban fabric.

Conclusion

One of the lasting elements of the successful application of the place-making method to the retail industry, first by Jon Jerde in Southern California, is its capacity to respond, within the context of existing market demands, to the growing needs for space identity and community globally and to bring these back as built experiential places for enjoyment by the local community. The method hinges on the understanding that successful retail development requires forging effective relationships among retail, public space, and context. New developments centred on luxury and high-end retail can aspire to become prestigious places by promoting a unique identity and reputation attached to the place, becoming civic destinations in the community's mental map. An obvious criticism of this method is that it promotes a highly controlled urbanism, luxurious islands for walking based on shopping in privately-owned destinations that are fundamentally anti-urban and ultimately exclusionary. Nonetheless, the realistic approach to today's global market and its demands for consumerism has proved in many contexts successful in realizing "instant places" for collective enjoyment by the many (if not for everyone) and in producing economic drivers for urban regeneration. One of the key distinctions in the place-making design process and in the results that this produces is the degree of involvement of the public versus the private sector, because those entities often have different and competing interests in promoting their objectives. Planning for pedestrian environments and public spaces is still a responsibility that lies within the public domain; unless developers are building whole new towns, urban fabric is generally created and regulated by a municipality. But whilst in the 1960s the initiative for urban transformations and regeneration were firmly in public hands across Western countries, in today's globalized world public initiative has almost entirely receded due to a lack of political will and a scarcity of public resources, and urban development is promoted in large part by private or public-private partnerships. J.S. Kayden (2000) provides a comprehensive and systematic study of privately-owned public spaces created in New York City since the 1960s through pioneering public-private partnerships. The study showcases the contribution that civic-minded partnerships can make to an open and attractive city in which all citizens have access to a diversity of public spaces. This pragmatic model provides a framework of communal spaces that today is becoming a global necessity as cities around the world seek new ways to improve their physical, social and economic environments, and a model which luxury places can tap into by inserting themselves as new centralities in the framework, by becoming prestigious places, not as substitutes for public spaces but as add-ons that provide a specific response to an existing demand by contemporary society. Will the future of urban design be about connecting (again) people and places?

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5 Contemporary art and urban attractiveness

The role of hypermuseums and art foundations

Francesca Guerisoli

Introduction: contemporary art and city

In recent decades, contemporary art in cities has sharply increased in its conventional spaces like museums, galleries, biennials, institutional temporary events, as well as in many other locations in the urban environment. Public and private administrators are increasingly promoting contemporary art through various exhibiting systems, identifying it as a way to enhance urban attractiveness. Various forms of public art are involving the urban space – especially biennials, which in recent years have multiplied exponentially around the world, with large participation by the public – as well as new museums and exhibition centres, fairs, big shows and exhibition projects involving outdoor public spaces.

The commitments are public institutions, associations, foundations, banks and private companies. The interest widely shared by all these different types of subjects has been determined by both cultural reasons and the fact that art and culture seem to have established themselves as powerful drivers of economic development. The demand for the redevelopment of former industrial areas, suburbs, interstitial spaces and so-called 'places of not belonging' refers to different needs to which art is called upon to respond. The starting point is the concept of transforming those spaces into places with a new identity, attributing art with the ability to create new ones or contribute to doing so.

While in the past museums, exhibitions and art events were credited with moral and educational functions, today art and institutions are often given the prime task of attracting visitors. In the post-industrial era, contemporary art is frequently used as a tool for urban and territorial marketing. It is considered a catalyst for social and economic innovation and for the re-activation of existing parts of the territory. Any city that wants to present itself as a young, modern, contemporary, forward-looking, creative, stimulating and provocative, maybe a little transgressive, must adopt a 'good cathedral' of contemporary art (Strassoldo, 2007: 18). The good cathedral is identified with the contemporary 'archisculpture': examples of new architecture that mark the urban landscape with their strong iconic presence. The new cathedrals are often identified by architects and critics with museums, which are placed next to those that have been called the 'cathedrals of consumption' – shopping malls or the streets of commercial districts (Amendola, 2010). In accordance with the laws of the market and communications, museums today attract tourists and citizens with their activities, their exhibitions, and as centres of social life. They impose themselves as sculptural presences and as aesthetic objects to be admired like the artworks exhibited within them, becoming elements of attraction in the globalized city.

For this reason, this essay deals with the museum's identity and its role as an urban attraction, focusing on the phenomenon of archistars. Nowadays, contemporary art is increasingly involved in the field of urban attractiveness and, in general, in global competition among creative cities (Florida, 2005). In regard to the functions for which art is funded, whilst on the one hand the public and private authorities have identified art as able to promote social cohesion, produce collective memory, create awareness and improve the quality of urban space, on the other hand, they use it as a means to promote local marketing, the gentrification process, and the overall attractiveness of a place.

Museums and urban attractiveness

In the past forty years, museums have been increasingly identified as a tool for regional marketing, as a catalyst for urban attractiveness, and as of key importance in giving a new image to the urban environment. This has led to a considerable increase in the number of museums and exhibition spaces of modern and contemporary art, often within projects of urban regeneration. Approximately five hundred museums of modern and contemporary art are distributed among the major cities of the world, including New York, Berlin, Paris, London, Rome, and Tokyo.

A focus on the attractiveness of these exhibition centres should take into account different aspects. We have precise data, verifiable through entrance fees, on the appeal of a museum and its collections. But we cannot quantify with hard data a museum's attractiveness as an architectural-sculptural object offered in a city, given that it is not necessarily visited internally as well. In the former case, data on the annual attractiveness of art museums are furnished by the monthly *The Art Newspaper*. In 2012, the world's most visited museums of modern and contemporary art were Tate Modern in London, which with 4,802,000 visitors is fifth in the overall attendance of museums, and Centre Pompidou, eighth with 3,613,000, followed by Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York (2,814,000) and Reina Sofia in Madrid (2,705,000). Guggenheim New York records 1,107,000 visitors and Guggenheim in Bilbao, 962,000. If we compare contemporary art museums with museums with other types of collections, the two institutions most visited in the world – the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York – have many more visitors: 8,880,000 visitors for the former, and 6,000,000 for the latter (data: Martini et al., 2013).

However, these data show only entrances to museums, not how their architectural features attract visitors to the city. Another issue concerns the economic benefits that museums can provide; while the revenues from tickets, bookshops, coffees, restaurants minimally affect cities' budgets, the presence of a new art centre may powerfully affect its urban context – the architecture, with its symbolic value, defines the territory and can change it. A. Polveroni (2009: 40) notes that it is outside the museum, rather than inside it, that considerations about money and image become much more important. Areas rehabilitated by museums have increased the profitability of real estate investments, as exemplified by Les Halles of Paris thanks to Centre Pompidou, or the Southwark area of London thanks to Tate Modern, the Bicocca district in Milan with the HangarBicocca contemporary art exhibition centre, as well as MACBA in Barcelona, which has contributed to the reclamation of Raval, a degraded area in the historic city centre. The most recent case is the MAXXI in Rome, for which the DARC – sponsor of the museum – organized visits to the site when only the foundations were in place (Casamonti, 2004: 463).

Thus, contemporary art and museums, as artifacts and buildings, exceed their cultural value. Besides their historical functions of culture and history, identity, identification, preservation, etc., museums are considered in their ability to attract local, national and international visitors, as places of culture, urban centres for leisure, and city icons. As the Guggenheim Bilbao shows by bringing 1 million visitors per year to the Basque city, a new museum of contemporary art can not only ensure the redevelopment of an area, but also its presence brings a new image to the entire city. This image, however, does not always coincide with the city's true identity, which the museum may subvert through its new image. With the goal of increasing urban tourism in what is conventionally termed 'the post-Bilbao age' (in which each new contemporary art museum is assessed on that example), there are many cities worldwide that have invested in the construction of architectural museums to secure media coverage and attract national and global attention to the city. This tendency goes hand in hand with public policies that in the 1980s supported 'events' and 'great shows'. Local governments used those moments as tools to ensure broader consensus and improve the global image of the city, pushing museums to play a more active role in terms of marketing and branding (Visser Travagli, 2010). Museums have become logo-buildings; their strong visual impact and their formal bold experimentation make them the emblems of the presence of contemporary arts in the city.

The first revolution in the relationship between museum architecture and the city occurred several decades before the Bilbao case; it was F.L. Wright's project for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. It opened in 1959 and it was designed to show the collection of 'non-objective paintings' curated by H. Ribay who, in 1943, in a letter to Wright asked for 'a temple for the spirit, a monument'. The building imposed itself in the urban space and defined a new relationship with the city's landscape. It became the precursor of the current museological experiences that – as the art historian M.T. Fiorio writes (2011) – have assigned the role of landmark to the museum and have changed the image of the neighbourhood, if not of the entire city. Later on, R. Piano and R. Rogers with Centre Pompidou, opened in 1977 in Paris, launched the debate about whether a museum should be a 'temple' or a 'forum'. Pompidou propelled the experience of a central space open to society which promotes dynamic culture and sociability. The transparency of the walls, which suggests a dialogue between the inside and the outside, identifies a place truly open to people and the territory, like a square, a culture machine into the consolidated fabric of the city. The two architects designated half of the building area as a square in front of the Centre conceived as a place for socialization. In both forms and symbolic signs, the Pompidou Centre completely breaks with the tradition of the temple-museum by presenting itself as a museum-square, as a meeting place that offers services and leisure areas, and that facilitates socialization. The museum becomes an extension of the public space which offers various possibilities for use. The building is not defined as a 'museum'; Pompidou is a centre open to the forms of contemporary creation. The museum thus undergoes a genetic change; its main function, even before the museal one, is that of a meeting place, open to the city and its inhabitants, that can be enjoyed as a place for socialization. According to the architect M. Fabbri and architectural historian A. Greco (1995: 48), the Pompidou Centre therefore became "simultaneously a monument and an 'open work'; artwork or 'event', created to contain events". The effectiveness of this formula has been proved by the Centre's approximately 2 million visitors per year.

Centre Pompidou is considered the pioneer for the so-called '*ipermusei*' (hypermuseums) or 'museums dell'iperconsumo' , a label coined by G. De Carlo to denote the relationship between access and the mass consumption of art museums: museums in which art and architecture – to use the words of the architect M. Casamonti (2004: 463) – merge and blend ("*si fondono e si confondono*"), a place where the container has become the content, like a work of art that attracts mass consumerism and use of the space. The museum is displayed and established in the urban landscape as a monument, as a symbolic building, which marks the city's urban identity. F. Purini et al. (2008) called this kind of artifacts 'building-logos' because they have become a new centre that represent an alternative to the whole city; these museums replace the urban context, as a pole of the global city, with their absolute presences that challenge the host cities, blurring their identities. Whereas the Illuminist museum's typology assigned auxiliary spaces in a ratio of 9:1, in the contemporary museum the ratio is 1:2; new functions complement the art system. The post-modern museum devotes large areas to consumption, and the result is a hybrid that combines exhibition activities with a shopping mall (Suma, 2002). The hypermuseums have taken from the Pompidou example especially those servant spaces such as the reception, stairs, elevators, restrooms, areas for conversation and the consumption of food, bookshops and souvenirs shops (Marini Clarelli, 2011). I.M. Pei's Pyramide for the Grand Louvre project (1989), with its underground network of main streets and connections to the city and regional underground networks, moves the museum even further in the direction of consumption, so that it becomes a logo-museum, a centre, a node of primary importance within the city (Purini, 2002).

Numerous critical studies have been made on museums' institution by architects, architectural historians, urban planners, art historians, museum curators, and sociologists. As claimed by Th. Greub (2006: 9), it is the iconic character of the architecture that makes the museum a meeting place *par excellence*; today the architecture of the museum is the main attraction. W. Oechslin (2006: 5) discusses the attractiveness of the museum-icon in relation to the stadium: "You can argue about what attracts the audience more, museums or stadiums. But is there really such a mass audience, such a thirst for art? According to a recent trend, we suspect that the phenomenon of museums as art houses will be reduced to its spectacular architecture, considered like a sculpture from an artistic point of view."

The museum has become a city icon, a mega-sculpture, a logo, a work of art which attracts the general public through spectacular architecture. Its function as a container of works of art is often sacrificed for the greater expressive power of architecture. No wonder that a section of the XIV Carrara Sculpture Biennial (2010) was devoted entirely to architecture. While the sculptural monument as a symbol seems to have lost its purpose – says the curator of the exhibition, F. Cavallucci – "it is the icastic strength of contemporary architecture which fleshes out today that desire for majesty once entrusted to sculpture". Great buildings, not just museums, have reshaped the urban landscape; and, among them, museum architecture plays a leading role. Museums have also been described as 'cathedrals of the twentieth century'; like large containers, spectacular museum-sculptures tend to impose their presence on the city's landscape very much like cathedrals and sanctuaries (Marini Clarelli, 2012: 100) did in the past. Since the Guggenheim Museum of New York, and then that of Bilbao, museums have become usable especially as huge architecture spaces, they are containers and, later, content. In the past twenty years this museum model has been the one most requested by public and private clients. Assigned to the most prestigious architectural firms in the world – the so-called 'archistars' – they are like real mega sculptures in the urban space. They attract people with their unusual shapes and apparently futuristic use of materials, surfaces and dimensions. Architect S. Suma (2006: 117) writes: "These are the museums that, as well as dominating the urban scene with their spectacular presence, provide with their recognizable and attractive image a guaranteed public success, regardless of the works on display". Known as 'habitable sculptures', these museums maintain the architectural function – that of being inhabited – but they are designed as sculptures for their own sake, and the function of housing the museum is considered secondary, as pointed out by the historian F. Poli (2004: 122–123): "The basic problem is that the museum (...) is a building with a monumental and symbolic value assigned by the client, either public or private. For this reason, the maximum interest goes to the representativeness of the construction; consequently, the architect's ego is widely solicited, often at the expense of the specific function of the building."

The critical issues related to the sculpture-museum do not end with that of the museum's functionality no longer at the structure's centre. They also involve cultural globalization problems; sculpture-museums built as city icons always seem to have been designed by the same architects. They resemble each other and, moreover, could be located in any other city in the world (Knapp, 2006: 75).

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was designed by F.O. Gehry, thanks to an agreement between the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation of New York and the Autonomous Government of the Basque Country. On the one hand, the museum has become a strong image of the former industrial Basque city; on the other, it is a symbol of cultural globalization. From the 1990s, the goal of the Guggenheim Foundation's director T. Krens was to transform the museum into the first global one through an international network of semiautonomous institutions. This management culture made a circuit of remote sites that hosted travelling exhibitions which induced several museum curators and scholars, including K. Schubert (2000), to question the 'cultural colonialism'.

Similarly, new museums are springing up alongside those transformed into museum brands by archistars. Centre Pompidou, besides its headquarters in Paris, since 2010 has had a satellite museum in Metz, Lorraine, designed by S. Ban in collaboration with J. de Gastines; the Louvre Museum, presented as the 'first universal museum in the Arab world', will have a new branch in Abu Dhabi designed by J. Nouvel and displaying the Louvre brand (paying $525,000 for three decades to the French museum).

To conclude this brief discussion of museums and their attractiveness within the city, the case of the MAXXI museum in Rome shows so-called 'hypermuseum' characteristics in relation to the local identity of the area in which it is located. In the competition for the contract to build the museum held in 1999, Z. Hadid's project was chosen for its ability to integrate with the urban fabric and for the innovative architectural solution able to interpret the potential of the new institution and provide it with an extraordinary sequence of public spaces. The complex volumes employed, partially suspended in mid-air, together with curved walls and lines, are compared with the urban system of the barracks in the district, adopting the simple and horizontal profile. The museum, opened in 2010 as a contemporary art and architecture centre, is described by Z. Hadid as 'an almost-urban campus' (*un campus quasi urbano*). The project related to the external part of the museum includes a surface almost equal in extension to the inside (outer space: 19,640 square metres; interior space: 21,200 square metres, of which 10,000 square metres are exhibition space). The museum square was conceived as an urban place even before the museum was (Bilotta & Rosati, 2010); it is supposed to be a livable open space and a walkway; at the same time, it should connect two streets, implementing a project defined in the City Plan of 1909, which was abandoned due to the construction of Montello barracks in the early 20th century. That construction occupied the entire area and changed the typical orthogonal layout of the neighbourhood, like an impassable division between the two streets. The Flaminio district – the area chosen by the public client – has a history in terms of outdoor architecture; the site for the museum was chosen midway between the Auditorium Music Park by R. Piano (2002), the modernist Olympic Village by A. Libera and L. Moretti (1958–59), and the *Palazzetto dello Sport* by P.L. Nervi and A. Vitellozzi (1958–60) (Ciorra, 2006: 120). This is now a district of modern and contemporary art highlighted by the presence of the MAXXI. Rome's Tourism Office declares that one of the functions of this district is to connect the capital's past powerfully with its future.

The artistic foundations: some considerations

Multinational and luxury companies, real estate companies and banks are increasingly engaged in the building of museums and in the opening to the public of collections of modern and contemporary art in order to associate their brand with them. Today, foundations linked to contemporary art play a central role alongside the public museum institutions. As pointed out by a specific study carried out by M.A. Marchesoni and M. Remotti (2009), the activities of private companies have grown from individual forms of patronage (like participation in the restoration of the Colosseum by Tod's in 2011, or the Trevi Fountain by Fendi) to well-defined legal structures able to share private resources with public purposes to promote contemporary art. They create spaces for young artists, share art collections with the public, gather a significant core of works that document artists' entire range of expression (the Pomodoro and Merz foundations), and act as alternatives to contemporary art museums at the national or local level (as in the cases of Milan HangarBicocca and Fondazione Prada). Free from the bureaucracy that troubles public institutions, the private sector companies create museum spaces to display their collections and to perform projects usually developed by big names in the contemporary art world.

Luxury brands are special actors within these processes. Their increasing engagement in the creation of foundations and exhibition spaces for contemporary art follows a target which S. Suma (2003) has described as a way to ensure media coverage for the *griffe* (fashion brands). These exhibitions in museum spaces adopt the typical strategies of the hypermuseum; big names of contemporary architecture are asked to build venues with a strong media appeal like the greatest public museums. Architecture, art and fashion are the three elements that become inseparable and are considered strategic. The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, established in 1984 near Versailles to promote the art of the present, entrusted J. Nouvel with its project for a new space in Paris, which opened ten years later. In 2014 Fondation Louis Vuitton opened to the public its new Paris headquarters designed by F. Gehry, who produced a large sculptural object also configured as a pilot project for the development of a new HQE (Haute Qualité Environnementale) standard through the choice of materials with low environmental impact. The iconic architectural strategy was also adopted by Chanel with its Mobile Art Pavilion – the Chanel Contemporary Art Container designed by Z. Hadid for the Venice Biennale in 2007 – a shell in white fibreglass, which contains artworks inspired by the maison's image. After being exhibited in Hong Kong, Tokyo and New York, in 2011 the shell was donated to the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, which uses it for its cultural programmes.

