

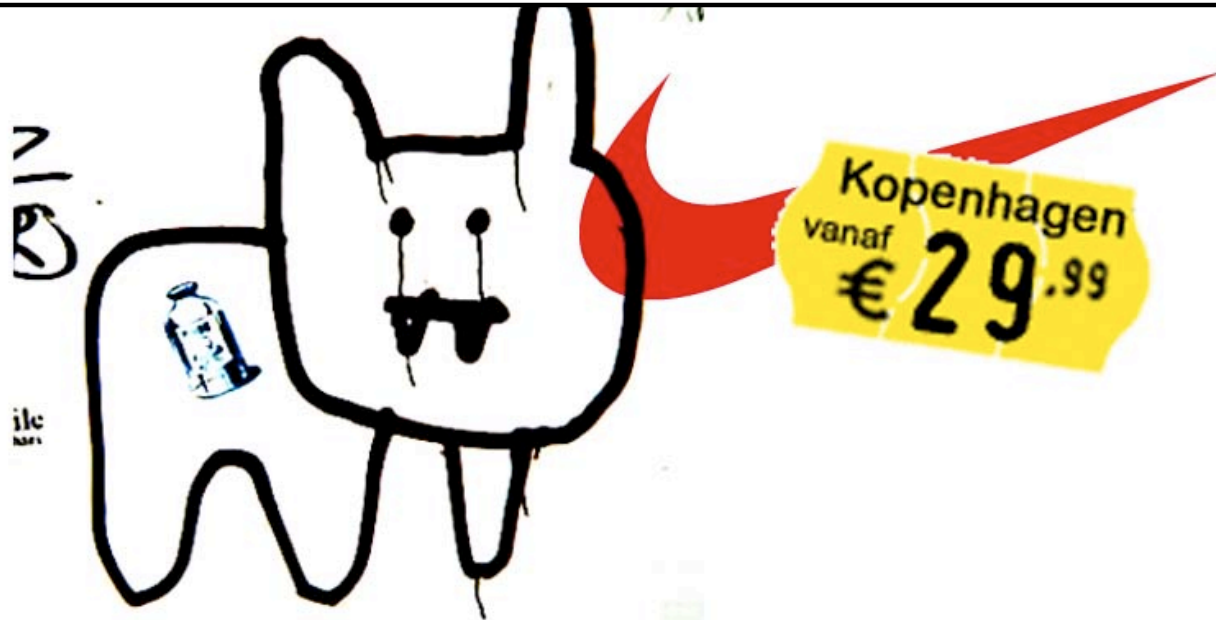


**Zentrale Intelligenz Agentur**

# City Branding vs. Streetart

The Dialectics of Subcultures and the City

>>> Fox Academy / Copenhagen, 16. April '05





**I.**

# **The Context**



I.

# The Context





# I. The Context





# I. The Context



Cities



Subcultures



Brands



# I. The Context



Cities



Subcultures



Brands



Streetart



## I. The Context >>> Cities





## I. The Context >>> Cities



### Gentrification

Inner city and working class neighbourhoods are converted into more affluent middle class communities.

The pattern is always the similar: squatters, artists, students, yuppies. Take New York's East Villige, London's East Village, Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg.



## I. The Context >>> Cities



### Privatization

Public space is more and more privatized. The former variety of public interaction is turned down into mere consumption activity.

The old architects' ideal of the „functional“ city is enforced through public-private-partnerships.



## I. The Context >>> Cities



### Segregation

The disintegration of society becomes manifest at the outskirts of cities.

Commuter belt colonies and gated communities for the rich, Favelas and Banlieues for the rest.



## I. The Context >>> Cities



### Economic Turn

Cities become brands. They are managed like companies and marketed like products in order to attract citizens, tourists and investment.

After nation branding, city branding is the logical next step with the nation state falling apart into regions and clusters.



