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Brandhubs

Catalysts for responsive urban design

This paper introduces an emerging hybrid urban typology in corporate conglomerates or "Brandhubs" and in particular the recent appearances of this phenomenon in Europe after having been established in North America and the Far East. The focus is on the latent potential of this typology for generating responsive urban design that creatively integrates experiential and sociocultural values in addition to functional and economic aspects.

Brandhubs are comprehensive urban mixed-use environments developed by brand-name corporations in partnership with host city authorities. Utilized as branding instruments and designed by signature architects, they aim to mediate corporate identities to a broad audience in an experiential 'public' space. As embodiments of symbols or a specific image or lifestyle, they are a veritable reification of the consumer commodity itself. In addition to hosting traditional retail, office and housing facilities, they are highly pervaded by entertainment, culture and other complementing event components, together forming a hub of experiences entirely organized around the given brand or sub-brand identities. The closest precedent to this development is the flagship promotional store such as the worldwide Niketowns or one-of-a-kind Prada Epicenters, which work more on a purely architectural, if not solely interior design scale. Instead, the goal of this paper is to show how Brandhubs are strategically implemented at the urban scale to foster development in the framework of public-private partnerships. With projects such as the Universal CityWalk Hollywood, Daimler City Berlin, Disney's Times Square Development in New York, Sony Centers in San Francisco/

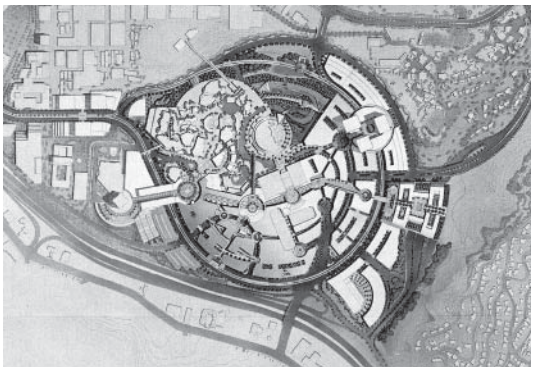
Berlin/Tokyo, VW ErlebnisWelt in Wolfsburg, and Migros's WESTside in Berne, the implication of Brandhubs in the development of both the cityscape and the image and influence of corporations becomes evident.

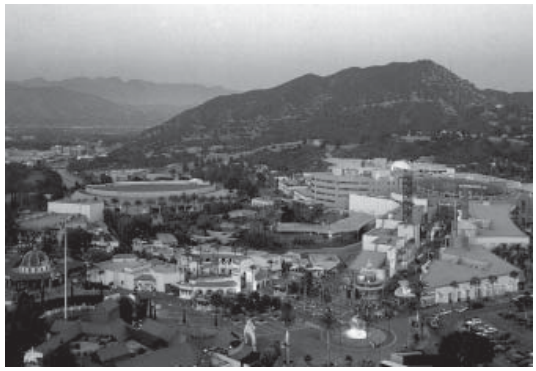
The Brandhub as hybrid urban typology in the experience society

Brand-name corporations increasingly participate in the current restructuring of our globalized cities, from monotonous industrial or service centers to multifaceted spaces of experience. As key visionaries and development partners of cities, contributing to every aspect of planning, marketing and operation, they fuel new corporate landmarks, or Brandhubs. Given the rapid expansion of a neoliberal market rationale, their main intention is to differentiate themselves from other corporations, increase brand equity, and thus sustain growth in a fiercely competitive world. The development of the Brandhub also represents the change from a pure service to an experience-oriented economy, in which the commercialization of culture and the culturalization of the economy are of particular importance (cf. Harvey 1989; Jameson 1991; Zukin 1995). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), in this new economic area "every business is a stage" and companies must design compelling and engaging events to be competitive, with promotional strategies that communicate their identity as popular institution.

In the shaping of Brandhubs, corporations therefore utilize the concept of the themed urban entertainment destination (UED). By offering a complementary mix of entertainment, dining, and retail – the "trinity of synergy" – within a highly branded and pedestrian-friendly environment, an UED aims to attract visitors across a variety of markets. In order that the brands themselves can become such an urban destination, Brandhubs either annex public spaces or make their private spaces public, integrating consumption- and culture-oriented UED components for the entire public. Together this modular mix of urban program forms an experiential epicenter of activities, which generate high-emotional value and allow for a characteristic encounter with the brand.

