

## Lesson 5

# Cities, space and everyday life

Contemporary city:  
descriptions and projects

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# Everyday life's tactics and strategies

In everyday life people use strategies and tactics:

- **Strategy** is the calculus of force-relationship which becomes possible when a subject is isolated from an environment
- **Tactic** is the constant manipulation of events in order to turn them into opportunities.

“Many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, etc.) are tactical in character.” (M. de Certeau)

In this sense, studying urban practices means considering both strategies and tactics.

# Everyday life and its constraints

## Champs, actions and structures

Everyday practices happen in “structured” **fields**  
Pierre Bourdieu calls this fields “**champs**”

“Les univers sociaux sont susceptibles d'une description en termes de «champ», au sens où, l'agent qui occupe une position dans le champ est à la fois agi et agissant ; jouet de forces qui le dépassent, il participe malgré tout au constant rééquilibrage des luttes dont il est partie prenante et à la constante redéfinition de leurs enjeux”

To each “champ” corresponds an “habitus”, a system of incorporated **dispositions** that usually function as routines

In champs there is a dialectic between the **freedom** of individual actions and the **ties** of structures

# Everyday life and spatial practices

## In the city each of us is involved in spatial practices

These practices (individual or collective) use and generate spatial resources, and are limited by spatial constraints

These resources and constraints are first of all connected with the fact that we are **human bodies**

As human bodies, our practices happen in space and time and involve a physical relation with spaces/places

# Features of spatial practices: rhythms



## **Ritmo**

La scansione ritmica caratterizza l'esistenza delle popolazioni, che si manifestano in un tempo discontinuo. La possibilità di parlare di popolazioni dipende anche dalla possibilità di cogliere ridondanze, ricorsività e ritmi.

# Features of spatial practices: ties and opportunities



## **Vincolo e opportunità**

Lo spazio rappresenta insieme vincolo e opportunità delle esperienze urbane, che da esso non possono prescindere. Così, lo spazio è opportunità per l'esistenza delle popolazioni e vincolo che ne orienta il modo di agire e di essere. Il comporsi di spinte e attriti caratterizza l'esperienza delle popolazioni nello spazio.

# Features of spatial practices: uses of space



## **Uso dello spazio**

Le popolazioni, attraverso il loro agire più o meno strutturato o finalizzato, usando uno spazio lo significano, ne danno una propria interpretazione: mettendolo "in atto", se l'uso che ne fanno corrisponde a quello previsto, negandolo o esprimendone il significato "in potenza", se lo reinterpretono in base alle proprie esigenze.

# Features of spatial practices: marks



## **Tracce e depositi**

Nel processo di utilizzo, interpretazione e significazione dello spazio le popolazioni lasciano tracce e depositi che parlano del loro modo di essere, del loro rapporto con il tempo, lo spazio, gli (eventuali) legami identitari. Rimangono così tracce, più o meno permanenti ed evidenti, che possono tradursi in modificazioni di senso dello spazio, in depositi o, ancora, in "scarti" di azioni che non possiedono alcuna consapevolezza o intenzionalità.



# Features of spatial practices: sharing



## **Condivisione**

La condivisione (di un tempo o un luogo o un interesse o un disagio...) è uno dei caratteri distintivi di una popolazione. L'esperienza della condivisione avviene a diversi livelli di consapevolezza, intenzionalità, progettualità; muta e si trasforma nel tempo; può avere diversa pregnanza nella vita della popolazione e dell'individuo, di cui costruisce le identità plurali. Le tracce della condivisione possono essere dalle più concrete e formali, alle più effimere e sottintese.

# Features of spatial practices: partiality and contingency



## **Parzialità e contingenza**

Attorno alla condivisione si addensano pratiche e significati che rendono riconoscibile una popolazione; allo stesso tempo, l'esperienza della condivisione è parziale rispetto all'identità dell'individuo e mutevole, poiché è contingente e limitata, nel tempo e nello spazio.