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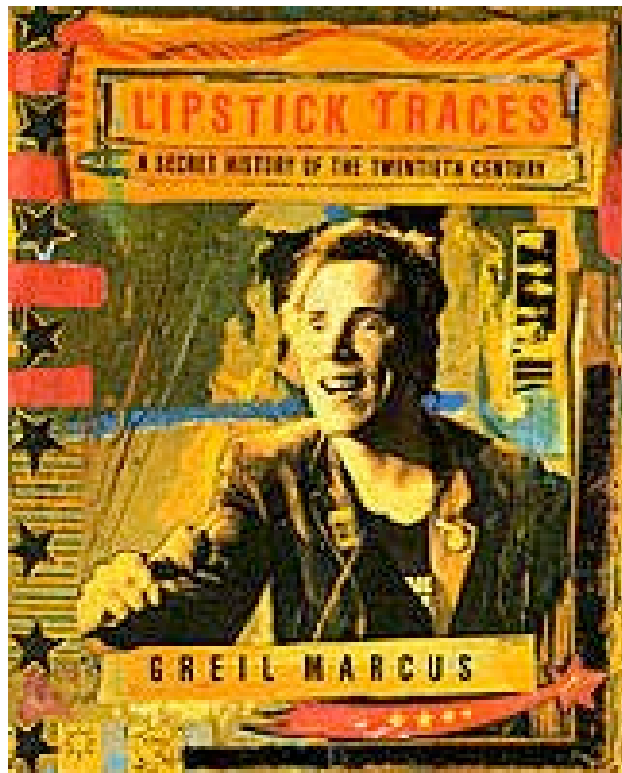
# The Context >>> Subcultures





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## The Context >>> Subcultures



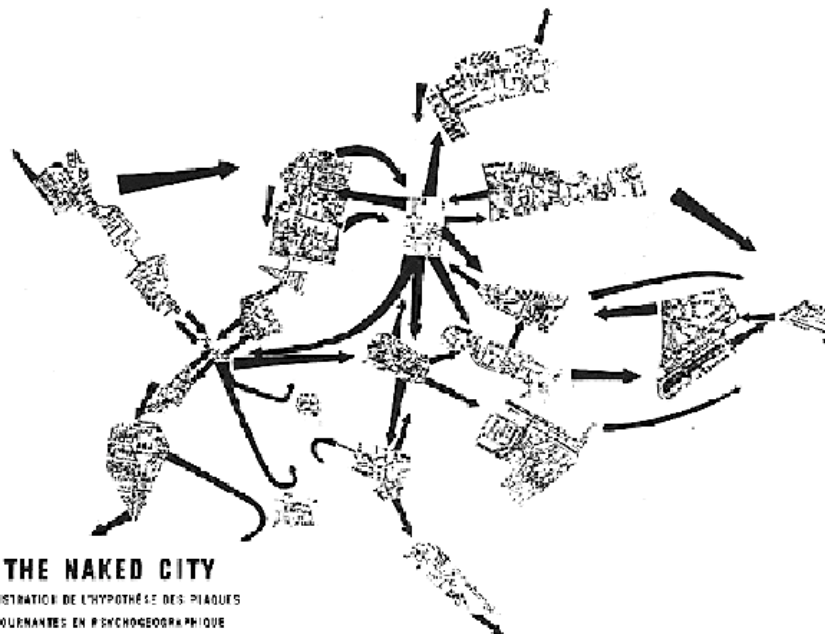
### Missing Links

A secret history of the 20th century: Subliminal trajectories and nearly invisible connections link DaDa in the 20s and the Situationists in the 60s with Punk in the 80s ... and maybe with Streetart today.

„...the mystery of spectral connections between people long separated by place and time, but somehow speaking the same language...“ – *Greil Marcus*



## I. The Context >>> Subcultures



### Avantgardes and the City

Avantgarde movements have always challenged the pure functional layout of the city... Because it is too boring. They suggest a more experimental, playful, artful appropriation of public space.

