Project data
Type of project
Renovación urbana
Start of construction
May 2005

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Comment of the Holcim Awards 2005 jury for Europe
With a high degree of competence, the project demonstrates an innovative layering of varied cultural and commercial programs that serve to generate a hybrid town square. Directly confronting the loss of public space, the work convincingly integrates urban, architectural, and landscape design to create a sustainable response to the contemporary challenges facing the region. The work also manifests an ethically conscious position in that it promotes a reinforced sense of communal identity for a diverse range of social groups, providing them an original perspective on the city and offering a place for dialogue and exchange. The project presents a credible economic catalyst for the local market that is simultaneously ecologically sustainable to the context. Skillfully handled is the creation of a microclimate that adaptively reacts to the intense climatic conditions of the region. The hybrid combination of commerce and tourism presents a convincing and feasible model for cross-funding the required investments to implement such a project. This project deserves special merit for achieving the highest of architectural standards and creating a work that promises to have beneficial and long-term impact on reactivating collective recognition of the city and its culture.

Project description by author
Redevelopment of “Plaza de la Encarnación” in Sevilla / Spain

“Metropol Parasol” is the new icon project for Sevilla, - a place of identification and to articulate Sevilla’s role as one of Spain’s most fascinating cultural destinations. “Metropol Parasol” explores the potential of the Plaza de la Encarnación to become the new contemporary urban centre. Its role as a unique urban space within the dense fabric of the medieval inner city of Sevilla allows for a great variety of activities such as memory, leisure and commerce. A highly developed infrastructure helps to activate the square, making it an attractive destination for tourists and locals alike.

The “Metropol Parasol” scheme with its large mushroom like structures offers an archeological site, a farmers market, an elevated plaza, multiple bars and restaurants underneath and inside the parasols, as well as a panorama terrace on the very top of the parasols. Thought of as a living timber structure, the parasols grow out of the archeological excavation site into a contemporary landmark.

The columns become prominent points of access to the museum below as well as to the plaza and panorama deck above, defining a unique relationship between the historical and the contemporary city. “Metropol Parasols” mixed design creates a dynamic development for culture and commerce in the heart of Sevilla.

From the very beginning the public was involved (symposium, competition, web-forum) – process of identification, local effect = activation development in the neighbouring areas, attraction and meeting place for entire city / surroundings. Plaza becomes a new unique space of urban communication (bus terminal, event spaces, panorama platform). Prototype for urban space in the 21st century.

Ecological quality and energy conservation
Responsible use and management of natural resources (e.g. timber from sustainable forests). Use of growing material locally, recycled and recyclable materials. Long life cycle of construction due to long lasting low maintenance components. Operation and maintenance: self cleaning skin with polyurethan coating as long lasting weather protection and ventilation liquid free. Low impact construction process (prefabrication minimizes disturbance). Shading imitating the traditional Sevilla way (tree form). Keep existing trees as part of the cultural and architectural history to our times - a prototype for urban space in the 21st century.

Economic performance and compatibility
Green areas for low building service equipment. Public space for marketing. Branding concept brings more tourism and economy to Seville. Development by construction company, free construction for city management by concessionaire (PPP). Creates employment in the local market and community. Traditional retail vs mall. Integration of public transport for economic reactivation.

Contextual response and aesthetic impact
Design excellence through international competition. Integration of computer technology in design and production. Design as site-specific for identification and uniqueness (city branding). Architectural design as desirable place of cultural, political and commercial events. Use of existing urban land and local tree species for landscaping.

Relevance to target issues (by author)
Quantum change and transferability

Ethical standards and social equity
Process of identification, local effect = activation development in the neighbouring areas, attraction and meeting place for entire city / surroundings. Plaza becomes a new unique space of urban communication (bus terminal, event spaces, panorama platform). Prototype for urban space in the 21st century.

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