Transformative factors of post-industrial urban spaces in China and Italy

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Socially Integrative Urban Regeneration

Transformative Factors of Post-Industrial Urban Spaces in China and Italy

Badiaa Hamama, Maria Paola Repellino, Jian Liu and Michele Bonino

1. Introduction

The transition to a post-industrial society in both China and Italy triggered changes to their economic and political systems. This resulted in profound transformations that had an enormous influence on the social and physical structure of their cities.

In China, the market-oriented economic reforms of the 1980s sparked radical urban transformation and new challenges (Gaubatz 1995; Hsing 2010). The advent of new market forces in a realm that was predominantly public during the industrial era (Ma and Wu 2005) sparked substantial transitions in community building and place making (Hamama et al. 2019). The pre-existing urban spaces, originally produced to serve the socialist ideology and industrial production, have been transformed to meet the new market mechanisms and standards of the post-reform era. This period of radical change was characterized by a desire to boost rapid economic growth and transform China's industrial-based socio-spatial structure. It was within this environment of great adjustments that Chinese cities witnessed an unprecedented increase in the involvement of real estate industries and market forces in the (re)development of urban land, often resulting in the process of growing social dissent (Mars and Hornsby 2008) and other associated phenomena, e.g., the restructuring of local communities (Hsing 2010), the strengthening of local identity, and the rising of cultural and creative industries.

In parallel, since the 1980s, the post-industrial restructuring in Italy, and more generally in Europe, has led to important social and economic changes and the widespread cultural renewal of cities. In order to diversify the economy, promote a new urban image, and attract international investments, the municipal authorities in major European cities encouraged the implementation of cultural policies and strategies involving the reuse of existing building stocks (Bianchini and Parkinson 1993), the adoption of a creative economy (Howkins 2001), and social innovation (Florida 2002). The renovation of former industrial sites has become experimental fields for the definition of new models of urban development that is able to replace or complement its traditional industrial specialization. Starting from these places and the active preservation of their physical legacy, local administrations have tried to strengthen the relationship between urban space and the renewed social fabric.

Given the broadness of post-industrial (re)development topic, the complexity and diversity of the Chinese and Italian urban contexts, this research is designed in

the attempt to address two main questions: (1) How did the two countries approach the restructuring of their urban space in the post-industrial period? (2) What are the main drivers that influenced the resulting physical and social structure of post-industrial cities?

2. Materials and Methods

The research draws upon a literature review from the experiences of post-industrial urban redevelopment and regeneration in Beijing, Prato and Turin, and the analysis of selected case studies in these cities. The aim of the research is to provide an overview about the approaches and strategies adopted in the regeneration of post-industrial cities in China and Italy, to shed light on the factors and mechanisms that mostly influenced the physical and social transformation of their urban structure in a transitional period. For the literature review and data collection, China National Knowledge and Infrastructure database, the most comprehensive and recognized research engine in China, Google Scholar and Web of Science have been used. The selection of the case studies is based on the results of the analysis and investigation carried out by the authors in the last three years in the framework of the Trans-Urban-EU-China project and reported in the deliverable documents of its Work Package 1, Community Building and Place Making in Neighborhoods. As will be explained in details in the next section, the five selected cases cover a range of issues that reflect the complicated task of balancing the physical and social dimensions in the process of transformation of urban spaces in post-industrial China and Italy.

This study is not intended to strictly compare the Chinese and Italian reality, which we believe is an arduous task to comprehensively cover within this essay, due to the complexity and diversity of the social, economic and spatial factors and the mechanisms that contributed to reshape post-industrial cities in both China and Italy. However, in the limited space of this article, our attempt is to use the different perspectives adopted in the post-industrial period as a benchmark to reflect on the experiences of Chinese and Italian cities instead of a systematic comparison between the two urban contexts. Although these case studies do not provide a comprehensive catalogue of the numerous situations that exist, they highlight several issues that transcend the specificity of each context and become part of a debate on a much broader contemporary urbanization. The next section, Results, is structured in two main parts to analyze the Chinese and the Italian post-industrial environments, respectively, the factors and the driving forces behind the regeneration processes of their urban spaces. Each part contains an introductory section giving a more nuanced analysis of the main dynamics that characterized the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial period (first research question); and a more detailed section, which adopts case studies to illustrate and focus on the factors that have determined,

influenced and shaped the physical and social transformations of post-industrial cities (second question).

