

# Business improvement districts: an instrument for fostering creative industries?

- Experiences and lessons learned from Hamburg



*WP 5 study report*  
*“Creative City Challenge”*  
*INTERREG IV B North Sea Region Programme*

REM • Consult, Hamburg  
2010

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## INTRODUCTION

The growing importance of the creative class for the sustainable economic and regional development of cities and regions is often opposed to existing instruments and procedures used to enhance this development, especially when it comes to real estate management. There is a lack of instruments, assistance and information for stakeholders in the creative sector. Moreover, common business development agencies are usually unfamiliar with stakeholders' requirements and exposure to companies in the various creative industries (cf. BSU, 2010a: 82 ff.). The study report "Business improvement districts: an instrument for fostering creative industries? - Experiences and lessons learned from Hamburg" investigates the role of business improvement districts (BIDs) in the sustainable development of creative industries in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. The first BID legislation was introduced in Hamburg in 2005 as a special form of public-private partnership (PPP), and as an innovative tool for a sustainable urban development in Germany. The report also discusses whether additional instruments for fostering creative industries ("Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft", "Bundesinitiative Kreativwirtschaft - Regionalbüro Hamburg" or the "Komm in die Gänge" initiative) can be combined with BID approaches to maximise benefits for the creative class. Finally, the question on a positive correlation between BIDs and the creative industry is to be answered and recommendations provided for future synergies.

## 1. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDs)

### 1.1 Background and definition of BIDs

Starting with a very basic definition, a business improvement district can be described as a limited geographical area in which an organisation of property owners and/or businesses owners has voted to collectively invest in local improvements in order to enhance their trading environment. The genesis of BIDs is usually associated with North America. The first BID was established in Toronto in 1970, and BIDs reached the United States several years later (with the Downtown Development District in New Orleans in 1975). Since then, the model has spread throughout the world: BIDs are currently established in more than 16 countries. In the early 2000s, BIDs were introduced in Europe as part of a fast policy transfer across the Atlantic. BIDs have subsequently been established in the UK, Ireland and Germany. Similar initiatives have been also launched in Albania, Serbia, and the Netherlands, among other countries (cf. Pütz, 2008).

The trans-nationalisation of the BID model at various geographical locations, and its adaptation within various economic, political and social contexts, has led to vast differences in the specific names,<sup>1</sup> objectives and structures of this form of public-private partnership. In general, BIDs are designed to support a wide spectrum of programmes and activities primarily aimed at increasing the attractiveness, safety, cleanliness and marketability of the identified area. Typically, services such as additional surveillance, cleaning, or customer-related services are implemented. Interventions in streetscape development are frequently utilised to improve infrastructures (streets, pavement, facades, squares, parks, playgrounds, etc). Image campaigns and the organisation of special events and communication programmes may also be primary results of a BID initiative.

The ways in which BIDs are legitimised or criticised vary greatly within urban development discourse. But, they all have one thing in common: a BID is developed based on the individual initiative of retailers, landowners, restaurateurs and service providers. The overall aim is to counteract the threatened depopulation of urban areas (city centres), redesign one's own district, and foster the economic attractiveness of the area (cf. WSB, 2010; Kreutz, 2010b).

Whereas BIDs are generally appreciated for their orientation towards “participatory regeneration”, they are also subject to increasing criticism for potential consequences with regard to socioeconomic and spatial inequality, and their apparent lack of democratic accountability. Nevertheless, BIDs seem to be continually evolving, taking into account the different models and best practices available in Europe and throughout the world. Indeed, the most recent BIDs are garnering attention for their broadened agenda, in which programmes are stretched “to include corporate social responsibility, employment initiatives, smarter travel, area promotion, business networking and support, and environmental performance and recycling” (cf. Williams/Semper, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Worldwide, there is no standard naming convention for BIDs. The UK, parts of the US (e.g. New York City) and Germany (e.g. Hamburg) have adopted the ‘BID’ terminology;. However, in other states, a BID may go by many other names, including ‘city improvement district’ (CID) in South Africa, ‘business improvement area’ (BIA) or ‘business improvement zone (BIZ)’ in Canada, ‘public improvement district’ (PID) in Texas (US) and ‘special improvement district’ (SID) in Arizona, New Jersey, Utah (US) (cf. Friesecke, 2006: 2).

