**Unpicking the fashion city: Global perspectives on design, manufacturing and symbolic production in urban formations**

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**1. Introduction: Fashion cities and the cultural and creative industries**

In recent years, fashion design has received increased attention as a part of the ‘cultural economy’ and has been regarded as a significant example of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) (DCMS, 2001; Scott, 2002). Increasing awareness of the economic and cultural significance of the designer fashion industry has led to its inclusion in many initiatives aimed at regenerating local economies through CCIs. Moreover, fashion has become an important identity-creator capable of building urban cultural capital and marking cities as ‘creative places’ (Rantisi, 2011). In this context, the ‘fashion city’ has emerged as a potential model for the revamping of cities, celebrated in ‘urban-booster’ commentaries, and sought after by urban authorities (Breward and Gilbert, 2006). A broad strand of research has explored fashion cities as particular examples of creative cities, examining fashion design clusters and their interconnections with other CCIs, as well as the locational behaviour of fashion designers as examples of a particular section of the wider ‘creative class’ (Leslie and Brail, 2011).

However, there are issues in treating fashion design as a CCI and the fashion city as a particular example of the creative city paradigm. More than most CCIs, fashion still necessarily operates as an assemblage of physical and symbolic production processes, reliant on both manufacturing of garments and on the production and transmission of powerful symbols (Williams and Currid-Halkett, 2011). The contemporary fashion industry combines a highly globalised manufacturing chain with a designer fashion sector often concentrated in a few key cities (‘fashion’s world cities’), where image-producing activities, such as design and brand development, contribute to the creation of meanings strongly connected to those places (Jansson and Power, 2010). Particular cities, such as Paris and London, have distinctive ‘lineages’ of this intersection between physical and symbolic production, and are examples of creative city formations that long pre-date the much more recent fixation with CCIs (Breward and Gilbert, 2008). In recent years there has been a diversification of the relationships between fashion and cities, and a proliferation of different types of fashion city, related to different positions in global networks. Off-shoring and the relocation of manufacturing in lower-cost cities, together with the development of ‘fast fashion’ production complexes, and the enhanced use of IT to connect design and production over long distances have profoundly altered the geographies of the fashion industry (Segre Reinach, 2006). The geography of fashion centres has also been complicated by changes in the ‘symbolic economy’ of publications, promotional activities, and events as well as developments in forms of retailing, shopping, and consumption. In addition to fashion’s established world cities (particularly Paris, New York, Milan, London) a number of ‘second-tier’ or ‘not-so-global’ cities of fashion have emerged in recent years achieving rising visibility in the geography of fashion (Larner et al., 2007; Gilbert, 2013).

This chapter argues that treating fashion or even fashion design as just another example of a CCI underplays its complexity. There are, of course, elements of urban fashion formations that do benefit from conventional approaches to CCIs, particularly those that identify fashion design clusters and their interconnections with other CCIs. Such approaches tend to isolate fashion design from the wider complexities of the fashion industry, and to direct attention to particular kinds of urban context. But if we move away from this very specific focus, we tend to be confronted with diffuse, unstructured notions of the ‘fashion city.’ Over time, several studies have focused on individual examples of traditional and newer urban fashion formations, but without addressing the phenomenon from a wider and global perspective. Other research has focused on the distinctive characteristics of fashion’s world cities particularly in terms of different working orders and practices of local fashion design (Pratt et al., 2012; Volonté, 2012). More recently, Lazzeretti *et al*. (2017) have underlined the existence of two different typologies of fashion cities, associated with the garment industry (‘manufacturing fashion cities’), or with virtual images and new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (‘symbolic fashion cities’). However, there is very little work that has attempted to make systematic sense of the current heterogeneity of fashion centres.

Our argument here is that the ‘fashion city’ should not be treated as a singular, undifferentiated, and unchanging category. Instead we move towards an analytical framework for thinking about fashion’s relationship with cities that can encompass both the different historical trajectories of urban fashion formations, and the existence of multiple models and development patterns in newer centres. The research is carried out through a broad analysis, review, and systematization of previous academic literature on fashion’s world centres and second-tier cities. Such groundwork both complements and extends the now very familiar division between fashion’s world cities and ‘second tier’ fashion centres. Moreover, it investigates different roles that fashion has in urban economies, and the different creativities associated with the industry, which extend beyond the standard paradigms of the CCIs and of the creative city.

