



MP4 WP1.3 Transnational Assessment of Practice



Case study report:
HafenCity, Hamburg

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Introduction

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg is Germany’s second largest city (after Berlin) with nearly 1.8 million inhabitants. Hamburg has a metropolitan region with more than 4.3 million inhabitants and is Europe’s largest non-capital city. Hamburg City-State is one of the 16 German Federal States which has a degree of autonomy and legislative powers in several fields. The City-State parliament is known as the *Buergerschaft* and the government is the *Senate*. The head of the Senate and the City-State’s Prime Minister is the First Mayor. The government is divided into nine Ministries or Departments, each one headed by a Senator. The Ministry for Urban Development and the Environment (*Behoerde fuer Stadtentwicklung Umwelt*) is responsible for Hamburg’s overall urban development.

The city is divided into seven administrative districts (*Bezirke*): Altona, Bergedorf, Eimsbuettel, Hamburg-Mitte, Hamburg-Nord, Harburg and Wandsbek. All of them are the size of large cities (with between 117,000 and 407,000 residents) with their own city-centres. The districts have their own elected parliaments (*Bezirksversammlung*) and their own administration (*Bezirksamt*). The level of the district is comparable to the Municipality or Local Authority elsewhere in Europe, while the Senate represents the regional Laender-level, i.e. between Federal government and Local Authority level. In many relevant policy areas, the districts are strongly dependent on the City-State structures, i.e. the Senate and the Ministries.

Context¹

The HafenCity is a prominent city centre development project which will increase the size of Hamburg’s city centre (in Hamburg-Mitte) by 40% by 2025. 800m from the town hall, the development area is situated directly between the historic *Speicherstadt* warehouse district and the River Elbe. This brownfield development area is 157 hectares in size, with 123 hectares of land area. By 2025, a new “city within the city” will be completed with a mix of residential units, businesses, culture, leisure, tourism and retail with approx. 1.8-2 million m² of floor area under construction. Approximately 53% of this is for offices and commercial uses and around 33% is residential). HafenCity will ultimately be home to 12,000 residents and provide more than 40,000 jobs.



¹ All facts and figures used in this case study regarding the HafenCity are from several publications by HafenCity Hamburg GmbH (latest update March 2010) – see for further information www.hafencity.com

The creation of public open spaces on the waterfront has particular importance for the development and is based on a specific concept for open spaces which is outlined below. The first prominent squares and spaces have already been completed.

The envisaged total investment volume is €5-5.5 billion private investments from investors, companies and housing associations etc. with approx. €1.3 billion public investment. The development is managed by HafenCity Hamburg GmbH, a development company owned by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

The central aims of this large-scale urban development are to create a 'compact' city of short journeys with residential areas that are compatible with the neighbouring port activity. As a "brownfield development", HafenCity reuses former port and industrial land. As of October 2009, 875 residential units had been completed in the west of HafenCity, with approximately 1,500 residents in the new neighbourhood and more than 5,500 people working here.



Buildings in **red** are completed/ under construction; **orange** indicates in concrete preparation/ architectural competition; **yellow** indicates in early preparation; **green** indicates very early preparation phase. Source: www.hafencity.com/upload/files/files/Flaechenstand_Feb10.pdf

The project and the 'place-making' approach

HafenCity brands itself as “A City of Plazas, Parks and Promenades” to stress the importance of public urban spaces in the development and in the city. In this new district, squares, promenades and parks serve not only as linkages between various forms of architecture and uses, but also as high-quality elements in the environment. Place-making has been of essential importance in the development process to date. The extent to which the long-term place-keeping strategy for the HafenCity is still “under construction” will also be discussed.



23% of the HafenCity development is to be developed as open space and public access rights apply to an additional 14%. Furthermore, some of the 34 hectares of water (excluding the River Elbe) have been or will also be configured and used. There is a collection of small and larger boulevards, green pocket parks, urban squares and terraces as well as promenades along and on the water in HafenCity. A series of public open

spaces and private areas accessible to all residents, local employees and visitors are closely interlinked, and many spaces in private ownership are subject to general rights of way. This ensures, for example, that private areas between buildings are passable to pedestrians or cyclists – and that the neighbourhood is crisscrossed by many such paths.