The Italian case is peculiar; there are many historic and industrial buildings awaiting new uses, and new museums and art spaces are often opened in existing places. Two examples of intervention by leading architects in existing historical spaces are the Francois Pinoult Foundation – Punta della Dogana, and the recently opened Fondazione Prada in Milan. Reworked industrial spaces have distinctive features that make them particularly suitable for contemporary art exhibitions in their various forms, including video and audio installations, photographs, graphics, and performances. The functionality of industrial spaces is also due to their extreme flexibility, since they can also host several exhibitions at once. Furthermore, they are reconfigurable spaces; being of considerable size and often structured as modular spaces, they can be divided in order to satisfy different needs (Colla, 2007: 28).

The Francois Pinoult Foundation – Punta della Dogana is an important point of interest among many Venetian attractions. It was conceived by the homonymous collector, who has major holdings in the luxury industry and owns Christie's, one of the most important auction houses in the world. After Palazzo Grassi in Venice, in 2007 Pinault invested in the restoration of the former warehouses of the Dogana del Mar to transform them into the exhibition space at Punta della Dogana which opened during the 2009 Venice Biennial. The warehouses were granted for a period of 33 years to F. Pinault, who won against the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in the invitation to tender organized in 2006 by the Municipality of Venice. The museum project was designed by the Japanese architect T. Ando, whose goal was to preserve the existing structure but also to provide space suitable for art exhibitions by mixing the new with the old. In its inaugural exhibition, 'Mapping the studio: Artists from the François Pinault Collection', the art space had more than 500,000 visitors, becoming the most visited exhibition of contemporary art in Italy. In 2012, a year in which all Italian museums recorded a decline in visitors, Punta della Dogana was ranked third among the most visited ones by more than 200,000 visitors, remarkable but far from the results of the opening exhibition.

Prada Foundation, designed by Rem Koolhaas, opened on 9 May 2015. It is the latest example of foundations created by luxury brands on the museum model described. However, the interest in contemporary art dates back to 1993 when M. Prada and P. Bertelli opened PradaMilanoarte, a space for exhibitions of internationally renowned artists. Two years later, with G. Celant as artistic director, it became Fondazione Prada, including other contemporary aesthetic languages (Celant & Koolhaas, 2008: 190). Like the previous example, located in a former industrial building, the new space in Milan was designed by studio OMA architects headed by R. Koolhaas. The project associated three new buildings – whose courtyards are open to the citizens as a common public space – with the seven bodies of a former industrial distillery. The architectural complex covers a total area of 19,000 square metres and comprises various services, including a bar designed by Wes Anderson that recreates the atmosphere of a typical café in Milan. Luxury and art foundations are also defined by projects that do not involve the creation of new exhibition spaces. Examples include Fondazione Furla, engaged in art since 2000 with an award for emerging young Italian artists, and Trussardi Foundation, founded in 1996, which prefers to develop artistic projects in different urban contexts, working on site-specific opportunities, related with neglected spaces or places full of urbanity.

Conclusions

The relationship between contemporary art and the city is today consolidated by extra-artistic local and global factors like city branding, the global market, tourism, etc.

Museums and exhibition spaces designed as mega-sculptures marking the urban space create new forms of attraction for people and investments. This has given rise to an 'invasion' by contemporary art of the urban space inside and outside the traditional spaces for the arts. The hypermuseums can be read at several levels; local governments and private sponsors/developers take advantage of the attractiveness of their presence, to promote the territory and the name of the brand at the same time.

The renewed interest of private companies in contemporary art brings us back to the initial considerations on museums and arts. On the one hand, private companies drive the contemporary art system by promoting works and artists of a certain cultural interest; on the other, they seem to pursue extra-artistic goals by associating their brand's image with the most vibrant international researches in art and architecture. The interest of private companies in museums leads to a co-design of the public space, as in the cases of the Italian Fondazione Prada, Fondazione Pinault, Fondazione Hangar

Bicocca, producing urban regeneration and a new use of the public space. In this way, private companies – as well as public administrations – can provide common goods by considering art as a way to create new spaces of identification and socialization for citizens, as well as new spaces for investment.

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Part II
Reflections

6 Prestige and luxury

Places of urbanity in paramount locations

Lineu Castello

Introduction

A new tendency increasingly accepted among architects of the contemporary city explores innovative theoretical approaches for the progress of today's planning practices. One such approach is to try to consider the planning of a city as a conglomeration of places. An interesting place to start the present discussion, therefore, might be to consider how this approach may have come about. One of the most direct indicators of this tendency stems from a new trend called 'place-based innovation', endorsed positively by some architect-planners when looking for new directions in urban planning. The basic sources for this understanding seem to come from R. Hambleton's recent book *Leading the Inclusive City. Place-based innovation for a bounded planet* (2015). Hambleton argues that "in a rapidly globalising world, place matters a great deal (…) place-based leadership can make a significant contribution to the creation of socially cohesive cities – successful, safe and sustainable cities that foster a good quality of life for all" (Hambleton, 2015: X).

This coincides well with my own view of the likely directions of current issues in architecture-urbanism. 'Place' is seen as a cogent topic that presents a challenge to the reasoning and imagination of numerous areas of scientific and professional knowledge – including architecture and urbanism primarily due to their links with issues of space. But the overt bias towards place in this chapter is specifically intended to clarify the connection created by the concept in terms of producing luxury and prestigious places in prime urban locations.

It is worth remembering that place does not mean the same as space, as a good number of authors repeatedly remind us. Indeed the literature about place is multifaceted, and the extent of the concept seems almost limitless. Practically all areas of knowledge eventually address the concept of place. In psychology, for example, the bridge between psychological and architectural issues, pioneered by D. Canter (1977) in his classic *The Psychology of Place*, has engendered a lasting and prolific relationship between the two areas, which is fortunately still remarkably alive today. In geography, another excellent example is provided by the contributions of Yi Fu Tuan (1987), which soon became fundamental for the understanding of place and crucial for grasping the concept's close connection with spatial perception and environmental behaviour. Philosophy's links with the concept of place are exemplarily demonstrated by E. Casey (1998) in his remarkable 'philosophical story of place'. An enthusiastic renaissance of place as a key concept has also been experienced in my own field of architecture-urbanism, consolidated in the work of authors like M. Carmona (2014), who have patiently recorded most of the recent developments of the topic, or to a lesser extent by recent considerations in my own book *Rethinking the Meaning of Place* (Castello, 2010).

In sum, place has been adopted as a specific concern by many disciplines; places can be described as socio-physical units of environmental experiences, whose making requires the involvement of all dimensions in complex urban planning processes, that is to say, the socio-psychological, the administrative-commercial, and architectural-urbanistic dimensions. This needs to be the key definition when interpreting the question of 'making prestigious places' set by this book. Moreover, as we have seen, place-based innovation is even sometimes recommended when improvements are being planned to the quality of life in urban spatial arrangements. A place-based urban structural arrangement would clearly be consistent with this chapter's opening statement of a new line of inquiry in the area of architecture-urbanism: an attempt to plan by means of a strategy promoting a sort of urban-regional network of places – i.e., a conglomeration of places, and more precisely, places of urbanity.

The focus here, of course, is on luxury and prestige places. Nevertheless, reference to the concept of place will also be necessary, at least to provide background and to address some equally important complementary topics, such as: (i) the power exerted by shopping places, (ii) the pervasiveness of luxury places, (iii) the spread of prestige, and (iv) subjective preconceptions in the understanding of luxury and prestige.

Two methodological approaches

This chapter should ideally follow two major methodological approaches, one conceptual and the other pictorial.

On the one hand, conceptual arguments should deal with clarifying the current context of exceptional places in a globalized world. But in order to frame the discussion on exceptional places it will first be necessary to define both prestige and luxury. It seems only logical that our understanding of exceptional places includes both categories, but it is interesting to note that both concepts sometimes imply slightly different meanings. Furthermore, although this chapter aims to examine the two types of place – luxurious and prestigious – it will tend towards a consideration of exceptional places, focusing not only on their prestige or luxury but also on their distinctive role of being perceived as places of urbanity in present-day urban environments. Hence it will first be necessary to recall what places of urbanity are, or how they are explained in current advances in place theory. This I have already attempted to do in my own book and the general considerations expressed therein, though preliminary, will be recalled briefly in the next section.

Pictorial arguments, on the other hand, would illustrate the general features that characterize a prestigious place. Common sense offers a firm foundation when it comes to generating an illustrative portfolio of prestigious places. Even so, strict selection is needed, due to the extraordinarily multifaceted modes of display of places today amidst so many communication resources available to placemakers and placemarketeers. Moreover, it is obvious that places today are consequently revealed through a multitude of diverse configurations and patterns. Full understanding of them therefore demands selection of a small number of memorable pictures of exceptional places, chosen at random. It seems imperative first to consider some basic definitions of, for example, luxury places, prestigious locations, a place of urbanity as a luxury place, a place of urbanity in a prestigious location; and also to observe and analyse the range of phenomena occurring at the interfaces between prestigious and luxurious places, that is, the phenomena of what are currently called in-between places; and finally, to consider the new tendency increasingly accepted among architects of planning cities as conglomerations of places.

Places of urbanity: varieties of prestige + luxury

I have written previously, "Urbanity is a typical and unique quality of the built environment, understood as that quality related to the dynamic of existential experiences acting on people when using the public urban space, through the capacity for exchange and communication implied by this space" (Castello, 2010: 21). Urbanity is widely accepted to occur in places, since places can contain a vibrant convergence of diversity and density; and it is in places that an extreme diversity of social experiences can become condensed into a compacted location. However, urbanity is commonly associated with the 'public realm' of cities, and the question that now arises is whether exceptional places can be included within the urban public realm. This creates a difficult situation, intrinsically connected with the question of a place's accessibility. The singularity of a place is usually conveyed by its evident exclusiveness, i.e. not being universally accessible. Additionally, being exclusive may create difficulties of access to the place – accessibility which, besides being physical, can be either social or economic – or both. Therefore, not every person can have equal or universal access to a place. But it must not be forgotten that most current strategies of placemaking and placemarketing aim at making places extensively visual, facilitating at least a visual access to them. Ultimately, accessibility to a place may probably rest on the attraction of its being more prestigious or presenting a more luxurious appearance. Consequently, a strong degree of relativeness has to be considered when trying to classify a place solely in relation to its accessibility. This is a cautious procedure that precedes any reflection on the realm of exceptional places.

Independently of this condition, neither social class nor economic status may today be entirely responsible for preventing people from patronizing certain places; access is mostly related to the personal inclinations of their customers, who label them as sufficiently prestigious or luxurious to attract their patronage. This introduces yet another aspect: whether luxury and prestige, if viewed as qualifiers, can be considered as intrinsically encompassing divergent preconceived meanings. In effect, as we shall see, it is quite likely that different views will indeed inspire differing meanings.

The following approaches will consider luxury places and prestige places as possible places of urbanity – an assumption sometimes advanced in certain intellectual circles that consider places exclusively as social constructs and claim that the production of luxurious places would necessarily depend on marketing, rather than on public construction. My own book considers three differing varieties of places of urbanity: 'places of aura', 'memory' and 'plurality' in relation to the people–environment interactions that they are able to determine. These three categorizations, especially the one labelling places according to aura, quite satisfactorily endorse the description of places of urbanity put forward here. The book states:

> One group of interactions between people and their surroundings features the role of the spatial dimension, involving phenomena relating to the physical nature and material constitution of places, their objective morphology – accentuating the experiences related to an 'aura' surrounding the place, even if this is sometimes just an 'abstract' aura, no more than an invisible halo caused by interactions between people and surroundings, yet sufficient to leave a mark on the place. (…) stimulated by elements of the local *spatial* collective imagination.
>
> In another situation the relationships between people and their surroundings will involve more subjective phenomena, which absorb the histories of a place – originating from the popular tales and stories flowing from these subjective interactions – and which underscore the role of the temporal dimension, a dimension which, although laden with imponderables, also involves the material forms containing these abstractions.
>
> (Castello, 2010: 10)

There is also a condition which is shared by the two previous ones, but which originally comes from interaction between people themselves, where the social dimension is predominant, involving phenomena associated with interpersonal contact and underscoring elements of the local social collective imagination.

The relationships likely to be triggered by places of this kind will be explored below, especially when there is a probable symbiosis between luxury places and prestigious locations; the occurrence of a luxury place positioned at the interface of a prestigious location; and when a luxury place can be considered responsible for determining the perception of prestige extending over an entire area of the city.

The power of shopping places

Commercial activities are acknowledged and accepted worldwide to form the DNA of exceptional places. This is a historical fact and several examples can easily be cited. Indeed, the central places of most cities are linked to the location of trading activities, a trend very closely studied in the field of geography, especially urban and retail geography. Close attention is given to retail topics in the literature, and more specifically in architecture-urbanism publications. In this respect, the golden era of shopping centres is well documented by authors like V. Gruen, the architect identified as the precursor of shopping mall design in North America, and who, according to the architecture critic W. Rybczynski:

> (b)y 1950 (…) had completed four ambitious shopping center designs for Los Angeles, Detroit, and Houston, or by (…) 1960 the United States had four thousand shopping centers. They were both keen on recognizing that the idea of concentrating shops and public amenities, besides benefiting businesses and consumers, would encourage a sense of shared community, or in other words, would foster the perception of a place of urbanity until then only found in the central core of cities. V. Gruen designed the Southdale shopping centre (MN, USA) in 1956, the first suburban fully air-conditioned enclosed mall, in the belief that it would become not only a market destination but also a centre of community and cultural activity, able to offer (…) certain aspects of urbanity that until recently were the exclusive privilege of the old core cities (…) first and foremost, the spaces for collective events formerly produced and maintained by the bourgeois public of these cities.
>
> (Rybczynski, 2010: 98)

Southdale is certainly one of V. Gruen's most acclaimed achievements, noted for its huge contribution to enhancing the creation of a new kind of environment – the shopping mall – "For Southdale uncannily conveys the feeling of a metropolitan downtown (…) it is an imaginative distillation of what makes downtowns magnetic: the variety, the individuality, the lights, the colour, even the crowds" (Rybczynski, 2010: 98). As such, it can be connected closely to creating what later became labelled as a luxury place.

The power of a shopping centre in determining a luxury place is considerable, since its pull is determined almost entirely by the shopping mix on offer. This requires definition of a luxury place by first answering a deeper question: 'what is luxury?'

Dictionaries usually explain 'luxury' as an indulgence or enjoyment of comforts and pleasures, especially as provided by expensive and beautiful things, material objects, services and the like, conducive to sumptuous living, generally a delicacy, elegance, or refinement of living rather than a necessity. They all agree that luxury implies out-of-the-ordinary pleasure granted to oneself, usually in addition to those necessary for a reasonable standard of wellbeing. Undoubtedly, these are precisely the rewarding experiences that V. Gruen imagined his malls would be able to offer the upper echelons for which he designed. It worked. And still does today. Global cities are constantly alert to the need to keep their stock of luxury places up-to-date; and one of the easiest ways is through the constant launching of new shopping malls offering more and more exceptionally rich spaces, each a little more luxurious than the previous one. The powerful Brazilian economic metropolis of São Paulo, for example, is known nationwide for the luxurious spaces offered by some of its shopping malls – nationally and internationally. One of the most luxurious is definitely Shopping JK Iguatemi, remarkable for its 'chic' clientele and clearly designed to cater to most of the exclusive whims of the upper classes, with expensive shops and boutiques boasting famous international brands such as Prada, Dolce & Gabbana or Diesel, and a good number of others, virtually inaccessible to the average Brazilian consumer.

The shopping centre is nonetheless extensively patronized, due to its allure of unabashed luxury attracting casual window-shopping. One enthusiastic client wrote about the shopping mall on social networks: 'An

Figure 6.1 Shopping JK Iguatemi, São Paulo (Brazil), 2015

Figure 6.2 Exclusive Oscar Freire Street in São Paulo (Brazil), address of luxurious businesses, 2015

Figure 6.3 Dubai (UAE) is a gift of the malls, 2015

amazing luxury mall! Top top top mall with many of the highest quality brands that you could find in the US. It would be very difficult to find all these brands together in a single mall in the US ...'.

Similar situations are encountered all over the world and Dubai perhaps currently represents the most accomplished symbol of the power of luxury places within a city, in face of the rapid development the city and the amazing growth of its international acceptance. Indeed, the constant increase in visitor numbers – local and global – to the city's abundance of luxury malls has turned Dubai into a shopping paradise.

The pervasiveness of luxury places

Many of the world's cities have experienced a 'mushrooming' of shopping malls. This modern phenomenon is often found in newly urbanized environments, mainly in modern Asian cities, and represents perhaps one of the most challenging patterns of the contemporaneity of cities. A good deal of research today relates to the study of this phenomenon, seeking to decipher the likely morphological configuration ultimately assumed by today's metropolises – if their fragments ever become amalgamated.

Another focus of attention is the noticeable pervasiveness of distinguished places, a factor usually responsible for the concentration of places of exception in a few specific urban sectors of contemporary cities, giving rise to 'ex-centric' centralities. Some see these dispersed concentrations as one of the most typical expressions of contemporary urbanization – a phenomenon sometimes referred to by scholars as polycentric centrality, as advanced in Ciudades (2013), dedicated to the topic of 'the centre in another place' – and many of those decentralized hubs are somehow linked to exceptionality, through functional or morphological features. It is not difficult to associate the location of one new urban centre with the launch of a new luxury place, such as an upmarket shopping mall. This trend is accentuated when the launch is marked by the agglomeration of several malls, all at once, in privileged prime urban positions (in locational terms) quite likely to generate more new urban places and – possibly – new places of urbanity. With regard to shopping centres, ex-centric centres generally constitute places of luxury, in view of their advantageous concentration of sophisticated facilities. Indeed the more sophisticated the mall, the higher the luxury ranking of the facilities it offers.

A common trend in many Asian metropolises, such as Hong Kong and Bangkok, is now to gather several shopping centres in a single (fragmentary) portion of the city. In Singapore this eccentric agglomeration of shopping malls occurs due to their axial location along an avenue that is a real 'corridor' of consumption, Orchard Road.

Surprising urbanizations occur in all corners of the world, yet there is no doubt that those situated in Asia are the most spectacular. Bangkok has not escaped what today seems to be the rule amongst the Asian Tigers; it is a

Figure 6.4 Orchard Road, Singapore: a line of malls, 2015

Figure 6.5 Siam Square, Bangkok (Thailand): an agglomeration of malls, 2015

city with an impressive number of representations of global images, in open contrast to its traditional points of history and culture. One innovation in the Thai capital has been to structure space to provide simultaneous offerings of a variety of functions, which normally might be spread over an extended territory but in Bangkok are concentrated in one single fraction of the city. The most impressive of these concentrations occurs at the intersection between the two main metro lines, at Siam station, where Bangkok offers a climax of contemporary centrality. The Siam area is distinguished by the presence of not one but four huge shopping centres: Siam Center, Siam Discovery, Siam Square and Siam Paragon – which define what could loosely be called a 'square', in a representative model of contemporary urban macro-scale.

This scale is reinforced by the presence of a variety of other functions, including multiplex cinemas, an aquarium, hotels, the national stadium and a temple; in short, certainly a prime location. And if that is not enough, the area is adjacent to two metro stations, on either side of Siam station, and contains nine establishments, including shopping centres, themed markets, and department stores. Ultimately, despite the gigantic scale, there is still opportunity for the simultaneous development of relations of urbanity, and even for occasional religious contemplation.