## 1.2 BIDs in Hamburg

Europe and Germany can be considered avant-garde when it comes to business improvement district practice. Dedicated BID legislation is applied in six<sup>2</sup> of Germany's sixteen Federal States. As a pioneer within Germany, the City of Hamburg established a "Law to Strengthen Retail and Service Areas" ("Gesetz zur Stärkung der Einzelhandels- und Dienstleistungszentren") which entered into force in January 2005. The first two BIDs – *Sachsenteor* and *Neuer Wall* – were set up in the summer of 2005. Hamburg was also the first European city to legally apply the legislative BID model to residential and mixed-use areas (housing improvement districts) in 2007 ("Law to Strengthen Residential Areas through Private Initiatives" – "**Gesetz zur Stärkung von Wohnquartieren durch private Initiativen**") (cf. Kreutz, 2010a).

Today, seven BIDs (including one finalised BID) have been successfully created in Hamburg (see Table 1).

BID	Budget <sup>3</sup> (in €)	Came into effect, duration	Task manager
Alte Holstenstraße <sup>4</sup>	330,000	18/4/09, 3 years	WSB Wirtschaft und Stadtmarketing für die Region Bergedorf e.V., Hamburg
Hohe Bleichen/Heuberg	1,947,500	20/5/09, 5 years	Zum Felde GmbH, Hamburg
Lüneburger Straße	548,000	01/04/09, 3 years	Konsalt Gesellschaft für Stadt- und Regionalanalysen und Projektentwicklung mbH, Hamburg
Neuer Wall	5,966,000	01/10/05, 5 years	Otto Wulff Bauunternehmung GmbH & Co KG, Hamburg
Ochsenzoll	172,653	13/04/10, 3 years	Cima Beratung und Management GmbH, Lübeck
Sachsenteor	600,000	24/06/09, 5 years	WSB Wirtschaft und Stadtmarketing für die Region Bergedorf e.V., Hamburg
Wandsbek Markt	3,990,000	16/07/08, 5 years	Otto Wulff Bauunternehmung GmbH & Co KG, Hamburg

**Table 1: Current BIDs in Hamburg (Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, 2010)**

<sup>2</sup> Bremen, Hamburg, Hessen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein

<sup>3</sup> Only private means

<sup>4</sup> Successor of first German BID (finalised in 2008)

The duration of a BID is up to 5 years, but it can be extended with a new ballot. According to the Hamburg legislation, the BID process consists of four distinct phases (cf. Kreutz, 2010a):

#### *Initial preparation*

The creation of a public-private partnership forms the basis for establishing a BID. A steering committee is established by the private partners (property owners) and representatives from public administration, sometimes also involving external consultants. A business plan concept is developed (including actions and financing), and promoted among the property owners.

#### *Formal application and approval*

If the plan has a backing of at least 15% of the property owners, it is formally presented to the local authority (urban planning department). This authority assesses the proposal – it must be in accordance with urban development goals and public interest –, informs all property owners about

the setting up of the BID and invites them to express objections. The property owners then conduct a ballot. Businesses, residents and other parties have no right to vote; essentially, no formal contribution from these parties is anticipated throughout the entire decision-making process.

#### *Formal designation*

If less than 30% of the landowners vote against the BID, it is formally established via the adoption of a public statute and a contract is stipulated between the public authority and a dedicated management body, which could be an agency, company or individual person.

#### *Implementation*

All property owners within the defined BID area must pay an additional statutory levy based on property values. The management body receives the contribution via the public tax authority and begins to implement the plan. The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce monitors the process.

To serve as contact person and support BID initiatives in Hamburg, a “BID appointee” is named within the Urban Planning and Environment Department in order to provide assistance by moderating BID processes, promoting the BID concept, providing information to the public, interested landowners and supporting district offices (cf. Büttner, 2010).