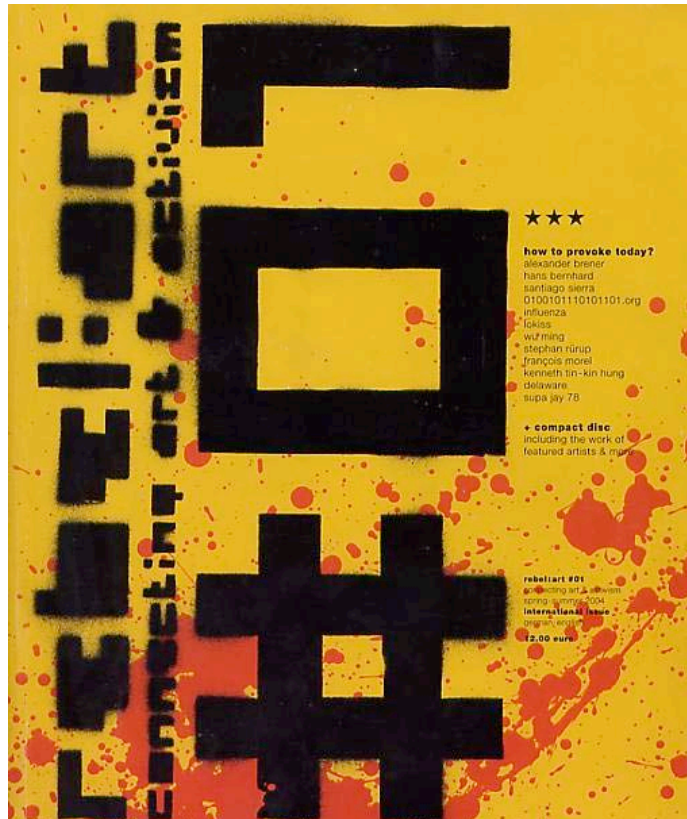
„One of the basic situationist practices is the *dérive* [literally: „drifting“], a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects.“

– *Guy Debord*



I.

## The Context >>> Subcultures



### Art meets Activism

Recent years have seen a vivid crossover of art movements and political activism.

Brandhacking, Culture Jamming and the „Reclaim the streets“ movement are strong manifestations of a new breed of activists focusing on symbolic interventions.



I. The Context >>> Brands





## I. The Context >>> Brands



### Re-claiming the Streets

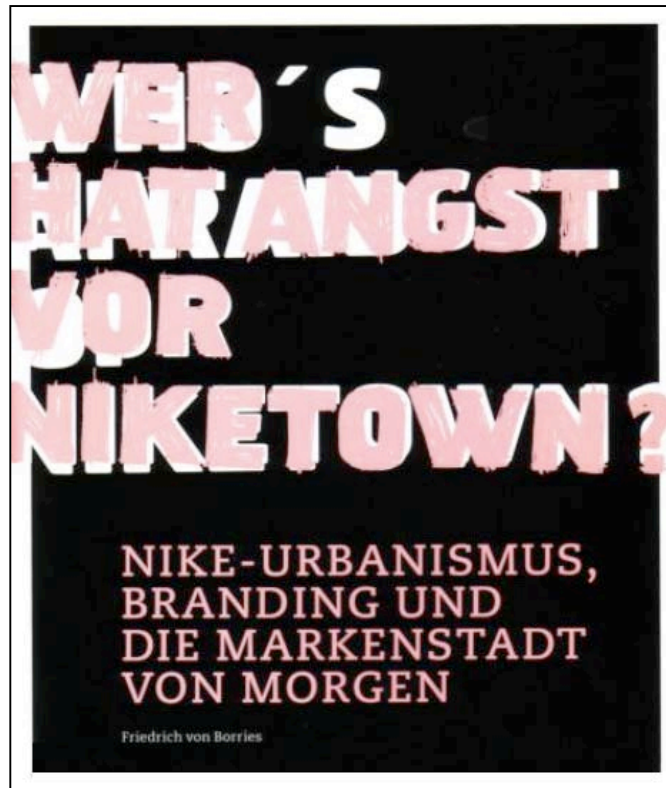
Lifestyle brands have established new forms of “below the line”-communication. Ambient marketing is entering public space.

They create “brandscapes” on a subliminal level and have adopted codes from the street.

They connect to subcultures and pretend to be subculture.