Figure 6.6 Exclusive Jermyn Street, London (UK), 2015

Figure 6.7 A prestigious event in Jermyn Street, London (UK), 2015

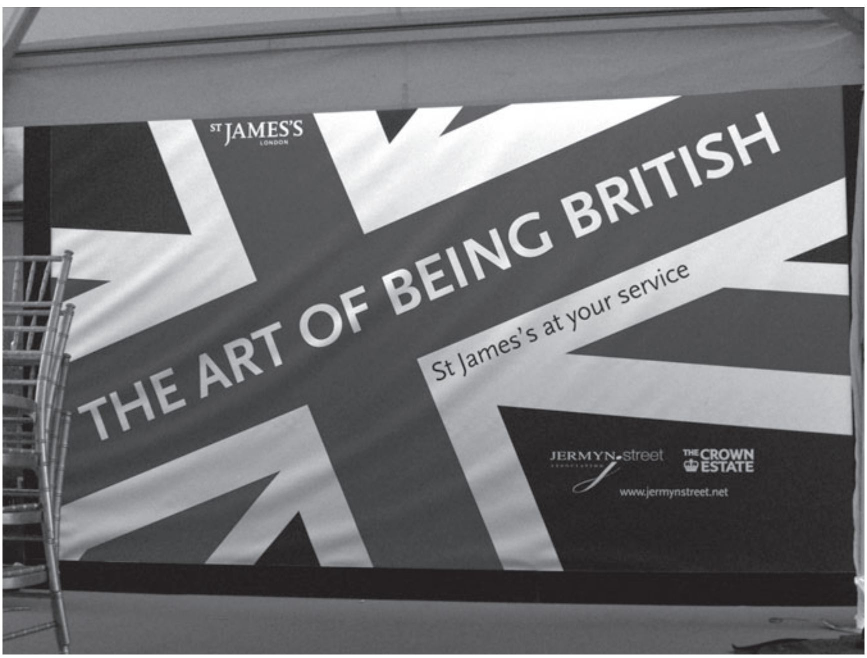

Figure 6.8 Place branding in action: Jermyn Street in St. James's is close to royalty, 2015

The spread of prestige

Luxury can also be considered from another angle. The following discussion is an attempt to explain the extensive spread of prestige, another feature to be considered in this chapter, since one single prestigious location may be responsible for producing a spatial agglomeration whose constituent parts are all linked together by a contagious sense of urbanity.

If Dubai's luxurious places are sometimes criticized for their ostentation and excessive glitter, luxuries also exist for the more exclusive enjoyment of only a fortunate few. We now enter a new domain: of luxuries enjoyed in terms of the prestige attained by the products they represent. For certain individuals and groups, prestige is a special thing; a very special thing indeed, obtainable only at exclusive prestigious locations such as Faubourg Saint Honoré in Paris or Jermyn Street in London.

A sense of prestige is felt when seeing one's home finely decorated with exclusive *objets d'art*; or appreciating the precious trend-setting fashion of an *haute-couture* item from a super-exclusive *maison* in one's wardrobe; or yet again, enjoying the delicate *gourmandise* of exceptional food served by a refined *chef de cuisine*, certainly a *connoisseur*.

Luxury for such people is a matter of sobriety, glamour and elegance – in short, of prestige. The more refined the product, the higher its prestige, and the wider its catchment area. Take Rio de Janeiro's celebrated Copacabana Beach, for instance; it is commonly accepted that the district's prestige began with the construction of Copacabana Palace Hotel in 1923. The region was at the time quite deserted and anonymous, but the arrival of the hotel brought hitherto unknown distinctive prestige to the area. The subsequent development of this sumptuous hotel was marked by the aura of its guests, which included royalty, presidents, film stars, respected artists, celebrated athletes and top politicians. It soon acquired a reputation as one of the most superb travel destinations in the world and helped to 'create' a new symbol for the city as a whole.

Finally, a comprehensive discussion of prestigious places should be considered necessarily to involve the idea of extremes: extremes of class difference, extreme variations of income, extremely different behaviour. This is indeed the usual (and perhaps, only) approach employed by most scholars considering the strong differences encountered in the realm of prestigious places. And it is also why there is no better way of illustrating the huge distances characterizing the fragments of the metropolitan urban landscapes of today than by showing the shocking reality of Paraisópolis, a sector of the city of São Paulo in Brazil, internationally known for its image of radical contrast, with a rich exclusive condominium set alongside a shocking favela.

Subjective preconceptions in the interpretation of luxury and prestige

An additional effort to understand more precisely the nuanced differences between luxury and prestige becomes essential – albeit tentatively – because the subtle variation of tone between the two may entail differing interpretations. One initial proviso, though, is that a spontaneous symbiosis exists between luxury places and prestigious locations. Furthermore, it goes without saying that both types of exceptional place occupy noticeable – if not paramount – locations spread throughout the urban environment.

Etymologically the two terms are far from opposite. Both refer to exceptional conditions and both are used to accentuate the uniqueness of a certain context of the environment. On closer examination, however, slight variants between them become apparent.

Luxury is "something that is an indulgence rather than a necessity", something that displays deluxe attributes and gratifies the senses – as explained very clearly by the Word Web Dictionary.

Prestige, on the other hand, implies high standing achieved through success, exerting influence by reason of high status or wealth, and having an illustrious and respected reputation.

A prestige location may generate a luxury place.

To consider luxury as something that is an indulgence rather than a necessity, and prestige as high standing achieved through success, influence or wealth may suggest they are opposed. But there does seem to be a connection, since both are unmistakeably connected to a single unifying condition; they both denote the psychological spatial presence of the sense of place.

The high-end worlds of Luxury + Prestige have recently experienced a degree of turmoil, with threats even of a kind of downgrading. A recent edition of *Washington Post* warns: "Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Prada ascended as icons of global wealth as their (…) handbags (…) silk scarves became status symbols from New York to Shanghai. But today's luxury shopper has soured on such obvious signs of affluence, in particular the logo-emblazoned goods that these brands became known for as they aggressively opened stores in emerging markets and in smaller cities" (Halzack, 2015). Troubled luxury brands are struggling to adapt to this new reality marked by affluent buyers preferring personal taste to conformity with highly recognizable logo-stamped big-name brands. Reactions are emerging on all fronts. S. Halzack (2015) pointed out that: "Against that backdrop, Louis Vuitton has added to its Rodeo Drive outpost a special oasis just for important clients – a rooftop area where guests can sun themselves and enjoy Champagne". This suggests the use of less defined spaces at the interfaces as a responsive strategy for recovering diminished earnings.

Exceptional places and contemporary urbanization

In a recent article on the contemporaneity of cities, I described certain idiosyncrasies that I believe exemplify the major features of contemporary built environments: the competitive attractiveness of cities and their offer of happiness; the ever-increasing polysemy merging the public with the non-public in the contemporary urban space; and, very particularly, unusual urban structuring indicating fragmentary heterotopias, a morphological configuration increasingly displayed by today's metropolises. This section will discuss heterotopias, but will consider them as fragmentary realities of urban contemporaneity; it will also focus more closely on the fragments constituted by exceptional places, either in the context of the city as a whole or as generators of prestigious places of urbanity.

Cities have been subject to much utopian thinking and to theorize about contemporary cities is both appealing and challenging. But they are centres of accumulation of capital as well as of revolutionary politics, where deeper currents of social and political change rise to the surface. Is access to urban resources controlled by financiers and developers or by the people? Who dictates the quality and organization of daily life?

David Grahame Shane's interpretation of the fragmented metropolis dilutes other critics' complaints about the fragmentation of urban built environments by focusing on the origins of the fragmented metropolis and highlighting its economic and financial causes. He also formulates hypotheses about the new morphological urban-architectural layouts that so typically symbolize contemporaneity.

Fluctuations of present-day capitalism are indicated as linking "urban fragmentation to the collapse of the modern financial system of Bretton Woods, based on nation-states, and its replacement with a new system for global profit-seeking corporations, which then face the problem of investing their profits in urban enclaves demonstrating reliability that they preserve these values" (Shane, 2011: 194). To illustrate the new morphological fragments, he cites the successes of new ventures in urban design (such as Battery Park City in New York), some of which are accompanied by 'special district' policies through which, "in Mrs. Thatcher's Britain and in Ronald Reagan's America, it became possible to insert large urban fragments" (Shane, 2011: 200). In addition, D.G. Shane considers that the publication of innovative urban-architectural studies (e.g. Collage City, by C. Rowe and F. Koetter, 1978) plays a decisive role in background topics associated with new morphological issues, proposing new unconstrained urban configurations "where multiple urban actors were free to build their fragmentary, utopian designs" (Shane, 2011: 203), endorsing libertarian views on the power of a fragmentary urban design, with theoretical foundations pioneered by architects such as K. Lynch and G. Cullen. Eventually, the late 20th century brought about "the new norm of global development, along with independent state authorities able to aid development and finance (used, for instance, at Canary Wharf, London, Potsdamer Platz, Berlin or Pudong, Shanghai in the 1990s)" (Shane, 2011: 204).

It is this view of a fragmented urban structure that prompts me to venture new assumptions. Firstly, that fragments may allude to representations of urban places; secondly, that these exceptional places have been invented by the current system of global profit-seeking corporations to indulge the desires of the upper classes, and to reward them with prestigious facilities that they claim as theirs by right. That is to say, to create fragments of luxury and prestige.

Luxurious and prestigious places are thus both easy to find in cities today and also widely distributed across the five continents. Indeed, it is not difficult to locate them individually and pinpoint one on each continent. The following section will also introduce an additional consideration: the peculiar fragmentation of today's cities may already be considered as a new threshold in placemaking theory.

Deluxe fragments: a pragmatic picture

Illustrating the current trend of deluxe places around the world in depth falls outside the scope of the present chapter, if not of this entire book. Some educated approximations will be made, however.

Deluxe places abound in North, Central and South America, for example, with a common feature of being able to stimulate different interpretations of more luxurious or more prestigious roles. National and regional conditions also play a firm part. In North America, marked differences can be noted between the East and West Coasts, for example. In cultural terms, New-Yorkers are believed to be more concerned with their cosmopolitan prestige, while on the other hand Angelenos seek to make the most of luxury, in an attempt to overcome a seemingly perennial condition of being considered as unrefined cowboys. But in both metropolises two of the most renowned deluxe locations can be singled out that significantly highlight the prestigious role of their surroundings, such as the revered Fifth Avenue in New York or the celebrated Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles.

In some cases, the architecture itself becomes the causal element in upgrading a city's prestige status. For many years "Los Angelenos sweated it out in a remote overgrown cowtown that had a sunny climate, but otherwise had precious little to recommend it" (Sudjic, 1993: 126). And then a succession of urban-architectural achievements contributed a significant upgrade to the city's ranking in the fiercely flamboyant competition so common among global cities today. "Every ambitious city wants an architect to do for them what they think J. Utzon's Opera House did for Sydney and F. Gehry and the Guggenheim did for Bilbao" (Sudjic, 2005: 318). This explains why Los Angeles so eagerly commissioned Gehry and his meandering architecture to design the Disney Concert Hall, and architecture critic D. Sudjic's cynical description of the acts accompanying inauguration of the Hall: "most of the speeches at the opening ceremony talked more about what this new concert hall was going to do for the city's image than about its acoustics".

Contemporary museums are also playing a specific role, rapidly acquiring the status of urban places and many of the features displayed by places of prestige. It may be that museums are leading the way in the present universal dispersal of urban fragments of differentiated exceptionality. In many cases, they have been regarded as the pioneering outposts of a fixed location of exceptional places (and the Guggenheim in Bilbao is a classic example). This modern phenomenon of branding a new territorial location through the insertion of a glittering museum may be one of the most illustrative patterns of the contemporaneity of cities, a pattern characterized by the growing pervasiveness of distinguished new permanent places which will ultimately generate 'ex-centric' centralities – usually helped by the attraction of luxury shopping malls.

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7 The city as a playground

How luxury players adapt their actions to local situations

Corinna Morandi

In this chapter I first outline in general terms how luxury-related businesses have settled in central Milan (considering both the core of the city centre and the nearby compact fabric of the 20th-century ring). This urban sector was for long characterized by mixed uses and tenures: residence, small manufacturing and retail. In recent decades, major changes in the local economic and social structure, also related to national- and international-scale processes, have given rise to a new pattern; retail, food and beverage ventures of different kinds have increased their presence, taking the place of other activities and contributing to the creation of specialized districts mainly addressed to city users and high-end luxury consumers.

The emphasis on internationalization has greatly influenced recent changes in Milan. It has had several effects, notably the transformation of tourist flows and the increasing importance of new transnational stakeholders in the local playground, as regards both the finance and property markets and luxury ventures in the sectors of fashion, jewellery and design, fine arts and, more recently, food. All these activities have been traditionally important for the economics of central Milan. They have contributed to creating – and recently to accentuating – the mood of this part of the city as a prestigious place.

To address the relation between prestigious places and urban change in the Milan context, I have selected two main approaches: one dealing with the role that some actors have played in creating or enhancing this character of specific sites of the city, through selection of the target users and consumers; the other one concerning the magnitude of the impacts of these transformations of economic activities on physical settings and spatial practices, focusing on public space uses and features.

Two cases of prestigious places are described as useful references to understand the processes of functional, spatial and social selection and the role that luxury consumption practices play in urban life. The last part of the chapter shows the outcome of this approach within two different cases – intentionally quite different from each other – and how actors, events and policies have fostered this process and the effect on uses, perception, urbanity and sociability of places.

Enhancing the attractiveness of central Milan as a prestigious venue

Milan is renowned as a highly dynamic city, affected by deep and continuous transformation starting from its administrative dimension. The process of progressively increasing the size of the city through annexation of the neighbouring municipalities recently ended in the transformation of the municipality of Milan into the core of the metropolitan area. In what follows, by 'inner city' is meant the ancient core of central Milan and the first ring-shaped fabric of the 19th-century periphery. The two urban sectors are strictly related as a consequence of the morphology of the city and of its growth through wider and wider 'rings' (Morandi, 2005).

This urban fabric was for long characterized by the presence of permanent inhabitants and offices, together with small manufacturing and retail businesses. A dense tissue of handicraft activities was found here, with the coincidence – in the format of the '*bottega*' (workshop) – of the realization and commercialization of the products, often luxury ones (Dalmasso, 1970). Low-income workers and the low-middle class could find accessible living conditions despite the greater presence of high-class residents, so that in this part of the city some kind of social *mixité* could persist. Most of the luxury-related stores and shops are still located in this inner district, while small manufacture and handicrafts – such as fashion and jewellery, which had long been spatially close to selling points – have participated in the process of reorganization and displacement of urban production sites.

In recent decades, major changes in the local economic and social structure – also related to national- and international-scale processes – have given rise to a different pattern. Different formats of retail, pubs cafés and restaurants, art galleries, and furniture showrooms have been increasing their presence. They have taken the place of other activities and contributed to the creation of specialized districts mainly addressed to city users, tourists and high-target consumers. In the city centre and some commercial axes, the clusters of retail activities traditionally dedicated to fashion have strengthened through the selection of brands and luxury goods (jewellery, luxury accessories, antiques, food) aimed at consolidating and marketing in particular the Quadrilatero[1] as Milan's most renowned prestigious place.[2] Different merchandise components in the field of furniture design and art galleries have shaped the reinforcement of the specialized Brera district, in the core of the old city centre and rich with museums and art schools. The integration of specialized retail activities together with the presence of specific spatial and social features has led the Municipality to identify a number of retail districts (DUCs), a provision which means that the public authorities are allowed to integrate different grants and to implement a policy to enhance the economic and social performance of those activities.[3]

The urban change just outlined does not follow a linear pattern; social and spatial effects may differ according to the features of the urban settlement.

Highly specialized, top-class retail businesses (consequently replacing a wider mix of consumption opportunities) often carry the risk of reinforcing gentrification phenomena, as shown in most downtown neighbourhoods in Western cities (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005; Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2008). Retail services typically addressed to local residents (and even more frequently to those with lower incomes) tend to be expelled from these areas. New shops and activities are usually oriented to an external demand and, at the same time, to the wealthier portion of the resident population (which often corresponds to newly-settled users). Also food retailing undergoes a 'luxurization' trend in urban gentrified zones, becoming something different from grocery in the usual sense of the term. The market expansion of bio-food and typical products underpins this phenomenon (Morandi, 2011).

A leading role in this transformation has been played by the advancement of the internationalization process, which has heavily affected Milan, generating different effects such as the enrichment of tourist flows and the increasing influence of transnational economic players in the fields of finance, property market and entrepreneurship.[4] Activities traditionally based in Milan and related with luxury – such as fashion, jewellery and, more recently, food – have been positively influenced. Expo 2015 played a role in this increasing internationalization trend of tourism and economic activities. It shifted some components of the city's attractiveness[5] ("Milan. A place to be" was the slogan of a successful branding campaign) and contributed to strengthening the demand for the location of up-market brands.[6]

The empowerment of two (quite different) prestigious places in central Milan

In this section, I describe the process of functional selection rapidly outlined above. I do so through comparison of the actions of retailers and other private and public actors which have recently changed some features of the economic and spatial characterization of two central Milan districts. The outcomes of their actions and behaviours can be taken as useful examples of the role of luxury in the urban scene.

The first case concerns the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (henceforth 'the Galleria'), an imposing habitable monument constructed in the second half of the 19th century on the model of the arcade, "the most important architectural form of the nineteenth century" (Benjamin, 1982), facing and connecting the Cathedral and the Scala Theatre, and entirely owned by the Milan municipality.

By means of the second case I reconstruct the story of Corso Como 10 since the time when – more than two decades ago – C. Sozzani, *Vogue Italia* director, opened a 'hybrid' activity: a mixed uses space hosting a store, a restaurant, an art gallery and a library by the gradual transformation of existing buildings inside the courtyard. In parallel, Sozzani developed actions aimed at imposing a new brand in the area of fashion and design.[7]

The two cases are quite different for several reasons:

- A long-established luxury atmosphere versus a brand new, contemporary prestigious place. In the Galleria some acknowledged luxury brands – such as Prada which was established there in 1913 as a handicraft leather goods store, or Savini, the famous restaurant – have been present for decades, albeit, as I will describe later, in a context of mixed retail and other activities addressed to different users. In Corso Como 10, placing the brand in the up-market target has taken a relatively short time.
- Location in the recognized hypercentre in the case of the Galleria versus participation in the change of a former popular district. The area of Corso Como 10 is located at the edge of the city centre, as a hinge between the compact consolidated fabric and an urban environment undergoing deep transformation. Hence in one case we have an environment which is heavily preserved for its spatial, aesthetic and branding features; in the other, a context much more permeable to physical and social change.
- Public ownership together with powerful private actors in the Galleria versus private ownership and actors in Corso Como 10. This focus is important for the issues that I intend to explore through comparison of the two cases, that is, considering the urban context as a playground where the actors re-position themselves – starting from a shared imagery – in the process of constructing prestigious places.
- The actors' features – economics, location, cultural background – are quite different: for the Galleria, financial groups owning up-market brands (LVMH, Gucci, Prada among many others); in Corso Como 10 skilled entrepreneurs taking advantage of urban projects of different scales, and participating in the construction of a new imagery for the place.
- The consumers and users targeted by the two prestigious places are different, not so much because of their spending power as because of their different attitude and vision of luxury concerning both goods and shopping ambience.