Accessible private areas of this kind mostly echo the design of neighbouring urban spaces, such as at *Sandtorpark* or in *Überseequartier*. At the new Unilever headquarters on Strandkai, the joints used within the paving on the Marco Polo Terraces continue across the divide between public and private space, creating a visually continuous area. So a variety of open spaces are developed with a mix of privately and publicly owned spaces. The design aims to create public open spaces and more secluded private open spaces without fencing or intrusive borders. How this concept without clear demarcations of spaces will function on a day-to-day basis remains unclear.

Public open spaces on the waterfront in HafenCity already completed		
Magellan Terraces	4.700 m ²	completed June 2005
Marco Polo Terraces	6.400 m ²	completed September 2007
Vasco da Gama Plaza	2.700 m ²	completed September 2007
Treasure Island Playground	850 m ²	open since Summer 2008
Traditional Ship Harbour <i>Sandtorhafen</i>	5.400 m ² of pontoons	open since September 2008

Source: www.hafencity.com

Two major international competitions were set up for the design of the open spaces of this development and were won by two architectural firms from Barcelona. EMBT Arquitectes Associates² designed the urban spaces in the western section of HafenCity, which have been to a large extent completed. Architect Beth Galí (BB + GG arquitectes³) won the competition to design central HafenCity and the areas west and east of *Magdeburger Hafen* harbour. These open spaces are at the planning stage or under construction. Interestingly, both Spanish companies are located very close to each other in Barcelona. During the implementation and realisation of the projects both companies work closely together with architectural and planning companies familiar with the German planning system and the corresponding regulations.

² For information, visit: www.mirallestagliabue.com/

³ For information, visit: www.bethgali.com/

EMBT created two large plazas at the narrow ends of the harbour basins at *Sandtorhafen* (Magellan Terraces) and *Grasbrookhafen* (Marco Polo Terraces). The term “terrace” describes the type of space: like an amphitheatre, the Magellan Terraces, completed in June 2005, cascade down to the water on several levels. They form a connection between the water and the land.

In the Traditional Ship Harbour in *Sandtorhafen*, opened in 2008, historic bridges lead down to specially created floating pontoons. This floating promenade rises and falls with the tide of the River Elbe.



Marco Polo Terraces

The Marco Polo Terraces (opened in September 2007) are much larger than the Magellan Terraces and the design of this space is very detailed with grass islands and wooden decks, sweetgum and bald cypress trees.

Smaller, more private squares, promenades and steps were created at Dalmannkai. A basketball court was created at Vasco da Gama Plaza, a local square for residents and visitors to the neighbourhood. Unifying elements for

the different urban spaces and buildings are the promenades and basement walls, which in many places have decorative brick patterns.

The two architects are now responsible for designing the open spaces for the commercial area *Überseequartier*, the *Magdeburger Hafen* and St. Annenplatz which will be completed by 2012/13.

The green spaces (pocket parks) in west and central HafenCity are still awaiting development: *Sandtorpark* and *Grasbrookpark* are part of the EMBT open space concept in the west. As the land for the two future parks is currently being used for development or construction site purposes, work will begin only in 2010.

However, the temporary Treasure Island playground was opened in summer 2008. As soon as *Grasbrookpark* is ready, it will be replaced by a new and significantly larger play area. The playground was developed with intense participation of children and their parents from the local community. Part of this development is a sort of nursery or kid’s club (*Spielhaus*) designed and run by the newly founded parents’ association “*Spielhaus HafenCity e.V.*”⁴ to provide shelter and voluntary child care.



Treasure Island playground

The central recreational area of the district will be *Lohsepark* which, covering 3.5 hectares, is the HafenCity project area’s largest green space by far. Eventually this so-called “Central Park” will extend from *Baakenhafen* harbour to *Brooktorhafen* harbour. A combined open space competition for its design was held in 2009. The 30 architectural offices invited to take

⁴ www.spielhaus.hafencitynews.de

part were also asked to produce an artistic draft for a memorial to remember the Jewish, Sinti and Roma peoples deported from the nearby former Hanover Railway Station.

Besides these briefly described public open spaces other private spaces exist in HafenCity, which are reserved exclusively for neighbourhood residents. The courtyards of buildings on Dalmannkai, for instance, immediately border the public Dalmannkai Promenade. But they are several meters above ground level on a flood-secured platform. The difference in height



therefore protects the courtyards from curious pedestrians walking by yet provides residents with unobstructed views of the water, above the heads of promenaders below. Even in the bustling commercial *Überseequartier* of the future, some private spaces will remain totally secluded from the public gaze, guaranteeing residents and office workers a high degree of privacy and intimacy in the heart of the new district, yet staying true to the publicly accessible character of HafenCity.