Groundbreaking US examples are Universal CityWalk, Disney's Times Square and Sony's Metreon, large-scale urban projects constructed by global players to mediate their identity in a pleasing setting and trigger lasting sym-





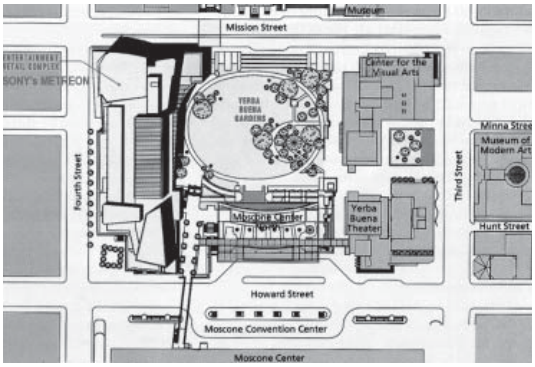
Universal CityWalk designed by the Jerde Partnership, Hollywood, Los Angeles 1993. *www.citywalkhollywood.com*

pathies. As Otto Riewoldt (2002) in his book *Brandscaping* asserts, "Behind the brand-building efforts there lies the conviction that the glamour and power of the brand are the key weapons in the battle for target groups and customers" or as Naomi Klein (2001) in her seminal *No logo* critically pinpoints, "The products that will flourish in the future will be the ones not presented as commodities but as concepts: the brand, as experience, as lifestyle." In this context, David Bosshart (1997) speaks about the "emotionalization" and "de-materialization of consumption," meaning that customers don't buy material commodities anymore, but themes, messages, symbols, cults, and events. As a result, Brandhubs become communicators of a specific lifestyle be it mobility, wellness, knowledge acquisition, constant self-regeneration, environmental-consciousness or all of the above.

Architect Jon Jerde's 1993 pedestrian promenade Universal CityWalk, for example, a prototypical retail entertainment destination, generates profit by forming a synergetic experience between Universal Studios and Theme Park, Universal City Cinemas, and the headquarters of Universal Creative. With its shops, restaurants, nightclubs, theaters, offices, classrooms, and a continually changing palette of new performances, Universal CityWalk is an extension of the existing entertainment venues of Universal City. As approved in a 1995 report by the Urban Land Institute: "The economic synergy of the project is evident … Since CityWalk's opening, patronage at the Universal City Cinemas is up 60 percent, and the studio tour is up 15 percent. Similarly, when the amphitheater has a good concert night, CityWalk's facilities are filled to capacity." (Fader 1995)

Disney's Times Square Development designed by Rober A.M. Stern Architects, New York 1999. *www.timessquare.com*

In addition to these experiential branding efforts, mega-corporations increasingly utilize multimedia strategies, in particular the concept of co-branding. Hitherto this practice, in which one media product advertises one or several other products, was primarily employed in the media industry. In the construction of Brandhubs, such synergistic effects are used for the first time on an urban scale with the aim of further increasing brand visibility and market penetration, ultimately creating multi-brand monopolies. This phenomenon can be illustrated with Disney's Times Square, which was keenly shaped by Robert A.M. Stern Architects as part of the 42nd Street Redevelopment, a large-scale public-private partnership project between the urban authorities of New York and multiple private developers: The Disney store on 42nd street advertises with billboards for Disney movies. The New Amsterdam Theater shows the Disney-Musical *"The Lion King"* next to a theme restaurant of the sports channel ESPN, which also belongs to Disney. A studio of the subsidiary company ABC broadcasts the television show *"Good Morning America"* in front of Disney's entertainment center at Times Square (cf. Sassen and Roost 1999). With these entertainment offers and backed by hardliners from politics and police, the Disney Corporation managed to transform Times Square from a notorious red-light district into a family-friendly urban destination, and not into a monotonous office cluster as originally planned (cf. Sagalyn 2001). In doing so, Disney set new dimensions for companies to act as driving force and investor for the future restructuring of cities.



Sony's Metreon designed by Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein Moris, San Francisco 1999.
www.metreon.com

Having also successful predecessors in Japan, like the Sony showroom in Tokyo's Ginza or the Sony Tower in Osaka, Sony's Metreon cross-promotes Sony's consumer electronics and media products in a similar yet more subversive manner. The complex is the last part of the urban regeneration project Yerba Buena Gardens, located next to the Museum of Modern Art in the South of Market Street area in San Francisco. Designed by the local-based women architecture firm Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein Moris, it is characterized by a soft high-tech look, mirroring Sony's technology-oriented and culturally-innovative image. To underscore this image, the building is clad with a glass and aluminum façade and furnished with an immense number of metallic elements in the interior, culminating in the concrete walls in which shredded computer pieces are intermixed. Already its spectacular entrance gives us a glimpse of the show inside. It features massive wings displaying information on Metreon. In the interior, Sony's flat panel televisions scattered throughout announce the next movies that will be shown in one of its 15 movie theaters or show art from the Museum of Modern Art. The Sony Style Store presents Sony's latest electronic gadgets next to Sony's DVDs. The PlayStation Store features a "game tender," who fetches any game you like on one of the 30 game stations. The Airtight Garage, a cave adventure zone for techno-entertainment, includes socially interactive games exclusively developed for it. All these Sony components mixed with other shopping venues, meeting spaces, museums and events feed off one other, creating a particular synergy. As Metreon, which comes from a combination

of the words metropolis and "eon", a Greek word for gathering place, writes: "It is the latest trend towards event spaces where guests can eat, meet and play all in one great location."