This analytical framework is developed in the two main sections of this chapter. The first section examines the historical development and current trajectories of major fashion cities, particularly Paris, New York, Milan and London, identifying common traits and pressures, but also distinguishing between them on the basis of the relative importance of business-orientated and creativity-orientated fashion industries, and differences in the survival of specialist artisanal production networks. In the second section we turn to examine contrasting models for the development and promotion of so-called ‘second-tier cities’ of fashion. We identify two broad tendencies: one strategy associated with the CCIs, the other with place-branding and promotion of cities as key sites of consumption, spectacle and performance in fashion’s international order. We also suggest that new centres of manufacturing have the potential to become more complex fashion cities, drawing upon the synergies between material production, design and local cultural characteristics. We conclude by proposing an analytical framework that moves beyond the distinction between fashion’s world and second cities, but also by emphasizing the more-than-economic characteristics of the creativities of fashion cities.

**2. The material and symbolic production of fashion: Towards an analysis of fashion’s world cities**

In thinking about fashion’s relation with cities, much attention has been given to a handful of Western cities, particularly Paris, New York, Milan and London. These are regarded as ‘fashion’s world cities’, where material and symbolic production, commerce, and consumption of fashion converge, generating very significant economic value.[[1]](#footnote-1) Their long-term historical geography was bound up with wider developments, including the urban consumer revolution in eighteenth-century Western Europe, the economic and symbolic systems of European imperialism and associated rivalries between cities, and the complex relationship between the emergent United States and European cultural authority (Gilbert, 2013). In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the emergence of a modern media system played a key role in the image-building of these cities, cementing their position in the ‘symbolic economy’ of fashion (Rocamora, 2009). Nowadays, a variety of ‘brand channels’ including media events, flagship stores, showrooms, shopping malls, and advertising communicate interlinked place-based images of fashion culture that reinforce the primacy of these cities (Jansson and Power, 2010). Fashion weeks, organised in a continuous cyclical circuit, are particularly important showcases for designers, products, and symbols from all around the world and contribute to building the distinctive cultural identity of these centres (Ling, 2012). As Godart (2014) suggests, these cities have an oligarchic position, distinctive in their power and influence, bound into restrictive or exclusionary systems, and radically different from other cities in relation to in fashion’s geographies.

Clearly the fashion industry in these cities benefits from the wider geographies of capitalist organization, in terms of access to capital, financial infrastructure and business services, as well as the co-location of the headquarters of major companies. They are also marked strongly by the ‘new cultural economy’. Fashion benefits from clustering of a wide range of creative activities, such as photography, journalism, media, PR and advertising. Fashion’s world cities also benefit from a rich infrastructure of cultural institutions including art galleries, museums, theatres, libraries, festivals and elite universities that enhance their attractiveness and have both economic and symbolic value. They function as aesthetic places with a strong symbolic power, where managed narratives, images, and myths about fashion are continuously created and disseminated in space and time (Jansson and Power, 2010). While each of the major fashion centres has its own distinctive characteristics, chronology and trajectory, it is possible to identify certain commonalities in this urban formation that critically worked through combinations of manufacturing, design activities, the symbolic economy and creative consumption.

It is also clear that these formations have changed markedly since the late-twentieth century, particularly in response to changes in global production geographies. These leading fashion cities were once organised around regional manufacturing systems of ‘flexible specialisation’, capable of responding quickly to changes of style, with close relationships between skilled craft-workers, designers and entrepreneurs. This fashion world city formation came under pressure from changes in the global economy. While skilled craftwork and finishing trades do survive to a greater or lesser extent in these cities, all have been profoundly altered by the ways that economic globalization has accentuated the separation between physical and symbolic forms of fashion production. Since the early 1970s, the globalization of production, trade liberalization and the intense competition deriving from lower-cost locations have affected the industry, leading to a severe contraction of manufacturing in and around these cities. The physical production of garments has been relocated away from North America and Europe, to lower-cost cities in India, China, Morocco, Turkey, South America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. All of fashion’s world cities have shifted towards design and symbolic activities (Scott, 2002; Evans and Smith, 2006).