# Space and society in contemporary cities

Economic and social dynamics in contemporary cities define **new spatial forms**, patterns and structures

Everyday life urban practices should be analyzed in the context of radical changes occurring to the relations between spaces, places and society

Urban economies and society cannot be described with the traditional vocabulary of points, lines, boundaries. They are always both local and global, here and there, in between

“They are increasingly structured around flows of people, images, information and money moving within and across national borders” (Amin, Thrift)

**A movement towards dis-junction between society and space**

# Figures of disjunction: systems and sites

Globalisation and financialisation of international relations change the traditional relationship between space and production

This phenomena have important consequences both at the global and at the local level (see for example the financialisation of urban markets)

In this perspective cities are:

- localized economic systems and forcing houses of (knowledge based) capitalism (**logic of competitiveness**)

but also

- sites in spatial stretched economic relations, rich ecologies of urban economic life (**logic of everyday life**)

# Figures of disjunction: sites of urban economy

Effects on contemporary cities:

**Mobility** of all productive factors (human capital, information, financial resources)

**New patterns** of productive spaces and places (interconnexed with other activities and functions)

New relationship between the **production** of goods and the generation of **services** (for firms and persons)

A new **mixité** of economic activities, especially in the field of knowledge-based economy

A new role for **human capital**, knowledge and technological infrastructure

# Figures of disjunction: society

In “contemporary” city it is possible to identify some general social movements:

- Towards **individualisation** of social relations (crisis of social cohesion, individualistic and privatistic approach)
- Towards (spatial and temporal) **fragmentation** of the practices of use of urban spaces and places (with the consequences of new conflicts for space)
- Towards **pluralisation** of lifestyles, cultures, values and interest (often incommensurable)

# Figures of disjunction: phenomenology of uses

Relations taking place between social practices and urban spaces/places are more and more

**Partial** (the same place can be used in different ways at the same time: the reinvention of public space)

**Temporary** (the same place is used in different ways during the day, the week, the year, the life cycle)

**Casual** (the relationship between a place and its “function” is subverted: old things for new uses and meanings)

**Contingent** (the possibilities of use are endless: the example of the rave party in the derelict industrial areas)

# Figures of disjunction: politics

In modern societies politics is based on the relationship between power and territoriality

Globalisation and re-assembling of national States change the relationship between space, power and politics

Consequences on urban politics and policies

- Crisis in horizontal relationship between society and public institutions (public/private), and between local and non local interests and power (**horizontal and vertical sussidiarity**)
- Problems of **legitimacy** of local government
- Problems of **effectiveness** of local policies



# Consequences: de-localisation

In contemporary cities delocalisation phenomena are relevant

- For **populations** (migration, changes in family organisation and localisation)
- For **economic activities** (delocalisation of goods production, re-use of central industrial areas)
- For **social practies** (specialisation of places in time in connection of multiple uses)

Delocalisation doesn't mean that places disappear: in the perspective of everyday life only places exist

“Non lieux” (Augé) is a contraddictory concept

# Consequences: de-spatialisation

Are these dynamics bringing a sort of “virtualisation” of urban societies?

Virtual communities, the web, and the metaphor of immaterial networks

“Everyday life always has an extra term, which is also a kind of virtual commonality, one in which terms like “far”, “deep”, “distant” are replaced by rhythms which fold time and space in all kinds of untowards localisations and intricate mixtures” (Amin, Thrift)

But we are always situated bodies, living in space and time

We are our **bodies**, and consciousness is not just locked up inside the head. Quoting Merleau-Ponty, the body is “flesh,” made of the same flesh of the world, and it is because the flesh of the body is of the flesh of the world that we can know and understand the world.

# Consequences: fragmentation

There is a nexus between individualisation, social fragmentation and multiplicity of uses of urban spaces and places

These phenomena are **dual**

Individualisation and social fragmentation are connected with

- Fear and **secutitisation** of urban spaces (new boundaries, self immunization)

but also

- Freedom and **creative use** of urban places (through tactics), often reinventing possibilities of use

# Descriptions: sprawl

Sprawl can be considered a complex phenomenon,  
involving different dimensions

There are many possible descriptions of sprawl.  
I select here a description based on rock music

Arcade Fire: «The suburbs»