All three aforementioned US examples are based on the consumer-oriented retail and entertainment market. However, with their standardized lowbrow offers directed towards the broad popular mass, Disney and Universal utilize the entertainment mall as an urban generator, in which the key measure for success is income per square foot. In contrast, Sony's Metreon deploys more sophisticated culture-oriented marketing strategies, which are driven more by promotional goals than direct retail profit and integrate independently run businesses and other local institutions. Moreover, by branding most of its products under different labels, ranging from PlayStation via the Airtight Garage to the Metreon complex, Sony consciously hides its global brand name. In this way, Sony propagates a multi- or even anti-brand culture. These subversive branding tactics are rather a reflection of Sony's interest in the relatively large youth market than its ethical consciousness about monopolies.

With such projects that transform the brand into a physical urban attraction, the implication of these developments in the regeneration of the city becomes evident. As urban destinations, they mirror all facets of everyday urban life. Once the corporate branding strategy leaves the confines of the traditional office block or single retail shop to incorporate entire districts or neighborhoods, the architectural problems increase in complexity and the socioeconomic aspects begin to implicate many other actors than the corporation and the property owners in question. In the US, where the Brandhub is already an established model, the public sector is involved with the corporate developer from the project's inception; the development emerges through their partnership. This practice is a direct result of the declining fiscal resources of city governments, which have shifted their responsibility from providing public facilities to the private sector. Consequentially, city governments are becoming increasingly dependent on private initiatives, philanthropy, or outright exactions for public constructions that would have been built by the city in earlier times.

This new form of urban development is rapidly becoming an accepted

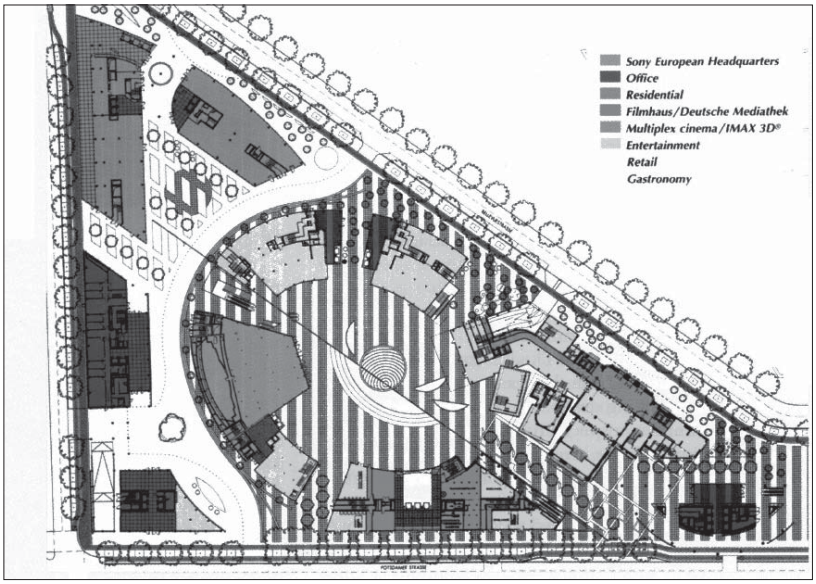
Sony Center Berlin
designed by Murphy/Jahn,
Berlin 1992-2000.
www.sonycenter.de

model in Europe. Moreover, while initiated by the entertainment industry, their promotional strategies are increasingly adopted or even advanced by other consumer-oriented industries such as the auto industry, fashion, grocery and sports. How the Brandhub typology manifests itself in the European context can be exemplified by the Sony Center Berlin, VW ErlebnisWelt in Wolfsburg, and Migros's WESTside in Berne.

Sony Center Berlin

The Sony Center Berlin, designed by Helmut Jahn as part of the Potsdamer/Leipziger Platz development initiated by the Berlin government in 1991, is a clear example of a Brandhub that not only utilizes the public event, but also the principle of co-branding: first by tangibly rendering Sony's dual structure as both a consumer goods and media producer, and second by creating a new competence center for the European entertainment industry.

