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## MAIN SECTION

# Marking a New Chapter in the History of our City. Newspaper Narratives of Proposed Waterfront Star Architecture

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## ABSTRACT

A recurrent claim associated with the development of star architecture buildings along new urban waterfronts in port cities is that star architecture's capacity to garner media exposure for a port city can support its efforts to communicate narratives of urban transformation. Even during the inception phase, a constellation of actors legitimizes these projects by capitalizing on their power to attract media attention. The media play a role in the communication and construction of narratives. This paper shows how newspaper narratives about a proposed star architecture project along the waterfront of a port city communicate transformation proposals. The case study presented is the inception phase of the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Germany. The findings are based on content analysis of 420 newspaper articles, published before the formal endorsement of the project. The findings indicate that newspapers communicated the sense-making value of the Elbphilharmonie based on the visual and emotional power of star architecture. Newspapers introduced notions of identity, citizen identification and Hanseatic particularity into the discourse and played an important role in explaining the promise of the Elbphilharmonie to become a symbol of the city's commitment to the port, the maritime context and the Elbe river.

## KEYWORDS

*Port City; Star Architecture; Narratives; Media; Identity*

## PEER REVIEWED

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## Port cities, new waterfronts and star architecture: introducing a textual research method

The transformation of port zones and historic former-port areas in post-industrial port cities of the Western World forms one of the main chapters of urban regeneration since the late 1970s.<sup>1</sup> The dynamics of globalization and containerization have spurred governments to adapt their ports by constructing new deep harbors and developing open storage sites for containers.<sup>2</sup> In the course of such advancements, the warehouses that had earlier provided storage became obsolete and the old port sites became abandoned. It would be a mistake to consider waterfront redevelopment projects efforts to introduce any new urban functions in a void that could be filled. Hein<sup>3</sup> argues that “since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century waterfronts of port cities had served as the site of exchange and the most important image of a port city, both a maritime business card and a welcome sign for travelers coming over the sea. They showcased a city’s international character and the presence of global trade and established or reinforced their character and function as gateways of the world”.

According to Marshall,<sup>4</sup> the phenomenon of ‘new urban waterfront’ has played a key role in the economic development and image-making of post-industrial cities worldwide and in Europe especially; the waterfront has become a testbed for ‘new city-making paradigms’, as well as an expression of ‘culture’. As such, while waterfront development focuses on local urban transformation processes, these are intricately linked to transitions in a city’s relationship to its port economically, socially, culturally and spatially; the term port city transformation refers to the process of change in these relationships. Although the ‘model’ of waterfront development was first consolidated and became popular in North America, the US in particular, in Europe many examples of this strategy in which waterfront becomes a driver for the future urban development can be identified: in the United Kingdom (Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff), in France (Le Havre, Dunkerque, St Nazaire), in Germany (Hamburg, Bremen, Kiel), in Spain (Valencia, Malaga, Cadiz), in Italy (Genoa, Venice, Naples, Trieste) –as well as the well-known cases of the London Docklands or Port Vell in Barcelona.<sup>5</sup> As part of a broader redevelopment plan, some port cities constructed cultural facilities as star architecture projects along their transforming waterfronts. By ‘star architecture’, we are referring to

1 Brian Stewart Hoyle, “The Port-City Interface: Trends, Problems and Examples,” *Geoforum* 20, no. 4 (1989): 429–35, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-7185\(89\)90026-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-7185(89)90026-2).

2 Carola Hein, “Port Cities,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, ed. Peter Clark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199589531.013.0043>.

3 *Ibid.*, 5.

4 Richard Marshall, ed., *Waterfronts in Post-Industrial Cities*. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 4.

5 Rinio Bruttomesso, “Complexity on the Urban Waterfront,” in *Waterfronts in Post-Industrial Cities*, ed. Richard Marshall (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2004).

architecture that is developed, perceived or promoted as a transformative agent of change owing to the exceptional recognition status of particular architects and their architecture.<sup>6</sup> Examples of such projects are Porto Antico in Genoa (1992), designed by Renzo Piano, the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet in Oslo (2008), designed by Snøhetta, and the Musée des Confluences in Lyon (2014), designed by Coop HIMME(l)blau.