While there is a consistent overall trend of a weakening industrial platform and strengthening symbolic economy, recent work has focused on the distinctive characteristics of fashion’s world cities. This moves beyond the popular associations with different styles and segments (Paris with haute couture, New York with sportswear and leisurewear, Milan with high-quality ready-to-wear, and London with innovative and creative apparel) to focus on different pathways for these cities, and particularly on different working orders and practices of fashion design (Pratt et al., 2012; Volonté, 2012). It is possible to identify two main elements to these changes, present to greater or lesser extent in each centre: the first is centred on ‘doing business’ and managerial and commercial aspects of the industry, while the second element is more oriented towards ‘generating symbols’ through creativity, artistic expression, and symbolism. We can trace different mixings of these elements and different trajectories for each major centre.

Paris has a long history as a city with a ‘place-specific advantages by reason of local cultural symbologies that become congealed in their products, and that imbue them with authentic character’ (Power and Scott, 2004, p. 7). Its central position in fashion is associated with the emergence of haute couture in the mid-nineteenth century, and the monopoly rents generated by symbolic associations between the city and cultural production. Parisian haute couture has promoted itself as an art-form, but there has also been a more wider-ranging and longer promotion of the city’s fashion status which has been fundamental in defining its preeminent position (Godart, 2014). Together with the emergence of a new wave of ‘star’ designers in the 1950s and 1960s (including Christian Dior, Karl Lagerfeld, Pierre Cardin, Yves Saint Laurent), a powerful mass media system contributed enormously in shaping and disseminating mythologies about the city’s supposedly endemic culture of fashionability. Central to these mythologies was the figure of ‘la Parisienne’, an international icon of taste and distinction, notable both for exquisite clothing, and her performance of fashion in city’s boulevards and night-life (Rocamora, 2009). ‘Paris Fashion’ is perhaps the most powerful brand image of a specific place in modern history, that at times seems to float free of connections with any specific element of the city’s material fashion economy (Gilbert, 2000). There is benefit to companies and designers in having any connection to the city. However, in addition to the continuation of this symbolic promotion, Paris has also become a key centre for the command and control of powerful fashion and luxury goods conglomerates, particularly LMVH (which includes Dior, Luis Vuitton, Kenzo, Givenchy, and Marc Jacobs) and Kering (formerly PPR, which includes Balenciaga, Saint Laurent Paris, Gucci and a controlling interest in Alexander McQueen and Stella McCartney). This has had a distinctive impact on the development of fashion designers, who usually are trained within these companies, while independent fashion and design schools that often emphasise narrow technical skills tend to be marginalised (e.g. Studio Barçot, Institute Français de la Mode, L’Ecole de la Chambre Syndacale de la Couture). These schools are not regarded as incubators for French creative talent by the Paris-based houses, which have a record for hiring new creative professionals from educational institutions in London and New York (Tokatli, 2011).

In New York, fashion has been historically associated with the Garment District, but the area has recently come under pressure as a manufacturing hub, now operating primarily as a source of samples and high-end products for New York designers and boutiques.[[2]](#footnote-2) The transformation of the Garment District is an indication of the way that fashion in New York, perhaps of all the major centres, has moved towards the model of the CCIs, closely associated with the figure of the fashion designer. In the 1980s and 1990s a wave of American ‘entrepreneurial’ designers specialising in sportswear and leisurewear, including Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, and Donna Karan, achieved international repute, effectively inventing the category of ‘designer-wear’ (Rantisi, 2004a). There has been a broader move towards the growth and concentration of fashion design in New York City; around 40% of US fashion designers have been based in the New York area since the early 1990s, with a very high location quotient of 8.16 for the greater metropolitan area (Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2016). There is strong synergy between the fashion design industry and globally recognised educational institutions (such as Parsons, the New School for Design, the Pratt Institute, and the Fashion Institute of Technology). Around 70% of the workforce in the local designer fashion sector comes through these schools (Tokatli, 2011). Talent is also exported to other centres, most famously Marc Jacobs and Michael Kors moving to the Paris houses of Louis Vuitton and Céline in the late-1990s (Rantisi, 2004a).