At first glance, the Sony Center with its vast glass curtain-wall facade appears as a closed and monotonous corporate building. However, a closer look reveals that the complex in fact is broken down into individual buildings of heterogeneous qualities, framing a surprisingly open, nearly public plaza. This spectacular forum, which is used as a 'public' gathering place, is surrounded by shops, cafés and restaurants. Like at Metreon, these urban amenities are pervaded by Sony facilities: the Sony Style Store, Professional Center and multiplex cinemas. The main difference to Metreon is that the Sony Center Berlin is not just geared towards techno nerds, but to a wide

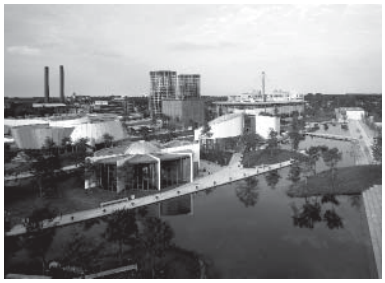


Ground plan Sony Center Berlin, showing the pervasion of a variety of uses.

audience ranging from film enthusiasts to sport fans. In the forum, under the floating 'umbrella roof', a variety of spectacular professional and cultural events take place: product launches, fashion shows, live TV coverage like of the World Championships, and even real sports events such as pole vault competitions. In addition, other complementary culture providers are integrated in the center. Examples are zoon.com, an interactive lounge by VW, and the film center that comprises the German Film and Television Academy, the Arsenal repertory cinema, and diverse media archives. The Sony Center also houses residences and a historic monument the banqueting halls of the former Grand Hotel Esplanade, which was removed from its original location and implanted into the new building. Today, it simultaneously serves as both restaurant and museum. All these urban offers are encircled by Sony's corporate headquarters: Sony Corporation Europe, Sony Music Entertainment Germany, and Columbia Tristar. Other companies, in particular from the entertainment industry, could also be attracted to set up offices in the Sony Center, such as Fuji TV or the HSG Film Production.

With such companies and institutions as tenants and as the host of the international film festival Berlin, Sony tries to conquer the German movie and TV market. In this way, the Sony Center not only generates an urban destination, but also fosters a new market for the entertainment industry. By subversively merging Sony's flagships with urban entertainment and culture, the Sony Center Berlin cross-promotes both Sony's electronic and media productions. Moreover, by propagating an event culture and by transfor-

VW Autostadt designed by Henn Architekten, Wolfsburg 1996-2000. *www.autostadt.de*



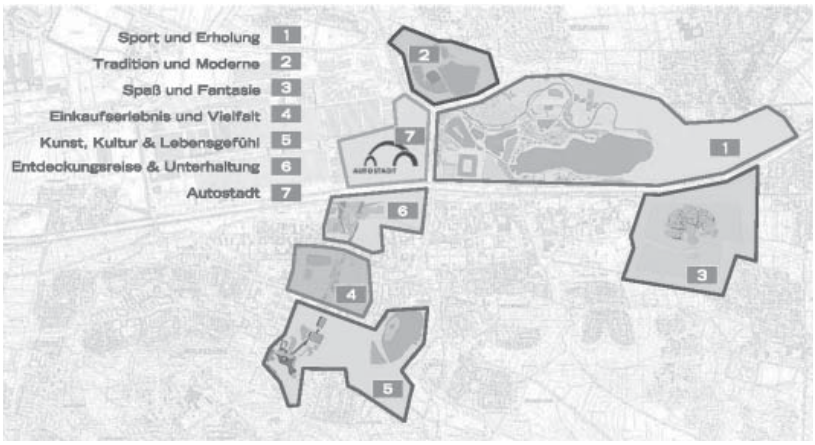
ming semi-public space into brand space, the Sony Center tries to raise the identification with the brand to a lifestyle experience.

VW Autostadt and ErlebnisWelt in Wolfsburg

In 2000, the Autostadt of the Volkswagen Group, which also derives its branding strategies from the entertainment industry, opened. The complex is a corporate visitor's park located in the immediate vicinity of the VW headquarters and production plant in Wolfsburg. Master planned by Henn Architekten, it is an exemplary case on how the concept of themed entertainment environments can be directly translated to the world of the automobile.

The VW Autostadt is part of the ErlebnisWelt, a comprehensive urban regeneration project put forth by the Wolfsburg AG, a 50/50 private-public partnership between the VW AG and city of Wolfsburg that aims to foster economic and sociocultural impulses for the future development of the city. Next to the Autostadt, the ErlebnisWelt comprises a network of six distinctive zones: discovery and entertainment, sport and recreation, shopping and experience, art and culture, fun and fantasy, as well as tradition and modernity, which pervade the entire city in the long run. The ErlebnisWelt is an innovative example on how a monotonous industrial city can be transformed into a multicultural Brandhub, offering state of the art services and leisure amenities.