Dealing with the two areas also makes it possible to evaluate how such specificities have influenced the consolidation or construction of the prestige features which characterize them and how luxury reverberates its effects in the neighbouring districts.

The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, the promotion of a municipal asset through luxury retail activities[8]

The first impression that a visitor gains while walking in the Galleria concerns its monumental features, magnified by the recent, excellent restoration work, and the elegance of a comfortable space rich with visual, voiced, social, cultural incitement (the definition of the Galleria as 'Milan's lounge' is popular although trivial).

The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II is located in the city core. It is a covered pedestrian arcade connecting the Cathedral and the Scala Theatre. It has been renowned as a shopping district since its opening in 1876, following G. Mengoni's design of a neo-Renaissance style *passage,* with a steel and iron 'roof', similar to other coeval examples of monuments celebrating the unification of Italy in 1860, such as the Galleria Umberto I in Naples. The realization of a path between the squares in front of the Cathedral and the Theatre had been under discussion since the beginning of the century to deal with the growing traffic in the city centre and to reshape the medieval narrow, winding and dangerous streets unsuited to acting as the scenery for the Cathedral. Dedication of the new route to the King, leader of the Unification of Italy and its independence from Austrian rule, was intended to facilitate approval of the Royal Act necessary for expropriation of the buildings which had to be demolished to construct the new monument. Three contests were held by the Municipality between 1860 and 1863, with large participation; the project of a covered passage grew little by little until the decision was taken for a cross-shaped arcade integrated by the buildings which defined the morphology of the Cathedral square. At the intersection of the two arms of the cross, the Ottagono, covered by a steel and iron dome, is an imposing place because of its monumental features but also because of the intensity and multiplicity of people flows. Construction of the Galleria began in 1865, and it took eleven years to complete the entrance to the major arcade and the northern ones facing the Cathedral square. The Galleria was severely damaged by the 1943 bombing, and was rebuilt between 1948 and 1955 (the paving was renovated in 1967 to celebrate the centenary of its opening) (Boriani, 2007). The recent complete restoration work and the new civic attitude to the economic promotion of the Galleria have halted the shameless commercial exploitation of its spatial and cultural value.

Exceeding a confused identity

In recent decades, activities with different economic profiles have cohabited in the Galleria on account of the variety of permits granted since the post-war period to retailers: luxury and fast-food restaurants like McDonald's, silverware and jewellery shops, fashion stores and bookshops. There is no doubt that the nearby Quadrilatero area was better acknowledged as the international, up-market and exclusive Milan fashion district. From the spatial point of view, the Galleria is not integrated into a continuous trade route with the adjoining commercial districts of Via Manzoni, Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Via Torino. All of these have specific consumer targets: high target with mixed merchandise typologies for the first; middle-level international brands and chain stores together with the up-market department store La Rinascente and a few 'survived' cinemas in Corso Vittorio Emanuele; lower profile with popular shops and pubs mainly catering to young consumers in Via Torino.

At the same time, the continuity of a pedestrian shopping district from the Cathedral to the Castello Sforzesco passing through the Galleria and the Corso Vittorio Emanuele arcades is of great importance to attract tourist flows, together with the network of streets converging on the Duomo square. In recent years, the local government, the sole owner of the Galleria, has implemented a strategic approach of economic promotion to exploit this potential and to boost the site's commercial attractiveness and locational value. The ownership regime makes the Galleria a quite specific case of a prestigious place, different from other retail and mixed-activity attractive poles, where private actors have been fostering urban regeneration processes, either in the case of complex renewal schemes as in Porta Nuova or in that of specialized shopping and leisure districts as in the Navigli area.

The recent promotion policy for the Galleria developed by the local government seems to have had an interesting outcome from the point of view of rationalization of the existing different activities and uses and of the renters' revenues. The process of selection of renters has been profitable; and it has also been effective in characterizing the Galleria as increasingly a Milan luxury pole, even if some traditional stores have been protected, such as certain *botteghe* and bookshops. Enhancement of the value of the public good has been granted through a municipal (civic) regulatory device: the displacement of some users and the new allocation of the premises in order to enhance the overall branding of the Galleria. The financial management of the process allowed the requalification and restoration of the buildings, with a profitable impact also on tourist attractiveness. The Galleria is identified as one of Milan's *Distretti Urbani del Commercio*[9] targeted by sectoral policies aimed at improving retail and mixed-use performances through joint actions by local and non-local social and economic actors (Morandi, 2011).

A change in the local government issues to enhance the values of a public asset

From the outset, the general guidelines set by the Municipality for the requalification of the Galleria appear to have been dictated by goals related to economic promotion (profitability), spatial enhancement (improving the destination of public property) and architectural value (restoration work).

The surface of the Galleria as a whole amounts to 57,000 square metres distributed in five 8-storey buildings. 149 windows face onto the street, along the inner space of the arcade or in the neighbouring streets. The Galleria has for decades been divided into separated spaces: retail on the ground floor, offices and dwellings on the upper ones.

More than 50 per cent of the rental leases were due to expire between 2007 and 2008, requiring the Municipality to rethink the regulation tools for the renewal of occupancy permits. According to the new approach, the leases concerning uses judged incoherent with the municipal guidelines (private dwellings and offices, associations venues) were terminated and the activities were displaced to other public buildings. The goal of the municipal guidelines was evidently to speed up the upgrading of the Galleria, accentuating its character as a prestigious place through full public control of uses, and achieving significant economic profitability.

Selection of the ventures and activities was oriented by various criteria: coherence with the prestige of the place; the alignment of leases with property market values; the decision that all the costs of restoration and maintenance of the monumental buildings had to be met by the renters; respect for the rules on heritage protection; safeguarding the traditional '*botteghe*' and bookshops through a 10 per cent rent reduction. The key issue of the local government policy was the balance between the public benefit and the intent to replace the renters and charge restoration and maintenance costs to them. Prestige and identification with the luxury market of the brands was taken as a further selection criterion, as in the case of Gucci. The replacement or reorganization of ventures affected luxury brands like Armani, Versace, Prada, Cielo, Chanel. LVMH's lease was renewed, with the possibility of complete renovation of the rooms located at different levels. The same applied to Autogrill, whose basement hosted the Feltrinelli mega-bookshop, and which was obliged to allow re-establishment of Motta, a confectionary brand historically based in Milan.[10]

Between 2007 and 2015 the profitability for the local government of the Galleria's promotion increased by 300 per cent, from €8,200 million to €25,730 million, including authorization for establishment of the luxury Seven Stars Galleria Italia hotel. Overall, the main effect of this negotiated approach to lease renovation was important work in cleaning, rehabilitating and restoring all the components of the 'livable monument', including open and built spaces privately and collectively used. With the renewal work, a tourist walkway was created along the steel and iron roof of the arcade at no cost to the Municipality and with a great view of the city centre. The importance of the quality of the public space for assertion of the place's prestige was also fostered by the regulations on the establishment of outdoor restaurants and cafés, which had to have specific architectural features, and on the uses of shared spaces.

As regards renewal of the upper floors of the arcade, the profitability was for long limited by the buildings' structure, reducing their commercial value for the property market: presence of narrow inner courtyards, lack of comfortable elevators, limitations on rehabilitation work, due to the listed building constraints.[11] For this reason, a new possibility was introduced in the promotion policy of the local government whereby rooms on different floors could be linked. The leasers could thus create larger stores developed vertically. The redevelopment made the upper floors more accessible for store customers and ensured a unitary approach to restoration and maintenance work and funding, overcoming the risks of fragmented interventions.

Prada was one of the luxury brands which first took up this opportunity, winning the competitive grant to lease up to 5,000 square metres.[12] It was followed in 2014 by Seven Stars Galleria Italia Hotel, which obtained a lease for 2,600 square metres.[13]

The effect of the local government's policy to endorse the Galleria as a luxury place is clearly important, but considering different sectors of the district other outcomes can be outlined. Within the Ottagono and its close surroundings gather the most prestigious brands, which have best exploited the opportunity for vertical development: Prada, Louis Vuitton, Versace, Armani, Gucci, Church's, Borsalino, Tod's. Feltrinelli seems to have followed an opposite spatial approach, established in a wide ground floor space with an entrance next to the Ottagono. A Ferrari store immediately outside the arcade underlines the clustering of prestigious brands.

On the other hand, the prestige atmosphere does not seem to have influenced the areas adjoining the monumental arcade, apart from the Ferrari store and the entrance to the Seven Stars Hotel;[14] the outward appearance is that of the rear of the arcade and of an 'ordinary' retail district. Moreover, the replacement of several stores with bank offices and agencies shows a wide gap between the success of the prestigious arcade, the outcome of the public policy of enhancing and promoting community assets accepted by private stakeholders, and the standard commercial and property market dynamics aligned to the ordinary features of city centre retail districts. The perspective is nevertheless going to change profoundly after the expected transformation of the property assets of the historic buildings facing onto Piazza Cordusio, where international luxury hotels and up-market stores will probably be established in the next few years.

Corso Como 10: the hidden luxury of an international ambience in a former Milan working class site

Corso Como 10 as a brand and as a concept store opened in 1991 in a former garage inside the courtyard of an old workers' house, located along the ancient route to Como, which had been cut off in the 19th century by the railway. Carla Sozzani, who has been a leading actor in fashion publishing (*Elle*, *Vogue*), created the first concept store in Milan, which testified to the specificity of her approach in-between art and fashion.

The multi-use space is designed to gather shopping (fashion, jewellery, light furniture, in part identified by the *Corso Como 10* logo), publishing, art exhibitions, a café and restaurant. The prestige mood is mainly related to innovative and exclusive design networks whose products can be found in the store.

Several features give this place a quite unique character. The entrance faces onto Corso Como, a remaining small part of a historic suburban lane immediately outside the 18th-century gate in the Spanish walls. The place still shows its nature as a threshold between the inner city core and the first developments outside the walls. In the sequence of late-19th- and 20th-century buildings, testifying to the district's original underclass features, the entrance to the concept store is discreetly announced by the logo ‘Corso Como 10’. Years ago, the street, having long lost its role in the transport network, was pedestrianized and furnished with benches and fountains to make it an attractive place to walk, meet, shop, or enjoy a café or a restaurant (Kasinitz, Zukin and Chen 2016). It thus participated in the first phase of a widespread process of transformation of the district’s spatial, social, and commercial features. Within this process, Corso Como 10 has been both a major actor and a beneficiary. “In the 1990s Corso Como developed a specific mutation, substituting traditional shops with clubs, bars and fashion stores. It was an autonomous process, developed thanks to specific features of the area (its proximity to Brera and other consolidated districts, the availability of empty and affordable spaces, etc.) and some innovative factors (the opening of the Corso Como 10 concept store).”[15]

During this phase, the spatial and commercial concept store setting, characterized by the imagery of a “discreet luxury place”, was established. The main entrance, which maintains its original appearance, leads to the courtyard of a working-class house, with one- or two-storey blocks hosting shops and a café-restaurant on the ground floor and, on the upper floor, a photography and design bookshop and an exhibition hall. The former residential rooms have been recently transformed into a small exclusive hotel. Through the exhibition hall it is possible to reach a wide balcony facing a skyline which shows the dynamism of Milan’s urban change characterized by the grafting of the recent tertiary multi-storey buildings onto the 19th-century fabric.

The life of a concept store, in between two different urban places

The goal, successfully achieved, of the opening of Corso Como 10 was to merge a store with a cultural and social venue with a strong identity, weakly related to the goods’ prices or to the aesthetics of the setting. The creator’s vision combined fashion, art and culture, and she wanted to make them recognizable through a logo and a clear corporate branding. Corso Como 10 is now an international brand with venues in Seoul (ROK), Shanghai and Beijing (RPC). The cosmopolitan mood of the brand is a strong component of the prestige specificity of Corso Como 10. It appeals to creatives, artists, young professionals, and fashion designers belonging to specialized relational networks more than it does to super-rich global tourists. The international atmosphere intentionally conflicts with the Milanese character (*milanesità*) of the physical setting. It maintains the courtyard character of the building profoundly renovated with a minimalist design approach. The place’s prestige and discreet luxury demonstrate a successful blending between global imagery and local spatial features.

Since the pioneering phase of the creation of the brand and of the Corso Como 10 concept store, the physical environment in which it is located has undergone huge and deep urban change.

With implementation of the large-scale project of Porta Nuova, the street, which for decades was a cul-de-sac, has become a central component of a pedestrian and cycle path connecting the city centre with the Brera district and the Isola neighbourhood, whose social and physical fabric is undergoing urban regeneration and gentrification.

The Porta Nuova area is the outcome of a recent major urban project which remedied the gap created by the abandonment, decades ago, of part of the Garibaldi railway yard, a leftover in a central sector of the city. Today, the underground, the local and high speed railways, urban street network and pedestrian paths make it one of the most accessible areas of Milan from both the city centre and the outskirts as far as the urban region. The main feature of the development scheme is Piazza Gae Aulenti, a wide square where pedestrian and cycle flows meet and connect urban sectors with different and specific uses and morphological features. The Piazza itself hosts the recently opened Unicredit Bank headquarters high-rise building and several retail and tertiary activities, as well as a public building for social infrastructures and events. Residential and offices towers (among them the renowned 'Vertical Forest' designed by S. Boeri) are aligned in the proximity of the central square. Luxury housing estates are an important part of the development. They compete in prestige with the traditional élite dwellings, attesting to the trend of 'supergentrification' (Davidson and Lees 2005) or luxury gentrification (Lees 2003).

Directly linked with the area of Porta Nuova, Isola is a historic neighbourhood of Milan. Its name recalls the area's separation due to the presence of the railway and other transport infrastructures. It was one of the lower middle-class settlements located outside the walls, and in past centuries it hosted activities (such as the cemetery and factories) neglected by the city. It long comprised a dense working-class settlement, influencing the creation of a specific environment where the inhabitants used to co-exist with factories, handicrafts and small shops. Today, the area has a distinctive identity perceivable in its urban fabric and social tissue, in the local economy and in the population, recently enriched – and partly transformed – with the spread of creative activities (related to art and design) flanking traditional businesses and with the change of street-level rooms into food and beverage venues ('soft gentrification').

Corso Como 10 is physically in between these milieux, where urban change exhibits different rhythms and features, and maintains its own trajectory, also from the point of view of the actors involved.

In Porta Nuova and Isola a heterogeneous group of stakeholders is involved in the transformation: international investors, still rather new for the Milan property market, local actors, various public authorities and associations. The arrival of these new players and some specific features of the area (excellent accessibility, proximity to the city centre, quality of the urban fabric) create a remarkable interest in – and pressure on – the district. During the project's implementation, a progressive process of occupation of new spaces took place. It exhibited an interesting dynamic based on the specialization of different parts of the development scheme and of the regeneration process: fashion and entertainment in Corso Como and surroundings (among them, the opening of Eataly, the affluent Italian food brand, and of several flagship stores); innovation and technology along the axis leading to the Central Station (Samsung District, Google Italia Headquarters); design, culture and nightlife (Isola). In parallel, a progressive increase in real estate market pressure took place. It involved also the neighbouring areas and reinforced the displacement of inhabitants and jobs. By and large the area's transformation showed the effect of the leading role of private actors in different fields and of different scales, and also the unusual and effective interaction between private stakeholders and public actors which influenced the processes of urban change in the area. Different degrees and levels of governance (from the regional scale to local management) show how these development schemes involve both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Developers paid especial attention – unusual in transformations of this kind – to the quality of the physical context, gained also thanks to constant consultation between property actors and investors and local associations (such as the 'Stecca degli artigiani')[16] and committees of inhabitants (such as Cantieri Isola). A specific role was played by Fondazione Catella, led by M. Catella – at the time the principal developer of the Porta Nuova project – in establishing dialogue with local actors on the quality of the solutions and the design of public spaces, taking Isola into account as a key factor for the project and not just as a bordering neighbourhood. The presumed authenticity of Isola as a traditional district, the rhetoric of the description of the presence of craftsmanship and of a creative class, and the surviving old buildings have been important elements in construction of the narrative of the urban change. In fact, the global expansion of Corso Como 10 is based not only on the commercial features of the brand but also on the components of this narrative, despite the fact that the local environment is completely different.

In conclusion, we observe a significant intersection of roles – between Corso Como 10 and the context of current transformation where it is located: first, in the creation of a new prestigious place in the city, due to the action of Corso Como 10; later, in its fortification, due to the important new development of Porta Nuova and to the soft gentrification of the Isola neighbourhood. In fact, Isola, Porta Nuova and Corso Como are integrated components, different and not competing with each other, of a system of prestigious places. The change is ongoing and it will take time to evaluate the complexity of the outcomes. I can venture to state that we are not facing the prospect of hyper-gentrification, with the severe exclusion of any *mixité* (uses, tenures, rents, populations) – a definition which better fits complete global cities (Muritti, 2015).

The specificity of the prestige atmosphere in the Corso Como 10 context

As I have tried to demonstrate, there has been a shift in the condition and role of Corso Como 10 from that of an isolated outpost of an innovative luxury place in a popular district to that of a significant part of a new prestigious place of the city. We can find some similarity with urban change in the south-eastern Porta Romana district, where the Fondazione Prada headquarters and exhibition and cultural events site has been the driver of a regeneration process. Some elements are nevertheless quite specific, mainly due to the balance between innovation and tradition as features of the prestige of this context. Skyscrapers and high-rise buildings stand close to popular courtyard residential typologies; international brands stand close to young designers' creations, attracting a wide range of customers and users looking for different components of the site's mood. A mix of contemporary, international atmosphere with local and vernacular elements seems to have a strong impact on visitors, and it is one of the key factors in the area's attractiveness. Indeed, the projects and policies deal with this tension between local opportunities and taste and global factors (languages, capitals and actors).

In this urban change mainly driven by private initiatives and recently by foreign-backed investors, the (almost) pedestrian public space plays a very important role as a backbone for the flows of users of spaces of quite different functional and morphological quality. Public space creates a recognizable linkage between different parts of the development and permits the establishment of several activities, such as restaurants, cafés and other amenities, which animate the area during day and night. New kinds of users pass through the area: office workers, customers of shops, bars/restaurants and clubs, tourists attracted by the new urban development and the 'popular' atmosphere of Isola. All these presences set up a sort of network, and there is an interesting exchange among them. It is difficult to determine the extent to which this effect was planned and the extent to which it is an unexpected impact on the area. Different kinds of economic activities contribute to creating a composite network of relationships among the different actors located inside and outside the area. On the one hand, operations draw their strength from local features; on the other, they influence the future development of the contexts. The area now seems to work as an activator for a larger urban sector within the city, and as a new pole in the geography of the 'must be' places in Milan and in Lombardy.

Conclusion: key concepts to decode two prestigious Milanese places

These final remarks are intended to highlight the elements which seem to have been of key importance in creating – or emphasizing – the character as prestigious places of the two Milanese districts which have been described.