Although the topics of new urban waterfronts and port city relationships have been well-studied by scholars since the 1980s, the interplay between star architecture, culture and the port city relationship remains relatively unexplored. A recent systematic study on culture-led waterfront redevelopments in Europe has been conducted by Ponzini and Akhavan.<sup>7</sup> Based on their analysis of 340 projects in the period 1990-2015, they underline the “contribution of cultural facilities designed by a star architect as part of a long-term program for the regeneration of waterfronts, of broader planning visions for economic restructuring, of a set of heavy infrastructural investments, of the transformation of public space and surrounding areas through master plans”.<sup>8</sup> Development of star architecture projects as part of waterfront redevelopment plans in port cities must be understood as a kind of identity work, in which a constellation of actors pushes for the development of these projects with the aim of contributing to the communication of an imagined collective identity. Such a project of collective identity work allows collective identities to be *recognized* by the collectivity and by others. Fukuyama<sup>9</sup> links contemporary collective identity work to demands for recognition, visibility and dignity. We argue that star architecture projects contribute to such collective identity work by amplifying visibility and facilitating the recognition of collective identities. As such, star architecture projects generate and support narratives linked to collective identity. During this process, language is mobilized to generate a discourse that constructs narratives. In this paper, we investigate how a proposed star architecture project and narratives are linked. We define narratives as sense-making depictions that influence the way in which an audience perceives a reality presented by a narrator.<sup>10</sup> A narrative transports emotions and value. The development of a narrative precedes the decision to hire a certain architect or to commission a certain design. In that sense, the narrative makes the case for a certain architecture. Although a narrative is constructed discursively, mostly by politicians and

6 Nadia Alaily-Mattar, Joelean Hall, and Alain Thierstein, “The Problematization of ‘Star Architecture’ in Architecture Research,” *European Planning Studies*, March 4, 2021, 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2021.1889476>.

7 Davide Ponzini and Mina Akhavan, “Star Architecture Spreads in Europe: Culture-Led Waterfront Projects Between 1990 and 2015,” in *About Star Architecture: Reflecting on Cities in Europe*, ed. Nadia Alaily-Mattar, Davide Ponzini, and Alain Thierstein (Basel: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 69–94, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23925-1\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23925-1_6).

8 *Ibid.*, 88.

9 Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

10 Roland Barthes and Lionel Dussit, “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,” *New Literary History* 6, no. 2 (1975): 237–72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/468419>.

journalists, a narrative influences the choice for a certain architecture, which then goes on to develop or even transform the narrative.

A recurrent claim associated with the development of star architecture on waterfronts is that star architecture's capacity to garner media exposure can support a port city's identity work and its efforts to communicate narratives that explain the value of urban transformation. However, despite of the centrality of the role of the media, little evidence exists of the input of the media particularly in the inception phases of proposed projects, which is where much of the legitimization by a constellation of actors takes place. Newspapers are an important medium for the communication of narratives, and therefore their articles become a suitable site for the observation of linguistic aspects of how narratives are developed.

In this paper, we have adopted a qualitative single case-study approach and used the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Germany, as our case study. We conducted qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles, a research method which is common in media studies. Findings are based on a close reading and analysis of limited amount of text pertaining to newspaper articles. Garcia<sup>11</sup> notes "Back in the 1990s, Parisi and Holcomb (1994) warned against the existing tension in news narrative, which 'typically mediate between the newspaper's economic self-interest in regional development and the journalistic ideal of public service'". Newspaper reporting can reflect, support or repudiate public perceptions. Journalists and editors are opinion formers. Their reporting can contribute to fostering the reception of narratives by the readers. However, in this paper we do not isolate the voices of individual journalists, nor do we consider the political inclination of the newspapers. Rather, we consider the aggregated voice of the corpus of articles as the newspaper narratives. The focus of our interest is how newspaper narratives about an emerging star architecture project proposed on the waterfront of a port city communicate a port city's commitment to transformation and the recreation of a new maritime culture. It is beyond the scope of the paper to investigate the political motivations or the make-up of actor constellations that initiate or communicate such narratives. It is also important to note that we did not intend to look for evidence that would support a claim that a change took place in perceptions by local communities owing to such newspaper narratives. Nor did we investigate how these narratives of a proposed project changed once it was approved and its construction started. Rather our analysis focuses on how discourse evolved before the existence of a concrete architecture proposal and we critically examine how this discourse revealed the expectations and objectives of the role that star architecture was expected to play for the city. Hence, we restricted the articles to those that were published during the time period from the inception of a project

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11 Beatriz Garcia, "If Everyone Says so ...' Press Narratives and Image Change in Major Event Host Cities," *Urban Studies* 54, no. 14 (November 2017): 3178–98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016674890>.

on that specific site to the formal approval of *the* Elbphilharmonie project by the Hamburg State parliament. We have identified and extracted the newspaper articles from the on-line news source LexisNexis Database. Using the keywords listed in Table 1, we identified 420 articles, covering 15 different newspapers and newsmagazines, which reported on the project. Of these articles, 63% were published by the publishing house Axel Springer in the newspaper *Die Welt* and its Sunday edition *Welt am Sonntag*. Although this high percentage might seem to limit our analysis and lead to questions about its representativeness, this in itself is a significant finding. It means that during the inception period one publishing house had a significant effect on shaping the discourse. It is important to note that only text can be retrieved through *LexisNexis*. Although it would have been useful to analyze the images that were circulated in these articles, this was not possible using the corpus that was analyzed. The articles cited in this paper were all originally published in German. All translations into English are our own.