3. Results

3.1. The Restructuring of Chinese Post-Industrial Cities: Readapting the Pre-Existing Urban Spaces to Meet the New Market Standards

As a result of the transition from a planned economy to a market-oriented economy in the late 1970s, Chinese cities witnessed a turnaround from "cities of production", typical of the socialist ideology that identified industrialization as one of its major goals, to "cities of consumption" in the post-industrial period. The abandonment of the socialist ideology of "production first, livelihood second", characterized by strict top-down centralized state power and planned economy (Gaubatz 1995; Hsing 2010), and the inauguration of a new era of market-based economic reforms had a tangible impact on the Chinese society and the urban structure of its cities. Cities started to be viewed as a catalyst for economic growth and played an unconventional role in the country's social and economic development. The almost homogeneous urban spaces that were produced after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 were based on public land ownership and dominated by the emblematic *danwei* system (Gaubatz 1995; Bonino and Pieri 2015)—a unit of socio-spatial organization of the urban space into self-sufficient work units centered primarily on industrial production (Liu 2019). However, following the economic reforms, urban China experienced profound shifts, which dramatically influenced the production and (re)development of its urban spaces.

Two important events reshaped Chinese post-industrial cities' physical and social structure: land commodification in the late 1980s and housing marketization in the 1990s. Land commodification became one of the salient restructuring tools in post-industrial China. Land has become the main financial asset for local governments (Hsing 2010). While, during the socialist period, urban spaces were produced mainly to serve the industrial production and communist ideology, in the post-reform era they were gradually remodeled to follow the market forces. The transition from a welfare-based housing system, the rise of a consumerist culture, and the establishment of a land and housing market dramatically redefined the Chinese urban structure (Wang and Murie 1999).

In the following sub-sections, the three selected case studies from Beijing, the capital city of China, shed light on a range of issues emerged in the post-industrial period, such as the (re)development of historical dwellings and socialist neighborhoods, with the consequent local conflicts, and the increasing focus of Chinese authorities on cultural and creative industries mainly for economic growth. In spite of the diversity of the cases, they all share one common characteristic:

the result of their (re)development was influenced and challenged by the logic of economic profit, which considerably influenced their physical and social structure. The case studies are illustrated following their geographical coordinates moving from Ju'er Hutong neighborhood that occupies a strategic position to the northeast of the Forbidden City, to Jiuxianqiao located between the fourth and fifth ring roads, and finally Xiaopu Art Village which occupies the farthest coordinates from the city center that is beyond the sixth ring road (Figure 1).

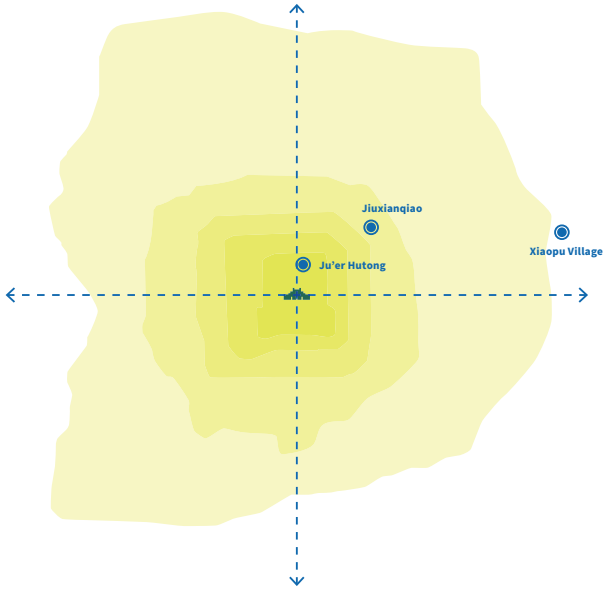

Figure 1. Geographical location of the case studies in the capital city Beijing. Credit: © Badiaa Hamama.

3.1.1. Preserving Identity of Places in the Face of Profit-Oriented Strategies—The Ju'er Hutong Case

The Ju'er Hutong dating to the Yuan dynasty is located to the northeast of the Forbidden City in the famous Nanluoguxiang neighborhood, a protected historical area of the Old City of Beijing. Like many historical dwellings in the city center in the late 1980s, it was in a state of deterioration and decay. In 1989, the Dongcheng District (Wu 1999) selected it as an experimental site for renewal after repeated calls by many researchers to opt for a "metabolic change rather than total clearance and rebuilding" in traditional residential neighborhoods (Rowe and Kan 2014). The winning project designed by the architect Wu Liangyong was inspired by the so-called "organic" renewal concept. The main goal of this approach was to minimize the demolition of existing buildings through the repair of average-quality dwellings and the replacement of the dilapidated ones with new courtyard houses, which consisted

in borrowing traditional architectural styles and adapting them to accommodate the New Siheyuan concept, i.e., new courtyard prototypes mimicking the enclosed physical form of traditional neighborhoods (Figure 2).