The physical components of the space play a very important role in the prestige of the places, notwithstanding their quite different characters. In the Galleria the prestige is related to the monumentality of the complex construction, but this character was denied when the site was mainly used to market and advertise brands not specifically selected to enhance the prestigious features of this exceptional 'usable' monument. In the Corso Como 10 context, the physical components are more 'ordinary', both in the historical elements and the new ones, apart from the Porta Nuova high-rise buildings, but overall the spatial setting works as an attractor of a multiplicity of users, among them those looking for some kind of contemporary innovative mood in fashion and design related to international networks. Meanwhile, the component of the identity features of the places plays a significant but different role: perceived as the identity of a monumental site in one case, and as a mix of tradition and new, local and international, popular and exclusive in the other.

A shared feature can be found in the 'urbanity' of the two places. In the Galleria the concept evokes the tradition of the European 19th-century arcades as a specific type of public space which combined innovation, comfort, and 'staying on the stage'. The locational value of the place is the main asset exploited by the local government to fund the expensive restoration and maintenance of the arcade. In Corso Como 10 urbanity may mean feeling comfortable among people from a shared cultural and social context. If we relate the concept of urbanity to mixed uses and tenures, in the Galleria this approach has been denied, because in the process of economic valorization all activities not pertaining to the field of luxury retail and accommodation have been ejected. Instead, in the Corso Como 10 context some *mixité* survives as an attractive feature of the zone, despite the fact that the level of the rents of the new buildings – often an expression of luxury status – and the soft gentrification of the Isola neighbourhood is working towards the selection of inhabitants and small businesses.

The quality and features of public – or publicly shared – space are the main components of the prestige of the two places in quite different ways: monumentality and aesthetic relevance for the Galleria; the intensity of relations, flows of information and investments in Corso Como 10. Both places are important parts of slow mobility paths, backbones of larger contexts of urban change. Could a slow attitude approach be considered an element of a luxury way of life?

To be emphasized are the different effects of the boasting of the character of prestigious place for the two cases in the surrounding areas. The selection and upgrading of the presence of luxury brands in the Galleria proves to be self-referential and unable to reverse the weaker commercial and urban performance of the connective tissue between the peripheral parts of the 'arms' and the surroundings, despite the centrality of the location. On the other hand, Corso Como 10, as already underlined, is part of a process of change on the urban scale. We could argue that the role played by the DUCs in the two cases (quite proactive in the case of Corso Como–Porta

Nuova–Isola, as an innovative attempt to deal with the colonization of an urban space, and almost absent in the case of the Galleria) could be a reason for criticizing the local government's action.

Governance tools are required to associate different actors with the benefits of the development of luxury activities. In fact, considering the large amount of public properties in the case of the Galleria and its surroundings, a strategy for governance of the secondary effects of the main site's promotion could have enlarged the area of influence and the locational values of the prestigious place. In fact, the issues related to governance of the processes of urban change are strongly influenced by the features of the actors and stakeholders involved, and the effort made in the case of the Corso Como–Porta Nuova–Isola district to create a confrontation playground among stakeholders of very different power and scale of action seems to have obtained some interesting outcomes.

Notes

1 Identified by via Montenapoleone, via della Spiga, via Manzoni, and corso Venezia.

2 For the meaning of 'prestigious place' in this book, see the introduction by M. Paris and L. Fang.

3 DUC, *Distretto urbano del Commercio* (an Italian version of the BIDs or of the Town Centre Management) is a tool developed by the Lombardia Regional Council to promote a district's tertiary activities through a policy of integration, social inclusion and local development. Participating in a DUC are associations and local government, private companies and social organizations financed by the Region, aimed at creating and promoting a shared vision for local development and territorial marketing. A DUC relies on a public-private partnership aimed at improving the retail sector through specific actions, managed by a board, led by a manager and financed by public entities and private capital. In Milan, the policy involved retailers, local associations, real estate agents, local stakeholders, etc. The role of each DUC is different, and they also show a large range of impacts on the territory.

4 The number of tourists increased from 5.6 million (2010) to 7.3 million (2015), and the rate of leisure tourism (culture, events, shopping) increased by 50%, more than business tourism (data: Camera di Commercio di Milano, 2016: 67–96).

5 According to the Jones Lang LaSalle Cross Border Retailer Attractiveness Index 2011, Milan is the fifth most attractive destination for mainstream retailers after London, Paris, Moscow and Madrid. Luxury is the most internationalized retail branch in Italy (data from: Jones Lang LaSalle, Milan loves shopping, 2012).

6 See Camera di Commercio di Milano 2016, '*Expo e la città. Il nuovo passo di Milano*', *MP – Milano produttiva. 26° Rapporto della Camera di Commercio di Milano*: 161–175.

7 The relevance of Corso Como 10 was first focused on during the visit and meetings organized by Li Fang and included in the programme of "The role of luxury in the creation of metropolitan centralities", 3rd year PhD Committee annual seminar, held in Milan Politecnico (Italy) in November 2014.

8 Mattia Abdu, counsellor of the Milan Inner City Borough, has provided essential information concerning the municipal strategies and acts which led to the change of the Galleria's luxury profile.

9 See footnote 3.
10 The first Motta Café was opened in the arcade in Milan in 1928. It was entirely designed by M. Bega. The interior design was a reinterpretation of the traditional Italian café, integrated with the Futurismo movement's concepts and soon became a symbol of modernity for Milan. It was dismantled in 1996 and re-opened within the Autogrill branch.
11 As early as 1946, G. De Finetti stated that the revenue from the ground-floor room leases amounted to 89% of the total revenues of the Galleria. This revenue rate did not change until 2012, when the municipal guidelines regulating the Galleria leases were implemented.
12 More than €5 million per year for the first five years of the lease and €9 million thereafter. In September 2016 a venue of Marchesi 1824, a luxury confectionary brand, frequented by traditional élite residents in the city centre, was opened inside Prada, evoking an integration between high-end food and fashion brands. It is interesting to note that Prada differentiates the décor of the stores according to the customer or user experience that it wants to create: classic elegant retro in the Galleria, creative culture-led cosmopolitan in Fondazione Prada in Porta Romana, archistar ambience in the Soho New York store designed by R. Koolhaas.
13 Paying more than €1 million rent per year.
14 The global luxury market tracked by Bain & Company comprises 10 segments, including personal luxury goods, cars, luxury hospitality, luxury cruises, designer furniture, fine food, fine wines and spirits, yachts, private jets and fine art (data: Bain & Company, 2015).
15 Notes from two interviews with Piervito Antoniazzi (DUC Isola) and Marco Barbieri (Confcommercio Milano, Lodi, Monza and Brianza) conducted by M. Paris and L. Fang in May, 2015.
16 The *Stecca degli Artigiani* was a squatted building hosting crafts shops, whose displacement created strong conflict with the local government and the developers. An outcome of the negotiation was the realization of a new building to host social infrastructures for the neighbourhood.

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8 Placemaking or making places?

Ambiguity of luxury and the design of urban public spaces

Juan Luis de las Rivas Sanz

The creative relationship between people and places: the historic city as an archetype

Nowadays, urban design scholars constantly rediscover the values of traditional urban spaces (complexity, diversity, mixture, continuity, enclosure, quality of details, character, legibility, …). The reason for this rediscovery could apparently rely in a rejection of the functional city; but, there is something more than criticism involved.

We recognize in this revival the longing for – and the difficulty of – creating urban spaces able to compete, in vitality and recognition, with the traditional ones. People delight in historic cities. However, I have written 'traditional' because the beginning is not affection for the urban past but nostalgia for something that occurs in existing city centres or neighbourhoods and which is very difficult to produce artificially in other urban spaces. Therefore, these values sought by designers suddenly appear in the experience of city life. Nevertheless, they are considered to be extraordinary. In some places of historic cities, we can detect these values at a glance. A sort of nostalgia increases in its association with the picturesque and in contrast with the conventional spaces of everyday city life.

Urbanism without producing city: the power of a faint buzz

How does nostalgia operate in the design of urban values? We may forget that this nostalgia is a feeling, more emotional than rational, and through it urban designers usually renounce wide theoretical reflection on urban history or the nature of urban phenomena. Working with a mix of techniques and emotions, architects design new urban spaces with a sort of mimesis of historical values, gathering all the elements that 'shape' urban experience. The result is the lack of quality of life in the public spaces of numerous new urban projects. In contrast with this failure, we admire the resilience of the existing historic urban spaces where qualities rely on social sedimentation and not on design tools. For example, people believe that the current set up of Times Square is the result of good urban re-design. But the quality of this singular place was there before its pedestrianization. Only ‘this place’ could be Times Square because only this existing place embodies its specific identity.

At the other extreme of ‘nostalgia’ are theme parks. However, urban designers usually criticize theme parks because they are unreal or, better, banal simulacra of the urban realm. The ‘real fascination’ of designers, like ingenious tourists, is only with great historic places. But when we speak about the design of urban spaces, the issue should be how to fulfil all urban expectations in a ‘new’ urban place. Perhaps we could better observe places like Disneyland, about which M. Sorkin wrote:

> one is constantly poised in a condition of becoming, always someplace that is ‘like’ someplace else. The simulation’s referent is ever elsewhere, the ‘authenticity’ of the substitution always depends on the knowledge, however faded, of some absent genuine. Disneyland is a perpetual shadow, propelling its visitors to an unvisitable past or futures, or to some (inconvenient) geography. The whole system is validated, though, by the fact that one has literally travelled, that one has, after all, chosen to go to Disneyland in lieu of any of the actual geographies represented.
> (Sorkin, 1992: 216)

In the confusion between the real and the possible, nostalgia offers an easy exit, the suitable recreation of other kinds of urban spaces (lost spaces) with a more intense urban life. It seems only a shadow. The deep knowledge and perception of the city’s material history are far from this dominant nostalgia. As M. Sorkin has explained, Disneyland is not urban at all, because it invokes an ‘urbanism without producing a city’. Like a reminiscence of the Renaissance urban scene, it remains the idea of the city as the theatre of life, where “… visitors are permitted the pleasure of circulating ‘backstage’ at the movie studio” (Sorkin, 1992: 228), although they are moving in a giant platform created and maintained by hard work. Disney reinvented work as spectacle, “one of the main effects of Disneyfication is the substitution of recreation for work, the production of leisure according to the routines of industry” (Sorkin, 1992: 230). M. Sorkin finished his noted essay by comparing the Disneyzone with television, “a machine for the continuous transformation of what exists into what doesn’t”. In this illusion of a city (aura-stripped hypercity) people must be happy; it is the cartoon utopia, a genetic utopia where every product is a sort of mutant, where “the only logic is the faint buzz of memories of something more or less similar” (Sorkin, 1992: 232).

However, that conclusion may be applied to ‘real’ cities. If we visit the Sony Center in Berlin (Germany), Porta Nuova-Corso Como in Milan (Italy) or Paris Rive Gauche (France) – all of them in the edge of the historic centre – we can hear this faint buzz of something more or less similar. In new urban waterfronts from Canary Wharf (London, UK) to Yokohama (Japan); in the new downtowns and central new areas in cities like Barcelona (Spain), Rotterdam (the Netherlands) or Vienna (Austria), we can also hear that 'faint buzz of something similar'. But this similarity does not belong to every place in itself, but rather to a specific mix of uses, symbols and functions. In *Delirious New York*, R. Koolhaas (1994) pointed out this assemblage of complexity, in Coney Island and in the Rockefeller Building, the festival park and the hybrid building as the figures of a new urbanity.

Placemaking or designing the interaction between urban environments and people

In contrast with this 'urbanism without producing a city' and also in contrast with the conventions of big urban renewal projects, there is another attitude based on different scales and centred – sometime, obsessed – on city life. The principal target of this alternative approach is not buildings but public spaces and its key word is 'placemaking'.

> Placemaking is a quiet movement that inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, Placemaking has the potential to be one of the most transformative ideas of this century. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value.
>
> (PPS, 2016)

In opposition to big projects driven by economic interests, placemaking is centred on what people can do by themselves to strengthen their communities. In this search for a 'great place' we can hear the echoes of classics like those by J. Jacobs and W.H. Whyte. The 'sense of place'[1] overcomes neighbourhood planning and returns to urban design together with new demands for participation.[2]

Designing places to improve urban quality of life

The idea of 'placemaking' introduces a new interest for the interactions between the urban environment and people in public spaces. It is not only the issue of collaborative design. Urban designers need to understand these interactions better. In recent years, cities have undergone incredible transformation, both in their peripheries and in their urban centres. It is evident that the new urban economies have driven this transformation in parallel with the rising of the post-industrial society. In the interaction between people and city, the economy assisted by the mass media has created new urban symbols. While scholars often don't like current commercial spaces, shopping malls and others, rejecting luxury because it consolidates the 'consumer society', people love and use these new urban spaces. In any case, livability and urban quality should be displayed in the entire city. Nevertheless, there are clear gaps in the quality of urban spaces, unfinished design tasks in very diverse urban areas and a universe of forgotten spaces. P. Healey, an experienced scholar, insists on the idea of 'making better places'. In one of her most recent works she proposes the idea of a 'planning project', aimed at strengthening the values of the place. She writes: "A focus on conflict mediation lacks a concern with promoting ideas about how to achieve more liveable and sustainable places" (Healey, 2010: X). The 'sense of place' appears in other attempts to reinvent urban planning. In this reinvention, 'public spaces' are decisive in producing quality throughout the city. But how?

J. Jacobs (1961) uncovered, in *The death and life of great American cities*, not only the values of old New York neighbourhoods, the rich life of sidewalks and the social links that functionalism has erased; she also discovered a singular architectonic value, a kind of 'visual order' able to generate harmony in the old irregular urban fabrics. That visual order is connected with people's experience of urban space, with its 'legibility' in K. Lynch's terms (1960). Besides this quality, we have the perception of W.H. Whyte (1980: 19): "what attracts people most, it would appear, is other people". The author not only had a generic fascination with the behaviour of ordinary people on city streets. In *The social life of small urban spaces* he proposed the idea of 'triangulation': "that process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to each other as though they were not"

Figure 8.1 Intrinsic to the historic city is its extraordinary capacity for change. Christianshavn, a neighbourhood of Copenhagen (Denmark), view from the tower of Our Saviour's Church, 2014

(Whyte, 1980: 94). Visual order and triangulation are physical qualities, very close to a sort of dis-order which permits things to occur by chance. Every space is open to diverse interpretations and behaviours. Actually, disappointment with the results of functional planning was present in the first criticism, demanding a deeper understanding of physical conditions of urban environment for a 'more human' urban life (architecture, access, boundaries, visual horizons, amenities, …). This new perspective introduced the 'sense of place' idea as complementary to that of 'social space': "the framework within which subjective evaluation and motivations can be related to overtly expressed behavior and the extended characteristics of the environments" (Buttimer & Seamon, 1980: 23).

Dynamics of 'genius loci' in the society of spectacle

Traditional urban spaces reclaim their historically-created values. However, today, the 'sense of place' relies on the fusion of urban dynamics in a city with hybrid identities.

The changeable 'sense of place' of contemporary cities

The mixture of meanings and expectations is a condition of the fragmented metropolis. And the nature of this condition is related to the 'society of the spectacle' announced by G. Debord (1967); in contemporary society all social relations between people are mediated by images. These images run and run around mass media, advertisements, and popular culture, penetrating life and all the ways to understand reality. The situationist strategies of '*dérive*' (drift) and '*détournement*' (turning away) are not unrealistic. The people who love proximity relationships are also urban strollers and '*flâneurs*'. We can criticize our contemporary consumer culture, with Debord we can denounce the 'commodity fetishism', the social alienation and cultural homogenization created by the 'society of spectacle', we can live without television or create small communitarian spaces in cities with their own rules, fleeing from a banal society. But we are unable – and unwilling – to renounce all the products that consumption society offers. We need its technologies of communication, we need its transport system, we need its knowledge. As W. Benjamin explained, being lost in the city is not so simple because it requires a learning attitude. In spite of our confusion between social life and its representation, or perhaps because of it, our city culture is '*mestiza*'. Two of the more influential landmarks of our contemporary culture explain the origins of this '*mestizaje*' (miscegenation). Since works like W. Benjamin's book *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* (1936) or M. McLuhan's *The Gutenberg galaxy* (1962), the perceptions of cultural values have been definitively questioned. The discussion has moved to the relevance of mass media in the creation of social values and to the meaning of cultural objects in their role of representation. W. Benjamin recognized the fragility of cultural production of meaning and M. McLuhan redefined the melting-pot society conditioned by media technologies. When worldwide information arrives so easily, and everywhere, the 'sense of place' becomes a different idea, with the changeable meanings of an evolutionary society.

Exceeding the 'non-place' through specific narratives

The non-places narrative can help us to understand it. In his seminal reflection on non-place, M. Augé drew on ideas of two other French authors. M. De Certeau's idea was that the "parallel between the place as an assembly of elements coexisting in a certain order and the space as animation of these places by the motion of a moving body is backed by several references that define its terms" (Augé, 1995: 80). This reference is primarily connected with the distinction drawn by M. Merleau-Ponty (1945) between 'geometric' space and 'anthropological' space. In second place we observe changes in the common use of a word when it becomes spoken; place and space are undifferentiated. Last but not least is the narrative itself, which "ceaselessly transforms places into spaces and spaces into places". It is M. De Certeau's idea (1984: 115) that "every narrative is a journey narrative". Not for nothing, this author speaks of the "frequent space" in his conceptualization of everyday life, anticipating the idea of non-places and relating spaces to the frequentation of places where people have an imperfect apprehension of their physical conditions. M. Augé (1995: 83–86) recovers this perception as "landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of 'snapshots' piled hurriedly into his memory". It is the typical perception of the traveller. He concludes: "the traveller's space may thus be the archetype of non-place". It is clear that space is more abstract than place. However, M. Augé has also explained that as long as place needs this narrative, it is possible to apply the term 'space' indiscriminately. He sees it in real denominations of designed urban places: 'Espace 2000', 'Espace Cardin' or 'Espace Yves Rocher'. Are non-places viewed as places or only 'spaces'? In the new understanding of 'genius loci', travellers and tourists share the space and perceptions with citizens. Economy of urban spaces coexists with a new ecology where being a consumer is one of the conditions of city life. If we walk through the contemporary city, in public spaces like Millennium Park in Chicago, IL, we can confuse our roles. But this confusion is a part of the urban condition.

In the complexity of our cities, the 'sense of place' needs specific narratives. 'Placemaking' builds these narratives with the collaboration of people. Advertising and marketing create other narratives for places. The everyday city life creates its own narrative of frequented places. Even situationist 'drift' develops its specific narrative. It is therefore impossible to design public places without a suitable narrative. For M. Augé, the word 'non-place' designates two complementary but distinct realities: 'spaces formed in relation to certain scopes' (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and 'the relations that individuals have with these spaces'. Urban design should combine these different sources

Figure 8.2 Past and present, with their meanings, always merge in cities. An old corner in Porto (Portugal), 2004

of meaning – functional, social and symbolic – in the narrative of each place, with a dialogic selection of cultural preferences.