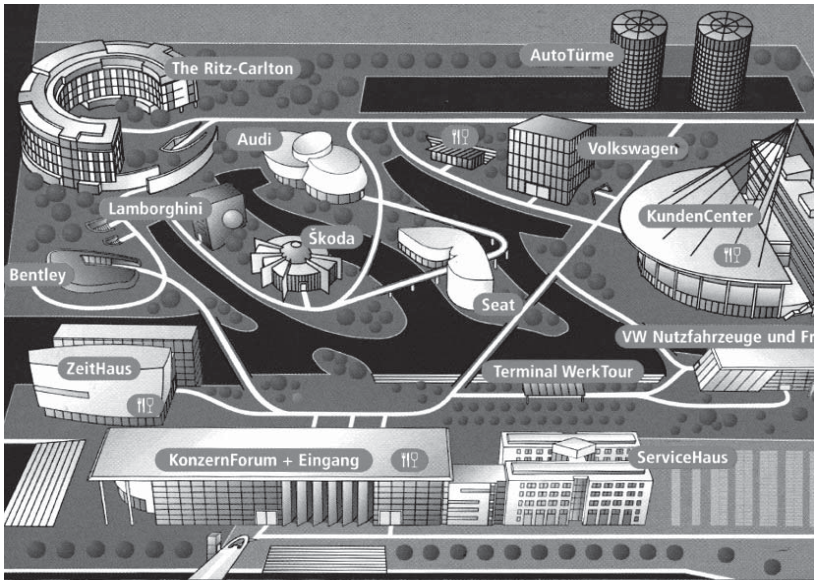
The VW Autostadt is a corporate communication center embedded in a



VW ErlebnisWelt by the Wolfsburg AG, Wolfsburg 1996-2012.
www.wolfsburg-ag.com

synthetic landscape, in which visitors are invited to embark on a journey through the multifaceted world of the automobile. It is a thematic service park that features a piazza-style reception forum, an auto museum, an elaborate auto delivery center, a Ritz-Carlton hotel, theaters, stores, and, above all, the car towers as landmark of the VW Autostadt, featured by distinctive auto pavilions for each brand of the VW Group. With the juxtaposition of the cult-pavilions, the VW Group can cross-promote its various brands including Audi, Bentley, Lamborghini and Skoda. Moreover, by animating these attractions with diverse installations that fuse art, entertainment, learning and branding, VW tries to communicate four major values: quality, security, social competence and environmental consciousness. Thus, the Autostadt not only worships the company's brands, but also their intriguing history and influence on world culture: from the "People's Car" via the "Love Bug" to the automobile of the future. The Autostadt quotes signs and terms of the bourgeois city, it refers to forum and piazza, stages spaces for the collective and the individual. Paradoxically, the Autostadt, like Daimler City, substitute the urban public spaces that were destroyed by the automobile society.

With this staging, the VW concern expects to increase the value of its products and differentiate itself from other car companies. The intention is not simply to convince the customer to buy his or her car directly from the firm, but rather to generate long-term brand loyalty. This strategy is based on the belief that by connecting the brand-name with a physical place, the customer will identify more strongly with the brand, enhancing its emoti-



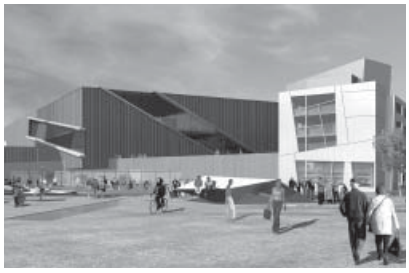
Plan VW Autostadt: forum with info booth, exhibition and stores; auto museum (Zeithaus); auto delivery (KundenCenter); car towers (AutoTürme); The Ritz-Carlton hotel; and the distinctive auto pavilions for each brand of the VW Group.

onal relationship with the corporation. In short, the Autostadt materializes the fetishistic relationship Germans have with their cars.

Migros WESTside in Berne-Brünnen

Developed by Switzerland's largest retail organization Migros, WESTside will become a super-regional urban entertainment destination. As announced on its website, the Brandhub will blend shopping, working, living, pleasure, and recreation in an "all-in-one experience for all sorts of people, no matter what their tastes and interests are." Scheduled to be open in 2008, WESTside is an exemplary case for questioning the typical typology of an urban entertainment center. By condensing city and landscape, outstanding architecture and commerce, high and low culture, consumption and relaxation, Migros' goal with WESTside is to set new dimensions for urban development.