Figure 2. View of Ju'er Hutong project after completion. Credit: © School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, used with permission.

The project was widely celebrated by the Beijing Municipal Government as a successful example of urban renewal. The success of the Ju'er Hutong was also associated with the close collaboration between government authorities, academic institutions, and the general public. The implementation of the rehabilitation plan was facilitated by a close collaboration between the residents, the designers and decision makers (Wu 1999). The housing renewal experiment of Ju'er Hutong project, which is only one part of the 8.2 hectare Ju'er Hutong neighborhood, was subdivided into four phases of development. Phase one was completed in 1990 and phase two in 1994 (Wu 1999, Figure 3). The proposed phases three and four were not implemented due to "the rising land value, the loss of government subsidies, and the developers' concern about a lack of profit" (Zhang 2016).

The neighborhood, characterized by an intimate, close relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces, was ambitiously designed to improve the residents' living standards and revive traditional community life. In addition, a strong spirit of communal identity and sense of belonging was fostered by the soft separation and hierarchy between the different spatial scales—public, semi-public, private—and reintegration of the urban morphology and space-making system of traditional neighborhoods. By adopting this metabolic urban redevelopment process, Wu prevented the complete replacement of the 8.2 hectare area at a time when the importance of traditional neighborhoods and the need to preserve the identity and

spirit of places were suffocated by a priority for economic profit. Nevertheless, the outcomes of the project, as explained by the architect Wu Liangyong (Wu 1999), have been negatively influenced by the pressure to raise the floor–area ratio (FAR), resulting in a far from ideal form. The size of the courtyards has been considerably decreased, compared to the classical Beijing's *siheyuan*, in order to achieve larger private spaces equipped with modern facilities.

Built almost three decades ago, the Ju'er Hutong project still provides interesting evidence of the complicated task of balancing socio-spatial and economic factors in many urban (re)development projects in historical neighborhoods in China, where strongly interlinked political and economic interests have caused the paralysis, if not the failure, of several urban renewal projects. Ambitiously designed to improve the residents' living standards and revive traditional community life, the Ju'er Hutong represented an important achievement in face of the many challenges that encountered the preservation of historical neighborhoods in post-industrial China, particularly due to the increasing land value that is still threatening the most representative housing forms of Beijing's historical urban layout.

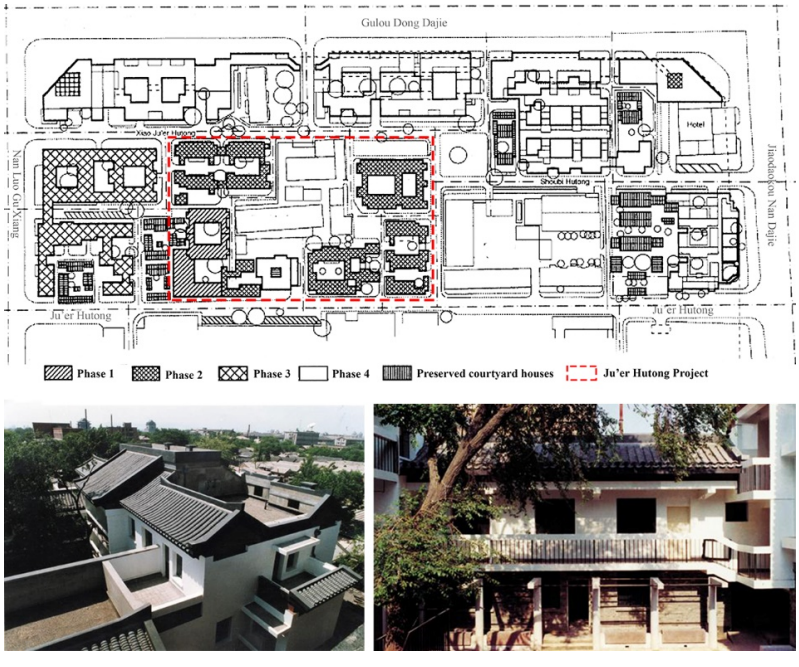

Figure 3. The phases of development of the entire Ju'er Hutong block and two detailed views of the courtyard houses of the completed project. Credit: © School of Architecture, Tsinghua University—edited by Badiaa Hamama, used with permission.