## Two texts: «The suburbs»

In the suburbs, I learned to drive And you told me I'd never survive Grab your mother's keys, we're leaving You always seemed so sure That one day we'd fight in In a suburban war You put it down against mine I saw you standing on the opposite shore Nobody down, the first bombs fell We were already bored We were already, already bored Sometimes I can't believe it I'm moving past the feeling Sometimes I can't believe it I'm moving past the feeling again The kids won't be so hard In my dreams we're still screaming Running through the yard And all the walls that they built in the 70s finally fall And all of the houses they built in the 70s finally fall It meant nothing at all It meant nothing at all It meant nothing Sometimes I can't believe it I'm moving past the feeling Sometimes I can't believe it I'm moving past the feeling into the night I just can't understand How I want a daughter while I'm still young I want to hold her hand Show her some beauty Before this damage is done But if it's too much to ask If it's too much to ask Send me a son Under the overpass In the parking lot we're still waiting It's already passed So move your feet from hot pavement And into the grass Cause it's already passed It's already already passed Sometimes I can't believe it I'm moving past the feeling Sometimes I can't believe it I'm moving past the feeling again I'm moving past the feeling I'm moving past the feeling In my dreams we're still screaming We're still screaming We're still screaming

## Two texts: «Sprawl 2»

- They heard me singing and they told me to stop  
Quit these pretentious things and just punch the clock  
These days my life, I feel it has no purpose  
But late at night the feelings swim to the surface  
'Cause on the surface the city lights shine  
They're calling at me, come and find your kind  
Sometimes I wonder if the world's so small  
That we can never get away from the sprawl  
Living in the sprawl  
Dead shopping malls rise like mountains beyond mountains  
And there's no end in sight  
I need the darkness, someone please cut the lights  
We rode our bikes to the nearest park  
Sat under the swings and kissed in the dark  
We shield our eyes from the police lights  
We run away, but we don't know why  
Black mirror, your city lights shine  
They're screaming at us, *"We don't need your kind"*  
Sometimes I wonder if the world's so small  
That we can never get away from the sprawl  
Living in the sprawl  
Dead shopping malls rise like mountains beyond mountains  
And there's no end in sight  
I need the darkness, someone please cut the lights  
They heard me singing and they told me to stop  
Quit these pretentious things and just punch the clock  
Sometimes I wonder if the world's so small  
Can we ever get away from the sprawl?

# Two videos

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Euj9f3gdyM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awHWCoIYQ90&ob=av2e>



# Innovative clusters in Milan

- *creative industry*. Creative companies account for 22.9% of the Milanese economic system in terms of the number of specialists and 27.4% in terms of the number of people employed;
- *knowledge-based and human capital intensive services*. Milan is the Italian capital of high level firms' services (finance, marketing, advertising, consulting, legal services) and it is characterized by a prestigious and diversified academic system;
- *information and communication technologies*, with a strong specialization in media industry. In Milan area are based the most important Italian media enterprises;
- *health services and biotechnology*. Milan has become a leader in the health sector, offering a wide and variegated range of skills and specializations, backed by a strong biotech industry.

# The reasons of success

- intensity of communication between Milan and the other cities involved in global networks and good accessibility;
- concentration of universities and research centers;
- industrial cultural heritage, with the strong entrepreneurship and a significant number of high-skilled workers;
- a tradition of social and cultural “mix”, that in the last years has been significantly abandoned.

# Main problems

- low quality of life and more precisely low “habitability” for people and firms;
- problems of government fragmentation and governance inefficiency; failures in the institutionalisation of metropolitan governance;
- lack of strategic approach and leadership by local government: a strong and rich society without a clear and shared development strategy

