From the Urban Revolt to the New Metropolitan Mainstream

From an international point of view, the metropolitan region of Zurich is relatively small. Nevertheless, it has been for many years routinely placed as a «Beta-World city», because of its strong «headquarter economy» which is specialized in the market of the machine and armament industries. In the 1970ies, Zurich was still an industrial city with a strong parochialness which left hardly any margin for new lifestyles or alternative forms of cultural expression. This situation eventually caused a social explosion, and in spring 1980 an urban revolt began: with street fighting, but also with cheerful happenings and creative action protesters demanded a different, vibrant and open city. Although the urban revolt collapsed after two years, it had changed Zurich’s everyday life, its cultural spheres as well as its public spaces. In the following years, Zurich experienced a remarkable cultural and social opening: legal and illegal bars and clubs sprouted up everywhere and contributed to an urban renaissance, stimulating, among other things, the development of a milieu of cultural production, including design, image production, events, etc. This economic sector today plays a key role in international competition between global cities. The urban revolt thus became itself a constituting factor of the global city formation of Zurich.

Fifty years ago, Zurich was still an industrial city with a strong parochialness in the machine and armament industry. In the 1970ies, with the increasing deregulation and globalization of financial markets, the transformation into a global city began. This was a contradictory process, which was strongly marked also by local forces. In this context, especially two local lines of conflict proved to be crucial: On the one hand, a strong controversy concerning the modernization of the city arose which resulted in a territorial compromise. Since the 1970ies, Zurich’s model of urbanization has been growth oriented, but it was also characterized by a strong regulation of urban development and the conservation of inner-city areas.

On the other side, the question of urban cultures proved to be crucial. In the 1970ies, public life in Zurich was still characterized by a crushing parochialness which left hardly any margin for new lifestyles or alternative forms of cultural expression. This situation eventually caused a social explosion, and in spring 1980 an urban revolt began: with street fighting, but also with cheerful happenings and creative action protesters demanded a different, vibrant and open city. Although the urban revolt collapsed after two years, it had changed Zurich’s everyday life, its cultural spheres as well as its public spaces. In the following years, Zurich experienced a remarkable cultural and social opening: legal and illegal bars and clubs sprouted up everywhere and contributed to an urban renaissance, stimulating, among other things, the development of a milieu of cultural production, including design, image production, events, etc. This economic sector today plays a key role in international competition between global cities. The urban revolt thus became itself a constituting factor of the global city formation of Zurich.

In the course of the 1990ies, another change of paradigm in urban development occurred. While the inner-city of Zurich evolved into a culturally and socially pulsating urban center, the «headquarter economy» expanded into the region, thus changing fundamentally the development of the former suburban areas. The metropolitan region now forms the unit of everyday life. It includes many different places which among each other are interconnected by a dense tissue of overlapping interaction networks. At the same time, a new hegemonic political alliance emerged in the City of Zurich which might be called «metropolitan alliance». The focus of local politics shifted towards a new combination of strategies: On the one hand side, it aims at attracting international investors, global capital and affluent groups of residents to Zurich, while on the other it looks for pragmatic, integrative and efficient approaches to solve the current social problems. Thus, the «New Metropolitan Mainstream» evolved in Zurich as a result of conflicting forces and processes.
As the sole land-owner, SBB has the leading role in return for the permission to build a combined three-level stadium adjacent to the stadium; the city was resisting. Credit Suisse as developer and the city, initially squatters, then a private association and the city, took the lead for the searches for investors and retain total control 39% of development. The building heights up to 40 m in selected areas.

Zurich’s economy is largely based on banking, insurance and financial services. The centre of these activities is around Limmatquai, a street area of the edge of the medieval city. The dramatic growth of the financial sector in the post-Second World War period added to the demand for additional office space. This demand met with a chronic shortage of space in Zurich’s historic centre and narrow inner city. The need for office space led to the development of further office and retail space in the periphery. The city was heavily influenced by the political rhetoric of the 1960s, calling for the urban renewal of the outlying residential areas. The schéma urbain 1966, the city’s urban development plan, called for the reurbanization of these areas and the redevelopment of the city centre. The plan was adopted in 1971 and was implemented through the public sector. The central area of the city was redeveloped in the 1980s and 1990s, and the surrounding areas in the 2000s.

The city’s development strategy was based on the concept of the “world city”, which was intended to attract international businesses and investors. The strategy included the development of new office and retail space, the expansion of public transport, and the provision of cultural facilities. The city’s development was driven by the need to attract foreign investment and to create a modern, global city.

The main sources of income in Zurich are from the banking, insurance and financial services sector. Zurich is the second-largest financial centre in Europe after London. The city is home to many international banks and insurance companies, as well as many domestic companies.

The city has a good network of public transport, with a rapid transit system that connects the city centre with the suburbs. The network is well-connected and there are many different modes of transport, including buses, trams, trains and bicycles.

The city is also home to many cultural facilities, including museums, art galleries, theatres and concert halls. The city has a rich cultural life, with many events and festivals throughout the year.

The city is also a tourist destination, with many attractions, including the old town, the university and the city centre.

In summary, Zurich is a modern, global city with a strong economy, a good public transport system, and a rich cultural life. The city is also a tourist destination, with many attractions and events throughout the year.