According to M. Augé (1995: 83–86), this coexistence of meanings is the distinctive feature of contemporary urban places: the "presence of the past in a present that supersedes it but still lays claim to it" like a reconciliation in which it is the essence of modernity. Quoting J. Starobinski (1990: 26–27), he declared "the possibility of a polyphony in which the virtually infinite interlacing of destinies, actions, thoughts and reminiscences would rest on a bass line that chimed the hours of the terrestrial day, and marked the position that used to be (and could still be) occupied there by an ancient ritual". The urban place of modernity is observed as a palimpsest; but in the non-place (in the simple space) the lack of this coexistence of meanings sets up a simplistic homogenization. "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then space cannot be defined as relational, or historical or concerned with identity will be a non-place." M. Augé's hypothesis was that supermodernity produces non-places in a city of palimpsests. In contemporary cities, non-places merge into new purposes and significances with the existing meanings but in an un-historical way. The new arrives so quickly, so directly, so banally … blended mistakenly with the stratigraphy of city meanings, with the historical layering that creates the urban palimpsest. It is in this timing that we find the lack of significance of so-called non-places, but also in the banal re-appropriation of existing urban spaces. We should probably better explain the effects of new urban lifestyles and the effects of media (not only advertising) on the understanding of urban places. We should explain the tribal or selective uses of urban space and the coexistence of these different uses. The new understanding of city is, in fact, more diverse than superficial. In a singular image, M. Augé compares France's well-designed autoroutes that 'reveal landscapes somewhat reminiscent of aerial views' with the old national and departmental main roads which 'make its secret beauties explicit' to travellers. However, these two very different kinds of perception cohabit in cities.

The mystification of 'non-place' reveals the negation of the re-appropriation of place meanings. M. Augé (1995: 101–102), like other sociologists, denounces the privatization of urban relationships: "The way the non-place is to be used, that origins a contractual relation of users with the non-place: …the ticket he has bought, the card he will have to show at the tollbooth, even the trolley he trundles round the supermarket, are all more or less clear signs of it". The user of a non-place has a concrete role as a customer, passenger, or driver. The non-place is a space controlled by the urgency of the present moment (interchange, crossing flows, etc.). Non-places are there to be passed through; they are measured in units of time. But this privatization of urban public spaces is also imperfect. The re-appropriation of meanings is possible. Perhaps for this reason, non-places reveal the necessity of places: "places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never absent from any place. Place becomes refuge to the habitué of non-places… Places and non-places are opposed (or attracted) like the words and notions that enable us to describe them. But the fashionable words – those that did not exist thirty years ago – are associated with non-places" (Augé, 1995: 101–107). Probably the evolution of non-places, by moderating their conventions, creates at least simulacra of places with the qualities of places … ergo places. We can see this in new shopping malls and other retail areas. But it is in the re-creation of existing urban spaces that the logic of non-places combines with the logic of traditional places and offers a singular mixture of meanings.

Genius loci as narrative argument in the urban palimpsest

Only time – we can better say history – generates deep meanings, and only in old places it is possible to detect at a glance the coexistence of meanings. Without renouncing the claim of 'right to the city', with H. Lefebvre (1968), it is evident that in non-places the daily routines melt its meanings. The right to the city is also the right to the sense of place. But it pertains to the 'third space' (Soja, 1996; Harvey, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991), where knowledge, perception, expectations and feelings merge together. In the dynamics of meanings, the urban design culture can also detect the 'genius loci' to establish a dialogue with its physical features and conditions. However, 'genius loci' is not the product of design, it is the narrative argument. 'Genius loci' is a social '*constructo*', a cultural device through which a story or legend is built.

It is the report of the possible meanings that every place can gather, defining the limits of its identity: that is, the boundaries that permit awareness of staying inside or not and the recognition of the internal components, as M. Heidegger (1971) explained in his definition of space/place (*Raum*), "a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging", related with dwelling "things which, as locations, allow a site we now in anticipation call buildings". In fact, the sense of place is a cultural (and social) creation, an artifact recreated by design, if we understand design as a process of recognition and re-composition of place identity. It is only here, in the range of the 'third space', that the coexistence of meanings and perceptions determines the collective recognition of certain values. There is, as H. Lefebvre evidenced long ago, a constant fight for social appropriation of space: a fight that 'takes place' at the different scales of the public realm, both on places and non-places. The discussion should be about the hidden structures of the public realm in the urban palimpsest with its complexity of meanings, in the society of spectacle with a diversity of perceptions. The urban show goes on, with no reason for dissolving the links with the poetry of places.

Mapping meanings: indeterminate public spaces

Proximity and mixed uses are two terms which belong to the mantra of sustainable urban design. The purpose is to create quality of life in cities with equity and durability. But, today, behind the will of enhancing the sense of place, the entire debate seems to be related to everyday life spaces, forgetting the symbolic functions of public spaces and also forgetting the – evident or latent – ordinary conflicts within democratic societies. The public realm in cities is something more than the understanding of different aspects of community life. In the city there emerges the permanent interference between proximity values and other interests, interferences of local relations with other issues that give sense to social life. Public spaces are related with the needs generated by this diversity of values and interests. All contemporary culture has been built in the performance of its constitutive complexity. We could recall *All that is solid melts into air* (Berman, 1982) in a modern 'melting vision' similar to that of T.S. Eliot (1922) in *Waste Land*, where the new arises amidst the old, which does not disappear. Urban designers must understand this mixture and consider that not all the needs of public spaces are clear or objective. Perhaps the solution would be to design 'adaptive fields' able to incorporate diverse uses and meanings: a recombinant design, with open possibilities, attentive to logistics and field conditions.[3]

A contemporary public spaces phenomenology: luxury and urban simulacra

A constant, thinking public places, is the reference to a multiplicity of voices and symbols. Placemaking turns into a process to serve local expectations but also the requirements of the spectacle society. Here we are in the shadow of the ‘Beaubourg effect’, envisaging a new culture of urban space for which the Pompidou Centre was a turning point. The philosopher J. Baudrillard (1981) developed his singular and influential theory on the culture of simulacra around the Beaubourg. The urban artifact generates an implosion in the existing city with a singular condition of political deterrence, the creation of a new model “articulated on the ideology of visibility, of transparency, of polyvalency, of consensus and contact, and sanctioned by the blackmail to security” (Baudrillard, 1981: 62). Ordinary people are very far from this kind of cultural sensibility, because there is a common indifference to the relationship between power and space. People are concerned with their livelihoods. The potential of change or manipulation in cultural values remains hidden or indeterminate. This indeterminacy arrives in public spaces.

Curiously, if we analyse the background of the Beaubourg building, the architects had simple objectives: simple, but not easy to achieve. R. Piano and R. Rogers won the competition (1977) in clear analogy with Archigram ideas. P. Cook, R. Herron and other members of Archigram were involved with the regeneration of public urban spaces (instant city, plug-in-city, living city). Important in their interests were the commitment with use of spaces by people and with the production of more intense city public life, also in the new urban peripheries. With an extraordinary power of anticipation, Archigram’s images talked about a new urban world that only began to arrive (in urban places and non-places) in the last decade of the past century. This

Figure 8.3 Archigram, Gordon Cullen and others sought in their own proposals similar qualities of the current historical city space. A walkable street in central London (UK), 2010

renaissance of public space appears in the universe of contemporary places of urban regeneration like waterfronts, railway station environs, historic centres, etc., but also in airports, shopping malls and business or theme parks: a renaissance rooted in the creation of a new urban image for the new 'prestigious places', directly related to branding and luxury. Guggenheim and the Abandoibarra area in Bilbao (Spain) are good examples in a medium city. Their catalyst effect, supposed for all the city, primarily affects the context in which they are located. Louis Vuitton in Paris, Prada in Milan (Italy), etc., could be similar urban catalysts of change. The pedestrianization of Fuencarral Street, in the centre of Madrid, generated an intense debate because of the speed of its gentrification. For it, the transformations – and gentrification – of poor inner-city neighbourhoods, like the Meatpacking district in New York or Hackney and Tower Hamlets in London, etc., could be more representative, with their fusion of housing, commerce and culture facilities. The key is that all those transformations rely on clear projects developed by both public and private actors – sometimes together – and which involve public spaces and urban infrastructures. The immense urban outskirts, the peripheries, the neighbourhoods of social housing cannot be left behind this process of regeneration. In fact, we can talk about an urban centre renaissance, in a broad sense of urban centralities, while the rest of the city is waiting.

To understand the possibilities of a new sense of place, in the context of urban complexity, the recombinant capacity of design must consider the whole city (all the urban) as a new field of physical operations. J. Baudrillard would explain it with his attribution of object signification to a system of objects. In one of their drawings, Archigram identified 'glamour' as one of the dynamic factors of the city. In the face of the banal discussion on urban values, in which an easy sociologism forgets people's desires, Archigram proclaimed: we need a fashionable city!

Places for every taste.

J. Baudrillard can help us. With W. Benjamin and M. McLuhan in mind, and with a singular relationship with the perception of urban changes, the French sociologist and philosopher tried to explain the symbolic value of an object. The value that a subject assigns to an object is always in relation to another subject. But we cannot assign that value only to the object. Its significance relates to a system of objects: "the sign value of an object is its value within a system of objects" (Baudrillard, 1981). Here emerges the relation of the object with its representation, the cultural reproduction of objects. Simulacra are the interpretative devices for understanding this representation and reproduction. According to J. Baudrillard, in the culture of late capitalism the simulacrum precedes the original in a permanent decay of the distinction between the real and its representation. With a probable misunderstanding of real social links, here there is an enhancing of cultural generation of meaning by the mass media. Baudrillard's theory is founded on a conception of the world where mass media blur people's needs, and these needs are the products of publicity, commercial images and marketing. It is not only a question of the prevalence of money or the market. The definition of 'usefulness', in terms of value, becomes central with the substitution of use value by exchange value. Simulacrum is dominant and, in J. Baudrillard's terms, the nature of 'originality' is irrelevant; it becomes a meaningless concept. Not for nothing, Baudrillard begins *Simulacra and simulation* by recalling L. Borges' fable "in which the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly". His conclusion is that the map precedes the territory. This tale pertains to our technological civilization where productive 'throughput' systems are so extensive that they cause alienation. The philosophical interest resides in the relation between language and ideology whereby power relations among social groups can accentuate the precession of simulacra. But it is clear that urban design is itself a kind of simulacrum, and that here the meaning of an object and its value are only relevant within a system of objects (the city itself).

The reconstruction of European urban centres after the Second World War induced doubts about the methods of functionalism. That was the context in which G. Cullen developed his 'townscape' concept, a clear precedent of placemaking-based urban design. Cullen's talent was his ability to design urban details in a city on a human scale with a quiet and vibrant collective life. In urban reconstruction, new and old meanings had been mixed in a strange mutual recognition. The wasted city and its ruins claimed their space of sense while economy and functionalism drove the reconstruction. The efficient city arose with its simplicity in contrast with the beauty (the nostalgia of beauty) and the complexity (supposed) of the ancient city. When G. Cullen proposed, in a drawing of 1947, the "square for every taste", or when in *Townscape* he presented his pioneering vision of the 'pedestrian priority' for central places, he put together all the ingredients of a new 'concinnitas' (in L.B. Alberti's sense) for the regeneration of public places. G. Cullen (1949) developed his new urban design with extraordinary wisdom in pioneering projects like 'Bankside Regained', a singular work by images and, perhaps, the first reinvention of the Thames waterfront, with the 'processional way' from the Thames to Saint Paul's, fifty years before the recovery of London Bankside and anticipating the walk towards the riverfront (today with the bridge from the Tate Modern). The design ideas were there, but the social, economic and urban conditions for the urban transformation arrived too late. The failure of urban functionalism, the sustainability ideal, and the new concern for city life have shaped the context in which that thinking has become possible. Thames Southbank in London, the High Line recreation in New York, and numerous other remarkable urban projects have been made possible by this new context. G. Cullen and Archigram understood urban design as an 'art of relationship', with a clear vision of new urban landscapes. The search for a new vitality in urban public spaces is commonplace today. The question is why there has been this delay between ideas and accomplishments.

Toward an alternative art of relationships?

One possible answer could be associated with the concept of '*terrain vague*', which means that several spaces and places of our cities have a 'lack of sense': a lack which induces a peculiar need for transformation. I. de Solà-Morales used this term to explain the condition of vacant and also indeterminate spaces: "the relationship between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding the evocative potential of the city's terrains vagues. Void, absence, yet also promise, the space of the possible, of expectation". The Spanish author complemented this meaning with the Latin root of 'vague', *vagus*: "indeterminate, imprecise, blurred, uncertain… This absence of limit precisely contains the expectations of mobility, vagrant roving, free time, liberty" (Solà-Morales, 1995: 118–123).[4] Abandoned or semi-abandoned areas in the city, urban brownfields, empty buildings, deprived areas, unproductive urban spaces, often without clear boundaries, are usually reincorporated into the 'normal' city. He reclaimed the value of these spaces in their original state as ruins, in their undefined condition. Only by respecting those values is it possible to guarantee their reincorporation into the city as spaces of freedom, as spaces alternative to the conventions of the capitalist city. Here I. de Solà-Morales expresses a sort of nostalgia similar to the evocative ideas of R. Smithson, who described urban empty spaces as "abandoned futures", spaces that can generate a 'grid of nomad spaces' in the city. This image is more a criticism than a proposal. The 'awaiting' condition of *terrain vague* competes with their un-productive or un-inhabited conditions. But the author tried to protect this space from the conventions of urban functionalism: "Today, intervention in the existing city, in its residual spaces, in its folded interstices can no longer be either comfortable or efficacious in the manner postulated by the modern movement's efficient model of the enlightened tradition. How can architecture act in the '*terrain vague*' without becoming an aggressive instrument of power and abstract reason?" (Solà-Morales, 1995: 118–123). He suggested a new continuity in urban spaces, a continuity of "flows, energies and rhythms established by the passing of time and the loss of limits". In contrast with the fragmented urban reality of the contemporary city, Solà-Morales seems to embrace a classical continuity of space proper to past temporality; nostalgia again? In any case, the *terrain vague* idea is a clear demand for deeper understanding of historical processes in urban change. Urban design needs a reaction that must be more regenerative than transformative. I share Solà's references to art and ecology because culture and nature represent the "presence of the other for the urban citizens". In front of those who understand the city as a great playground for Real Estate business, we can propose the whole city like an indeterminate space, useful in different ways for people.

The market will easily occupy the indeterminacy or weak presence of the other when and where it detects real opportunities. With the market, luxury brands try to supply new meanings in a permanent process of reinvention of the existing city. The doubts emerge when it is possible to verify the results. Economic issues, like jobs and building renewal, mitigate the lack of references to the public interest. When stakeholders have no power, they need to solve the situation. An alliance with markets should be possible. Stakeholders are also consumers. The key of this alliance must be the design of the place itself, the creation of spatial value, with regenerative sense of place and quality of life.

Epilogue: sense of place revisited

The heads or tails, in contemporary urban public spaces design, would be the criticisms of the Disneyfication process, 'urbanism without producing a city', in contrast with the emphasis on placemaking with urban proximity. However, between these two extremes there are no clear connections with the complexity of significations that characterize contemporary cities. In the search for a 'sense of place' of urban spaces, as the most relevant thinkers have explained in different ways, the contents arise from the 'coexistence of meanings', with a suitable performance of the features and representations of those meanings. It is here that luxury can emerge as a remarkable or a banal source of sense. The stratification of historic values, material or immaterial, generates advantages in the perception of 'genius loci'. In fact, the re-creation of urban places requires arguments of prestige complementary to the historic values. Luxury has a direct relation with the quality of objects and the high quality of design. The prestige of luxury allows a positive osmosis with urban places by transferring qualities. In media culture, people easily capture these qualities. In our material culture, luxury also leads to popular expectations concerning the quality of life. Urban design can integrate luxury places and references without renouncing other urban and social values. Meanings and values are generated and transformed by the mass media in a culture of interferences where work and leisure melt people's interests and actions in a continuous "reification of consciousness" (Lefebvre, 1958). It is true that H. Lefebvre related this reification to a "fetishism of commodities" but the central issue is promoting 'authentic urban life'. It is not only a question of efficiency or social responsibility. When G. Cullen explained (by design) the qualities of urban places, he was promoting a new narrative of 'authenticity'. When Archigram reclaimed 'glamour' for urban places, also by design, they were promoting a new narrative of public life, including fashion as the manner of producing prestige. The coexistence of existing features of space with new values is the first step in urban regeneration. Urban interventions can create an open connivance of old and new. M. Augé and J. Baudrillard showed the complex field of significance in which urban design must operate. An urban place is not a single object; it belongs to a system of objects in a dynamic society. Change is the nature of the city. The hypothesis is that proximity cannot lead to the making of urban places by itself. Placemaking cannot forget the failures of functionalism. Only managing everyday life needs is not enough to respond to people's needs for public life. It is people who create urban values. Urban spaces cannot only respond to basic needs: leisure, retailing, consumption, travel, … are also important urban experiences; they are significant artifacts. With a smarter approach, urban design can re-create the field[5] of operations of urban places as hybrid landscapes where different meanings coexist. Art and ecology can combine a deeper knowledge of places with popular culture, luxury included, in a progressive form of urban regeneration.

Notes

1 In this article 'sense of place' is used in its classic identification with *genius loci* (Ch. Norberg-Schulz, 1980; J.B. Jackson, 1994; etc.). It is not possible here to re-define the concept of 'sense of place'; but it is well known that urban design culture uses this concept in deliberate confusion with its use in common language. For the purposes of this chapter, 'sense of place' is used in its broader meaning. See Jivén & Larkham, 2003.

2 It is convenient not idealize 'sense of place' as a neutral feeling: "To the local people sense of place is promoted not only by their settlement's physical circumscription in space; an awareness of other settlements and rivalry with them significantly enhance the feeling of uniqueness and of identity" (Tuan, 1977: 166).

3 See the concept of 'recombinant architecture' in Mitchell (1999) and also Allen (1997).

4 I. de Solà-Morales exploited the ambivalence of this term in French, where *vague* means 'wave', 'vacant' and also 'imprecise'.

5 'Field' like a space for the equilibrium between '*Oikos*' (household, the private) and '*Agora*' (the public sphere). The debate about the crisis of 'politics' has caused denouncements about the 'privatization' of urban life and also about the 'shameless' commercialization of popular culture. The relevance of public spaces is determinant in our culture, with expectations and also with delusions. The undetermination of 'field', applied to public spaces, must be diverse of the concept of 'camp', according to G. Agamben (1995): space where the rules are suspended, a situation in which the division between the private and the public disappears. See Dehaene and De Cauter (2008).

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9 Luxury and the metropolis

Towards a reciprocal definition?

