

# PLACE OF CREATION AND PLACE OF PRODUCTION: SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE BERLIN FASHION-DESIGN PRODUCTION NETWORK

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**ABSTRACT:** Fashion design plays a significant role in Berlin's creative industries and for its start-up scene. Berlin has the highest concentration of designers in Germany, most of them working in small start-ups, while the spatial organisation of their production is stretched from the local level to the global network of fashion events, showing different entrepreneurial strategies within the production process. Different spatial structures of the production organisation are identifiable through which it is possible to discuss the role of Berlin in the production network of fashion designers and the kinds of relations holding between the city, designers, and their production network.

**KEY WORDS:** fashion design, production network, Berlin, creative field

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## Introduction

A characteristic of creative industries that makes them appealing for debates on regional economics is related to their dynamism and the expectation of urban economic development that follows the agglomeration of creative and knowledge-intensive sectors. Creative actors tend to use cities and urban milieus as catalysts for new ideas and as sources of inspiration that, through dense communication networks, take place in urban regions (cf. Mundelius 2008: 26; Anderson 1985: 18; Davelaar, Nijkamp 1989: 571; Hall 2000; Scott 2008; Storper 2013). Within the general concept of creative industries, different economic sectors are grouped so that, even if they share human creativity as one of their central production and value generation components, they show different production organisations and spatial struc-

tures that make them legible only when considered in their regional context (Pratt 2005; Staber 2008). This paper will focus on the fashion design sector in Berlin in order to better understand the geographies of production and relations creative industries have with the city, not only different between sectors, but also within individual sectors, where different entrepreneurial strategies and contingent structures play a role. Berlin is the most important agglomeration centre in Germany for fashion designers as well as German fashion institutions (such as design schools and the fashion week). Furthermore, the city is also one of the most important for German creative industries, and the creative and knowledge industries play a relevant role in its economy (Krätke 2011: 162; Gornig et al. 2012; Brenke 2007; IBB 2011; Senat WiTF 2014). In this context, even if fashion designers are concentrated in Berlin, their pro-

duction networks show different spatial organisation and extension: from the very local, where every production phase is done in Berlin, to the international level, where only the design is done in Berlin while other phases take place abroad. This might not be something new to many sectors, nor to the fashion design and apparel sector (Dicken 2011), but then the question has to be asked as to why designers decide to concentrate in one specific city and what the pivotal elements of production agglomeration are. What is the relation of individual fashion designers and the city with the global networks of fashion?

In this paper, the production network of Berlin fashion design is analysed in order to develop first answers to these questions. The paper is structured as follows: in the second part, a theoretical framework for the agglomeration of fashion designers is developed, based on the concept of Scott's (2006, 2008, 2010, 2014) creative field and of the production network, in order to explain links between the city and the spatial organisation of production in fashion design. In the third part, the main elements that determine Berlin as a creative field for the fashion designer are presented. After the fourth part, which details the methodology of the empirical data collection, different spatial organisations of the production networks are presented in the fifth part. In the last section, the results are discussed.

## Creative field and production network

### Creative field

The relation between creative activities and the cities in which they are concentrated is one of mutual influence and dependence. This kind of relation, of a complex and multilayered nature, is at the very core of the understanding of creativity-driven urban economic development, and creativity itself (cf. Merkel 2008, 2012; Hall 1998; Florida 2002; Scott 2010, 2014; Landry 2000; Storper 2013; Krätke 2011). Creativity has gained a relevant role in the understanding of entrepreneurial activities, especially in the creative sectors<sup>1</sup>, as well as having diffused immaterial