# Fashion City

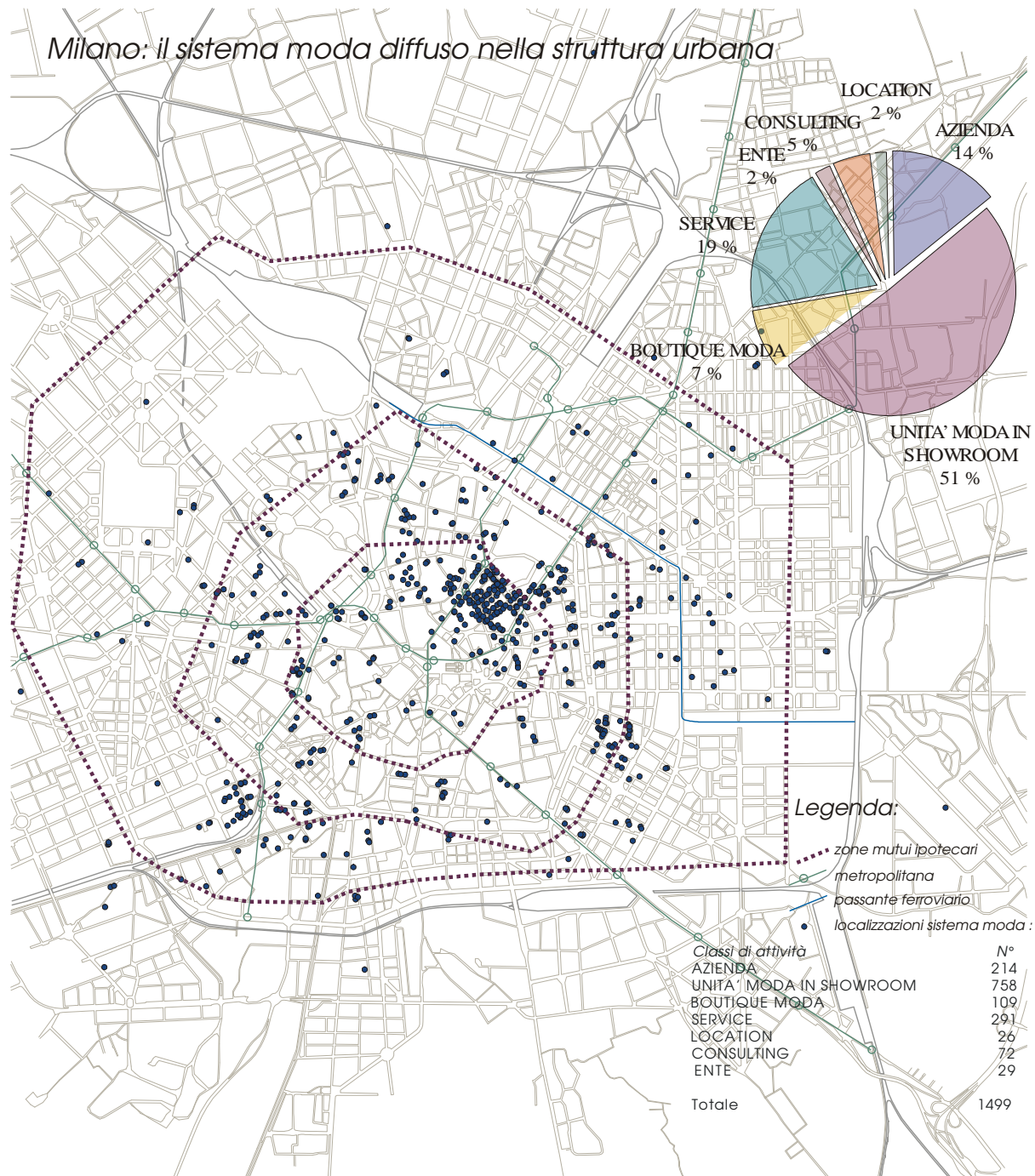
- Fashion City (Città della moda”) project is promoted by Milan Municipality and located in the project of re-use of Garibaldi Repubblica area
- The City of Fashion is a project that should host different activities linked to creativity and especially fashion economy: a flagship project for Milan as the “city of fashion”.
- The project has been proposed more than 20 years ago by some fashion operator and by the Chamber of Fashion
- The project is expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2010