3.1.2. Grassroots Mobilization and Its Role in Reversing an Exclusively Top-Down Urban (Re)Development Plan—Jiuxianqiao Residential District

Located in the north-eastern part of Beijing, Chaoyang district, Jiuxianqiao underwent a strenuous up-down period of urban redevelopment, which is still today at the center of negotiations and debates. Representing a typical *danwei* or work unit compound, Jiuxianqiao was built in the 1950s during the socialist period as the first center for the electronics industry. As all the work units of the industrial period, Jiuxianqiao was a self-contained urban unit combining workplace, residences, public services and facilities. Due to the radical changes occurred in the transition to the post-industrial period, Jiuxianqiao area experienced significant social and spatial transformations. In the new fast changing post-industrial environment, the work-units, representing the fundamental socio-spatial urban parcel of the socialist Chinese city, had gradually declined. As a consequence of the shift from housing as a welfare good to housing as a commodity product in the late 1990s and the necessity to redevelop urban land for more profit and rapid growth, the physical environment of Jiuxianqiao's former factories was upgraded and developed into profitable high-quality residences and offices, while the low-quality dilapidated housing left from the socialist period remained untouched (Figure 4). Following the development of new commercial housing, the original residents started their protests demanding for better living conditions (He 2010). Resistance and pressure exercised by the local communities resulted in an inverted perspective of community engagement in a predominantly top-down system (ibid.).

Effectively, the redevelopment plan of Jiuxianqiao, launched in 2004 by Beijing Municipal Government and Chaoyang District Government in partnership with private developers, was based on a top-down strategy that did not take into account the inclusion of the local communities in the decision-making process. After long negotiations, the local government and private developers decided to (re)develop Jiuxianqiao into high-quality and affordable housing with public facilities. Nonetheless, in 2008, the variation of the conditions for the urban regeneration plan to the detriment of the residents, particularly the reduction of the compensation packages, resulted in a stronger wave of discontent and protests amongst the dissatisfied local residents. To maintain the stability of the area and avoid the escalation of social conflicts, the local government was forced to organize a public vote to include the local community in the negotiation process for compensations (Zhang et al. 2016). The negative results of the vote led to the suspension of the redevelopment project and withdrawal of the chief private developer.

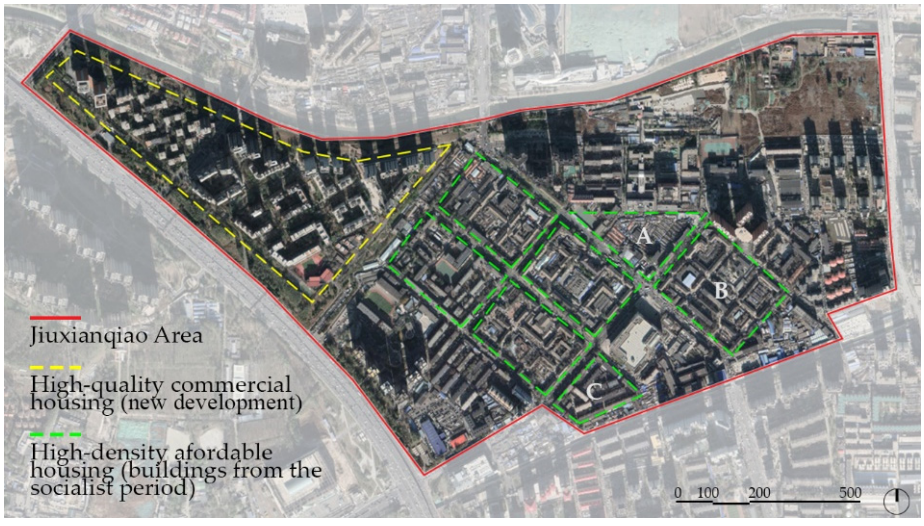

Figure 4. Satellite map with the typology of residential blocks composing Jiuxianqiao area. Credit: © Google Earth, 2020; illustrated by Badiaa Hamama.

In 2010, Chaoyang District Government decided to resume the redevelopment project adopting a more "transparent" compensation process, which consisted in the agreement that redevelopment could proceed only in those blocks, which compensation rates had been voted in favor by more than 90% of the local residents (ibid). These important grassroots mobilizations allowed the residents to potentially stand against colluding parties, acquiring the important role of being part of the decision-making process (Zhang 2002) and the negotiation for compensations. To date, and according to the author's last investigation, only the blocks A, B and C had been renovated (see Figure 4 above), while the remaining high-density socialist blocks, the legacy of an industrial era, are still in the throes of an ongoing negotiation process witnessing the challenges to balance both economic and social factors in the process of physical transformation of pre-existing urban spaces in post-industrial China (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Jiuxianqiao's traditional neighborhoods in contrast with the new commercial high-rise developments in the background. Credit: © Badiaa Hamama, 2018.