Time Frame	Language	Type	Total #articles (collected via keywords before reviewing)	Total #relevant articles (that were analyzed)
Before Nov., 3, 2005	German	Reports & newswires	548	420
Search keywords: Elbphilharmonie OR Kaispeicher OR Elb-philharmonie OR Philharmonie AND Hamburg				

TAB. 1 Search results of LexisNexis Database

## Brief background of Hamburg and the Elbphilharmonie

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg is a city state in Germany, located south east of the Elbe River's estuary mouth on the North Sea at the junction of the Elbe River with the Alster and Bille Rivers. Hamburg's ancient river harbor enabled the city to become an important trading center on a regional and continental scale. Over time, the harbor of Hamburg became the largest port in Germany and the fate of the city has been linked to the economic significance of its port. Even in the 1920s, the catchphrase "Tor zur Welt" (Gateway to the World) was Hamburg's slogan,<sup>12</sup> which captures the city's involvement with maritime trade and the connectivity that was made possible through its port.

Hamburg's harbor was originally located on the northern bank of the river Elbe. Since medieval times, harbor activity has been physically integrated with the city: ships and barges would transport goods by canal to

12 Lars Amenda, "Welthafenstadt' und 'Tor zur Welt': Selbstdarstellung und Wahrnehmung der Hafensstadt Hamburg 1900-1970," *Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv* 29 (2006): 137–58.

warehouses connected to the offices and houses of traders.<sup>13</sup> A warehouse district, the Speicherstadt, was developed in the late 19th century, which encompasses the site that would later house the Elbphilharmonie; it was home to a former prominent landmark of the city, namely, the Kaiserpeicher, an imposing building with a special tower and a time ball clock that can be seen from afar and used by ships to set their clocks. Damaged during WW2, the old Kaiserpeicher, along with the clock tower, was demolished. A new building called Kaispeicher was built in the early 1960s as a modern storage facility, notably lacking a special tower or any symbolic ambition. However, during the 1960s, the port of Hamburg was losing its importance: first the iron curtain cut it off from its hinterland and then the advent of containerization decreased the demand for storage facilities. Due to these trends, the waterfront in the port area around the Speicherstadt and buildings such as the Kaispeicher lost their functions and historic importance.

As the City of Hamburg owns most of this land through the harbor company, in the 1990s Hamburg Senate decided to repurpose the warehouse district and transform a 157-hectare former harbor land area next to it into a mixed-use urban district through a city-owned subsidiary. This urban transformation project is called HafenCity, and the district itself would later be called HafenCity. With this project the city intended to re-establish the connection between the River Elbe and the city centre, giving Hamburg a new direction for growth, down to and along the river".<sup>14</sup> The 1999 winning international competition entry to the masterplan of HafenCity by KCAP Architects & Planners, ASTOC Architects and Planners, and Hamburgplan AG envisages the development of an architectural landmark on the strategic site of the Kaispeicher, which is located in HafenCity.<sup>15</sup> In 2001, the city launched an international architecture competition for a project called MediaCityPort, an office building, on that site. The competition was won by the Dutch firm Benthem Crowel.<sup>16</sup> In 2001, art-historian Jana Marco and Hamburg architect and real estate developer Alexander Gérard asked the office of Gérard's former classmates Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron to produce a counterproposal in the form of a draft for an alternative architecture project. Herzog and De Meuron won the Pritzker Prize in that same year. Coincidentally in 2001, the Hamburg municipality leadership had changed after four decades of Social Democratic leadership to Christian Democratic. A wind of change was blowing in Hamburg. Marco and Gerard claim that their involvement came as a reaction against the

13 Carola Hein, "Port Cities and Urban Wealth: Between Global Networks and Local Transformations," *International Journal of Global Environmental Issues* 13, no. 2/3/4 (2014): 350, <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJGENVI.2014.064510>.

14 Dirk Schubert, "Waterfront Transformations and City/Port Interface Areas in Hamburg," *Dimensión Empresarial* 13, no. 1 (2014): 15, <https://doi.org/10.15665/rde.v13i1.335>.

15 ASTOC's firm webpage shows the masterplan <https://astoc.de/en/projects/urban-planning/masterplan-hafencity-hamburg>, accessed April 14, 2021.

16 The project is featured on Benthem Crowel's webpage <https://www.benthencrowel.com/projects/mediacityport>, accessed April 14, 2021.