A research project at HafenCity University HCU (Ethnographie öffentlicher Orte in der HafenCity) on behalf of the HafenCity Hamburg GmbH delivered an ethnographic research into the use of HafenCity's open spaces in 2008/2009⁵. The headline findings can be summarised in the following three remarks⁶:

- It seems that the design of public space in HafenCity allows a good balance between clear regulations for uses and flexibility of individual occupancies
- Large events provide important opportunities for people to discover open spaces in HafenCity and to become familiar with the culture of different uses of the spaces
- Large opportunities for the development of a specific Socio-culture of the area can be identified in HafenCity.

The HafenCity Masterplan

The underlying main principles for the whole development were formulated in the HafenCity Masterplan (2000, updated in 2006⁷). The Masterplan outlines the urban development concept for the extension and enlargement of Hamburg's city centre by transforming nearby former harbour areas. The scheme – termed "Supplementary Urban Development Plan" according to Section 1 (5) No. 10 of the Federal Building Code – expresses Hamburg's major urban development and city planning aims for the long-term development of HafenCity. The Masterplan was approved as the basis for the development of HafenCity by the Senate in February 2000. The Masterplan, consisting of both text and layout plans, is a flexible, adaptable concept. It will be continuously updated and refined and will take shape as part of an ongoing development process. An update is planned for 2009/2010.

⁵ For information on the research (collected in photo-documentation format) and a small selection of pictures visit: www.hafencity.com/de/konzepte/forschungsauftrag-freiraum.html

⁶ Final report "Ethnographie öffentlicher Orte in der HafenCity - Fotodokumentarische Exploration" 10.10.2008 (translation by the author).

⁷ HafenCity Hamburg GmbH: HafenCity Hamburg – The Masterplan. New Edition 2006 (www.hafencity.com/upload/files/files/z_de_broschueren_24_Masterplan_end.pdf).

As such, the Masterplan is the result of the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas in which the results of an international urban planning competitions, the outcome of a public planning debate, and political decision-making all play an equal part. The plan gives a clear framework for the development, but is still flexible, allowing for amendments regarding the implementation and any change of frameworks.



Public green areas are **dark green**; private green areas with public use are shaded **grey**; **light green** indicates private green areas; **grey** indicates promenades and squares, locations with special water reference are **light brown**. Source: www.hafencity.com

The Masterplan emphasises the importance of public open spaces along HafenCity's waterfront, which is conceptualised in the Open Space Concept. The Masterplan builds on the close connection of the area to the river and the docks: flooding is therefore a pertinent issue. Flood protection forms a part of the Masterplan and will be provided by ground level elevation (of up to 8.4m above mean sea level (MSL) in the most vulnerable areas). HafenCity is not located within the city's main dyke line, and each elevated site will be connected to it by a special flood-protected roadway, which will ensure access for emergency vehicles. Once the elevations are completed, four flood barriers will then connect HafenCity with the main dyke line⁸. Flood-protection is not only an important task, it is also a cost-factor for the development of the area because the ground level elevation is causing increasing building costs.

One of the main purposes of the Masterplan is to enable HafenCity to become an energising influence in Hamburg's economic, ecological, social and cultural development. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to build a broad consensus on the objectives and measures involved. This can be accomplished through extensive dialogue at an early stage in the planning process. At the beginning of the process this was quite difficult because the development took place on empty brownfields. Further on in the implementation process, dialogue and participation gain importance.

⁸ HafenCity Hamburg Der Masterplan (2006, p. 74).

The essential foundations upon which the Masterplan have been based were developed from the winning competition designs and from the 1998 Masterplan concept with its town planning principles and basic technical parameters. Building on these, the plan consists of main aims and objectives in text form and a structural concept in visual form along with a town planning concept and thematic plans for considerations such as land and buildings use, traffic and transport, flood protection, and public open spaces. Additionally, there is a description of the planned phase-by-phase development of the area.