resources available in specific spaces and cities, or within sectoral and personal networks. In this sense, the city becomes the place where creativity is generated, applied, and, at the same time, influenced by the creative activities that take place. This kind of dynamics is well described by Scott (2006, 2008, 2010, 2014) in his concept of the creative field<sup>2</sup>. The concept underlines that creativity-based economic activities in an urban environment depend on different factors that can influence each other, without implying deterministic causal relations. In this sense, the creative field "is represented by sets of industrial activities and related social phenomena forming spatially differentiated webs of interaction that mould entrepreneurial and innovative outcomes in various ways. [...] Both the field on the one side and its effects on entrepreneurship and innovation on the other are reflexively intertwined with one another" (Scott 2006: 54). According to this definition, there is a shared relational context between creative actors in a given place, as well as between them and the local socio-institutional context, so these relations cannot be reproduced elsewhere; creative actors bring to bear their human capital and their creativity, but they also learn norms, strategies, and organisational forms from the context, or milieu, in which they operate that can also influence production. As Scott writes, "The individuals who compose each community typically internalize elements of their daily environment and reflect these back in more or less socially conditioned creative efforts" (Scott 2010: 119). This kind of knowledge is mostly related to urban regions, and thus is influenced by local entrepreneurial characteristics and actions, as well as by professional networks throughout the local level.

The creative field and related economic development show the path dependency of regions, and it follows that the economic profile and innovation capacity of a city are determined by the main sectors based there (Storper 2013; Scott

finied in general, but the definition has to be based on local experience and practice (Pratt 2005). In Germany, there is a shared definition at the federal level in which the sectors are considered part of the creative industries (BMW 2012; Enquete-Kommission 2007).

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that the creative field is not the only concept that works out the creativity-entrepreneurs-city relation; however, the discussion of these concepts goes beyond the aims of this article.

<sup>1</sup> What is understood as creative industries and what kind of sectors fall under this concept cannot be de-

2008; Hall 1998). In this sense, the development of a specific sector, the related specialisations, and the labour market direct local creative energies and expected innovation trajectories. Consequently, the need for the recognition of creative results in one place can drive creative actors present in a given city sector, because those kinds of creative inputs are sought after and acknowledged. As formulated by Staber (2008: 573), "Cultural regions specialize the way firms do, and ideas that are consistent with the core ideas defining the region will have a survival advantage. The reason for this is that an environment filled with semantic associations, symbolic meanings and cultural representations that reflect the core set of ideas can trigger people to perceive a new idea as being consistent with that set than when such associations are absent." The sectors of the creative field are linked to the urban production system and also generate dynamism on the local labour market (Storper, Scott 2009; Storper 2013). "In this way, the cumulative, localized nature of knowledge creation and learning has been extended from the organisational to the territorial level" (Boschma 2004: 1006). So it can be summarised that the creative field of a city is unique for every place and, even if it does not coincide spatially with the city region, its profile is defined by the result of interaction between economic actors and physical and socio-institutional elements<sup>3</sup>.

### Production network

Along with the concept of Global Production Networks (GPN) (Henderson et al. 2002; Coe et al. 2008a, b), where, at the core of analysis, the production process is placed in the context of its relations, the production network is suggested as a holistic approach to production forms in creative industries. The word 'production' underlines the (social) process of the making of a good and its value together with its phases and actors as central elements, in opposition to the concepts of value creation and commodity. The concept of a network, as also in the GPN, has been chosen for its metaphorical and methodological flexibility, because, on the one hand, it allows a reconstruction of non-linear structures

and relations, even though there can still be linearity in networks. On the other hand, different kinds of relations and actors can be integrated in networks so that production forms can be thematised, as they are in many creative industries, as non-linear structures that integrate informal social components in production activities and, especially in some production phases, distinctive local and urban components (cf. Lange, Bürkner 2010; Van Heur 2010; Krätke 2002; Heebels, van Aalst 2010; Merkel 2008; Lange 2007). Networks are understood here as "*relational processes* which, when realized empirically within distinct time- and space-specific contexts, produce observable patterns [...]" (Dicken et al. 2001, italics in the original), but are not directly related to a specific scale (as the global scale in the GPN).