BIDs in Hamburg are generally focused on activities which make the identified area more attractive for customers and more marketable for property owners. Nevertheless, BIDs could promote new uses and the diversification of a district, and could have a positive impact on a sustainable development of creative industries. Therefore, the following description of the BID Lüneburger Straße will present a BID model in Hamburg which embodies the initial ideas while taking into account the creative industry.

### **1.3 BID Lüneburger Straße (Harburg near Hamburg)**

The pedestrian area “Lüneburger Straße” (400 m long) is an established retail district in Harburg near Hamburg. The area underwent a period of transformation over the past several years, and is currently facing a downward spiral, caused, in part, by the construction of a large shopping centre at the edge of the Harburg city centre. Therefore, in November 2005, a number of property owners joined forces to initiate the creation of a BID. Following extensive discussions, and with the assistance of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, the Harburg Regional Office, the Helmut Schmidt

University and external consultant konsalt GmbH, they managed to establish the BID in 2009 (senate decision: 10 March). On behalf of about 100 property owners, task manager konsalt GmbH is responsible for the implementation of measures described in the business plan, and overall management of the BID (cf. konsalt GmbH, 2010a).

With regard to the topic of the study report, the BID Lüneburger Straße business plan has a special position compared to other Hamburg BID initiatives. The following measures are of primary importance for fostering sustainable development of the Lüneburger Straße:

- Cooperation with stakeholders within the BID and in the immediate surroundings
- Marketing
- Management of public spaces (cf. konsalt GmbH, 2010b)

In terms of cooperation with additional stakeholders, especially from the creative class, periodic events will be implemented with support of museums, performers and the nearby technical university to attract customers and improve the image of the BID. For example, previously implemented events include the *Take Five Jazz Festival*, the *Harburg Summer of Art and Culture* and activities in conjunction with *Kultur.Forscher*. (cf. konsalt GmbH, 2010b). A number of cooperation partners are available to coordinate events and take advantage of synergies between the BID and ongoing initiatives: City Management Harburg, the Chamber of Commerce, the Citizens' Organisation Harburg, art associations (Harburger Kunstverein im Bahnhof e.V., KulturWerkstatt Harburg e.V.), the Stellwerk jazz club and information platform SuedKultur, among others (cf. konsalt GmbH, 2010c).

Like other ongoing BID initiatives, the BID Lüneburger Straße is aimed at strengthening the city centre as a retail district and making the area more attractive, cleaner and more marketable. But, this BID also places great significance on the exchange of experiences with partners and close cooperation with local stakeholders, including the creative industries.

## 2. EXEMPLARY POLICY INSTRUMENTS TO FOSTER CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN HAMBURG

Due to the growing importance of the creative class for sustainable economic and regional development, the City of Hamburg has established new, specific policy instruments to foster creative industries. Several examples are illustrated in the following.

### 2.1 The Cultural and Creative Industries Initiative of the Federal Government – Regional Office Hamburg (“Bundesinitiative Kreativwirtschaft - Regionalbüro Hamburg”)

In 2007, the “Cultural and Creative Industries Initiative of the Federal Government” was founded to increase industry competitiveness and guarantee that creative industries receive the same level of attention as other economic sectors with regard to their role in the economy and their potential to create jobs. The Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media have taken over the primary responsibility. Moreover, the governments of the Federal States, industry associations and a mixture of individual stakeholders support the performance of the initiative. Creative professionals will obtain information on available services, guidance and support programmes, as well as knowledge about new start-ups, via the Federal initiative. Detailed information can be found on the initiative’s website: <http://kultur-kreativwirtschaft.de/KuK/Navigation/root.html>.

In addition, regional contact points such as the “Regional Office Hamburg” provide assistance at the local level to businesses, self-employed professionals and freelancers in the cultural and creative sector. These contact points organise targeted events and services such as consultations, information days and regional networking activities.

To obtain more detailed information about the economic performance and potential of the cultural and creative industries, the German government commissions relevant research reports on a continual basis (cf. Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, 2010).