The 'place-keeping' approach

'Place-keeping' issues in HafenCity are now at the modelling and testing phase. The HafenCity GmbH HCH still manages all public open spaces on behalf of the Local Authority, because public land is under their control and not yet under the control of the District Authority. Therefore all remarks on 'place-keeping' reflect only the specific conditions of the current development phase. In the near future the first publicly owned open spaces will be transferred to the District Authority and will form part of their responsibilities regarding long-term management and maintenance if no alternative concept is developed in the meantime.

To retain the high quality of the newly created public realm, a higher standard of maintenance and management is required than 'business as usual' in other neighbourhoods in Hamburg, e.g. regarding the frequency of street cleaning and refuse disposal. The public sanitation department operates in HafenCity as do private companies contracted by the HCH. A private company (providing open space facility management) is responsible for cleaning and maintenance, including graffiti removal. The maintenance of green spaces is delivered by another specialised enterprise. Since 2009 a dedicated person has been responsible for open space management (*Wegewart*), controlling and supervising the whole area daily. Once the *Wegewart* encounters problems, damage or the like, activities to solve these problems are initiated. HCH covers the costs for these activities from their budgets. It was not however possible to access specific information on the costs for ongoing place-keeping activities.

Maintenance standards will change in the near future when the first open spaces will be dedicated as public spaces, i.e. the transfer of spaces from the HCH's separate estate into public ownership. This process is starting now. This will consequently lead to a transfer of responsibilities from the HCH to the District Authority of Hamburg Mitte. Due to the general lower standards of maintenance than current practised by HCH and the limited public funds for regular place-keeping, the frequency of street cleaning in the area will probably be lowered from daily to twice a week. The fragmented responsibilities in the public administration will be another challenge for the future (i.e. different responsibilities for streets, squares, water etc.). The reality of the District Authority is far from the strong and influential development agency with responsibilities for all public spaces, wide-ranging powers and financial capacities that the HCH have. So far no clear future strategy exists and only preliminary debates have been had within the HafenCity community. This is clear when the conversations between residents and owners about the future developments are viewed, e.g. on the internet forum⁹. Some residents in HafenCity fear that the open spaces will not be looked after properly when their status changes to public spaces and transferred from HCH under the responsibility of the District Council. The public administration is aware that they will not be able to deliver the same standard of management that HCH currently do.

⁹ <http://www.hafencityleben.de>

Therefore, a place-keeping strategy is required which should be developed jointly by HCH, the District Council, proprietors and residents. Several models are imaginable and HafenCity could be a good place to develop and implement new strategies and exemplary methods for place-keeping in Hamburg. Corresponding debates are taking place between the stakeholders to formulate a strategy for the future.

Another challenge regarding place-keeping in HafenCity is that property boundaries in some open spaces in the west of the development area are not clearly visible due to a consistent design of the open space stretching over different properties to show that private spaces are also open to the public. These spaces will need coordinated place-keeping activities from the relevant proprietors to maintain the quality and also to have common standards. For the first pocket-park (Sandtorpark) a "Maintenance-concept" is in preparation and should be completed in 2010 before the park is finished. The HCH aims to come to an agreement with private proprietors and public administration to achieve joint and co-ordinated place-keeping efforts for the park "from one source", i.e. with funding from both the private proprietors and the District Council.

Partnerships

The central player in the urban development is the HafenCity Hamburg GmbH (HCH), a hundred per cent subsidiary of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. In 1998, the City of Hamburg entrusted HCH (formerly GHS Gesellschaft für Hafen- und Standortentwicklung mbH) with the management of the entire HafenCity development. HCH has had the following areas of responsibility:

- Marketing and sell municipally-owned real estate in HafenCity (approx. 90 % of the total area under development);
- Attracting investors and buyers, providing all necessary assistance;
- Developing the location for residential use, service industries and leisure amenities;
- Coordinating all planning and construction projects;
- Planning and implementing land development;
- Managing and administering funds (Special Assets 'City and Port') used for the development of HafenCity;
- Cooperating with the relevant Hamburg authorities and parliamentary committees;
- Location marketing, public relations and citizen involvement.

Additionally, HCH is responsible for the public space management of spaces which are still part of the separate public estate (*Sondervermögen*) and not yet transferred to the standard responsibilities of the District Authority.

The HCH is supposed to have a limited lifetime. Once all the public land in HafenCity is sold and all development-projects are under construction or finalised, HCH will cease to exist. The idea has been mooted that the HCH could change from a development agency to a management agency in the long run, but no official plans currently exist regarding this possibility.