## I. The Context >>> Brands



### Corporate Situationism

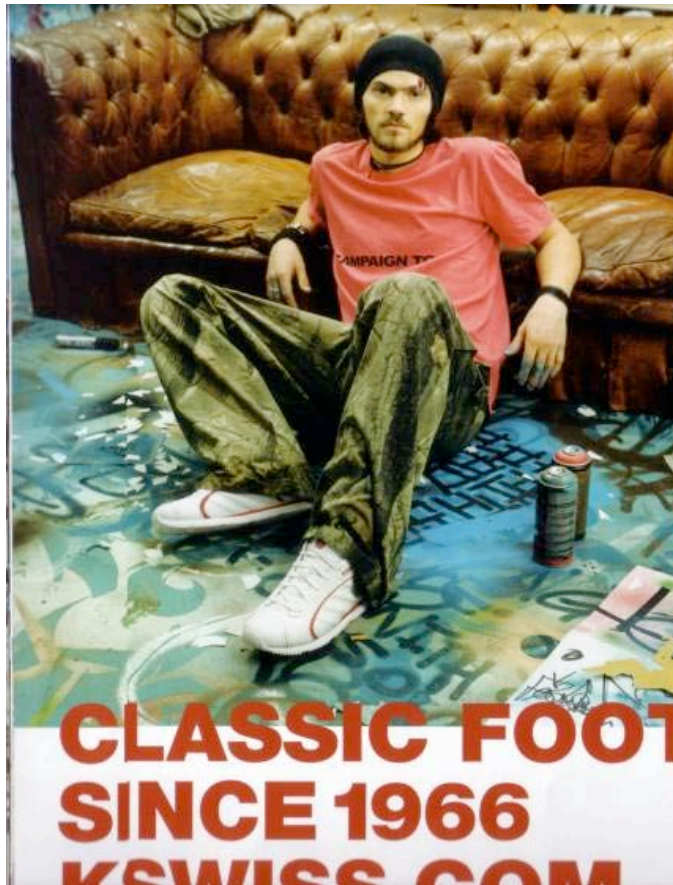
Brands can not accept the purely functional city as it undermines their ambitions to involve emotionally. Hence, they have adopted strategies of cultural Avantgarde-ism.

„Today it is especially brand-environments that offer a new perception and usage of the city. They refer to a subconscious discomfort with the entirely rational and controlled city.“

– *Friedrich von Borries*



## I. The Context >>> Brands



### Streetcredibility

Graffiti and streetart are often referred to in advertising supplying a rebellious image and a touch of outlaw attitude. Cool branding and streetart are fraternal twins seperated at birth.

„Guerilla marketing“ is the ultimate marketers dream of achieving maximum impact by breaking rules and conventions... sometimes even the law.



# I. The Context >>> Streetart





## I. The Context >>> Streetart



### Paradox Intervention

„Good“ streetart is used by officials to market cities as culturally charged, vibrant and exciting places.

„Bad“ streetart is heavily criminalized applying „broken windows syndrome“-theory and „zero tolerance“-politics.



## I. The Context >>> Streetart



### Post Graffiti

A new multitude of streetart uses more elaborate forms of expression: stickers, posters, cut-outs, stencils...

Graffiti has come a long way. The spectrum ranges from illegal bombing to professional gallery art.



## I. The Context >>> Streetart



### Layouting the City

A new alliance between graphic design and urban activism emerges and questions traditional concepts of urbanism.

What if we could actually photoshop the city as we would like to see it?



I.