FIG. 1 The Elbphilharmonie (Image by Carola Hein)

architectural mundanity of MediaCityPort. From 2002 to 2003, they lobbied for the idea of an iconic concert hall placed on top of the Kaispeicher and designed by the two newly crowned star architects. In 2003, they introduced Herzog & de Meuron's visualization to the media, launching what later would be called the Elbphilharmonie to the public. This proposal, henceforth, garnered media and civic support. The German weekly news magazine *Stern*<sup>17</sup> reported favorably on the proposal in June 2003. The first big article appeared locally in the *Hamburger Morgenpost* in August 2003. A few months later, the Hamburg Senate abandoned the MediaCityPort project and eventually in October 2005, the Hamburg State Parliament consensually approved building the Elbphilharmonie on the basis of a feasibility study and authorized the Hamburg Senate to award the project.

It is quite remarkable that the building was awarded to Herzog & de Meuron without an open call for bids or architectural competition. Balke et al.<sup>18</sup> argue that an overarching euphoria and enthusiasm made political party barriers virtually meaningless and was sufficiently powerful to marginalize any critical comments and questions regarding unclear financial, contractual or constructional issues. This collectively shared euphoria in the initial planning phase was followed by scandals related to setbacks, conflicts and delays of the construction phase, which commenced in 2007. Most notable were the exuberant increase in costs from a projected cost of 186.7 million Euros in the first feasibility study in 2005 to €241

17 "Ufo an der Elbe; Die Hamburger Hafencity wird Europas größtes Bauprojekt. Mit einer PHILHARMONIE wollen zwei Architekten dem Ganzen eine Krone aufsetzen," *Stern*, June 26, 2003.

18 Jan Balke, Paul Reuber, and Gerald Wood, "Iconic Architecture and Place-Specific Neoliberal Governmentality: Insights from Hamburg's Elbe Philharmonic Hall," *Urban Studies* 55, no. 5 (April 2018): 997–1012, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017694132>.

million in 2007, to 789 million Euros in 2013. Juridical struggles resulted in a temporary construction standstill but were resolved eventually in 2013. The Elbphilharmonie project was completed and hosted its first concert in January 2017 [Fig. 1]. The final price tag was €866 million! (See a report in *Zeit Online*<sup>19</sup> on the evolution of the costs.)

## Analyzing the inception narratives in relation to port city transformation

As indicated by the newspaper coverage, before the idea was proposed for a concert hall on top of the Kaispeicher the city communicated its intent to build on this site an exceptional landmark that would support port-city transformation. Even before the inception of a star architecture project, the narrative of an architecture project on this particular site was framed around expectations that it would contribute to port city transformation. In 1999, *Die Welt* reported that city planners envisaged on this strategic site “a landmark modeled on the Sydney Opera House”.<sup>20</sup> Newspapers reminded their readers that the Kaiserspeicher of 1875, with the tower and the time ball, had been a landmark of the city.<sup>21</sup> The MediaCityPort was portrayed as becoming a flagship. Indeed, the concept of the initial project MediaCityPort was framed in the competition brief around “increasing Hamburg’s importance as Germany’s digital capital... representing an initial spark for an urban and economic development in the new HafenCity”.<sup>22</sup> This was picked up in several newspaper reports which indicated that MediaCityPort had the potential to position Hamburg as “Silicon Valley an der Elbe”<sup>23</sup> and that the building could become a “Medien-Mekka”.<sup>24</sup> From 1999 till June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2003, MediaCityPort was described as an exceptional project in the newspapers. However, exceptionality was related in the newspaper articles to the exceptionality of the location, the previous building and the particular moment in the evolution of the city. MediaCityPort was linked to the exceptionality of the efforts to build the HafenCity as a “Milliardenprojekt” of a new city on the port.<sup>25</sup>

19 Florian Zinnecker, “Lohnt sich das Spektakel?,” *ZEIT-online*, January 10, 2019, [https://www.zeit.de/hamburg/2019-01/elbphilharmonie-hamburg-bau-kosten-besucher-konzerte-bilanz?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F](https://www.zeit.de/hamburg/2019-01/elbphilharmonie-hamburg-bau-kosten-besucher-konzerte-bilanz?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F).

20 Gisela Schütte, “Die Hamburger Hafencity wächst Block für Block; Das Hanseatic Trade Center wird zum Eingangstor des neuen Stadtteils - Höchste Mieten der Stadt,” *Die Welt*, April 9, 1999.

21 Gisela Schütte, “Der Kaispeicher A wird zum Medien-Mekka; Konsortium plant Zentrum für 300 Millionen Mark -Rund 1000 neue Arbeitsplätze - Fertigstellung 2004,” *Die Welt*, January 27, 2001.

22 “Wettbewerbe Entscheidungen: MediaCityPort,” *BauNetz*, accessed May 31, 2021, [https://www.baunetz.de/wettbewerbe/MediaCityPort\\_99358.html?infopage=81495](https://www.baunetz.de/wettbewerbe/MediaCityPort_99358.html?infopage=81495).