The production network differs from the GPN at the analytical level by focusing on the regional context of production forms that tends to be concentrated at the urban and regional scale, even if it does not exclude international interactions. However, it shares with the GPN the demand for higher flexibility in the identification and analytical reconstruction of the production phase and spatial configuration, which can be highly heterogeneous and relevant to the production forms of creative industries. An entrepreneurial network is understood here as an interaction between independent entrepreneurial actors related to each other via the sector-specific production and exchange logic of goods and services. In creative industries, as well as in fashion design, production and value creation are not only the results of economic processes, but they also integrate social components that may influence or drive economic activities. These two components (economic and social) are embedded in specific territorial contexts and can develop specific characteristics for individual sectors, which then may have an influence on the form of production. In order to bring together these different influential factors in one analytical concept, the production network is suggested. The production network can be understood as the interaction of heterogeneous actors, in their economic and social processes, that are relevant to production and commercialisation processes (cf. Dicken 2011; Henderson et al. 2002). In order to understand the spatial organisation of creative production networks, they are considered to be rooted in the creative field that

<sup>3</sup> For an overall perspective on the concept of a creative field, see also Suwala (2014).

constitutes the local context within which creative actors develop their entrepreneurial strategies.

## Berlin as a creative field?

Berlin has the highest concentration of fashion designer and fashion-design-related activities in Germany (IBB 2011). In addition, creative industries play a relevant role in the economic structure of the city. The socio-economic transformation and elements of the city constitute the frame within which the fashion-design production network is organised, and, at the same time, it comprises the grounds on which it can be developed.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, which led many industrial activities to abandon the city leaving it in a marginal position within the national economic structure, Berlin lost many job positions. Between 1989 and 1992, there was a 40% decrease (Gornig 2012), and between 1991 and 2007, 178,000 industrial jobs were lost (Krätke 2011: 160). In the textile and apparel sector the reduction in activity was considerable (Coperchini 2014). However, from 2005 on, the Berlin economy has been demonstrating higher dynamism and growth rates than other German states (Gornig 2012; Brenke 2010). According to Krätke (2011: 162), this is due especially to the growth in tourism, the knowledge-based economy, and creative and cultural economies. Berlin is a place of concentration of 10% of all German cultural and creative activities, and has shown one of the highest growth rates of firms among German cities (Brenke 2007; Geppert, Mundelius 2007; Mandel 2007; Senat WiFT 2008). Fashion design reflects this tendency and, since 2000, has been one of the sectors with the highest growth rates in Berlin creative industries (Gornig et al. 2012; Senat WiFT 2014), though Berlin is the German city with the highest concentration of fashion workers (Schepers 2011; Berlin Partner 2013). At the institutional level, there are ten schools in Berlin, both private and public, that offer fashion-design courses. Since 2007, Berlin's fashion week has been organised, and the city senate has offered a financing programme for fashion design start-ups (Start Your Own Fashion Business)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.berlin.de/projektzukunft/wettbewerb/start-your-fashion-business> (accessed 31 Jan. 2015).

Furthermore, social components and the geographical distribution of city inhabitants, together with the real-estate market, also contribute to establishing the creative field of the city, not only for the fashion sector, but for creative actors in general. There are more than 160 nationalities living in Berlin, and over the last 20 years (1992–2002), two of the three most represented age groups are people between 25 and 45 (the first) and between 18 and 25 (the third) (*Amt für Statistik ...* 2012), so there is a strong presence of a young and multicultural population. Most of creative activities are concentrated in the inner city, as well as most of fashion design, immigrants, and young people (the 18–45-year-old group being the best represented one). Berlin also has high immigration rates, in both directions, especially in the group aged between 20 and 35. Therefore, these aspects of the population, in combination with relatively low rents and building and district structures (especially in the central city) that favour multiple uses and the clustering of young internationals, stimulate a creative atmosphere, namely a creative field of the city.