## 2.2 Hamburg Creative Agency (“Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft mbH”)

The “Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft mbH” was established in 2009 to foster the competitiveness of the creative industry and improve prospective earnings for stakeholders in creative fields in Hamburg. Since March 2010, the tasks of the Hamburg Creative Agency– owned by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg – are (cf. Pressestelle des Senats, Hamburg , 2009):

- Conducting marketing activities to strengthen Hamburg as a location for the creative class
- Property agency service for companies in the creative sector (including data collection on potential properties and searches for workspaces)
- Supporting education measures in the field of creative industries
- Networking
- Development of two creative districts in the city centre over the long term

With an annual budget of €750,000 and 4 to 5 employees, the Creative Agency Hamburg is seen as a beacon project for the creative industry in Hamburg. Moreover, a special fund has been established to promote temporary uses (“Fonds Zwischennutzung städtischer Flächen und Räume”) (cf. Axel Springer AG, 2010a+b). The recently founded Creative Agency Hamburg offers a wide variety of functions: it can support the exchange of learned lessons within ongoing/finalised projects, it can be viewed as a contact point for the various stakeholders (business development agencies, urban planners, persons engaged in the cultural and creative sector, financial administration bodies, etc.), it can provide information about possible funding opportunities and moderate between property owners and the creative industry (cf. BSU, 2010: 85). Its focus is on property agency services for companies in the creative sector, which adds local services to the assistance provided by the federal initiative. Detailed information can be found on the following website: <http://www.kreativgesellschaft.org/>.

## 2.3 Excursus: “Komm in die Gänge” initiative (Gängeviertel Hamburg)

### *Background and history*

In August 2009, a group of about 200 performers (painters, urban planners, illustrators, poets, bohemians, etc.) “squatted” in 12 vacant buildings in the “Gängeviertel” – a closely cropped housing district of about 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> which contains many historical buildings – within the city centre of Hamburg. After the area had been vacant for over seven years and many buildings had fallen into disrepair, a Dutch investor planned to demolish 80% of the older buildings. With the help of the “Komm in die Gänge” sit-in attention was drawn to the general lack of space for performers in Hamburg, to avoid the demolition of buildings in the district. The initiative accused the city of only paying attention to large, prestigious projects and of using performers as an urban planning and policy instrument in order to upgrade urban districts (cf. Gängeviertel e.V, 2009: 1 ff.; Panter, 2009).



Fig. 1: “Komm in die Gänge” campaign – 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of non-renovated living and working space – vacant for you for years! €0 per m<sup>2</sup>! (Hein, 2009)

To work against these methods and following the investors’ inability to pay, the initiative has begun an open dialogue and has been working closely with the Urban Planning Department of the City of Hamburg (cf. Panter, 2009). As a start, the City of Hamburg tolerated the sit-in and the performers have been allowed to use parts of the “Gängeviertel” for exhibitions, concerts, readings and other performances (cf. Hinrichs, 2009). Moreover, the initiative submitted an initial concept to the Urban Planning Department. The overall goals of the initiative for the further development of the “Gängeviertel district” are (cf. Gängeviertel e.V., 2009):

- Openness/(public) accessibility
- Self-determination
- Free space for creative and cultural development
- Revitalisation of the old historical character of the district

The concept attempts to combine spaces for housing, working and public use. Therefore, flats, room for events, rehearsal rooms, rooms for seminars as well as for exhibitions and (private) studios will be created. Special attention has been paid to areas where residents can meet to exchange experiences and ideas.



Fig. 2: Structure of uses (Gängeviertel e.V., 2009: 24)

In addition, the initiative presented ways to finance the reconstruction of the district and provide affordable rooms for performers. It also presented a potential organisational structure for the continuation of the initiative. The plan is to cross-finance the various offers and use a high percentage of personal contributions and grants. Graduated rents (matched to individual means) and credits at reduced interest rates are also being considered. In order to guarantee that the users and inhabitants (performers) of the “Gängeviertel” are able to decide what will happen to the district in the long term, the initiative proposed to install a “Koordinationsgruppe” (coordination group) and a “Belegungskommission” (occupancy commission). The tasks of the coordination group will be to organise and obtain agreement on events and activities. The occupancy commission will be responsible for granting rooms (including uses) (cf. Gängeviertel e.V., 2009).