3.1.3. From a Village Dedicated to Agriculture to a Global Center for Contemporary Art—The Case of Xiaopu Art Village

Different from the urban reality of Ju'er Hutong and Jiuxianqiao, Xiaopu Art Village, headquarter of Songzhuang town in Tongzhou District located in the eastern suburbs of Beijing, is a demonstrative case of China's increasing interest in the urbanization of suburban areas and the promotion of culture and creative industries in post-industrial period. This case, among others in China, witnesses the process of a rapid physical and social transformation from a village initially intended to be an independent and organic center of art away from the government spotlight, to a catalyst for economic growth with a strong government intervention and control. It was not until the year 2000 that Chinese authorities started to promote culture and creative industries in an attempt to revitalize the economy and promote Chinese culture (Kean 2007). In the early 1990s artists' communities were continuously persecuted and displaced due to various reasons in the country. Yuanmingyuan Village, one of the earliest artists' villages established in the mid-eighties by a community of artists in Beijing was demolished in 1995 and its artists evicted to make way for the development of a villa project.

The displaced community of artists identified Xiaopu Village as their new ideal headquarter because it offered big, available, cheap-to-rent space, the relatively more relaxed atmosphere of rural areas, and was close to the city (Wang 2010). However, even before the new community of artists could be integrated their arrival in Xiaopu village was seen as a threat to public safety. In 1997, Tongzhou listed Xiaopu as one of the most dangerous public security hotspots in the district (ibid). Nevertheless, due to the State's growing interest in the creative industry, the activities of the new community of artists were soon considered as a source of revenue and economic revitalization. Xiaopu village, originally dedicated to agriculture, entered a process of spatial and social transformation into a national and global center for contemporary art by the local authorities of Songzhuang town in 2006 (Ren and Sun 2012). The local government's plan was to increase revenue through alternative land use, which resulted consequently in converting land from collective ownership of the villagers to public ownership under the direct control of the town government (Zhang 2014, Figure 6).

The origins of Xiaopu art village were rooted in a desire to create an autonomous community of artists and form an independent space for creativity and a certain lifestyle. Notwithstanding, its rapid institutionalization, commercialization and urbanization transformed the village from a self-governed artists' community into an officially recognized art establishment and economic growth engine. The unsustainable development approaches that transformed Xiaopu village from a forgotten and underdeveloped suburban area into an industrial cluster, meant primarily for economic gain, led to the displacement of several pioneer artists due to the pressure of urban development and the considerable rise in renting prices (Zhang 2014). It also caused the urbanization of local villagers following the transformation of their vocation from farmers to the staff of art and service activities (Figure 7).

Figure 6. Satellite maps showing the rapid transformation of Xiaopu village. Credit: © Google Earth, 2020; illustrated by Badiaa Hamama.

Figure 7. A villager on his moped looking at a construction site in Xiaopu village. Credit: © Liu Jian, 2012. Used with permission.

3.2. The Restructuring of Italian Post-Industrial Cities: Adaptive Reuse Strategies to Design a New Image of the City

In recent decades, the process of deindustrialization or production change, which has affected Italian and other European cities with a long industrial tradition, has generated strong repercussions on various manufacturing sectors, with negative impacts in socio-economic terms. The advent of the post-industrial transition phase

led city leaders and decision makers to agree that industrial cities could only recover if they promoted new lifestyles and sustainable working models in order to achieve new economic competitiveness and urban quality. In this context, urban policies and strategies recognize obsolete manufacturing sites as the most suitable place to land new urban visions, combining the legacy of the past with the desire for a new sustainable and socially integrative environment.

Culture and creativity played a crucial role in the transition to a post-industrial economy. They stimulated economic and urban growth, not only as a way to attract investments, but also as an effective tool to spark urban regeneration and economic and social innovation (Bianchini and Parkinson 1993). This process was backed by cultural policies that triggered competition between cities based on investments in cultural and creative industries and led to the formation of cultural districts. This topic was extensively debated and tested not only in Italy due to the typical district model of its productive fabric (e.g., the city of Prato, the "exemplary case of Italy of districts" (Becattini 2000), discussed below), but also in the scientific literature in the Western world and in China (e.g., the case of Xiaopu Art Village, discussed before).