## Methods

The following discussion is based on a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews (cf. Hopf 2000; Loda 2008; Becker 1998): nine expert interviews with experts and 27 interviews with fashion designers, from 30 to 80 minutes long, were conducted between 2010 and 2014. The qualitative research pattern and the related organisation of the interviews had to be worked out in the absence of reliable quantitative data on entrepreneurial activities in the fashion design sector<sup>5</sup>. All interviews were transcribed and analysed using grounded theory principles (Glaeser, Strauss 2005; Giudici 1998: 428–443; Lamnek

<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to find quantitative data on the Berlin fashion sector and the number of active fashion designers and labels as well as their economic performance, because in the sectoral division of creative industries fashion design is grouped with other sectors into the category 'design economy', which also includes other kinds of design (Senat WiFT 2008, 2014). While the categories used by the statistical office embrace sectors of industrial clothing production in general, they do not grasp the specificity of fashion design, thus providing almost no quantitative data.



2005: 100–117; Straus, Corbin 1994). Single cases were reconstructed so that the main production network structures could be identified. Regarding fashion designers chosen for the interviews, those producing clothing for adults (women and men) were considered, but not those who produce accessories, shoes, costumes, or clothing for children. The fashion designers interviewed have their label in Berlin and were identified through different channels (participation in Berlin's fashion week and other Berlin-based trade shows, publications, and Internet pages of designers based in the city<sup>6</sup>).

## Geographies of the Berlin fashion design production network

Fashion design production can be divided into different production steps that it shares with the clothing production circuit (Dicken 2011: 303) in general, such as fabric production, design, preparation, production, and distribution. This is so because there is no clear difference between what clothing production is and what fashion design is<sup>7</sup>. It can be said that in fashion design the actual design of a piece or collection plays a more central role than the marketing and distribution phases; the quality of the fabrics and production is crucial, and the designer has to be socially recognised for this. However, there are no quantitative elements that can distinguish fashion design. In Berlin, fashion design labels are often small enterprises, with one to five employees, and the designer is also an entrepreneur. The life cycle of a firm in this sector is a few years, so the turnover rate of new openings and closures is high. The production network in this sector can be divid-

ed into five phases: fabric fairs and fabric collection, design, production, fashion weeks or trade fairs, and the distribution. In this case, the design phase takes place in Berlin; the factors that strategically motivate designers to work in Berlin and that bind their production network with the creative field of the city will be discussed later. Now, I want to concentrate on the different geographical distributions of the other phases, which not only show different scales, but are also related to different entrepreneurial strategies or needs for a label.

### Fabric trade fairs and fabric collection

Fabric trade fairs are visited by designers in order to find new fabrics and fabric producers. During these events, designers have access to a great number of fabric producers and look for contacts for their new collections. In Germany, the most important and largest fabric trade fair is held in Munich (Munich Fabric Start), while a smaller one also takes place in Berlin (Berlin Vision)<sup>8</sup>. Comprising the majority of fashion-related events in Germany, these fairs take place twice a year. The majority of the interviewees in this research go to Munich for their fabrics because of its larger scale. Outside domestic borders, Berlin designers tend to choose Paris for its fabric trade fair, one of the most important and biggest in the world. Only a small number of interviewees chose a different trade fair outside of those three (in this case, it was in Italy: Milan, Bologna, or Florence), or visited more than one trade fair, the most relevant combination being Munich and Paris.

There are also other designers who buy their fabrics from retailers (that are based in Berlin, in other German cities, Switzerland or Austria) or in Berlin-based shops, so they do not visit trade fairs for their fabrics. The majority of the designers interviewed use fabrics produced in Europe, or in the Mediterranean Sea region, while only one mentioned Chinese fabrics<sup>9</sup>. This shows that,

<sup>6</sup> As publications, editions of *Das Modebuch Berlin* from between 2010 and 2012 published by the city magazine *Zitty* were used, as well as the website [www.the-labelfinder.de](http://www.the-labelfinder.de) and the data base of the VDMD ([www.vdmd.de/de](http://www.vdmd.de/de)).