New York also successfully supports this design sector through fashion institutions and a dense network of support services, including fashion magazines, the bi-annual New York fashion weeks, forecasting services, wholesale showrooms and buying offices, as well as a strong and segmented retail sector. New York is also home to complementary cultural institutions in the arts, and a more general milieu that attracts an international pool of creative talent. The city is also a major centre of fashion businesses control with particular strengths in translating design into global branding strategies, such as the Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger brands and the key assets of the PVH corporation. As well as training in design, the education system is highly business-oriented, providing courses on management, merchandising and marketing (Rantisi, 2004b). Public policy on the part of both local government and not-for-profit business associations also reflects shifts in the character of the fashion industry. The policies of the 1980s and 1990s, which aimed to sustain a broad manufacturing and wholesaling economy in the Garment District were succeeded by initiatives that rebrand the district as an up-and-coming area mixing production and consumption of fashion, drawing upon the area’s distinctive history.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In Milan, there remains an extensive industrial and artisanal manufacturing sector (Volonté, 2012). The city has a long-established tradition in craftsmanship and the production of ready-to-wear, which remains relatively competitive due to quality, flexibility, and innovation (Segre Reinach 2006). The fashion ecosystem includes some of the most powerful global designer fashion houses (such as Armani, Versace, and Dolce & Gabbana), supported by a creative sector including PR, advertising agencies, model agencies, journalists, magazine editors, and photographers. The modern success of the Milanese industry is strongly associated with the model of the ‘entrepreneur designer’, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s thanks to the success of renowned fashion talents such as Giorgio Armani, Gianfranco Ferré and Mariuccia Mandelli.[[4]](#footnote-4) Creativity in Milan is often associated with a ‘culture of wearability’; business profits and consumers’ needs are regarded as more important than radical innovation (Volonté, 2012). Accordingly, Milanese higher education institutions (HEIs) provide students with business, technical and craft competences in order to provide significant numbers of skilled designers and other fashion professionals required in the production chain. However, these specialist schools are regarded as a weak source of creative talent and innovation, and Milan-based companies can turn to designers from other fashion centres for high-profile appointments (Pratt et al.,2012). Competitiveness has been enhanced by place-based associations, which are generated and attached to products, firms, and the fashion sector more generally. In particular, tourists and business visitors alike are attracted to Milan’s famous ‘Quadrilatero Della Moda’, a district occupied by the flagship stores of global designer fashion brands, as well as boutiques highlighting emerging local fashion talent. The Milan Fashion Week has become a crucial element in the city’s international image, attracting tourist and business visitors as well as securing a position in the international circuit of fashion events (Jansson and Power 2010). There have, however, been criticisms that while fashion has been a strategic asset in local government’s promotion of Milan, policy-makers and institutions have not adequately supported the local fashion industry, particularly distinctive its ecosystem of design and production (Pratt et al., 2012).

London has experienced the fullest deindustrialization and retreat from manufacturing of fashion’s world cities, and the fullest shift between material and symbolic economies. Although long associated with rich cultures of demotic ‘street’ fashions, London’s international reputation before the 1960s was primarily associated with traditions of tailored clothing. While, to some extent, the 1960s developments in youth fashion drew upon existing networks of workshops and artisanal production and established linkages between the West and East Ends of the city, they were ‘anticipations’ of the new cultural economy, marked by a enhanced promotion of the image of the city (Breward and Gilbert, 2008). London has a reputation for a creative, conceptual approach to fashion, often regarded more as a form of artistic and symbolic expression than physical production (McRobbie, 1998). While a generalization, London collections are noted for originality, experimentation and idiosyncrasy, rather than wear-ability. The education system in London is a powerful engine of the local fashion economy, attracting highly-talented international students, and incubating creative talent. Specialist HEIs place significant emphasis on ‘creative’ fashion design, with pedagogic approaches that emphasize creativity and aesthetic values. London fashion education also emphasizes symbolic aspects of the fashion process, with courses in fashion marketing, promotion and journalism, benefiting from the city’s position as a hub of CCIs. The fashion education system is also directed towards retailing, rather than technical skills associated with production processes.

London lacks large global fashion corporations capable of absorbing the creative talent produced locally (Burberry being the largest exception), with major retailing companies and other creative industries more likely to employ graduates. Clothing manufacture declined rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century, and London’s manufacturing sector is now smaller and more fragmented than other fashion’s world cities. There are some small-scale design-oriented specialist firms (Evans and Smith, 2006); however, despite a recent small upturn, this sector is comparatively tiny, and a brake to the development of a strong ecology of fashion start-ups and micro-enterprises. One interpretation of London’s trajectory might be a ‘hollowing-out’ of the fashion city; another reading is that this is the city that has moved most fully towards the symbolic economy. London fashion weeks place the city in the cycle of major shows, and the success of London-trained designers elsewhere has cemented its reputation as a source of creativity (Taylor, 2005). However, other elements of London’s formation sit outside the conventional design and production process; London’s fashion reputation is strongly connected to consumption of the city as a distinctive place. This is partly about London’s continuing success as a retailing centre, and its wider importance as a tourist destination. But London also disseminates its fashion culture as an experience to be consumed, and a strong promotional apparatus has contributed to the communication of place-based narratives and myths. London’s museums have been extremely successful in staging major fashion exhibitions emphasizing London’s creativity and its importance in the life-histories of leading designers, and drawing upon its fashion traditions and importance in popular culture.