23 Ralf Wegner, “Silicon Valley an der Elbe,” *HORIZONT*, January 24, 1999.

24 Schütte, “Der Kaispeicher A wird zum Medien-Mekka; Konsortium plant Zentrum für 300 Millionen Mark -Rund 1000 neue Arbeitsplätze - Fertigstellung 2004.”

25 “HAFENCITY; Milliardenprojekt: Die neue Stadt am Hafen,” *Immobilien Zeitung*, September 27, 2001.

The article "HafenCity Hamburg; Neue Gründerzeit am Wasser"<sup>26</sup> explicitly links structural transformation, containerization and the transformation of the waterfront, speculating that MediaCityPort will be a flagship of the future HafenCity. "Kaispeicher A, which will mutate into the MediaCityPort with a glass tower, will stand in the middle of the water, with the city center within reach when you look out the window".<sup>27</sup> Although first doubts about the MediaCityPort project emerged in early 2002, with reports of "rumors of [the project's] end... [and]... political scramble for this prestigious project"<sup>28</sup> these concerns revolved around the economic viability of an office building. The newspaper coverage did not dispute the necessity of building a landmark. The MediaCityPort continued to be described as an ambitious project with implications for all other projects of HafenCity,<sup>29</sup> and as "courage for a big pitch".<sup>30</sup> Hence, even before the inception of a star architecture project, the narrative of an architecture project on this particular site was framed in the newspapers around expectations of it contributing to port city transformation.

In June 2003, Marco and Gerard first launched to the public the idea of a concert hall on top of the Kaispeicher, designed by two star architects. Beginning in June 2003 the longitudinal development of the number of articles reporting on an architecture project for that strategic site of the Kaispeicher shows a sharp increase [Fig. 2]. In addition, there was a change in content, garnering considerable qualifiers for the proposed building [Fig. 3], which made the case for an exceptional star architecture. Calls for a landmark accelerated, with journalists repeating the rhetorical ploys used by proponents of the project. Indeed, after that date, the exceptionality of the architecture took center stage in the newspaper coverage; the vocabulary used to describe such exceptionality revolved around sensationalism, spectacularity and otherworldliness. The Elbphilharmonie was a "Musentempel",<sup>31</sup> "UFO on the Elbe",<sup>32</sup> *Die Welt*<sup>33</sup> described MediaPortCity as a "glass tower" in June 2002, and one year later *Die Welt* describes the Elbphilharmonie as a "glass palace".<sup>34</sup> The Elbphilharmonie project was legitimized by references to the status of its architects as

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26 "HAFENCITY HAMBURG; Neue Gründerzeit am WasserHafencity-Fest bringt Leben in den Stadtteil der Zukunft," *Immobilien Zeitung*, March 15, 2001.

27 Gisela Schütte, "Hafencity-Fest bringt Leben in den Stadtteil der Zukunft," *Die Welt*, June 25, 2002.

28 Gisela Schütte, "Hamburgs Hafencity vor ungewisser Zukunft; Planer verärgert über politisches Gerangel um Renommier-Projekt - Kaispeicher-Abriss wieder in der Kritik," *Die Welt*, October 30, 2002.

29 Martin Kopp, "Mut zum großen Wurf," *Die Welt*, October 30, 2002.

30 Ibid.

31 Gisela Schütte, "Gutachten prüft Chancen der gläsernen Philharmonie auf dem Kaispeicher; Musentempel auf dem Dach?," *Welt am Sonntag*, October 5, 2003.

32 "Ufo an der Elbe; Die Hamburger Hafencity wird Europas größtes Bauprojekt. Mit einer PHILHARMONIE wollen zwei Architekten dem Ganzen eine Krone aufsetzen."

33 Schütte, "Hafencity-Fest bringt Leben in den Stadtteil der Zukunft."

34 Gisela Schütte, "Ein Glaspalast für Hamburgs Musik; Spektakulärer Plan für neues Gebäude über Speicher in der Hafencity - Konzertsäle für 3000 Besucher," *Die Welt*, June 26, 2003.

being star architects<sup>35</sup> from the world league<sup>36</sup> and even by the fact that foreign newspapers were reporting on the project.<sup>37</sup> Hence, the necessity for an exceptional star architecture project was amplified almost uncritically by the newspapers that adopted and circulated the rhetoric of the project's proponents. The narrative changed from one in which architecture supports port city transformation to one in which star architecture is the spearhead of transformation.