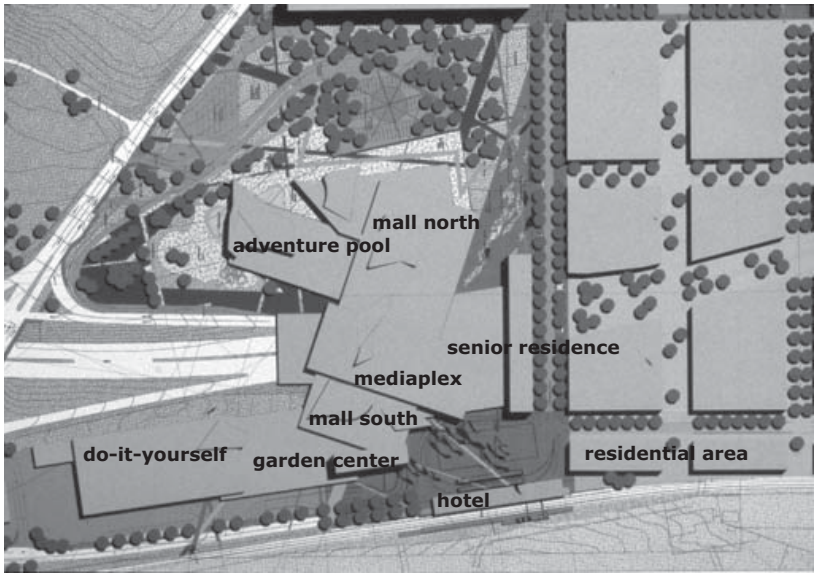
WESTside is part of West Berne's most important urban extension area: the Brünnen Development Plan elaborated by the city of Berne. Originally, this plan only comprised a single residential area. However, with the initiative of Migros to build a "shopping and leisure paradise" adjacent to the planned residential area, the mono-functional scheme turned into a holistic and financially feasible vision that is currently realized by the Neue Brünnen AG with Migros Aare as the majority shareholder. Next to the WESTside complex, which is to generate 800 jobs, the plan also incorporates residential accommodations for 2,600 people, ample green zones, and convenient interchange possibilities for public transport and the motorway.



Migros WESTside designed by Daniel Liebeskind, Berne-Brünnen 1995-2008. *www.westside.ch*

With Daniel Libeskind as architect, WESTside is also a very ambitious urban design project. According to Libeskind, the conglomerate will become a dynamic place that challenges the border between consuming, acting and 'just being'. In this manner, WESTside consists of various fluidly interconnected parts: (i) a shopping mall with specialist shops of all sorts, (ii) a fitness and wellness zone including an adventure pool and climbing wall, (iii) a mediaplex cinema, (iv) a superstore park with do-it-yourself and garden center, and (v) senior residences as well as a hotel and convention wing for business people and tourists alike. These complexes will be connected by a public piazza and an alley in the interior. In addition, they will be highly pervaded with dining areas ranging from self-service facilities to ethnic gourmet restaurants, discovery and cultural offerings, supervised playgrounds as well as other leisure areas.

Within these multicultural spaces, which are targeted towards a broad audience and will be open 365 days a year, Migros aims to stage and co-brand its various businesses, including retail, travel, gastronomy, sports, wellness, culture, education, and last but not least, banking. Well-known for its unique business philosophy and engagement to sustainability, Migros substantially contributes to the quality of life in Switzerland. With WESTside it seeks to further its image as a widely accepted, responsible, consumer- and environment-friendly company.



Site plan Migros WEST-side: the various parts pf the complex are fluidly interconnexted by public piazzas and an alley in the interior.

The Brandhub as urban catalyst: resistance or participation?

As shown above, Brandhubs are utilized by brand-name corporations and entrepreneurial cities as promotional instruments, embodying commercial strategies that integrate economic (formerly private) aspects with sociocultural (formerly public) values into novel private-public spaces. In this way, they have a direct impact on the urban development. On the one hand, they encourage urban revitalization and bring forth an increased interest for urban design and potentially a heightened attention for its quality and sustainability. On the other hand, questions arise as to what extent urban design is influenced by this intricate integration of commercial operations. Do these branding strategies generate even more differentiated and sustainable urban design forms that cater to an evolving society? Prevailing opinion moves between two divergent positions.

Disneyfication = homogenization and loss of public space?

The first resisting position scorns such brandscapes and emphasizes their negative impacts on the urban realm. By likening them to Disneyland, this viewpoint argues that these apparently disturbingly themed and simulated environments infiltrate the city with mediocrity, commercialism and mass culture. For example Michael Sorkin's (1992) collection of essays entitled *Variations on a Theme Park* exemplifies how this pervasive "Disneyfication" destroys the variety of historic places and produces a bland artificial homogeneity. It also tends towards the production of *The Generic City* or *Junkspace*,

as keenly labeled by Rem Koolhaas (1995 and 2001). As an extension to Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, this position further claims that the public realm has been increasingly replaced by "hyperreal" worlds – predominantly as spaces of commodification.