Fashion’s world cities have experienced common challenges and opportunities, particularly associated with pressures on manufacturing activities (primarily economic globalization, but also competition for space in hypercapitalized local property markets). However the cities, while interconnected by the institutions of fashion, especially the cycle of major collections, flows of creative staff, and stylistic influences, have distinctive characteristics and trajectories. Table 1 attempts to systematize these differences, and is organised by two variables: the first assesses the city’s orientation towards ‘material’ or ‘symbolic’ models of fashion production; the second assesses the remaining significance of specialized artisanal production.

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Each city has a different position in this schema. Milan and New York tend towards what we describe as more a ‘material’ system of fashion, and still operate (particularly Milan) through extensive production schemes. Designers are characterized by entrepreneurial strategies or work within corporate structures, in both cases valuing the marketability of products more than individual creativity and artistic expression. Cities that tend towards symbolic production (Paris and London) lack a deep manufacturing base, and fashion design is more disconnected from the material production of clothes, particularly beyond very specialist elite or experimental fashions. These centres hold a long-established symbolic importance in global imaginaries and the continuous promotion and reworking of narratives and symbols about their global position is vital to their survival. The retention of a specialized artisanal production affects both fashion training in HEIs and the pool of fashion designers. Milan and Paris, with the strongest traditions of artisanal production have tended towards fashion education with a strong focus on technical, craft and production skills. Designers are often hired from outside, particularly in establishing new creative initiatives. New York and London are major centres in fashion education, with a global student population (benefitting from the dominant position of the English language), while Milan and Paris act as magnets for designers looking for opportunities in established fashion houses. While all four cities are homes to major global fashion corporations (with London lagging), these different formations influence the precise ways that they draw upon local talent pools, training, and place-specific traditions and symbolism.

**3. Cultural and Creative Industries, Symbolic production, and new manufacturing synergies: Contrasting models for the development and promotion of ‘second-tier cities’ of fashion**

The diversity of these four centres indicates the limitations of thinking about a single model for the ‘fashion city’. That diversity is increased if attention is paid to other cities. Increasing academic attention has been paid to alternatives centres of fashion production, design, consumption, and culture. Studies of ‘second-tier’ or ‘not-so-global’ fashion cities have drawn attention to a range of models, including Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bangkok, Barcelona, Berlin, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Lagos, Melbourne, Nairobi, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Shanghai, Stockholm, Toronto and others (Breward and Gilbert 2006). These cities have very different economic and cultural contexts, but indicate the way that fashion has become increasingly important in urban development strategies and in repositioning cities as attractive destinations for inward investment, skilled migrants, and tourism.

The concept of the ‘fashion city’ has appeared in the plans and promotional activities of many urban and regional governments. This is often weakly codified, and can mean very different things in different contexts. Perhaps the clearest analysis of the idea of the ‘fashion city’ comes in Scott’s discussion of factors required to move Los Angeles to ‘the front rank of world fashion centres’, competing directly with ‘New York, Paris, Milan and London’ (Scott, 2002: p. 1304). Scott suggested a number of requirements, comprising: a ‘flexible’ manufacturing basis; a dense cluster of specialist high-quality sub-contractors; major training and research institutes; regionally-based but internationally recognised promotional vehicles, including fashion media and major fashion shows; an evolving fashion and design tradition with strong place-specific elements; formal and informal connections between the fashion industry and other cultural products industries (particularly Hollywood). Even in 2002 this seemed to look back towards the fashion world city formation of the twentieth century; as we have seen these have altered, while alternative centres have often developed only particular elements of this pathway. Looking at the relationship between fashion and cities more widely challenges straightforward assumptions that the physical manufacturing of garments has become less important than symbolic production of fashion (Kawamura, 2006). In some parts of the world, relocation of manufacturing and the emergence of ‘fast fashion’ production systems and the digitization of long-distance supply chains have undermined the significance of local craft skills and flexible production. Looking more widely, however, there is also the potential for new urban fashion formations associated with emergent geographies of manufacturing.