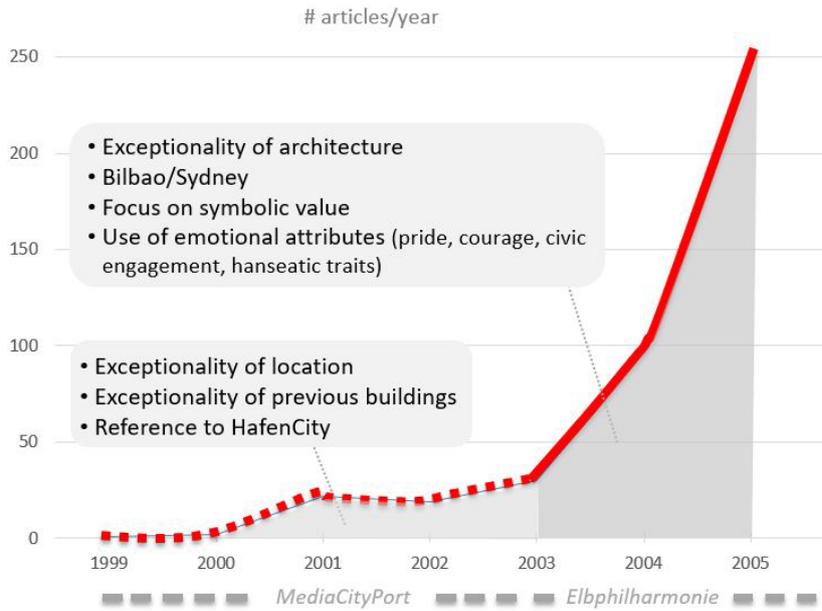


FIG. 2 Development of articles accessed in LexisNexis

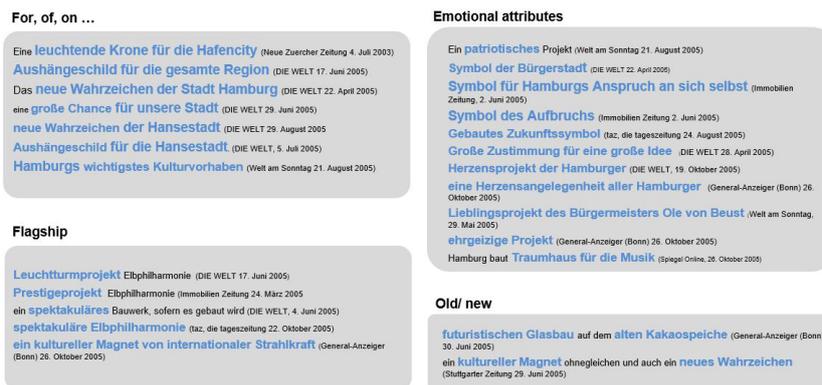


FIG. 3 Qualifiers of the Elbphilharmonie in articles during the inception period

35 Hajo Schiff, "Zwei Gesichter ; Er schuf IBM-Hochhaus und filigrane Villen: Dem Architekten Werner Kallmorgen widmet das Ernst Barlach Haus erstmals eine große Schau," taz, die tageszeitung, July 7, 2003.

36 Berthold Seewald, "Elbphilharmonie nimmt sich Berlin zum Vorbild," Die Welt, April 28, 2005.

37 Gisela Schütte, "Das Ausland lobt das neue Hamburg; Zahlreiche wohlwollende Stadtplanungs-Kritiken - Die Stadt verschreibt sich einen gewaltigen Wachstumsschub," Die Welt, September 13, 2004.

After the introduction of Marco and Gerard's proposal of a star architecture project, the visuality of the project's architecture and the power of its image to accentuate the city's visibility became fodder for the media. Newspapers reported on how the image was being used to advertise the city: "Now the image of the new 'Elbphilharmonie' is already being used in city advertising - under the slogan 'growing city', with the help of which Hamburg wants to stay out of the depressing discussion about shrinking cities... A slogan can also be good politics. The image of a piece of bold architecture as a philharmonic hall over the Elbe ... has actually made city history".<sup>38</sup> "A built symbol with a visual power like the Sydney Opera House would advertise HafenCity and reinforce the goal of making Hamburg a leading metropolis culturally as well";<sup>39</sup> "an architectural spectacle that offers all the prerequisites to finally bring Hamburg a long-awaited world reputation in architecture".<sup>40</sup> Continual reports on the visuality of the building aimed to sensitize the readership to the recognition value of the building and the power of its image to support the city's quests for recognition and visibility, which supposedly have been "long-awaited".<sup>41</sup> There were even reports on the receptiveness of this visuality by the citizens. "Somebody said that the citizens were not interested in architecture: A single picture was able to turn the entire political and planning opinion of the city by 180 degrees".<sup>42</sup> During the period 2003-2005, the Elbphilharmonie project was described as a landmark that could aid the positioning of HafenCity, Hamburg and its region at scales ranging from that of northern Europe to Europe and worldwide. References were made to the city of Bilbao, urging Hamburg to be not only as exciting as Bilbao but also as daring.<sup>43</sup> More allegories were made to the Sydney Opera House. The Elbphilharmonie was "a building like the Sydney Opera House ... [it] advertises Hamburg in illustrated books around the world",<sup>44</sup> "a promotional building (ein werbewirksames Bauwerk)".<sup>45</sup> Hamburg was depicted as seeking to replicate a "Sydney-Effekt"<sup>46</sup> not long after the city of Hamburg had failed a national bid to host the Olympic games of 2012, which incidentally Sydney had hosted in 2000. One newspaper article explains this as follows: "A James Bond film was shot in Hamburg a few years ago. The first question the director asked was where in the city is the building by

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38 "Von Sydney lernen heißt bauen lernen; Die von Herzog & de Meuron geplante neue Philharmonie soll Hamburgs Hafencity aus der Lethargie reißen," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, August 27, 2004.