While many critics object to the homogeneity of disneyfied spaces, the presented Brandhubs indicate that their generic nature increasingly becomes outflanked by the rise of non-replicable and rather original experiences that draw their energy from local culture and/or high-quality design with real materials and honest intentions. One major reason for this is that authenticity, history and locality have become commodities themselves. In recent decades, the intensified competition put forth by the globalization of the markets has forced both cities and corporations to differentiate themselves from their competitors. To become more distinctive, they increasingly produce unique commodities by appropriating local peculiarities as well as aesthetic and ethical meanings of diverse origins from which they can extract economic benefit. As David Harvey (2001) theorizes, the forces of globalization in a sort of contradictory manner lead to "the valuation of uniqueness, authenticity, particularity, originality and all manner of other dimensions to social life that are inconsistent with the homogeneity presupposed by commodity production" or Disneyfication. That means, if corporations and cities are not to totally destroy the uniqueness that is the basis for sustaining growth in an otherwise fiercely competitive world, then they "must support a form of differentiation and allow for divergent and to some degree uncontrollable local cultural developments that can be antagonistic to their own smooth functioning." In this regard, they should even integrate subversive cultural practices precisely because this is one way to be authentic, creative, and unique.

The impact of such commodified environments has also been substantially criticized in the light of an increasing privatization and the related loss of public space. They have been termed as "dual cities" or "control centers", which tend to be carefully secured to tailor to consumers and social elites while excluding undesirables, thus enforcing the already existing social and spatial polarization of our postindustrial landscape. As for example Frank Roost (2000) in *The Disneyfication of Cities*, most critics conclude that

The Brandhub as polarized place and control center: Les Policiers by Julien Michel, 2001.

brandscapes are scarcely suitable to solve the problems of our cities since the exclusion of specific levels of the population as well as demarcation of losers from the economic development is an essential component of their marketing success. These critics rightly point out that Brandhubs try to meet the consumption and entertainment desires of the increasing percentage of the population that is willing to spend their disposable income to take part in urban – albeit commercially-driven – activities. However, the key motivation of brand-name corporations to use Brandhubs to promote their identity as a widely respected institution require them to navigate "highly public ethical and social concerns … Increasing numbers of large corporations thus find themselves caught between two seemingly contradictory goals: satisfying the investors's expectations for progressive earnings growth as well as the consumer's growing demand for social responsibility." (Cogman and Oppenheim 2002) As a result, these companies are forced more and more to go beyond the mainstream and incorporate the subculture, undesirables and even their opponents such as anti-globalization campaigners or environmental activists in their corporate-wide branding strategies, as asserted by leading consumer researchers and as illuminated by Naomi Klein (2001). For example, one of Sony's main target groups in the creation of Brandhubs are the "Reactors … [who] are born on the street, or wish they were … are subversive, rebellious, suspicious of power and authority, have no taste in the conventional sense and favor honest contradiction." (Kunkel 1999)

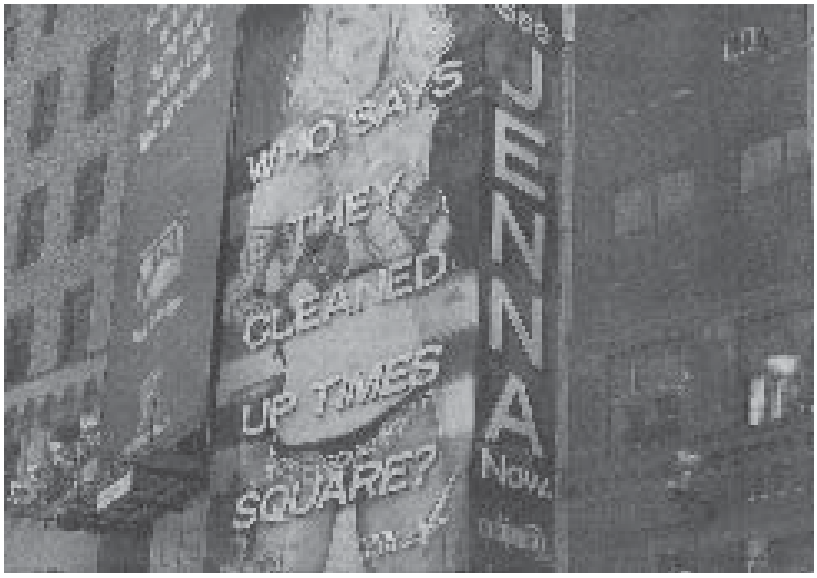
For sure, this exploitation of the local milieu and subculture for export and the benefit of others – the social elite, brand fetishists, one-time tou-

The Brandhub as urban promotion and differentiation tool: adidas ad, Park Inn (formerly Forum Hotel), Berlin, Alexanderplatz, 2004.

rists and suburban day-trippers – can be seen as even more insidious than the evident Disneyfication or commodification of it. However, by utilizing multicultural branding strategies and by trading on unique qualities, Brandhubs open up new spaces within which more sustainable alternatives can be conceived and implemented.