## Fashion City (2)

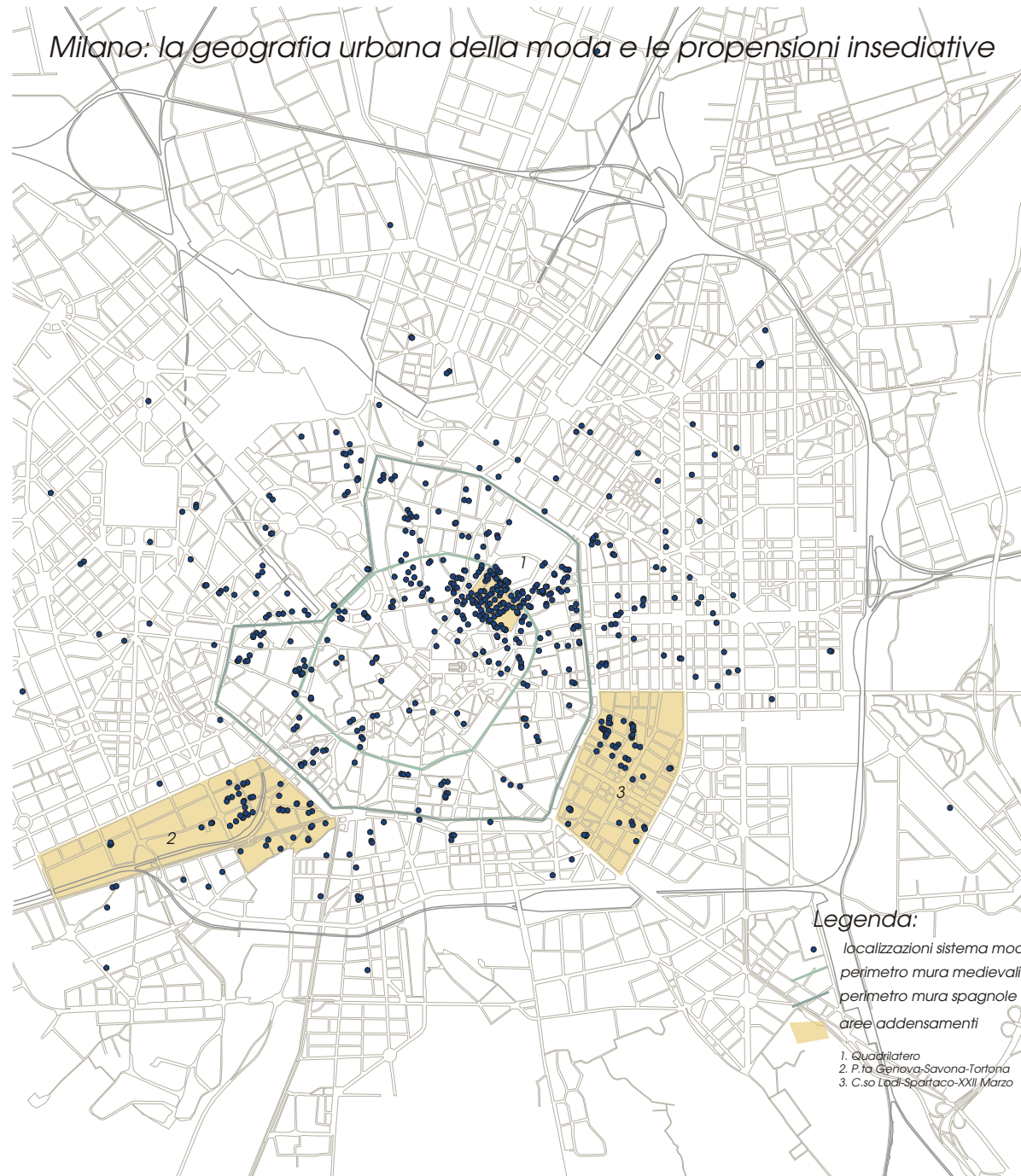
- The problem of the Fashion City Project is that the fashion operators have already decided to locate their activity in other places
- The behaviour of fashion operators appears to be extremely sensitive to the importance of the environment and to spatial characteristics
- Fashion has become part of the process of selecting the way urban spaces are used and reused, producing a sort of “colonization” of some urban sectors: not only the famous “Quadrilatero della moda”, but also other sectors of the urban core
- Fashion City project doesn't seem to consider these processes and its effectiveness is uncertain