Alain Bourdin

The metropolis is a fuzzy object

The scientific literature in recent decades has mainly analysed metropolisation as a process (Font, 2007; Indovina, 2007) which characterizes a territorial organization polarized by cities and the rise of big urban areas. Among those contributions, several scholars, such as M. Castells (1996, 1997, 1998), P. Taylor (2003) and S. Sassen (1991), associated this process with globalization. They pointed out the role of the knowledge economy, innovation, business services, financial functions and accessibility for territorial attractiveness. Some of them also mention the impacts on the diversification of lifestyles, cosmopolitanism, the multiplicity of actors contributing to collective action, social polarization or some environmental characteristics (heat islands). In short, the boundaries of what constitutes metropolisation are not strongly defined because the concept of 'metropolis' as an urban type is rarely mentioned. The extensive literature on global cities (Sassen, 1991) is more focused on power relations and relationship networks than with the metropolis as a 'whole' or 'total'[1] urban configuration. Looking at the metropolitan atmosphere with a more sociological approach, following the example of A. Marshall (1919), we noticed that is rarely or partially mentioned as for example by P. Veltz (1996) when he identifies the insurance value of the metropolis for business because it provides various resources (advanced labour, outsourcing, services, etc.). Dealing with such a complex issue, this lack of precision often brings contingencies.

The process of metropolisation consists of different flows that convey goods, capital, information, population, cultural goods, and lifestyles. They meet and interact in specific places: a network of nodes based on metropolises. These nodes allow flows to slow down or temporarily stop (Veltz, 1996) but also modify or create it. Therefore, the dynamics of a metropolis are defined not only by the intensity of metropolisation factors, but also by its interaction with flows and its power of composing, building and creating synergies with them. The specificity of this power is a topic to focus on. But limiting the research to the economic field would be wrong. This specificity is just as much expressed in the social organization, the metropolitan culture, and the urban form.

In sociology, the tradition initiated by G. Simmel stresses the specificity of the metropolis as a social and cultural organization. Recently, other scholars, such as F. Ascher (1995, 2009), have outlined its spatial and temporal specificity.

The metropolis is an entirely specific social environment that challenges the notion of society in the definitions that the social sciences have preferred, particularly following É. Durkheim and K. Marx. The metropolitan space, organized by mobility, speed, and discontinuities, also considering the 'virtualization' allowed by digital technologies, increasingly differs from the Euclidean space of previous cities.

This research about the specificity of the metropolis as an urban figure means that we cannot remain in the economic dimension but must look for other fields of analysis that combine culture, economy, society, and urban form and improve our general knowledge through specific focuses. One of them could be related with luxury. Indeed, there is an economy of luxury – dominated by large international luxury firms – several social practices associated with luxury, an imaginary related with luxury, a link between luxury and mobility (luxury tourism), and urban forms specifically related to luxury (places for shopping or culture created by luxury operators). However, luxury seems to be largely concentrated in cities and especially in the most important ones. Therefore, questioning the definition of luxury from these different points of view means to reflect on the specificity of the metropolis.

But we will see that the definition of luxury is also blurred. However, luxury makes it possible to understand the metropolis and the Metropolis allows us to understand luxury: these two topics are terms of a reciprocal relationship and this reflection will improve our knowledge about both of these issues.

Luxury: an empirical definition

When we consult Wikipedia (in French), 'luxury' is defined as a lifestyle based on lavish and wasteful expenditures, as opposed to one related to strict necessities. This definition involves aspects related with behaviors (sumptuous sophistication, ostentation, etc.). By extension, luxury also means all the elements and practices aimed at achieving this lifestyle. For this reason, "a luxury product is something marked by a very high quality, refined, expensive and rare, although today the borders of luxury are deliberately kept imprecise by involved companies".[2]

Within this framework, we face a major ambiguity in the definition of luxury: is it a way of life or a set of objects and services? In the former case, in which luxury is an activity, the field of luxury depends on the will of individuals to practise it, and it requires a specific cultural competence. It would be more readily associated with a class – the elite, the aristocracy – or with a particular attitude (refinement for example). In the latter case, it totally depends to the level of accessibility to a set of goods and services. In this case, the barrier of access to luxury would be no longer cultural but purely economic.

The transition from one to the other definition will be discussed later. Empirically, we should recognize the triumph of the latter definition, at least up to very recent times (see Vulser, 2016). During the last thirty years, the luxury market has experienced a constant growth, and according to a recent study of Bain & Company (2015), its turnover of $224 billion in 2014, corresponded to about 3 per cent of world GDP that year[3] (*La Tribune*, 2015).

Today, the principal actors involved in the luxury market of goods and services are a set of multinational companies owned by strong financial groups. LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SA is the most powerful luxury group[4] and it achieved a turnover (in 2013) of $21.7 billion, which is less than the $90.76 for Boeing in 2014 or the $42.1 for Apple in the same year (and $485 for the champion, Wal Mart),[5] but enough to place the French group among the world's largest companies. In parallel, we experience a considerable increase in the number of products that belong to – or are perceived as in – the category of 'luxury'. There are no commonly recognized boundaries that distinguish luxuries among semi-luxury, high-end, premium, etc. There are two different kinds of luxury: one inclusive and one exclusive, as explained by J. Benzimra during an event held in 2008, organized by the Conseil économique et social[6], where the latter is based on scarcity, in a context in which an integrated production and distribution system selects its customers and creates elite-sales areas. Operators who adopt this first approach "does not practice a licensing policy, in order to preserve the exclusivity of its products, and for this reason, the maintain an entry price [paid by the customer] especially high" (Socquet-Clerc, 2008: 17). Instead, inclusive luxury allows customers to easily affirm their adherence to a particular lifestyle. Its production can be outsourced or offshored. Brands develop secondary brands or franchise systems, and the entry level of their products/goods is relatively accessible.

This definition and many other works on this field pointed out a certain fragmentation of luxury. J. Castarède (2014) speaks about three categories of luxury: 'accessible', 'intermediate' and 'inaccessible', with a relative uncertainty about borders. Furthermore, the same brands cultivate these ambiguities, as a strategy of market control. The complexity of the field is even more evident considering the number of sectors in which luxury is active. For example, McKinsey's study (1990) for the Colbert Committee[7] identifies 35 sectors, grouped in four areas "likely to include luxury brands".[8]

These empirical definitions of luxury must be complemented by various elements. The first of these is those related with fashion and the role of fashion brands. This certainly concerns some of the presented segments, but its economic and cultural specificity is too great to be regarded separately. This sector has evolved in recent decades, and it is intimately linked to metropolises. Moreover, beyond the classic set of activities (clothing, accessories, etc.) that shape the fashion sector, various fads, for art and culture, locations and events – undoubtedly linked to luxury – have influenced its recent evolution. The phenomenon of fashion is not new, but it is increasingly professionalized (with specialists in trends, for example) and fashion is often created by professionals or users coming from the sector of luxury.

Moreover, a number of factors that fall within the luxury category have nothing to do with fashion, but they influence the space and the living practices of its inhabitants. The search for authentic and rare heritage through tourism or the art market is very usually part of an approach similar to looking for luxury items (Lipovetsky, 2003). There is also sporting luxury, very old, first developed through installations and places such as the golf courses of the most luxurious hotels in the resorts frequented by the elite. Today, such luxury is rather characterized by very specific activities requiring costly equipment and significant lateral expenditures (i.e. spear fishing in a particularly inaccessible place), and more by high customization of the activity. For example, personal trainers follow their clients, such as those of the New York company 'Manhattan Muscels', providing their services in private gyms, at offices or they accompany them abroad, during their journeys, "finding a little place in your suitcase, when you go to Japan" (French District, 2016). Culture is another aspect deeply related with luxury and their link is quite evident in events or places that offer an experience that is extraordinary, because of its intensity or its rarity. Some museums seem to belong to the world of luxury (and possibly occur as such) and others do not. This is obvious in the case of contemporary art, and it can be explained by the fact that luxury brands partly adopt the same pattern as the traditional great patrons or sponsors; they finance contemporary art through major museums (the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris or the Prada Foundation Milan are typical), and they organize exhibitions on the history of their products, for example, the 'Chanel No. 5' (a famous perfume) exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo, a centre of Parisian contemporary art (De Lassus, 2014).

Finally, in their work G. Lipovetsky and E. Roux (2003) recognize some urban landmarks or facilities as 'common' luxury. This contemporary version of euergetism is produced by public actors through a number of monuments – often ostentatious – such as contemporary rulers (kings and republican monarchs), who wanted their names to be retained by history. Besides their programme, the design, materials, decoration, and management of certain public spaces undoubtedly belong to the world of luxury. L. Piquerey (2016) shows how the public space of Courchevel (a winter station in which LVMH is strongly present) became a luxury space. More anecdotally, a recent article (*La Republique*, 2016) announced the opening of a luxury space on the Champs Elysées, managed by a specialist English company: this operator "for €2 (paid in cash or credit card), [will provide] a world of luxury of 80 square metres, on two floors, open to you". These toilets even promise a unique and "*avant-garde*, luxurious and hygienic" experience. All the current rhetoric on luxury in just one sentence!

Luxury flourishes in metropolises

Historically, luxury was first linked to aristocratic societies and, in particular, to the court phenomenon (Elias, 1969). In the 19th century, it increased in the environment that M. Weber (1984) called the 'cities of consumers' – based on seaside resorts, spa towns – and in the biggest cities, which provide services and goods for the elites, this latter remained relatively marginal – except in a few cases, such as in Paris, one of the first cities to develop an export-oriented luxury industry. The strong association between luxury and the metropolis seems more recent, and it has really developed in the past two decades, along with urban tourism, and in this chapter we will focus more on this specific topic, outlining some peculiar aspects.

First, the number of customers for luxury increases when the above-mentioned exclusive luxury, which requires knowledge or expertise that all its customers cannot have, is complemented by inclusive luxury, which is less demanding for users. Moreover, the number of rich people increases constantly. Since 1996, the wealth of affluent individuals has quadrupled. The number of millionaires (in $) is constantly growing and reached 15.4 million in 2015. The number of billionaires increased from 470 in 2000 to 1,810 in 2016 (Forbes definition)[9]. The process is similar to the one of the historical court capitals (Chevalier, 1975); through a consistent number of traders and merchants, able to grant credits and deliver goods – and a large stock of products '*a la page*' – luxury customers are allowed to choose a wide variety of objects and services even if they are not in stock. They want to experiment with innovations, to test and experiment, and to enjoy a high-level welcome and customized after-sales services. This happens where there are concentrated a 'critical mass' of customers (some luxury stores live easily with only one or two 'big' buyers per day – but the problem is that it is not easy to acquire them) and where there are all the subcontractors and service providers (including financial) needed by the system to work. The more prosperous a metropolis is (which has nothing to do with the size of its population), the more likely it is to acquire a critical mass of luxury customers; and the more it is economically 'sophisticated', the easier it is to meet all the demands of the luxury sector.

Moreover, the critical mass effect also concerns the 'upper middle class', and it allows the existence of what G. Lipovetsky (2003: 56) called 'semi-democratic luxury'. It reinforces the luxury sector and fits particularly with department stores like those found in Paris, London, and Shanghai, or with duty-free shops at airports. Dubai and Istanbul (with its new airport) vie for supremacy among integrated shopping centres within airports, and operators are constantly looking for formulae (e.g. the creation of a spa in Seoul) to attract more foreign tourists (Russian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Hong Kongese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, etc.).

This last example highlights another point; all metropolises are hubs where all kinds of flows, ideas, information, objects, and people intersect.

The already-mentioned urban tourism has become a resource; but economic activities, researches, art and other functions generate a peculiar vibrancy – a sort of urbanity. Some of those who pass through these hubs belong to the luxury clientele: not only classic tourists, but also normal people who use these spaces (who come to sign a contract, attend a congress, visit a professional exhibition, or to have a good time).

Therefore, this vibrancy is related with the creative economy and influences luxury. The concept of creative economy is a rather vague one (Campagnac, 2015), especially in its borders with innovation economy. But it includes everything in the economy that comprises a dimension of creation (in the sense of art). It is generally characterized by the presence of a specialized environment. One of the most typical examples is the design sector – which is very powerful in some cities. And often what is produced by this sector goes to the world of luxury, mass production (automobiles or other goods) or is involved within the development of new digital applications (services, management tools, or production). In this sense, the creative economy produces luxury, but it is also the ideal environment for it.

Anyway, cities – more precisely the people who manage them and are in charge of the development of their economies – don't 'keep calm and wait for the arrival of luxury operators', but they want to attract them and sometimes they offer tempting conditions to those companies. This is one of the aspects related with the contemporary competition among cities. Experts – and actors involved in these processes – recognize that urban attractiveness has a key role in this challenge. Nowadays, putting the city's name on the map and becoming a destination – and not just a place where flows do not stop – is imperative. The aim is to attract those who really bring wealth: affluent tourists, especially those from specific countries (China, Japan, the Middle-East, USA, etc.) and which belong to specific social groups (oligarchs still spend more than the lower-middle class, who come to outlet villages by uncomfortable buses); also business travellers – especially those belonging to top management – and those commonly called the 'creative class', i.e. actors in the knowledge economy: researchers producing 'concepts' that will give birth to new businesses (e.g. 'inspired geeks'), intellectuals, prominent members of sophisticated intellectual professions (e.g. medical specialists), designers and artists and, more in general, rich people. Recent studies (Grossetti et al., 2009) show that some basic features related with the personal background (being from, having a family, or having studied in a specific city; or having lived there due to professional or educational needs, etc.), stimulate the choices of the people, but some other aspects influence their decisions. In the cited survey (Grossetti et al., 2009), the cordiality of the city, and its social and cultural diversity reach high scores as a *second reason* (the notion of second reason is very important) for choosing it (a specific city). R. Florida (2002), although using his typical north American approach that must be adapted for other parts of the world (Bourdin, 2014), put forward other key elements (strong presence of digital technologies and services, talent and tolerance towards diversity, etc.) that create a tempting atmosphere for future inhabitants.

However the part played by luxury in making a metropolis attractive is very often undervalued and must be examined.

Besides being a factor for attractiveness, luxury also brings wealth. Besides the direct or indirect tax revenue that it can generate, it creates outsourcing and jobs (including the specialized ones).

N. Vulser (2016), in a recent article entitled 'The big luxury names brought back to reality', quoted Ch. Blanckaert, a luxury management professor, and wrote: "luxury should be worried (...) the world moves at a dizzying pace, but the luxury firms remain frozen in their convictions, not challenging the models they use for stores and services (...) customers are bored in the shops, they want something more frivolous and funny". The key word is 'innovation' and within this framework, the metropolis – as a crucible of new trends and ideas – plays an even more necessary role.

Innovation and ostentation on the metropolitan scene

According to P.N. Giraud et al. (1995), a luxury product (good or service) is a 'set'. For this reason, a buyer is ready to pay a higher price for an item instead of one with equivalent functional characteristics because in this process s/he acquires, together with the product, a system of representations: images, concepts, feelings linked with them.

Following this definition, the relationship between a metropolis – and its opportunities – and luxury becomes an interesting field of analysis, especially focusing on the common aspect of representation.

This entails discussion of the civilization of metropolises – and thus the hypothesis of its existence – adopting an anthropological perspective, as did G. Lipovetsky (2003). Luxury is often associated with the idea of the superfluous. Beyond this reputation of worthlessness, the 'superfluous' is meaningful, especially if we read the works of M. Mauss (1923–24), J. Huizinga (1938) or G. Bataille (1949). Luxury can be seen as a creative overabundance whose meaning consists in its excess. We can give it a Promethean meaning – in its radicalism luxury is a challenge which involves gods and human fragility – or even a way for men to dissipate their wealth, and for this reason "the world order as it was originally created, can be regenerated" (Lipovetsky, 2003: 32) or the society can be transformed by hyper-consumption. This point emphasizes the potential creative role of consumerism, when it is not just accumulation of what is already well known, but rather a demand for something new, different, and untraditional. Novelty has always been present in luxury – despite the durability of some of its products – even if only through fashions, but the just-mentioned demand for innovation is today very strong. And, as already mentioned, innovation and cities are inextricably linked together. This concerns economic innovation, in J. Schumpeter's (1942) sense of 'creative destruction', but also social and cultural innovation. Here we are back again to the creative economy and the creative 'class'. We could probably go further, and study the opposition between towns, where luxury is more focused on traditional consumers (except the rich) and conventional products, to metropolises, whose luxury is strongly linked with fashion trends and innovation. In this second case, it attracts new potential customers, such as new riches coming from universities (related with the digital economy and finance). This is an original target for luxury, different from the old 'parvenus' for many reasons, and especially because these customers are young, and they enjoy their wealth in an original way, less 'moral' and personal and more 'social'.

Among the meanings associated with luxury, prestige is probably one of the most commonly cited, and even more in relationship with the book of T.B. Veblen (1899) that analyses conspicuous consumption. Luxury can be a marker of belonging to a social group; certain objects (clothing, watches, jewellery), certain practices (sport, culture, art) or being in certain places (leisure resorts, hotels, restaurants) are distinctive and recognizable signs. In Veblen's time, ostentation was displayed in very specialized areas rather isolated from the rest of the world: leisure cities (like those on the French Riviera), castles, aristocratic salons, clubs, theatres, restaurants – the world of M. Proust. Since the advent of the jet set and new media elites, things have changed, mainly because visibility has been added. Today it is not enough to be seen by one's fellows; something exists only if everyone sees it. Part of metropolitan centralities (historic city centres or their contemporary version) becomes a stage for ostentation. For a long time, cities have created spaces devoted to ostentation practices (the Spanish *paseo*, for example), showing and emphasizing the social order that create the establishment. In metropolises, ostentation becomes much more nomadic. It expresses social effervescence more than the social hierarchy. The dandy, or Simmel's jaded citizen, which marked the beginnings of the metropolitan phenomenon, have been replaced by numerous figures of diversity that influence music, the diverse and constantly growing world of arts activities, the digital professions and lifestyles. The '*bobos*' – if we stick to the original use of the term (Brooks 2000) – mark the encounter between the counterculture and artistic life, on one hand, and the high-level white-collar class on the other. All this comes about through a lifestyle in which staging and self-presentation play a decisive role, replacing ostentation in the classic sense. This shift of ostentation from marking a social status to self-satisfaction is often dated to the 1990s by marketing specialists (i.e. Roux, 2003).

This process, which involves complex cultural processes, plays a significant role in the transformation of a set of central metropolitan locations. Unfortunately, the revanchist-city theory (Smith, 1996), with its simplistic and politically correct – even if radical – thinking, shows a poor understanding of it. No one can deny that the colonization of the inner-city creates violent struggles in some cases. Anyway, their origin, in particular the processes that drive up land prices, goes far beyond the sole colonization of central spaces by the richest – who incidentally may also prefer 'beautiful addresses' far from the centre. It is rather the constitution of metropolitan scenes, a space that changes constantly. These feed on cultural and social innovation in lifestyles, including when this innovation seems dangerous. Each player is part of the show: rich people when they exist, 'bohemians' and students residing in the city centre, tourists, visitors of all kinds, innovation entrepreneurs (including if they are illegal), etc. Luxury takes its place in this context of generalized and constantly reinvented spectacle. But whereas in the traditional urban staging (of the *paseo*), luxury objects, services or behaviours had to remain stable enough to exhibit rank and therefore a social order in the metropolis, metropolitan luxury is supposed to express the difference, singularity or excess of those who can afford it and do not care whether they are qualified as parvenu, or bobo, or provocative.