<sup>7</sup> Both apparel industries and fashion design contain parts and processes of each other, since all apparel products have to be designed, and the majority of fashion design collections are industrially produced. How fashion design differs from the rest of apparel production can only be determined qualitatively, as a result of people's creativity, or as inserted into specific contextual dynamics that is socially, spatially, and economically constructed (McRobbie 1998; Simmel 1904; Kawamura 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Those are not the only fabric trade fairs in Germany, but only the most relevant ones for Berlin fashion designers.

<sup>9</sup> In the interviews I have conducted, there were also designers who work with upcycling production processes, so they obtain their fabrics from different sources (industrial waste, pre-consumption waste, or used

for their fabrics, Berlin fashion designers choose between three options: finding them at the local urban level (Berlin), at the national level (Berlin, Munich), or at the international level (Paris).

## Production

In the production phase, the designer decides how and where the collection, or single items (if single pieces are realised) have to be produced. Three groups of spatial solutions emerged from the interviews: the collection is produced by interns at the label, or by tailors (*Zwischenmeister*) and manufacturers in Berlin; the collection is produced in Germany (many of those who have chosen this solution have found facilities to work with in Brandenburg); or it is produced internationally, mostly in countries neighbouring Germany, especially Poland.

In the first case – that is, production in Berlin – designers work with unique pieces or small, exclusive collections, so production by a manufacturer would be too costly without the possibility of a close interaction with tailors.

“Well, I don’t make two collections per year, instead it is a continuous extension collection, I would say. Well, I don’t make a collection now and then next year it is no longer available, but rather it is built up continually. Because I make single pieces that are gone when sold, so I don’t make series and also not different sizes, [...] but when the original dress is sold, then I rarely make it again. I make only new things each time and from what I have I develop it further. Well, of course there are more wintery and more summery things, but I do it in such a way that nothing is left over.” (ID 17)<sup>10</sup>

The search for tailors is often made through personal contacts and word of mouth among designers or between designers and tailors. It is, in

fact, common for designers to work with more than one tailor at a time.

For bigger productions, Berlin labels use industrial manufacturers. Underlying this choice is also the motive of generating the value of having a ‘made in Germany’ product, and so designers look for production sites within Germany, especially in Berlin or in the surrounding region of Brandenburg.

“Because I think that this must be supported, even though it is a little bit ideological. Normally I could also go abroad and I would save for sure 20% of my costs. But I don’t do it, because I believe it has a future here.” (ID06)

The opportunity to be spatially based near the manufacturer is welcome, because of the interaction and feedback that take place between designers and manufacturers. For the same reason, the most popular country for production outside Germany is Poland, because this combines the reduction of production costs with relative geographical proximity to Berlin.

## Fashion weeks and trade fairs

Fashion weeks, as well as trade fairs for fashion, play the role of bringing together the three categories relevant for the reproduction of economic dynamics and image creation in the fashion sector: designers, buyers, and the press. In order to function, an event needs all three categories; if there are mainly designers and buyers at an event, it can be good for business, but it would lack diffusion by the media (useful for the designers to attract new buyers and spreading their image and reputation). On the other hand, if buyers are few, designers cannot gather orders for the collection they present, and the business aspect of an event can get lost if it is more PR-oriented. If only designers and buyers are present (direct clients and for bigger orders), it is more a trade fair. Events of those three categories also perform the function of bringing together people from the fashion sector so that the participants, especially designers, can see and be seen by each other. Therefore, fashion events “[...] help reproduce the community of fashion workers, bringing them together to circulate and ‘perform’ fashion knowledge” (Entwistle 2010: 8). These events are also bound with their location and can bring positive development at the regional economic

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apparel items) and re-use the fabrics for their products. They obtain their fabrics from German-speaking countries. I am aware of the different approaches to materials that this process involves, and the selection of cases for this research does not represent a concerted effort to exclude these labels from this analysis of the geographical distribution of production network phases.

<sup>10</sup> Some interviews were made in German and other in English. In this paper a translation of the extracts of the following German interviews has been made: ID03, ID05, ID06, ID11, ID12, ID17, and ID18.

level (IBB 2011; Schepers 2011; Senat WiTF 2009; McRobbie 1998: 69; Weller 2008) and develop network relations among fashion actors through both official and informal events, such as parties (cf. Weller 2008; Kawamura 2006; Entwistle 2010).