We identify two broad tendencies within strategies to develop new fashion centres. The first focuses on fashion design as a CCI, drawing upon notions of creative clusters. National and urban governments outside fashion’s world cities have paid growing attention to the development of designer fashion industries within broader CCIs-oriented policies, as a means for competing in the globalised economy, promoting local creativity and cultural distinctiveness. The development of ‘fashion districts’, concentrating activities and institutions focused around fashion designers, including wholesalers, suppliers, specialist manufacturers and educational institutions, has been adopted to support local fashion industries, often modelled explicitly on districts in established centres like New York (Harvey, 2011). HEIs are seen as significant cultural intermediaries capable of sustaining local designer clusters, acting as a link between training and industry, and as a key platform for knowledge production and social interaction (Rantisi and Leslie, 2015).

Some cities have policies targeting the fashion design sector with the aim not just of economic success, but also to re-brand cities and national cultures as creative. For example, in New Zealand at the beginning of the twenty-first century the designer fashion industry was supported by a creative industry policy nurturing place-based creative talent, promoting national identity and repositioning fashion in the national economy. There is strong support for a significant designer cluster in Auckland, but also for strategic media promotion, showcasing events, such as New Zealand Fashion Week, fashion-related incubators, and training schools (Larner et al., 2007). Similarly, the development of a fashion district has been part of initiatives by the City Council of Johannesburg to support CCIs and promote the city internationally. More specifically, dedicated fashion-related institutions, design incubators, trade journals, training institutions, trade shows, together with the South African fashion week, have been established to support the local design industry and promote a distinctive fashion identity (Rogerson, 2006; Harvey, 2011).

There are parallel examples in many other cities, including Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Toronto, where a designer cluster is a focus for different elements of the fashion formation (Melchior, 2011; Leslie and Brail, 2011). Fashion weeks have proliferated; as well attempting to integrate cities into the wider circuit of events, they both showcase local talent, and provide resources and networking opportunities for designers (Ling, 2012). For example, Australian Fashion Week provides an opportunity for Sydney-based designers to promote their work alongside global brands, but also facilitates networks that benefit the local fashion industry. This includes international contacts, but also connects design talent to local manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers and media (Weller, 2008).[[5]](#footnote-5)

The second tendency draws upon examples of ‘second-tier’ fashion strategies that focus less on fashion as a CCI, and more on place-branding and symbolic production. In this second model, events like fashion weeks serve less to promote local design, than to promote the city as a place of fashionable consumption plugged into the international order. They play a key role in defining and communicating place-based images and identities in cities without strong grounding in fashion production (Ling, 2012). More generally, consumption has become a means for achieving place identity and symbolic recognition. Distinctive shopping experiences may be valued more than the fashion product itself. Local forms of retail within shopping districts have become important in promoting second-tier fashion cities. Independent boutiques offering exclusive ‘designer’ products and unique shopping experiences can be important cultural intermediaries building up local identities and shaping the fashion experience of cities (Rantisi, 2011). There is also importance in emphasizing connection to fashion’s world centres, and the established order of fashion; at one extreme, a fashion city of this kind is an empty consumerist outlet for global brands, marked with the patina of distant fashion’s world cities.

The symbolic significance and reputation of certain cities may develop through the success of designers working in major centres elsewhere. For example, the rise of Tokyo in the 1980s was associated with emergence of innovative and successful Japanese designers, particularly ‘The Big Three’: Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons. These designers showed their collections in Paris with consequent global recognition. This strongly affected perceptions of Tokyo as a fountainhead of creative talent and as a new fashion capital (Kawamura, 2006). Similarly, the Belgian designers known as the Antwerp Six, graduating from the city’s Royal Academy of Fine Arts in the early 1980s, promoted their collections in London and Paris to build their reputation and demonstrate a cohesive identity connected to their home city. Antwerp has never established a successful independent fashion week but has continued to promote its identity using the major fashion cities as platforms. The wider transformation of Antwerp was not based on industry development or trade activities around fashion, but on city-branding that prioritised media, museum initiatives and cultural events, to generate cultural distinctiveness and a Belgian fashion-related identity (Martínez, 2007). Antwerp indicates a strategy for fashion centres built primarily on the creation of place-identities and reputation, rather than supporting design clusters or local production systems. Table 2 indicates the main features of these contrasting development strategies.