39 "Sydney-Effekt," *taz, die tageszeitung*, January 13, 2005.

40 "Von Sydney lernen heißt bauen lernen; Die von Herzog & de Meuron geplante neue Philharmonie soll Hamburgs Hafencity aus der Lethargie reißen."

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Katja Engler and Gisela Schütte, "Wahrzeichen von europaweiter Strahlkraft; Hinter verschlossenen Türen beraten die Leiter der führenden Konzerthallen der Welt Fragen zur künftigen Elbphilharmonie," *Die Welt*, August 25, 2004.

44 Gisela Schütte, "Geister-Debatte um neue Philharmonie," *Die Welt*, August 28, 2003.

45 Ibid.

46 "Sydney-Effekt."

which the world can tell that we are in Hamburg. No answer was given to the director and so he chose the Atlantic Hotel. We now know how important the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the Opera in Sydney are for a metropolis. The Philharmonie could play this role in Hamburg".<sup>47</sup> Hence, the potential positive economic and cultural effects of the project were discussed in reference to the project's supposed recognition value and its capacity to increase the city's exposure, thus leading to a competitive advantage. Newspapers propagated the notion of the visual power of star architecture and its capacity to generate recognition. With the introduction of the idea of a star architecture project visuality became a central element of the narrative.

Significant emphasis was placed on communicating the idea that the symbolic value of the Elbphilharmonie manifests itself not only in its landmark value but also in terms of its sense-making value. Especially in the period preceding the formal endorsement of the project by the Hamburg Senate, the project was increasingly presented in the media using emotional attributes. The project was described as possessing power to counter the negative condition of the city. It could "pull Hamburg away from lethargy"<sup>48</sup> because "the magic of architecture will work".<sup>49</sup> The emerging project was also associated with an optimistic mood in the city.<sup>50</sup> "The Elbphilharmonie could be a symbol for breakthrough/awakening (Aufbruch)",<sup>51</sup> a symbol for Hamburg's claim to itself.<sup>52</sup> When the question of funding became a concern, the project was presented as symbol for a "Bürgerstadt",<sup>53</sup> "a patriotic project",<sup>54</sup> an "affair of the heart (Herzensangelegenheit) for all Hamburgers"<sup>55</sup> with calls for a campaign similar to that of the Dresden Frauenkirche to make the Elbphilharmonie a "heart project (Herzensprojekt) for Hamburgers".<sup>56</sup> In this period, star architecture was legitimized by notions of identity and citizen identification. It was a project for all Hamburgers. To strengthen this argument,

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47 Oliver Schirg and Matthias Iken, "Wir müssen mehr tun; Wo muß Hamburg besser werden? Finanzsenator Wolfgang Peiner (CDU) hat konkrete Vorstellungen," *Die Welt*, April 2, 2005.

48 "Von Sydney lernen heißt bauen lernen; Die von Herzog & de Meuron geplante neue Philharmonie soll Hamburgs Hafencity aus der Lethargie reißen."

49 Katja Engler, "Die Magie der Architektur wird wirken; Unterstützung und Beifall für geplante Elbphilharmonie - Leiter der führenden deutschen Konzerthäuser diskutieren in Hamburg," *Die Welt*, November 5, 2004.

50 Ludwig Görtz and Oliver Schirg, "Hamburg muß sich von den engen Fesseln der Stadtgrenzen befreien; Der Unternehmer Ludwig Görtz schreibt über seine Vision Hamburg 2015," *Die Welt*, May 19, 2005.

51 Klaus Göppert, "Hamburg, die wachsende Stadt," *Immobilien Zeitung*, June 2, 2005.

52 Ibid.

53 Matthias Iken, "Symbol Der Bürgerstadt," *Die Welt*, April 22, 2005.

54 Katja Engler, "Ein patriotisches Projekt," *Welt am Sonntag*, August 20, 2005, <https://www.welt.de/print-wams/article131221/Ein-patriotisches-Projekt.html>.