Berlin has held a fashion week (the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week) since 2007 with related events and other trade fairs, and, within these events, Berlin fashion designers have developed three different positions. First, they present their collections during the Berlin fashion week at the official fairs:

“As we are from Berlin it is meaningful, because we can say that we represent ourselves at our best here. It would be different to go to Amsterdam, where I have also been. So it is just a possibility to use the flow of visitors and show your stuff and, because it is becoming more and more important here, also on an international level, this plays a very significant role for us. So it will be decided during the Berlin Fashion Week and a couple of weeks later how the rest of our year looks, financially and technically.” (ID12)

Or they develop private ideas to present their products in the city during the week.

“Currently I have the feeling that it is better like that and therefore it has been also a decision to say “I’d rather do things a little quieter, I make it now a bit away from the big fuss of the Fashion Week, etc.”; for us it doesn’t make much sense to pay a lot, to drum loudly, when in the end not very much happens. This is not my style and I also hate fairs, which can scare, so I’ve also had no desire to go to these fairs and then to sit somewhere in the city and hope to sell. Then I prefer to work here with more precision and then the buyers come to me and ask if they can see the new stuff, then I make appointments and they come here and order what they want to have.” (ID05)

Secondly, designers do not present in Berlin, preferring other fashion weeks, mainly that in Paris, considering it a more professional and business-oriented platform. The main difference between Berlin and Paris for those who present either in both or exclusively in Paris is the major presence of buyers, especially international ones, at those events.

“Most people who come to Berlin are people who either work in fashion themselves because they are designers, or have relatively large

shops, like department stores. Such buyers always come and I have the impression that they really come here to Berlin to party. Well, it is the very first, it really is very, very early, it is the same time as the men shows in Paris, which I also don’t find any good. Therefore the very important people are in Paris at the same time and look at the men shows and don’t come to Berlin. The people who come here, as I said, are only opening the ball, so to speak, they party and think “cool, the season is open”, and it is really very very early, it is a huge problem, also logistic, for the preparation of the collection, it’s a mega stress if you show in Berlin.” (ID18)

The lack of these categories in Berlin, for designers, is related to a less professional and international atmosphere; this atmosphere, however, is required of such events in order to insert them and the participating designers into international professional networks.

Thirdly, designers show at different fashion weeks and trade fairs throughout Europe, or they do not show at fairs at all because their business organisation renders their collection, or pieces, unavailable for ordering by or production for other shops. In that case, they work on a local base, or over the Internet.

## Distribution

According to the interviewees, three geographical levels of the distribution of their products can be identified. The first is the local urban level, where designers sell from their own or other shops in Berlin.

“Every season, what happens is that some items from the experimental collection go on to the next season; some items from my classic collection are getting away, because they don’t sell so good, people are not interested. So, the collection is quite dynamic, but it goes pretty slow now because I own my own shop and the way I work, I have at the beginning of a season quite a few new items, but during the season I all the time add and take off pieces from the collection. So I’m a bit more flexible. A shop that will buy regularly, at the beginning of the season they buy a whole collection or pieces they choose.” (ID07)

The second level is when the products are sold in shops in different cities in Germany or in other

German-speaking countries (Austria and Switzerland), while the third level is when designers sell in different European countries and/or the USA and Asia, especially Japan. In this sort of configuration, it has to be kept in mind that the distribution of fashion design focuses on specific locations of specific cities and single boutiques, that designers who sell globally, for instance in Japan, may have their products in only two or three shops in total. Therefore, this kind of distribution can be related to an entrepreneurial strategy or the result of the appeal of a product design to specific buyers and markets. However, it is not to be understood as merely a mirror of entrepreneurial success or limitation.