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These two models do not, however, exhaust the potential for new fashion formations in the twenty-first century. The new geographies of fashion production create opportunities for some cities associated with manufacturing. We see the potential for the development of new kinds of fashion city, where the impetus comes not solely from top-down booster strategies and CCIs, but through fashion innovation drawing on the hybridities between expanding production for global markets and local cultural forms. The massive growth of new urban consumer markets in China, South and South East Asia and Latin America makes possible the kind of synergies between consumer demand, creativity and entrepreneurialism that were a feature of the past development of fashion’s world cities. The Business of Fashion and McKinsey in their *State of Fashion* report for 2017, discuss the increasing centrality of ‘urban engines’ for the global fashion economy, and the way that ‘a new class of rapidly growing wealthy cities in newly influential markets are becoming central to the evolution of fashion’ (2016, p. 13). They predict that cities including Shanghai, Mumbai and Beijing will enter the very top ranks of fashion consumption, but also that other large and rapidly expanding Chinese cities with burgeoning middle class markets, such as Chongqing, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Shenzhen will also become globally significant for shopping. What is less certain is that these places will develop complex, cross-sectional fashion economies and cultures that connect large-scale manufacturing with design innovation and strong cultural institutions. There is perhaps more possibility of such connections in more open and culturally-diverse contexts; in Latin America for example, the growth of the clothing manufacture sector has provided a stimulus for local designers, and the region has growing fashion events not just in Brazil and Mexico, but also in Buenos Aires, Santiago and Lima.

The decline of manufacturing in fashion’s world cities has also allowed other cities in Europe and North America to move into a remaining segment in the physical manufacturing of garments. These cities have usually relied on quality and craft-skills as a basis for their international reputation as new centres of fashion. For example, while New York has become more design-oriented, Los Angeles has emerged as a distinctive design and manufacturing fashion centre (Scott, 2002; Williams and Currid-Halkett, 2011). Since the 1980s, Los Angeles has developed an important niche in causal sportswear and overcome the manufacturing ‘primacy’ of New York.[[6]](#footnote-6) There are also interesting contrasts between Milan and Florence. Florence has a long-term reputation for fashion, alongside its global significance in art, culture and for tourism. Since the 1970s Milan has been the dominant Italian fashion centre, but Florence has developed an internationally important manufacturing system specializing in the production of leather goods, supported by a local concentration of skilled artisans. Milan’s drift towards symbolic production (although it remains perhaps the most connected to manufacturing complexes of the four world cities) has allowed Florence to raise its reputation as a manufacturing fashion city. There is also evidence of collaboration between the two cities in strengthening the global visibility and prestige of Italian fashion (Segre Reinach, 2006; Lazzeretti et al., 2017).

**4. Conclusions**

There is very significant diversity in the nature of cities where fashion is an important element of the local economy and the wider reputation of the city. Any notion that there is a single formation that can be described as ‘the fashion city’ flies in the face of evidence about both the historical trajectories of major fashion centres, and the range of existing cities. In this chapter, to replace the singular fashion city, we built an analytical framework that recognises different models, but that also allows for thinking about the historical trajectories of cities and their interrelationships in a wider system. Such a framework helps to investigate the different positions that fashion plays in urban economies, and the different types of creativity that are associated with the industry, extending beyond the standard paradigms of the CCIs and the ‘creative city’. Moreover, it complements and extends the now very familiar division between fashion’s world cities and ‘second tier’ fashion centres, encompassing both different historical trajectories, and the existence of multiple models and development patterns in newer fashion cities.

It is possible to identify three broad tendencies in the relationship between fashion and the urban. These tendencies can be theorized in terms of ‘three ideal types’. Drawing upon Max Weber’s conception, such ideal types do not correspond exactly to reality, but work through accentuation to create unified analytical constructs (Weber 1904 [1949], p. 90*).* The first ideal type is the ‘manufacturing fashion city’ with a local economic system primarily focused on an extensive apparel productive sector, whose variants include mass production systems and extensive flexible workshop-based economic models. Secondly, the ‘design fashion city’ has a local economic structure focused on the fashion design industry, often strongly geographically concentrated in a distinctive cluster (where it may overlap spatially with other CCIs). Finally, the ‘symbolic fashion city’ ideal type has a radically different economic structure in which the production of apparel, and even the design of clothing for production, are absent or very limited. Instead the city itself is sold as a site of fashion, and commodifying the experience of the city becomes a primary economic activity.