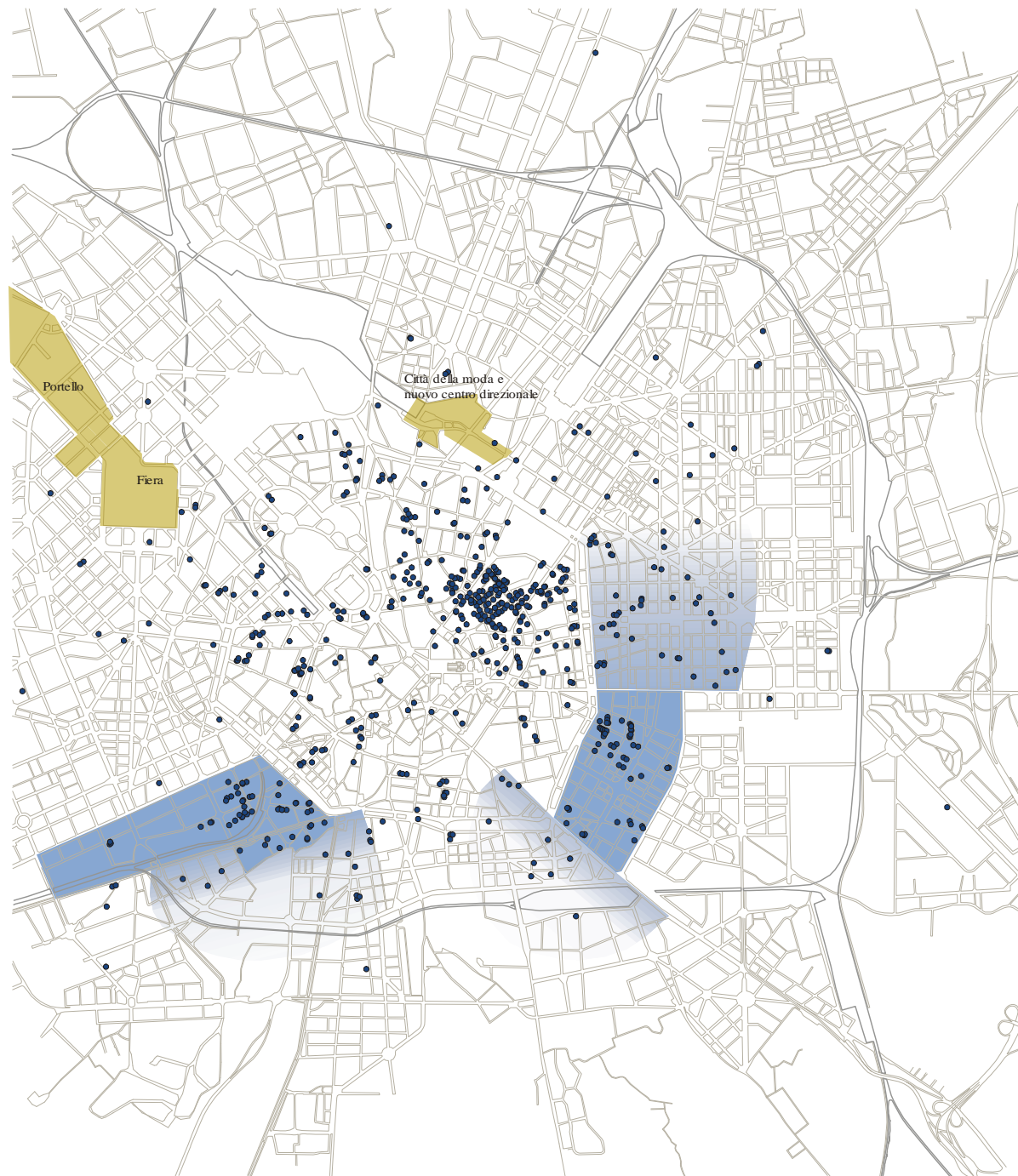
Milano: il sistema moda diffuso nella struttura urbana



# Milano: la geografia urbana della moda e le propensioni insediative







# Conclusions

The policy we have analyzed don't seem adequate to create an effective support to knowledge-based activities because:

- are based on the support through direct services, while many actors in knowledge-based economy demand first of all a sustainable, vibrant and dynamic urban environment;
- policies are not based on an adequate comprehension of spontaneous dynamics of firms and operators in knowledge-based sectors;
- policies are too much focused on in physical services (poles, buildings, locations), while the main problems of innovative and creative activities are those of human capital and “talent” attraction.