“We don’t do any sort of paid advertising in magazines or anything like that. A sort of growth of the company has happened by word of mouth so far and just (all my presents) obviously as well. And I mean, we are growing – we now have stores in Europe and in Asia. [Interviewer: “Where?”] In Europe, and in Asia it is just Japan. [...] Tokyo and Osaka and Fukuoka. [...] We have clients in Switzerland, Germany, the UK, but a small number. I mean, not as big as in Japan.” (ID20)

Further ways to sell their products are through online shops or at trade fairs. Those are normally ways to integrate the ‘traditional’ distribution channels, and only a few interviewees rely exclusively on these methods. Fashion boutiques and shops in Berlin tend to concentrate in the most tourist-frequented neighbourhoods of the city in order to gain access to tourists as customers (Moore, Fernie 1998).

A further organisational solution for delivering products to different shops consists of producing the items in advance and proposing them to different shop owners. That, through their feedback, can generate specific adjustments to what is sold in their shops.

“We make it completely different, we now make all the parts. We have our largest business, that is, commission business, that means we don’t sell the goods directly, well we also do it, but our larger business is the commission business [...]. If you do it like all other designers, that is, you bring every year, every six months a new collection and it is sometimes not well received by people, then you get nothing. That’s why we actually bring permanent new pieces in our

portfolio. So we serve shops with one piece, e.g. for three years, because the stores know, “OK, I can work with it, that runs on the client, it’s sold well” [...]. So we don’t make a collection and then develop something new each time and each time something different and then we no longer have the pieces. We produce them for a longer term.” (ID06)

## The designer

Even though the other phases of the production network take place at the local, regional, or international level, it is in Berlin that fashion designers concentrate the most creative part of the production process. What are, then, most relevant elements of the creative field of the city for the fashion designer? On the one hand, there are elements that facilitate the start-up process in general, and for the fashion-design sector specifically. First of all, an important element is the relatively low living costs and rents that have characterised Berlin since 1989 even if, of course, in a lesser way now, and, related to this, the availability of spaces for rent (for ateliers and commercial purposes, as well as for private needs).

[Respondent 1:] “In Berlin it is easier to stay afloat.” [Respondent 2:] “Yes, because of the rent and the atelier and simply because of the living costs, of course much lower.” (ID03)

This allows the possibility, for example, for designers to earn a living with part-time jobs and use the rest of their time for their fashion design activities. In this sense, moderate everyday costs are perceived by the designers as a factor that increases the creative potential of a place, because one can experiment more with products and ideas as the risk of economic loss can be more easily contained (this, however, would be in contradiction with other cities, like New York, where being creative and having high living costs is a challenge).

“I think there are a couple of reasons. First of all, after leaving Europe, I think Berlin is well positioned in Europe. It has a very good reputation, it’s a very creative city in a way, there’s a lot of inspiration if you want, and it’s a little bit off the centre of fashion. So for me at least, being a new brand, it’s a little bit easier. I could make a few mistakes and correct them and not be the centre of attention. If you start a brand



in Paris and you make a collection and the collection is not nice, or you make a mistake, or your quality is not perfect, you don't get a shit second chance. In Berlin, I had the opportunity to work, to try, to make errors, to correct them and still not burn myself out. Another aspect is an economic aspect. It's much cheaper to start a business in Berlin and to live in Berlin, rather than to live and start a business in Paris – everything costs more. To have a shop in Paris like what I have here, I think I would need to pay maybe five times more than I paid here, both to make it and ongoing costs. So, that's a very practical choice that I have made. I wanted somewhere where I could create my things that is not gonna be detached completely from the fashion world, but not being completely in the centre of it, and I can afford to see my ideas come to their without burning out, because I had no, let's say, business experience before I started this, only creative experience. So the business part was very new for me and I knew my resources were quite limited, so if I started a business in a place where every day costs so much money, it would be very dangerous for the success of the business." (ID07)

On the other hand, it is the presence of other designers and fashion-related creative actors (like photographers, graphic designers, film-makers, artists, etc.) that contributes to the development of a creative atmosphere because of the potential interaction and collaboration that can positively affect the fashion design business. This is generated by the shared urban space, but also by social and professional networks that can lead to the diffusion of recommendations, values, and norms.