There are, necessarily, no pure examples of these ideal types in existing or historic cities. But this analytical framework helps to identify differences and historical trajectories among cities, and also to focus on the relationships between different cities. This framework can be used as a heuristic device to think about the characteristics of fashion cities, and to provoke debate about their qualities and development paths. Figure 1 is intended to do just that. It treats the ideal types as the corners of a ternary diagram, and plots fashion city formations in terms of their tendency towards each of these. These are not objective finely-calibrated positions, but do indicate broad patterns. The diagram has suggested positions for twenty-first century cities, and suggests historical trajectories for the four main world centres.

<INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>

The approach presented in this chapter complicates the kind of ‘tool-kit’ approach associated with city-boosterism, and simplistic calls to make other cities into the ‘new’ Paris or New York. What it also does is to draw attention to fashion’s qualities as rather more than a conventional CCI. There are examples, such as Auckland, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Toronto discussed above, where the design cluster strategy has been significant. But what should not be missed is fashion’s wider importance as a more-than-economic feature of urban life and culture. Of course, the ‘symbolic fashion city’ may capitalize commercially on histories and imagery of fashion as worn on the streets, as for example in the figure of the Parisienne, or London’s regular appropriation and celebration of its subcultural richness. But it is important to think of fashion and particularly the wearing and ‘performance’ of fashion as more than just a resource for place-branding. Fashion has been a key element in the vibrancy of urban cultures, and there are dangers in any analysis that restricts its relationship with the urban to different forms of economic strategy misses key elements of both the nature of fashion and of urban culture. The ‘accentuated’ ideal type of the symbolic fashion city points to the risks of a ‘hollowing-out’ of the fashion city, detached not just from making and designing clothes, but also potentially from the creativities of wearing clothes in cities.

The new ‘urban engines’ for the fashion economy of the twenty-first century suggested by Business of Fashion and McKinsey (2016) are rather dismally measured by their potential sales volume. Malls and duty-free outlets of global designer brands do not a fashion city make; instead we might regard these places as ‘Potemkin cities of fashion characterized by little more than the corporatized surface sheen of fashion culture’ (Gilbert, 2006, p. 30). Many of these cities, often within autocratic or repressive political systems, may attempt to adopt particular urban development strategies, but lack urban vibrancy, difference and cultural dissent. There are vast profits to be made in the new urban markets of China, and the cities of the Gulf are already extraordinary focuses of luxury consumption. A city like Dubai may on one reading sit at the bottom right corner of our diagram, a place where design and manufacturing elements have vanished. But Dubai is perhaps not so much an extreme example of the symbolic fashion city formation, as a category-error – a city full of expensive fashions and yet not a fashion city. For emergent fashion cities, capable of powerful innovation, we should look elsewhere, probably towards less regulated and more chaotic urban cultures in Latin America, Africa and South Asia. Perhaps the most important lesson from history is not about fixed strategies for the development of the fashion city, nor even that the most successful fashion cities have long worked through the synergies between material production, creative design and symbolic production, but that they also depend on active and even transgressive urban fashion cultures.

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1. The term ‘fashion world city’ borrows from the extensive literature on ‘world cities’ (Friedmann, 1986) and ‘global cities’ (Sassen, 1991), emphasizing their position in broader structures and systems, and the hierarchical nature of this urban ordering. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Although the area has lost upwards of 80% of its manufacturing jobs since 1987, there are still around 400 fashion manufacturing firms in the district (Garment District Alliance, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In March 2017, New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), in collaboration with the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) and the Garment District Alliance, announced a $51.3 million dollar package to help stabilize and strengthen the garment manufacturing industry (Garment District Alliance, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This model is still an important focus for the local fashion economy, but has become corporatized and branded, as in the example of Giorgio Armani S.p.A. based in the city. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Equally, the Portugal, Montreal, São Paulo and Berlin Fashion Weeks are all aimed not only at showcasing designer fashion talent, but also at connecting designers with other key actors such as manufacturing firms (Rantisi, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Such growth has been supported by initiatives by local government and trade associations aimed at sustaining the clothing industry in Southern California and at promoting Los Angeles as a hub of cultural-product industries. In addition, the establishment of educational institutions oriented towards developing technical, production and business skills, such as the Los Angeles Trade Technological College and the California Design College, has nurtured a high-skilled workforce. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)