This sparked growing interest in *adaptive reuse* design strategies to actively preserve physical and cultural heritage as well as disused buildings and industrial sites (Carter 2016; Wong 2016; Baum and Christiaanse 2012; Brooker and Stone 2004). Authorities and government agencies in several countries, not only in Europe, were fully aware of the impact of this transformation strategy. As a result, they promoted practices involving the adaptive reuse of existing buildings as a pragmatic tool in their urban programs. The goal was to foster the recycled use of land resources, the creation of a new city image, sustainable development, and to strengthen the sense of local identity of their communities. The growing number of design experiences in different contexts demonstrates the widespread use of this transformation strategy (obviously with some basic differences dictated by local conditions) due to the fact it triggers real estate valorization strategies by reinventing important urban areas.

Recycled industrial spaces are seen as potential resources to gradually increase infrastructure and services in the urban fabric and build a new alliance between the territory and different local societies (Ciorra and Marini 2011; Russo 1998; Secchi and Boeri 1990). The complexity of regeneration processes, the difficulty of adapting large unused spaces to the new socio-economic needs in old cities, and the long time frame needed for the municipal administration to actively involve communities determine a heterogeneous range of outcomes, as emerges from the case studies in the cities of Prato and Turin, illustrated in the following sub-sections. In the *Macrolotto 0* area in Prato, the re-use of former industrial structures in other manufacturing sectors or the vast panorama of cultural and creative industries proved to be an effective lever for engaging local stakeholders in the processes and procedures of cooperatively designing solutions. Within the rhetoric of reuse as new cultural and leisure spaces,

the "softer" approach experimented in Turin shows how the design results can effectively modify the pre-existing state of a site with minimal interventions but able to strengthen its historical and cultural values. Despite the different modes of intervention presented below, the main objective remains to protect and readapt physical heritage. In turn, this will preserve the historical and cultural memory of the city and its communities and ensure the long-term sustainable use of the building stock, often very different to the original.

3.2.1. A Public Participation and Co-Design Process to Achieve Social-Sustainable Integration—The Case of Macrolotto Creative District in Prato

In the second half of the twentieth century, a group of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the textile sector in Prato created one of the major industrial districts in central Italy. In the past twenty years however, the district has witnessed important economic changes. Since the 1990s, the new industrial sector of the so-called *pronto moda* (apparel industry) has risen to 25% of local GDP (Lombardi and Sforzi 2016). The growth of this industry is closely linked not only to the Chinese community in Prato (the third largest in Europe), but also to transnational Chinese networks across Europe (Lan and Zhu 2014). The new community developed a new production model by reusing abandoned structures in the so-called *Macrolotti* areas, as called by the urban planner Bernardo Secchi in 1996, during the drafting of the City's Masterplan. In particular, the consolidated urban area spreading westward from the old city walls has been called *Macrolotto 0* (Figure 8).

Macrolotto 0 was once the driving force behind the former industrial district of Prato but later became a predominantly Chinese neighborhood. However, over the years, complex relations between Italian and Chinese communities triggered growing social tensions (Lan 2015), as immigration was considered by local population as the main reason for the district decay (Nielsen et al. 2012). The Municipality of Prato decided to encourage a socially integrative transition in one of the most important neighborhoods for the future of the city, both in terms of its location and historical role. It resolved to include a public participation and co-design process, called *Prato al Futuro* (Prato looks to the future), in the draft of its new Operational Plan (urban development plan) adopted in September 2018. This planning tool was meant to collect and systematize what was to be included in the plans: projects, process interventions, and the outcome of the participatory process already activated by the local administration. During four months, from September to December 2017, the participatory process involved an extensive program of activities: from meetings with citizens to workshops for designers and professionals, as well as more recreational initiatives actively involving all citizens. The new Operational Plan integrates experience and expertise, addressing issues such as public space, reuse, ecology and the circular economy as a driver for change.

Figure 8. Macrolotto 0 area, Prato, Italy. Credit: © City of Prato 2019, used with permission.

As part of the overall framework of *Prato al Futuro*, the urban strategy redesigned *Macrolotto 0* as a creative district by using culture and creativity as tools to generate social inclusion between the Italian and Chinese communities. In the last few years, there has been an increase in initiatives involving active citizenship and specific transformation. One such initiative is the *Piazza dell'Immaginario* organized by Dryphoto Contemporary Art (2014, recently dismantled). In addition, numerous creative industries and local associations have slowly relocated to this neighborhood (Artforms, [chi-na], Circuito Urbano Temporaneo (CUT) - Temporary Urban Circuit, Kinkaleri_spazioK, Lottozero, Studio MDT, Sixteen, and Studio Court 17). The municipal government also developed a more ambitious project, called *Macrolotto Creative District* (2018) (Figure 9).