Corporate urbanism = urban stimulation and regeneration?

This second affirmative position is represented by the public-private venture between brand-name corporations and public authorities, which work together in the development of Brandhubs. For the corporation as the main developer and visionary, public-private partnership projects purvey incentives such as the provision of cheap land in central locations, financing aid, tax abatements, eased planning regulations, and above all access to local peculiarities. For the entrepreneurial city as cooperative facilitator and supportive provider of such incentives, they entail economic impulses, job creation, increased tax revenues as well as direct investments for public needs. This sort of 'getting and spending' as well as the common interest to create an attractive image and destination for meeting both the desires of experience-seeking consumers and cultural-conscious citizens is what bind the city and the corporate developer together (cf. Frieden and Sagalyn 1989). As part of their common marketing efforts, they praise Brandhubs for their popularity and for immediately improving the local situation. Moreover, they claim that their impetus serves the entire population, including the 'poor', who



The Brandhub as urban destination and catalyst: Jenna Jameson billboard, New York, Times Square, 2004

incidentally turn out to be some of the most avid consumers.

While Brandhubs create instant urbanity and exhibit potential as catalysts for urban regeneration, their long-term contribution to the city and real life expectancy remain questionable, especially since they are heavily based on the ephemeral, the event – the experience. Are they simply the next evolutionary step from the entertainment mall to be replaced when the experience-seeking consumers migrate to newer "in-places", or can they become deeply rooted in the city? Will Brandhubs be the next *Junkspace* in which public urban space itself is rapidly being transformed into a consumer commodity or do they constitute a promising model for responsive urban design that creatively combines commerce and culture?

Responsive urban design = differentiation!

In the stream of rapidly alternating marketing cycles as well as increasing public concerns about the commercialization of everything, there is a need for a differentiated set of urban strategies that challenge the spatial and temporal forces of brand culture. In the contemporary experience society, where culture, economy, politics and society merge, neither architecture as pure art or 'public gift' nor fully commercialized architectures seem viable. As mediators between private and public values, architects and planners are forced to acknowledge the importance of brand culture in order to use it to their best advantage and develop more sustainable alternatives. This is not only confirmed by commercial urban designers such as Jon Jerde, but more recently also

by renowned architects such as Rem Koolhaas, Frank Gehry, Herzog & de Meuron und Daniel Libeskind. They all try to comprehend the commercial mechanisms and production conditions of corporate urbanism and develop new design strategies for it. They assign urban design an operative role within the economic and political power game, whereby the principles of branding and a globalized experience economy are appropriated in a proactive, yet critical manner. This requires differentiated design strategies and planning instruments that creatively integrate social issues with pragmatic requirements such as economic and functional parameters.

As indicated before, the Brandhub typology exists not only to provide private benefit but also public added value that is unique, highly visible and can be directly experienced. Because Brandhub developments focus on reaching the broad local population, corporate developers have to work with – not against – public stakeholders as well as transgressive cultural producers, even if their interests are antagonistic to the corporation's own codes and functioning. In this regard, successful Brandhubs provide responsive, highly differentiated urban designs marked by three major characteristics. First, meaningful urban identities mediate the brand culture and regional peculiarities in a way that is responsive to public concerns, enabling more and more of the population to identify with the project. Second, a unique mix of uses are composed in an adaptive form that mirrors the urban identities by condensing global and local as well as diverse hybrid spaces so as make the Brandhub economic and sociocultural viable. And third, a close integration within the city complements and enriches instead of displacing or destroying the project's immediate context.

Brandhubs are a true showcase of how architecture and urban design can potentially contribute to combine urban revitalization with corporate promotion and experiential spaces. In most cases, it can be shown that this benefits both the corporation and the public. For the corporation, this involves added expenditures that should not only be viewed as an essential cost of doing business, but rather as an investment that offers lasting economic bonuses, chiefly because the Brandhub's integration with the local context and the provision of added amenities significantly adds to the longevity of the Brandhub and therefore its effectiveness as promotional instrument and

long-term sustainability. For the public, responsive Brandhubs open possibilities for novel urban spaces within which more sustainable cultures can evolve and constitute catalysts for local development.

In this manner, Brandhubs utilize a win-win strategy, which implicates that one can only create a sustainable future when all stakeholders can equally or even exponentially benefit from urban development. By creating viable public spaces, operative social and cultural venues as well as a basis for long-term economic growth, corporate as well as local structures will be enriched. As a result, fostering the responsiveness of the Brandhub typology can increase its potential for transforming urban spaces in unique ways to achieve a reasonable and equitably distributed level of corporate and social well-being.

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