Narcissism and comfort in the core of the metropolitan civilization

Meaning does not always mobilize large symbolic structures; without any metaphysical dimension, luxury can become a *locus* of self-affirmation or self-appreciation. Self-satisfaction or self-admiration balances the "lassitude of being oneself" (Ehrenberg, 2010) and it is expressed particularly in luxury. "The passion for luxury is driven not only by the need for admiration, envy or recognition by the other, but also by a desire for the personal enjoyment and the will to have an elitist image. This type of narcissistic dimension has become dominant" (Lipovetsky, 2003: 65). The key words are experiential, authenticity, and uniqueness. In other words, the desire is to have unforgettable experiences, ones that are singular – which at least give the impression of not being accessible to anyone else – and authentic. "Deluxe practices [are dominated] by the quest for health and experiential, sensory and emotional well-being. Theatre of appearances, luxury became a tool for the individual and his subjective sensations" (Lipovetsky, 2003: 70).

The quest for authenticity is of particular interest; and it involves heritage, as well as luxury. Indeed, the most authentic object is a unique work of art or testimony of the past as long as no change is made to it. Most of the classic luxury items easily correspond to this idea of authenticity – and their producers highlight their crafted character, which means authenticity – but today and for the new luxury public, these features (to be unique, unexpected, non-reproducible and individual) should mark experiences and not only objects. Luxury of today may be a ticket for the first commercial trip to the moon or to spend a night in a hut in the midst of lions. Luxury in any case consists in new experiences, new sensations, and, often, takes place in unexpected and exceptional places.

Metropolises may seem antithetical to authenticity, but their museums show the most original and rare artworks. They also offer opportunities for all sorts of new experiences in various fields (sport, leisure, culture, relationships, personal development and care etc.). And above all, they are, to those who want it, the ideal places for self-admiration.

One way to admire oneself is to give personal satisfaction and to take care of oneself. Comfort has always been something different from, or more than, a distinguishing criterion; but it is now completely separated from it and constantly affirms its importance. Wise, purely ergonomic comfort is often overshadowed by 'unbridled' superfluous comfort. This is the case, for example, of the luxury cabins on aircraft operated by Etihad Airways. New technologies are often mobilized, including the most sophisticated home automation unless it be that of sustainable development, as with the Tesla S luxury electric car. But comfort is also services and, again, ostentation or the manifestation of a social status is replaced, at least partly, by sophistication and pleasure. Being surrounded by servants to show that one's social position is important – indeed, it is measured by the number of bodyguards and photographers – is not as desirable as enjoying everything that makes one feel 'good'. This increasingly concerns body care and health, including transformation of the body by cosmetic surgery. New versions of comfort appear and differentiate themselves: comfort for old people, comfort for young people, etc.

The metropolis furnishes a huge amount of facilities in this field, because it comprises an inexhaustible supply – as long as one can pay – of services to the person. The providers of all services can be found, especially those who can come to one's home. And the market is growing constantly: tomorrow one can seek comfort elements that one has never heard of before, or have a meeting with a teacher of now fashionable Far Eastern wisdom, just to see if he brings something more than one's usual coach.

The civilization of the metropolises in question?

The specific character of luxury is a long-standing historical phenomenon. But it evolves, in contemporary history, in parallel (with some time lag) with the evolution of dominant models and trends in consumption. Therefore, classic symbols of traditional luxury – the spa town luxury hotel, the Orient Express, and social distinction – have been replaced by the search for extraordinary experiences, and for self-worth. The Orient Express is no longer used to transport the European elite to Athens or Istanbul. During the trip, it offers to – more or less – wealthy travellers, an exceptional adventure, which most of them will probably have only once in their lives. Similarly, the affluent society consumption model was marked by the conquest of 'must-have' objects (refrigerator, washing machine, car, television, etc.) in order to show their belonging to a definite class of people, just as a member of the elite had to own a luxury car from a rather narrowly defined range. Today the dominant model of consumption relies on a constant flow of objects (accelerated by planned obsolescence), the presence of a larger stock of options, and an attention to differentiation – to be different from other people, at least in appearance (Bourdin, 2014), to which, in recent times, has been added a dose of ethics: give meaning to what you do and especially, at least for a minority, be concerned about human rights and environmental issues. The two movements are completely parallel.

We could stop here and simply say that the current evolution of luxury is a worldwide trend (which does not exclude that it has national variants). From this perspective, there is no reason why the trend should not be present in metropolises. But this chapter has wanted to show that the metropolis is a suitable environment for luxury, and more precisely for its current developments. Indeed, besides the critical mass constituted by its population (rich enough), the metropolis has some economic and financial qualities which work as drivers for luxury. Contemporary metropolitan areas produce all kinds of rarities (which translate into values, some very directly monetary, others less so); their regenerative powers are very strong; and local companies produce a set of sophisticated objects and services, that cannot be outsourced to cities or countries with low-cost and low-skilled labour. But there is more. The metropolis has become the crucible of creative destruction, not only in the economy or even in cultural innovation, but also in lifestyles, and in social life in general. The frequent change in fashionable streets that we see increasingly evidences this character. The metropolis is also the preferred scene for the expression of narcissism, of a new conception of comfort, and even of the relationship with objects. The triumph of metropolitan luxury expresses all these aspects and highlights the fact that its economic dimension cannot only define the city; the civilization of metropolises exists as it did at the time of G. Simmel (1903).

Digital technologies strengthen this civilization with more innovation and creativity, more expression and assertiveness by individuals who live in the same place and are part of the same social functioning without truly living together. In the same process, uncertainty in the experience of space and of time is getting stronger, and experiential luxury increases more and more its popularity. This certainly matches global trends, but it specifically affects the core of metropolitan areas: in historic urban centres, transformed as tourist areas and displays for art or even for market; in new centres related with transport, economy, retail (including luxury), art or sport (or all at once); in micro centralities (devoted to leisure or sociability) embedded in the metropolitan fabric. These different metropolitan centralities become the key-places of the civilization of metropolises, with its contradictions, its violence, its dynamism. At its core lies the contemporary luxury, in its new definition.

But this strong anchorage in the metropolis does not mean that the world is limited to large cities. Globalization may take quite different forms outside metropolises, and there is no evidence that its various forms differ only in degree. This gives great importance to the question concerning the relationship between the civilization of the metropolises and the cultures of the social configurations around them.

Notes

1 The term 'total' refers to the «total social phenomenon» as defined by M. Mauss (1923–24).
2 Defintion of '*Luxe*' in Wikipedia.fr. Available from: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxe [8 September 2016].
3 Data: Bain & Company, 2015.
4 After the LVMH Group, the top nine positions of the 'Global powers of luxury goods top 100' are: Compagnie Financiere Richemont SA (Switzerland), 13.4 US$mil.; The Estée Lauder Companies (USA), 10.9; Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Group Limited (HK), 9.9; Luxottica Group SpA (Italy), 9.7; The Swatch Group Ltd. (Switzerland), 8.8; Kering SA (France), 8.5; L'Oreal Luxe (France), 7.7; Ralph Lauren Corp. (USA), 7.4; PVH (USA), 6.2 (data: Deloitte, 2015).
5 Data: Capgemini & RBC Wealth Management, 2016.
6 Mdm. J. Socquet-Clerc Lafont collected its proceedings in the Avis "Le luxe: production et services". Available from: www.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/Avis/2008/2008_02_jacqueline_socquet_clerc_lafont.pdf [9 September 2016].
7 According to its own definition (Available from: http://www.comitecolbert.com, accessed 2/08/2016), this committee, "created in 1954, brings together the French luxury houses and cultural institutions. They work together on the international influence of the French art of living".
8 The four broad areas are: (a) the person: that includes clothing, fashion accessories, leather goods, shoes, perfumes and cosmetics; (b) the home: tableware, furnishings, and fixtures; (c) the 'get out': travel and holidays: hotels, restaurants, wines and spirits; and (d) luxurious modes of transport: cars, boats, and planes.
9 The updated list and the criteria are available at: Available from: www.forbes.com/billionaires/list/ [6 April 2017].

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10 What governance for luxury-driven transformations?

Mario Paris

Nowadays, a number of experiences in cities point out the relevance of luxury in recent urban transformations and its specific territorial influences. The metropolitan space is a testing ground for innovative practices and actions developed by private operators, often aimed at working through the stimulation – or sometime, the simulation – of urbanity. In all these cases, luxury acts as a catalyst for investments and an attractor of users and customers. It thus becomes a driver of the transformation of enclaves that become places of consumption of up-market goods, services and experiences, but also these spaces become interfaces, where the elitist set of actors face off the city as a plural reality. The final result is a new territorial pattern in which different urban districts allow entry of inhabitants and their habits of dwelling and consumption. Compared with traditional urban places, these are specific environments which represent alternative stages for the everyday lives of cities and integrate the traditional supply of their public/shared spaces. In this case, the switch of luxury players from exclusiveness to prestige – that is the main focus of this book – is evident, and it represents a starting point from which to explore the potential of those transformations to enhance the quality of life in contemporary cities and the risks related with them.

Two approaches to the territorial action of luxury

Today, the heterogeneous category of 'luxury stakeholders', which comprises fashion brands, financial groups, real estate investors, etc., shows close interest in the city and in taking part in transformation of its spaces, not only acting as tenants or colonizers but also influencing the features and vocations (the '*genius*') of those places. In the field of urban studies, a focus on the influences of luxury-driven transformations on the city entails a certain degree of complexity, and account should be taken of the spatial/territorial dimension of this issue from several viewpoints.

Luxury-driven transformations as drivers of urban integrated regeneration

In some case, we can compare urban interventions developed by luxury operators with other kinds of large urban interventions related with integrated urban regeneration (EU, 2010) and the re-activation of fragments of the existing city. When using this perspective, it is important to take into account the role of the different actors involved in this process, and especially in regard to some aspects concerning the specific nature of luxury and its recent evolutions.

In these cases, it is important that all the players – which often possess strong financial and branding power due to their global image – assume a new 'sense of responsibility' whereby they are required to interact with the city as a shared space. Accordingly, their actions must avoid the arrogant attitude typical of some business approaches, and they must understand that interacting with the metropolis means dealing with its diversities, its contradictions, and the freedoms of its population. This process of learning how to work with sensitivity to local contexts, their inhabitants, and socio-economic systems is a key factor in increasing the quality of the results of interventions. Therefore, public actors have an important role in this relationship between operators and places because they must provide a clear framework in which operators develop their activities and, at the same time, orientate these transformations to produce something more than fancy and rentable spaces. The interaction between local governments and private developers should give rise to projects of new kinds marked by complex programmes in which the customers are not only consumers of goods and services but also users of common (Ostrom, 1990) – when not public – places (Ferguson, 1990; Bianchetti, 2014; De Angelis, 2014). This issue posits luxury as one of the terms of the new urban question proposed by A. Merrifield (2014) or as an element of the planning project as pointed out by P. Healey (2010).

Between these two sets of players (private investors and public actors) there are the users, who constitute another important component of the process of development and consolidation of the above-mentioned transformations. By using these spaces, people became inhabitants of those transformed fragments of the metropolis, and through their living practices and their progressive appropriation, they re-connect those luxury-enclaves to the city, bringing life and vibrancy to them. From a long tradition of studies revived by recent analyses (i.e. Kyle & Chick, 2007; Esteban, 2007; Cresswell, 2004; Adams et al., 2001; Hiss, 1990), we know that only if a space is able to allow and host unexpected and spontaneous activities by its users does it become a place. But the quality and the identity of prestigious places is based on the role of luxury as an inspirer of specific habits and interactions between premium spaces and their populations, not just with the providers and buyers or users of paid activities or services. Recent refurbishments of consolidated public spaces (Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in Milan) or monuments (Coliseum in Rome) financed by luxury operators are an example of the potential of this new approach. Together with these actions, the role of these operators as sponsors of public art and/or urban festivals show other opportunities in which luxury enlarges its action field promoting its global image and, at the same time, increasing the urban attractiveness of local context.

Therefore, the territorial value and innovation related to prestigious places rely on their role in the creation of new urban environments in which the actors involved, the programmes included, and the functions attracted create a space for contemporary life and dwelling practices. The challenge for these environments within the city is to become shared spaces, not places of cloning (Castello, 2010) in which luxury re-proposes processes of isolation, exclusion and conflict typical of its traditional attitude. At the same time, the originality of prestigious places may affect not only their territorial dimension but also the processes of development and cooperation among actors that rely on specific assets related to the nature of stakeholders. Luxury players are experienced in the construction of narratives and imageries; they have global power related to brand image and customers' loyalty; they possess financial resources; and they have experience in work relating local contexts and international trends. All these elements are key factors in the global challenges that cities encounter in their everyday lives. For this reason, luxury-driven transformations should become assets for the territory and not divisive issues. But this evolution therefore depends simultaneously on the spatial quality of the results of luxury-driven operations and on the features of processes and interactions among their developers.

The distinctive features of luxury-driven transformations: emerging readings

Exploring the specific characters of the action of luxury in space, we can point out, among others, four main key points for the field of urban studies.

The first relates to the cultural background of the planning discipline. Like many of the contributions in this book, current research seeks to enrich the language of planners by decoding a number of specific luxury-oriented terms ('trading up', 'trading down', 'masstige', 'prestige', etc.) and clarifying them, especially in their relationship with space. The result is a sort of open glossary in this field of research that will support future reflection on prestigious place-making and luxury-related territorial transformations. Therefore, subsequent studies should enhance the initial group of words that we have collected in this book; this will be an effort to produce specific knowledge of relevance for both scientists and practitioners.

The second aspect concerns all the diverse practices of luxury players (international financial groups, small – but innovative – actors, parasites and developers, retailers and providers of services, etc.). Recent debates have focused on consolidated investments in real estate as well as branding and smart attempts related to experiential dimensions and value creation for places. All these practices co-exist, and they deal with several other sectoral logics that affect the same field – the city – to create original mixes which improve its fragmentation and increase its complexity. For this reason, exploring the field of spatial actions of luxury, analyses work on different scales (from local to global) and on the roles of different actors (public stakeholders, private companies, semi-public entities, etc.), defining risks and opportunities. Several cases have exemplified a trend among luxury players whereby global brands exhibit a new sensitiveness to contexts and local situations, and simple – sometime ingenuous or simplistic – attempts to adapt their strategies, language and action to specific conditions and interact with peculiar constraints and needs. Some other cases have shown continuity with practices and approaches that were usual before the 2008 crisis but today face a radically different world. Their results seem to have, according to J.H. Kunstler (2001: 2), little history and a dubious future.

Therefore, recent research has focused on those luxury-driven transformations which involve 'prestige' and/or 'exclusiveness'. To be noted is that, in both situations, those examples affected not only the dimension of 'where' the projects took place, but also 'how' they materialize in the territory and 'who' the actors involved were. Attention to these aspects is important for understanding the territorial effects of their presence, which affects the magnitude of the physical impact on cities and metropolitan areas (generating 'soft' or 'hard' gentrification, re-opening or privatizing public spaces or creating shared commons, enclosing fragments of the city, or recovering brownfields/greyfields, etc.). As said, these operations often concern the character of spaces, creating one or multiple identities for specific parts of the city or the territory. At the same time, they work on the local scale of the building and the neighbourhood and on the scale of the urban pattern and the metropolitan hierarchy, creating alternative forms of centralities or real 'superplaces' (Morandi & Paris, 2015). But prestigious placemaking also concerns the impact on processes of transformation, which often become a testing ground for innovative forms of synergy between public and private actors, or practitioners with diverse backgrounds (fashion, finance, service production, real estate, etc.) and scales (global operators and local investors). Several interventions involve specific targets (single buildings or blocks) that sometimes engender a larger regeneration process able to attract new investors and create an innovative eco-system. Thus, the presence of luxury operators – a sort of excellence – becomes a local competitive advantage and can be the driver of new territorialities for a specific part of the metropolis.

In conclusion, and focusing on how luxury influences the transformation of cities, a number of recent studies have underlined that, more than in its results and its physical artifacts in space, prestigious placemaking introduces a specific operational approach into current spatial practices. Therefore, it changes the way in which urban places – or better, places with urbanity – are produced in contemporary cities more than its physical reality.

For this reason, scholars have stressed a number of important key points: for instance, the parallel strategy of operators, which affects consolidated cities and peripheral areas by working on these two levels at the same time; or the specialization of luxury clusters in these dissimilar environments (retail, work and services on consolidated urban interventions, healthcare, leisure, sport and culture in suburban locations) and the key role of iconic architecture and specific technical aspects (sustainability and green, regenerative processes, etc.) that characterize these interventions.

By studying the products of luxury-driven transformations, we define the urbanities of prestigious places, and observe whether these spaces can be integrated into territorial development strategies which should combine the public and private actors' interests, and ultimately benefit the daily experiences of users, including inhabitants, in relation to present and future policies. For this reason the role of public actors becomes a central and open question, and we ask if (and how) local governments can deal with these phenomena.

The materialization of prestigious places should be opportunities to enhance the map of the city's shared/common spaces, especially when luxury operators exploit areas outside consolidated central locations, attempt to create new centralities, and stimulate new urban experiences, new symbols and values. But is it possible to address and influence these transformations?

A governance for the influences of luxury on contemporary cities?

In order to answer the above question – a central issue in the planning debate – we should return to the role of users, which influences the success of the operations developed by luxury players; and that of public bodies, which work – or should work – as pivots of spatial transformations.

Although they are not the developers, both these two actors have the power to affect prestigious placemaking processes, each from a specific starting point and with different tools. As pointed out in the first section, it is only through the active appropriation of these spaces from inhabitants that up-market locations and luxury fragments of metropolis become parts of the city. For this reason, prestigious places are different from previous products of luxury transformations; they create opportunities for the urban environment and its inhabitants; they promote interactions and integrate its services and facilities. According to L. Castello (2010), 'People make places!', and if prestigious places are able to attract users and customers, they will produce new habitats for the contemporary citizens of global metropolises; if they remain isolated and exclusive enclaves, they will probably be overtaken by other transformations.

Within this framework, the role of public actors becomes more and more important. Firstly, this is because it is clear that it needs more than an ideological approach and it should rely on something more than a mere restrictive attitude. Often, when public bodies deal with liquid (Bauman,

2009) and innovative market dynamics, an over-limitative approach causes rigid schemes which restrict the opportunities for interactions with private developers more than the chances of companies to take advantage of situations (Moroni & Andersson, 2014). For this reason, together with specific attention to markets and their evolution in order to reduce the risks of speculative operations, public actors at local, metropolitan and regional scale should also consider the opportunities related with the actions of luxury stakeholders. They should therefore adopt an approach in both policies and actions whereby they can extract not only financial but also territorial value from those operations. The inclusion of luxury as a sector within the strategies of regional and local plans, and the recognition of the role of its stakeholders in public-private partnerships, etc., could provide a new set of economic, functional and spatial resources so that public actors can generate new occasions for the city, and not just for private developers. The result should be an extension of the inertia of luxury-driven transformations which may become drivers of the larger regeneration of urban and regional vibrancy, of the city's attractiveness, and the quality of life of its inhabitants. In this sense, the challenge for public actors will be to find ways to influence the quality of the proposals made by private investors and to produce opportunities for regional and urban spaces.

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