#### *A flagship project fostering creative industries?*

So far, the initiative has been successful because it not only expressed criticism, it also developed a detailed concept in close cooperation with the involved department. Moreover, the timing for the initiative has been perfect, because the City of Hamburg is very intent on promoting the city as creative metropolitan city. Creative milieus cannot be planned, but good, favourable conditions can be developed. With its approach and concept, the initiative showed that all relevant users of the district should be involved and support the developments. The initiative was not able to complete a formal renovation.

The renovation of the first buildings is planned for the end of 2011. The transformation of the entire district will probably be finished in 2015. The Senate of the City of Hamburg will decide about the concept at the end of December 2010 or in January 2011 (cf. BSU, 2010b). Detailed information can be found on the following website: <http://das-gaengeviertel.info/> (only available in German).

Although the Hamburg Creative Agency could be seen as property agency for people and companies working in the creative sector, no information or statement is available on the cooperation between the initiative and the agency.

### **3. CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN HAMBURG’S BIDS – A POSITIVE CORRELATION? REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As described within this report, BID initiatives can be seen as catalyst for diversification and changes, and for encouraging new uses which have received a great deal of attention in Germany and most parts of Europe. Active alliances, voluntary engagement and action are key elements for successful BID initiatives. The starting point is usually property owners’ interest in a prosperous location, because an attractive location guarantees stable value. Despite the criticism, a tendency can be seen in the most recent best practices, which aim to make BID a more sophisticated tool in spatial planning and city management. While the causality between successful economic performance of cities/towns and the creations of BIDs has been very positively asserted, doubts still exist about the impact of BIDs on the relationship between private and public sphere in the city, and their effects on social cohesion and inclusion. The solution to such disputes should probably be researched in one of the key factors for the success of BIDs: *flexibility*.

It is the flexibility of the BID model that offers the perspective to investigate a potential correlation between creative industries and BIDs. As the legal BID instrument is relatively new in Germany, the correlation between BIDs and creative industries is not easy to estimate. Nevertheless, there often is

a lack of instruments, assistance and information for stakeholders in the creative sector, or stakeholders who would like to cooperate with the creative industry. Thus, the following recommendations can be provided on how to utilise synergies between BID initiatives and creative industries:

- *Including activities which foster creative industries in BID business plans*  
Although BIDs have not pursued a thematic approach, but develop measures to face negative processes within urban areas (city centres),<sup>5</sup> there is the possibility of including activities or measures which foster creative industries in the business plans of BID initiatives (see 1.3). This could include the establishment of annual events (e.g. music festivals or art exhibitions) as well as durable exhibitions in public spaces.
- *Temporary uses*  
Vacant buildings and rooms often have a negative impact on the attractiveness of a district. In addition, the renovation and modernisation of retail shops is time-consuming and costly. As many stakeholders in the creative industry tend to prefer temporary uses and a high level of flexibility and independence, there is the opportunity to take advantage of this factor by temporarily renting rooms to performers or others active in the creative industry. In order to convince property owners to rent to stakeholders from the creative class who are normally not able to pay market value, time-limited agreements which allow a high degree of flexibility and allow the owner to rent to solvent renters, if available, should be created. This could be another measure included in BID business plans to prevent vacancy.
- *Cooperation between ongoing initiatives fostering the creative class and BIDs*  
The problem of a lack of assistance for stakeholders in the creative sector has been tackled by the Cultural and Creative Industries Initiative of the Federal Government and its Regional Office Hamburg, and via the establishment of the Hamburg Creative Agency. Networking between these kinds of initiatives and other existing policy instruments on local, regional and Federal levels, as well as discussions on experiences and lessons learned during projects, are indispensable tools for maximising synergies and spill-over effects. Thereby, BID initiatives should be seen as general contact points for stakeholders in the creative class and, in particular, for the Hamburg Creative Agency. There should be a close cooperation to discuss the inclusion of events and space for exhibitions as well as possibilities for temporary uses.
- *Improving the image of urban districts and creating unique selling propositions*  
Perhaps the most important issue regarding synergies between BIDs and the creative industry could be the creation of unique selling propositions by including stakeholders from the creative class in BID initiatives. Thus, the sustainable initialisation and subsidy of rooms or public spaces provided especially for performers could be a possibility where common funds of the BID initiative are used to balance rental differences. This could provide the district with a new, unique face, based on the choice of performers. In addition, performers will also benefit from this approach.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of **single sector BIDs** has been suggested in Scotland; discussions have been held on whisky visitor centres, golf courses, marinas, financial services (before the crisis), food/books and art areas, although none of these ideas have been implemented. Please visit: [www.bids-scotland.com](http://www.bids-scotland.com) or [www.scotlandstowns.org](http://www.scotlandstowns.org) for more information.