## The Context

**>> Streetart has a navigator function as an indicator of free floating creative potential.**

**>> It crystallizes at the creative hotspots of the cities, since these are the places people really care about.**

**>> Streetart reclaims important chunks of public space bottom-up.**



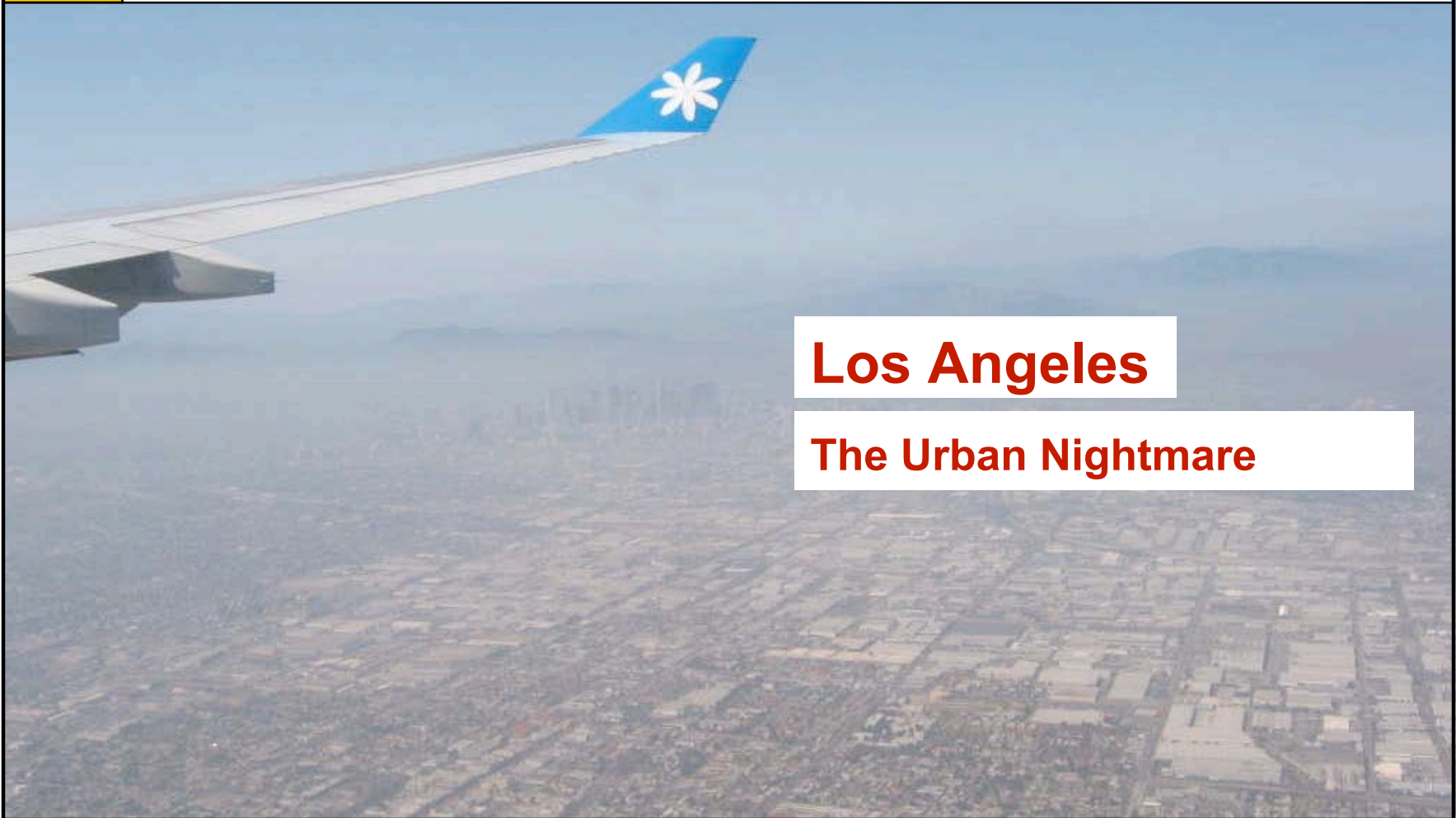
**II.**

# **City Examples**



II.

## City Examples



**Los Angeles**

**The Urban Nightmare**



II.

## City Examples >>> Los Angeles



### Urban Sprawl

Gated communities and fortified neighbourhoods form vast urban landscapes without any center. Public space is eradicated.

Despite the rise of ethnic plurality in Los Angeles, there is no public „agora“ where community issues can be negotiated.



II.

## City Examples >>> Los Angeles



### Gang Communication

The territorial logic prevails in „subcultures“ and „streetart“ as graffiti are primarily a tool to symbolize gang hegemony and mark spheres of influence.

Blood, Crip and Hispanic graffiti are very rough and archetypical while graffiti in general is extremely criminalized.



II.

## City Examples >>> Los Angeles



### Big Brother

Shepard Fairey aka OBEY Giant is one famous exception to the rule as LA's pioneer in propaganda streetart, being the first to use a character instead of a tag.

His motives however mirror the claustrophobic atmosphere of a city under surveillance.



II.

## City Examples



**Singapore**

**The Totalitarian City State**

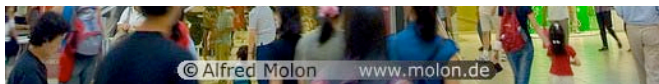


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## City Examples >>> Singapore



Golden Escalators on Orchard Street



### A City build on Shopping

The „nation light“ was invented by Lee Kuan Yew in 1959 and run like a company by the same family ever since.

Singapore has been the beach-head of global capitalism in Asia and managed to lift its people on First World level economically through an authoritarian command system.

Cultural development, however, lags behind.



II.

## City Examples >>> Singapore



Poor example of very rare Singaporian graffiti

### Cultural Boredom

Gentrification, sterilisation and the hype of brands and shopping have proven so successful, they led to boredom amongst the saturated new upper class city dwellers.