Covering an area of 44 hectares, its focus is the role of public space as the "urban backbone" of the regeneration and place making strategy. The project includes: the creation of a big new square; the transformation of former industrial structures in new spaces for aggregation and sociality; a metropolitan market; a media library; co-working spaces; sustainable mobility interventions such as the creation of a *30 km/h area*; pedestrian and cycle paths. The result is a network of public and private spaces and welfare services, diffuse and connected to existing paths and structures,

forming a spatial *continuum* that renews the dense city and extends into the open spaces. The core strength of the creative district is the combination of urban life, social inclusion, and quality standards which together create a vibrant urban niche. As a result, many interventions focus on the relationship between the new creative community and the immediate neighborhood as a way to support social cohesion and dynamic activities.

Figure 9. Macrolotto Creative District, Prato, Italy. Credit: © City of Prato 2020, used with permission.

3.2.2. The "Adaptive Reuse" Strategy to Create New Urban Centralities and Enhance Socio-Spatial Identity—The Turin Approach

In recent decades, the city of Turin has been undergoing a process of transition towards the definition of an urban development model able to complement its traditional industrial specialization. Up until the eighties, the automobile industry was the driving force behind the economies of the city and the lifestyle of its citizens, fueling its image as the most important company town in Italy. From the fifties onwards, wave after wave of domestic migration towards the city, especially from the southern regions of the country, has transformed its social and urban structure. After each difficult crisis in the automobile industry, the city tried to project new images: initially in the nineties with urban renewal projects, then with the Olympic city (in

the frame of XX Winter Games Torino 2006), and finally by launching a "smart", tourist-oriented and University city.

Compared to other situations in Italy, Turin's adaptive reuse of the spaces left by its industrial legacy reveals its unusual, "soft" approach. Rather than enlarging the city, the refurbished sites become part of its mainstream activities: selective addition and substitution interventions transforming the urban fabric thanks to "re-sewing" processes that create new, dense and vital urban centralities (Vassallo 2017). The goal is to preserve and reactivate the city's tangible and intangible heritage since the latter fosters community building and local identity. Different forms of such "re-sewing" process exist in the city (Vassallo 2017): renovation of former factories (e.g., the Lingotto, a former FIAT factory); renewal of the urban fabric (e.g., the Spina 3 urban area); and urban regeneration projects to reintroduce industrial production in disused spaces (e.g., Mirafiori, a former FIAT factory). Regeneration is an effective way to re-employ available structures, but above all, it compacts the city by reducing the consumption of space, time and energy. Parco Dora in Spina 3 (Figure 10), for example, provides a new understanding of inner urban landscapes and reflects the current transition taking place in society.

The new park was created by converting 37 hectares of a former industrial complex located in a strategic redevelopment area called Spina 3. The factories, active until the nineties, used the Dora river for their manufacturing processes. Parco Dora is an emblematic example of preservation of iconic structures, charged with symbolic values and re-functionalized as a large flexible infrastructure to service the local community. The goal of the project by Latz+Partner and others (2004–2012) was to incorporate and enhance the identity of each of the five zones in the park in order to enrich the park experience. Visitors can use the network of pedestrian paths, bridges, steps and ramps that connect the various areas and surrounding neighborhoods and run past several ruins partially covered by vegetation (Bullivant 2008). An open community program is also held in the park, with sports, cultural, temporary and international events. The industrial skeletons are thus transformed into an immense stage set for the public life of the city. The Parco Dora intervention demonstrated that the crucial factors required to create "well-being" for urban communities are quality physical space and the relationship between the design of the built environment and urban lifestyles.

Figure 10. Parco Dora, Torino, Italy. Credit: © Latz+Partner 2012, used with permission.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The transition from an industrial environment to a post-industrial (re)development era in both China and Italy has been driven by a multitude of complex dynamics at the economic, social and spatial levels. In this manuscript, the authors attempted to focus particularly on the factors and the main events that have influenced the physical and social transformation of cities in a climate of rapid change and new expectations. With the help of case studies, we shed light on some of the transformative strategies and challenges of post-industrial restructuring in both the Chinese and Italian contexts.