Overall, opportunities could be available for stakeholders in the creative class *and* the BID initiatives. Particularly where legislation allows for flexibility in the use of the BID tool, BIDs seem vastly suitable, both in terms of the services they could provide and the spaces they could be used in.

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**Fig. 1: “Komm in die Gänge” campaign – 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of non-renovated living and working space – vacant for you for years! €0 per m<sup>2</sup>!**

Hein, B. (2009): Gängeviertel Hamburg, art – Das Kunstmagazin, [http://www.art-magazin.de/asset/Image/2009/SZENE/von-welck/zwei\\_ar.jpg](http://www.art-magazin.de/asset/Image/2009/SZENE/von-welck/zwei_ar.jpg), (20.10.2010).

### Fig. 2: Structure of uses

Gängeviertel e.V (2009): Konzept für das Gängeviertel, <http://das-gaengeviertel.info/konzept.html>, (21.10.2010).

## Interview guidelines

with **Stefan Kreutz**, scientific assistant at **HafenCity University Hamburg**, (main area of research: urban improvement districts, transnational European projects), 26/10/2010

and

**Frithjof Büttner**, Hamburg Ministry of City Development and Environment, BID appointee, 29/10/2010.

As part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Programme “Creative City Challenge” project (<http://www.creative-city-challenge.net/de.html>), the study report “*Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), an instrument for fostering creative industries? - Experiences in and lessons learned from Hamburg*” investigates how BID initiatives in Hamburg - and other locations - can have a positive effect on the creative economy. One expected result is the formulation of preliminary policy recommendations on how synergies between BIDs and (stakeholders in) the creative industries can be developed.

1. How long, and in what capacity, have you been involved with BIDs?
2. What, in your opinion, is the key motivating factor for a BID initiative?
3. Why are there a disproportionately large number of BIDs in Hamburg compared to other countries (European cities)?
4. Property owners have a strong interest in attractive locations because of the rental potential and guaranteed value. What, in your opinion, is the role of the growing creative industry sector in this context? To what extent can/should BIDs respond to it?
5. Although BIDs are a relatively new tool in urban development, to what extent do you feel the creative class can benefit/be supported by BIDs? If a potential benefit/support exists, how can it be implemented, and in which areas? (For example, do you see opportunities based on temporary uses or events)? How do you think property owners could be convinced to obtain the active involvement of the creative class in BID initiatives?
6. Do you think there could be conflicts in the involvement of the creative class in BID initiatives?
7. Could you indicate international (European) examples of BID initiatives – whose measures have been developed and implemented – that are directly related to the creative economy?
8. There are various forms of urban improvement districts (e.g., HIDs). Do you think it would be possible to set up “improvement areas/innovation areas” for the creative industries? Could the “Komm in die Gänge” initiative (and the concept for further development of the Gängeviertel district which was presented to the Department of Urban Planning and Environment) be considered an initial approach in that sense? Or do you think it would be more feasible to include the creative class in existing BID initiatives?