For cultural consumption and excitement the better off now travel to Bangkok or Taipei as authentic street life with niche cultures and unregulated nightlife are part of urban culture there.



II.

## City Examples





II.

## City Examples >>> Milano



### New Renaissance

The former industrial region has become Europe's most important creative cluster. Design and creativity are the driving forces behind economic prosperity.

Small workshops, manufacture production and traditional craftsmanship match with international business in the design driven industries of fashion, furniture and interior design.



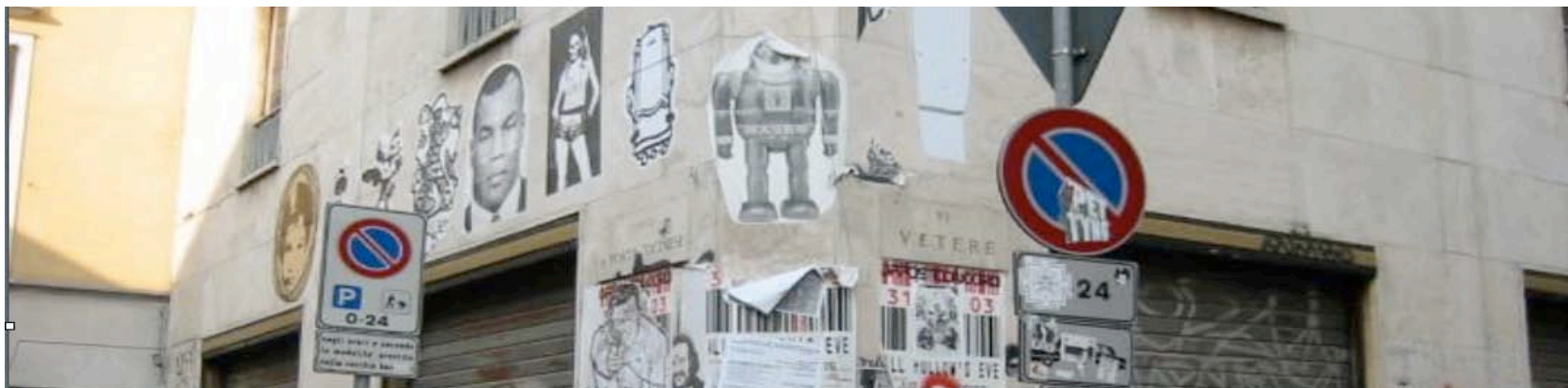
## II. City Examples >>> Milano



Milan Street Art at Corso Ticinese

### Creative Hotspot

Milanos most vivid area for small fashion labels, clubs and galleries around Corso Ticinese is also a Mecca for the international streetartists' community.





II.

## City Examples



**Manchester**

**The Re-Branding Project**



II.

## City Examples >>> Manchester



The Hacienda, photographed by Ian Tilton

### Manchester Capitalism

The iconic power capital of the industrial revolution suffered heavily from Globalisation. During the 80s Manchester had a short third sector renaissance with a strong music industry cluster around Factory Records and the Club Hacienda - both landmarks in progressive Design.

The origins of Tony Blairs nation branding project “Cool Britain” can be traced back to the Manchester style of the 80s.



II.

## City Examples >>> Manchester



### Re-Branding the City

In 2004 the City, still facing huge social problems, made a radical move in appointing Peter Saville, the man behind The Hacienda and Factory Records' legendary record cover designs as Creative Director of the whole city.

Beyond creating a contemporary and global viable "corporate design" for the city, Saville is working out social projects as well, to involve citizens. Outcomes are not clear, yet, but watch it!



II.

**City Examples**



**Berlin**

**The Battleground**



II.

## City Examples >>> Berlin



### Open Space

After 1989 – especially in the eastern part – everything was allowed, everything was possible,

Semi-legal housing, clubs and art form the city's image and turned it into an international magnet for artists and bohemians.

But gentrification takes its toll...



## II. City Examples >>> Berlin



### Empire strikes back

Last week the first Anti-Graffiti Conference with over 200 participants organized by an initiative called “NoFitti” took place in Berlin, taking a stance for zero-tolerance-politics.



Accomplishing the event german border forces used helicopters with night-vision devices to track down writers for the first time.

Result: 8 arrests, 1 collateral casualty.



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**Thank you!**

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