In China, two important events have reshaped the socio-spatial structure of its cities: land and housing marketization, respectively, in the late 1980s and 1990s under the circumstance of rapid urbanization. The flourishing new market forces and fast growth of the real estate industry set off an unprecedented competition for urban land. In most cases, it caused the demolition of millions of square meters of traditional residential districts and old neighborhoods (chiefly located in city centers) to make room for more profitable modern high-rise buildings (Hsing 2010). In Beijing, several policies have been implemented to encourage tertiary industries and thereby transform urban industrial infrastructures. The city center, occupied mainly by typical low-rise traditional courtyard houses, became a hotbed for real estate development projects, causing irreversible damage to the city's socio-spatial structure and identity (Abramson 2001). The nonstop wave of demolitions triggered fierce debates amongst architects and urban planners calling for the protection of

traditional neighborhoods. Several projects were rebuilt based on the philosophy of "repair the old and make it look old" (修旧如旧—xiu jiu ru jiu); nevertheless, this redevelopment approach often involved the demolition of traditional urban structures and the construction of new urban development (Lu 1997), with a few exceptions, such as the case of Ju'er Hutong, where architect Wu adopted the concept of organic renewal, trying to maintain as much as possible of the historical dwellings.

Similar to the approach of "organic renewal", experimented in Beijing, is the process of "re-sewing" tested in the city of Turin, which demonstrated how design results can effectively modify the pre-existing state of a site with minimal interventions but capable of reinforcing its historical and cultural values. Just as in China, in Italy, the process of de-industrialization and the changes in the modes of production have triggered a profound re-articulation of the relationship between economy, territory and society. In this transitional phase, cities contributed to the promotion of new lifestyles and sustainable development models to achieve a new economic competitiveness and a higher quality of urban environment. In this context, municipal authorities promoted, on the one hand, the implementation of policies and strategies focused on culture and creativity and, on the other hand, territorial marketing operations that exploit the renovation of obsolete industrial structures to define a new image of the city. Consequently, urban regeneration and the reuse of existing building stock has become one of the most debated topics.

Aside the different terminologies, e.g., organic renewal, adaptive reuse, re-sewing, and (re)development strategies etc., what emerged in both China and Italy is a new sensitivity towards the practices of preservation and reinvention of the pre-existing industrial urban fabric, in an attempt to protect the physical heritage and the identity of urban spaces, as well as an alternative tendency to engage the local communities as an integral part of the decision-making process. Civic engagement proved to be an essential prerequisite for the implementation of the plans of urban regeneration as shown in the Ju'er Hutong project and Jiuxianqiao, even if in the latter case community participation was triggered by grassroots mobilization. In Italy, the case of *Macrolotto Creative District* shows how virtuous processes and practices, ascribable to the creative and cultural economy, are even more effective in terms of social integration when they involve the local community in the co-design of spaces. Both in China and Italy, cultural and creative industries started to play a vital role in the reinvention of post-industrial cities and economic regeneration. Adaptive reuse of existing industrial structures for new functions better designed to meet the needs of a contemporary environment and the recycling of abandoned production sites, as in the cases of Prato and Turin, became a widespread transformation strategy in Italy. In China, cultural and creative industries, as demonstrated through the case of Xiaopu Art Village, had been pointed as a driver for economic growth and urban development in the peripheral zones. Nevertheless, the emergence of independent

and organic art villages in the suburban areas by autonomous communities of artists had been later institutionalized through top-down government interventions, which finally resulted in the displacement of the pioneer artists due to an increase in real estate prices.

Generally, the Chinese post-industrial (re)development processes have been shaped by an overemphasis on economic growth and on top-down interventions over community building and social integration. However, lately perspectives are changing and alternative approaches to urban (re)development, with more social inclusion, thanks also to grassroots mobilization, are in the making in the Chinese urban context. Regardless, more effort, political will, and people-centered approaches are needed to better tackle the socio-spatial consequence of urban and rural redevelopment, protecting and guaranteeing the interests of the most vulnerable.

The Chinese and Italian post-industrial experiences were undoubtedly shaped by different driving forces at the economic, social and spatial levels, and adopted various approaches and strategies to tackle the new challenges. However, it emerges that the two realities identified some factors as essential for a successful and sustainable transformation of the urban spaces: the preservation of the physical heritage and identity of a place and the involvement of local communities. Nevertheless, achieving socially integrative cities is still an arduous task in both China and Italy. The following recommendations are valid for both urban contexts as driving elements for future interventions: assure more active participation and civic engagement focusing on co-design processes to better address the needs of the local communities and preserve the specific features of places; involve the public through community events, cultural and artistic festivals, local markets, etc.; make the construction of public support the key factor for the (re)development of urban and rural areas. From the point of view of policy makers, it is important to give a relevant role to urban adaptive reuse in the general vision of a city, because of the possibility of citizens' deep involvement, temporary and quick measurable results.

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