55 Carola Grosse-Wilde, "Die Hansestadt will Weltniveau: KONZERTHAUS: Die Elbphilharmonie soll ein neues Wahrzeichen der Stadt Hamburg werden. Heute faellt die Entscheidung ueber den Bau des futuristischen, 186 Millionen Euro teuren Glasbaus auf dem alten Kakaospeicher," *General-Anzeiger (Bonn)*, October 26, 2005.

56 Nicole Paganini and Stefan Flohr, "CDU und Grüne stimmen für Bau der Elbphilharmonie," *Die Welt*, October 19, 2005.

newspapers tapped onto the Hanseatic particularity of the city with the notion of the Hanseatic being implicitly understood by the readers and not necessitating much explanation or elaboration. The project was linked to “what it means to be Hanseatic”,<sup>57</sup> the financing builds on its Hanseatic tradition.<sup>58</sup> “According to the Senate, “an incomparable Hanseatic landmark is being created here”.<sup>59</sup> The notion of citizen identification and the vocabulary of optimism, patriotism, citizenship and identity were raised by politicians and public officials and then went on to be reported on in the news. *Spiegel Online* cites three prominent local politicians in one article.<sup>60</sup> “The Elbphilharmonie is a landmark with which the people of Hamburg can identify, of which they can be proud and a landmark that will be freely accessible to all Hamburg residents ... Like the Eiffel Tower is connected with Paris, Big Ben with London and the Brandenburg Gate with Berlin - this is how the Elbphilharmonie will be identified with Hamburg all over the world in the future ... The planned building [is] a ‘new city symbol’”. By linking the Elbphilharmonie with emotional attributes, media reports produced a sense-making depiction that transported emotions and values to the Hamburger readership and explained to citizens the direction the city was headed, while taking them along. It is worth noting that this effort to use the Elbphilharmonie for sense making was quite explicit. It was reported on quite elaborately in the media: “The development of HafenCity is already attracting international attention. But that is especially true for the professional world. You cannot imagine much by that. With the Elbphilharmonie, the HafenCity would get a symbol of the aspiration with which Hamburg pursues urban development, and also of the aspiration that the city of Hamburg itself places on its future”.<sup>61</sup> Newspapers integrated the emotional appeal of star architecture into the narratives which they circulated. These explained the necessity for the emerging project to address supposed deficits in recognition and visibility.

## Visual and emotional power of star architecture

Our findings indicate that the narrative of port city transformation prepared the ground and made the case for the development of star architecture along new urban waterfronts. However, the introduction of the initial ideas regarding star architecture accentuated the narrative of port city transformation. After the first introduction of the idea of a star architecture project, the exceptionality of architecture took center stage in the

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57 Peter Krause, “Ein wenig hanseatischer Aufbruch mit Gidon Kremer,” *Die Welt*, January 14, 2005.

58 Seewald, “Elbphilharmonie nimmt sich Berlin zum Vorbild.”

59 “Geld für Glas,” *taz, die tageszeitung*, September 27, 2005.

60 “Hamburg baut Traumhaus fuer die Musik,” *Spiegel Online*, October 26, 2005, <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/elbphilharmonie-hamburg-baut-traumhaus-fuer-die-musik-a-381851.html>.

61 Göppert, “Hamburg, die wachsende Stadt.”

newspapers, with repeated mentions of sensationalism, spectacularity and otherworldliness. The repeated reports on the promise of engaging two architects, whose skill was legitimized by the authority of a prize and the power of visuality of architecture, not only set the stage for a spectacular star architecture but also supported the recourse to emotional attributes which linked the project to the identity of the city in which the port was an essential element. Newspapers introduced notions of identity, citizen identification and Hanseatic particularity into the discourse and played an important role in explaining the promise of the Elbphilharmonie to become a symbol of the city's commitment to the port, the maritime context and the Elbe River. They connected the emerging waterfront star architecture to emotional attributes such as pride and courage. By doing so, newspapers played a role in developing and communicating a narrative of the Elbphilharmonie, one which explained the Elbphilharmonie as a symbol of the city's commitment to turn its attention to the port and to the river. This narrative sought to influence the way in which readers made sense of the emerging waterfront star architecture and by extension the reality of port city transformation in Hamburg.

These findings show how a proposed star architecture on the waterfront was first discursively constructed and how this process of discursive construction used the visual and emotional power of star architecture. These efforts were directed by a constellation of actors to whom fostering a role of the port in the imagined identity of the citizens of Hamburg mattered. While it was beyond the objective and scope of this paper to investigate the motivations of these actors and their identities, our findings raise important questions about how the process of star architecture production can be a medium for negotiating and constructing power relationships in the city rather than just reflecting existing ones. One must keep in mind that the decision for port city transformation is foremost a political one. Such projects are developed in a particular phase in the history of the evolution of these cities, one in which the symbolic power of strategic sites was disrupted and a search for carriers of identity was ongoing. In this process, even before an architecture is built, its visual and emotional power is used discursively to serve political interests.

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