

The City: Backdrop of a Pleasure-Driven Society or Lasting Urban Pleasure Landscape?

Never before have so many people been able to fulfill so many of their dreams. Never before have we had so much time and so many opportunities to "live the life." One telling manifestation of this development is the fact that today, 60 percent of traffic volume is associated with leisure activities. At the same time, never has the societal pressure and imperative to "live the life" been so profound. Those who have no interesting job, no flashy car, no vacation to the South Pacific to tell about, no alternative health and fitness program are considered "out." Those who feel overwhelmed by the seemingly endless possibilities visit creative workshops or book "all-inclusive" trips in order to get themselves animated.

Gerhard Schulze, a sociologist from the University of Bamberg, concludes with regard to today's pleasure-driven society [1] that the big sociocultural turning points of the second half of the 20th century represent a transition from a status quo in which man was the subject of his world to one in which the world is the subject of man. "What has changed is above all one thing: the generally accepted relationship between the individual and the world. According to the old paradigm, the world was the given thing that the individual had to adjust to. In the new paradigm, the relationship has been turned upside down – if anything is still seen as given, it is the individual. This reorientation of the relationship between the world and the individual forms the basis of contemporary society." [2]

As a result of this change in paradigm, an ever more powerful dynamic of development has set in, and the number of opportunities at our disposal has increased dramatically. Nothing seems impossible anymore. Anything can be imagined and realized. Man is no longer satisfied with finding his place in a predetermined world, but rather demands the right to choose his own world. In the meantime, advertising and trendsetting are ensuring that the selection of potential opportunities is still increasing. The ruthless indicators of success or failure such as stock quotes, market share, and global reach are becoming the measure of all things.

Once again, the city has become the favored spot for those seeking to live the good life. Whereas the 1970s introduced an era in which larger shopping and entertainment complexes were moved outside of the city, the 1990s have seen the city reemerge as the center of pleasure seekers and consumers. Pleasure-driven society is purposefully settling in urban areas that offer more intensive stimulation than sterile mega discos in the countryside. Or can you imagine the love parade being held on the Woodstock site? The city is turning into the platform of the "fit-for-fun" society. New urban pleasure landscapes are emerging, especially in former industrial areas previously not viewed as attractive from a cultural point of view. These invite the visitor to improvise, offer a cheaper price niche, seem to offer potential surprises and guarantee the sought after thrill. A prominent Swiss example is "Zürich West," Zurich's former industrial backyard between the central railway station and the Altstetten district. In 1999, the Schauspielhaus, the city's theater, set up a stage in a former ship construction shed. Several renowned art galleries have premises round the theater. A multiplex cinema and a musical theater are also nearby, in addition to a pulsating bar scene and countless night clubs to satisfy the "Saturday Night Fever" of urban and suburban youth. The pleasure-seeking culture of the fun-loving generation has clearly established itself in the former industrial district. This trend has emerged not only in Zurich: since the end of its industrial days, the "Sulzer-Areal Stadtmitte" in the city of Winterthur/Switzerland has also developed into a center for nightlife and leisure. The skating park located there draws visitors all the way from Germany and Austria. In many cities, one can find other examples of pleasure-driven revitalization of former industrial districts.

But how is the transformation of these districts into vibrant cultural districts to be assessed qualitatively? Are these districts profiting from this development or are cities degenerating into nothing more than reflections of our pleasure-driven society? Indeed the negative par-

allel developments – traffic congestion, high noise levels among others – are a reality not to be ignored. Yet it is also evident that the new cultural and entertainment landscapes are being used and enjoyed by all walks of society: the theater lover next to the disco teen, the art collector next to the cinema lover. All are present within these areas and the city is being used and rediscovered. Industrial quarters formerly considered off limits – urban "terrae incognitae" – are turning into gathering points for urbanites and suburbanites. All the while, they are attracting investors and capital to the city. What more could we want?

Yet trends are short term in nature, and the task of urban and spatial planning is to create urban spaces that survive the short-term trends and facelifts that cities undergo. Cities and city architecture can no longer be built for a span of three generations, but must be able to adapt flexibly to rapidly changing developmental trends and cycles. Quality with regard to city building, architecture, traffic systems, and diversity of uses is therefore an investment for the future.

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Notes/Anmerkungen

- [1] Schulze, G. (1992): *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft*. Frankfurt/M.; Schulze, G. (1999): *Die Kulisse des Glücks*. Frankfurt/M.
- [2] Schulze, G. (2000): *Gesellschaft 2000: Was wird aus der Erlebnisgesellschaft?* <http://www.sozio-logie.uni-bamberg.de/er2000.html>

ihre eigene «Kultur» besitzen. Ausserdem wird sich auch Zürich West verändern, wird seinen Umbruchcharakter verlieren. In einem nächsten Transformationsschub wird das Gebiet immer mehr Citycharakter annehmen. Mit allem, was dazugehört: hohen Boden- und Mietpreisen, knappen Flächen, fehlenden Parkplätzen. Entdecken die Kulturschaffenden und die ihnen stets folgenden Zeitgeistsurfer dann ein neues Transformationsgebiet?

Anmerkungen

- [1] Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik: Beiträge zur Stadtforschung Nr. 25, Berlin 1998
- [2] Stadt Zürich, Fachstelle für Stadtentwicklung (Hg.): Wegzuger und Zuzügerbefragung Zürich, 1998/99
- [3] Meier-Dallach Hans-Peter, Hohermuth Susanne: Stadtkultur im Grossdorf Schweiz, NFP Stadt und Verkehr, Bericht Nr. 47, Zürich 1994
- [4] www.erlebniscenter.de
- [5] Hochparterre, Zürich: 11/1999
- [6] TA Magazin 6, 1998
- [7] Stadt Zürich (Hrsg.): Stadtforum Zürich, Schlussbericht, Zürich 1997
- [8] Morgenthaler, Jan: Transit 99 – Ein flüchtiger Sommer in Zürich, Zürich, 1999
- [9] Stadt Zürich, Amt für Städtebau: Kooperative Entwicklungsplanung Zürich West, Synthesebericht, Zürich 1999
- [10] Schweizerdeutsch für «Kneipenszene»

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