"I wanted something that was not so established. I really wanted to have a feeling that I was creating something in the city and, you know what it's like here in Berlin, like there's so much to be done, you have this feeling that so much can be done and you have an influence on the city. Berlin is amazing, is an endless source of inspiration, just very very cool and when you talk to people, because it is an art capital and you've got a lot of artists here and you've got people [...] and many many different artistic fields, you can just be sitting around a dinner table and someone can say like, "Oh, I'm a photographer" or "I'm a painter" or something like

that, and you can talk to people on a really human level and a really one-to-one level. Even if you don't have a budget for a photo shoot, "You know what? maybe I can make you a jacket and you can do a photo shoot for me." And so it's this feeling of collaboration, especially among young people, that I think makes Berlin one of the few cities in the world where it is so apparent. I mean, you feel it, it's palpable." (ID20)

The creative field of the city is also based on the sense of openness and cultural variety that young multicultural people generate, especially in specific parts of the city. This interaction is also contingent on the mixed functions of buildings, especially in the city centre.

"Berlin is an important location because it is an interesting city, just because of that. I prefer to drive to Berlin than to Cologne or Bonn or anywhere else. Berlin is interesting because a lot is still so new, of course, because before interesting people were already coming here, in the Wall time already to escape the military service and all of these things. [...] just like that, for independent individual creative people, Berlin has always been the city for them and now it's certainly so even more, not because the fairs are here, but because a lot of new things emerge. East and West and all that were not as finished as in Munich or Dusseldorf, in all these stupid lacquered cities, there are other people and everything that has been developed in the East, which is so great, even a flower shop can look beautiful and with a few resources things are available, these are other people, already far too jaded to do something else. Good that we live here." (ID11)

A designer summarised his view of the role of Berlin in his production network and in the creative field when he said:

"Berlin is definitely a fashion city, is a fashion capital, but it's not where the industry takes place. I mean, it's just 'the reality'." (ID20)

## Conclusions

This paper has presented the main spatial diversity of the Berlin fashion-design production network. Using the concepts of a creative field and a production network, it was possible to understand the different production strategies of

fashion designers together with the structuring and binding elements that develop the relation between the designers and the city. In the Berlin case, historical and socio-economic elements were identified as relevant in building the creative field and structuring the production networks of fashion design.

For the different production phases, three scales of action were identified: local, regional, and international or global. This differentiation is partly related to the entrepreneurial strategy of a given label and to the nature of production itself (for instance, a label specialising in unique pieces generally would not present its product at trade fairs where they could be ordered by other shops, but would tend to act at the local level), but it is also partly supported by the local socio-economic context. The majority of the Berlin fashion-design labels are small-scale and act at the local urban level where they can rely for their organisation on informal exchange economies with other creative actors and on the easier possibility of financing (or co-financing) their activities. This kind of organisation is also facilitated by low living costs. The fashion institutions in Berlin play different roles; the numerous fashion-design schools attract students from across Germany and other countries, while the fashion week and the other trade fairs that take place in the city attract mostly designers from German-speaking countries; the same goes for buyers. The presence of a comparatively few international buyers – supported by the fact that the January 2015 edition of Bread & Butter was cancelled for lack of buyer participation – becomes a key factor upon which designers decide where to present their collections. However, the designers who actually consider this kind of decision are those who also present abroad and make a comparison between the different trade fairs and events. Therefore, it is mainly internationally active actors that can act as bridges in the flux of global fashion knowledge.

Berlin, consequently, is a creative city at the international level, but the case of fashion design shows that the economic dynamism of a creative sector in a creative city can vary, and the urban creative field should integrate the dynamic structures of the local labour market in order to generate positive effects in the urban economy (Storper, Scott 2009), even though the scale

of the production network can extend far beyond the local creative field and different spatial structures are active in a single sector.

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