HCH cooperates with the public administration of the District Hamburg Mitte and the Ministry of Urban Development and the Environment as well as planning and regulatory authorities.

The most important partners of the HCH regarding the step-by-step physical development of HafenCity from west to east are a range of investors and developers¹⁰.

The place-making of the first public open spaces described above was a process involving only planners and architects, the planning authorities and the HCH. Residents or potential users were not involved because they didn't exist in HafenCity or in the immediate vicinity at that time. The planning and realisation process followed the effective rules and regulations for urban planning and construction works, including a general public inquiry.

A different situation arose around the development of the temporary Treasure Island playground which was realised in cooperation of the HCH with neighbourhood children and their parents. Since completion, a dedicated community association manages the playground and nursery on a voluntary basis without any public funding.

Meanwhile, owners and residents in the already completed areas of the development become increasingly relevant and important, especially those residents currently in close contact with the HCH. Since September 2007 a neighbourhood-manager is working for the HCH, whose main tasks are to settle conflicts between the different users (residents, businesspeople, shopkeepers, restaurateurs, tourists, construction companies etc.) and the heterogeneous uses of HafenCity, e.g. regarding the place-keeping of open spaces. The installation of an informal advisory board for the neighbourhood (*Quartiersbeirat*) was one of his first activities to create a structured forum for debate.

Recently, a joint association of owners and tenants (HafenCity Netzwerk e.V.) formed as an interest group for the new neighbourhood. The website www.hafencitynews.de is an important area-based communication-tool for informal exchange of information and opinions and the website www.hafencityleben.de is the forum for online debates. Both websites are organised and funded by private initiatives in the area.

Future place-making activities for the forthcoming large green spaces in the central area of HafenCity (Grasbrookpark and Lohsepark) will be developed with the participation of users and neighbours. Regarding the Sandtorpark, a special situation has to be considered and organised: this pocket park will not only be a public open space and entrance for surrounding office buildings, but will also function as a schoolyard for the neighbouring primary school. This will present specific challenges for future place-keeping activities in these spaces.

Finance

To date, the HCH finances the place-making and place-keeping of public open spaces in HafenCity. As mentioned earlier, information on costings were not made available.

Evaluation

The HafenCity development is still too new for a comprehensive evaluation of place-making and place-keeping activities described in this case study, because such procedures and strategies are still developing. It is also difficult to evaluate place-making and place-keeping because the management of the open spaces will transfer from HCH to the District Authority. In light of this, some general remarks and reflections are provided here. HafenCity can be considered a laboratory for urban development at the beginning of the 21st century. The aims

¹⁰ An overview of HafenCity's principal investors, owners and developers is available online under: <http://www.hafencity.com/en/home.html>

are ambitious task and the challenges manifold, but some of the concepts realised in HafenCity might provide a blueprint for future urban developments.

- Open Spaces in HafenCity have enormous relevance for the urban development as a whole. The economic, creative and management efforts involved in place-making demonstrate that open spaces in HafenCity are much more than mere “decoration”: they are welcoming spaces for individuals, groups and a range of activities and uses.
- HafenCity demonstrates that an urban area is able to invite the citywide community with a broad spectrum of activities and events in the open spaces (i.e. culture, leisure, gastro and other opportunities). The intense use of the open spaces and the growing number of visitors in HafenCity show that this strategy is successful. While living and working in HafenCity is fairly exclusive (because the development is generally expensive due to flood protection, prominent location and solely new constructions), the open spaces are inviting and open to different users and uses.
- The requirements from the overall Open Space Concept and the design concepts for certain areas for the development of connected open spaces leads to an overall attractive urban design with a high-quality materials and physical condition.
- The overall design crosses property boundaries in several spaces, and the user is quite often unable to identify a change of land ownership/ tenure. The open spaces are of a consistent design and standard regardless of whether they belong to private proprietors or the public sector. This broadens the portfolio of spaces on offer for the public. One challenge for the future will be to keep this quality of publicly owned open spaces even if they won’t be managed by the HCH anymore.
- Regarding public green spaces, this case study cannot provide any practical lessons yet, as the first park (Sandtorpark) opens at the end of 2010. HCH is currently preparing a place-keeping strategy for this park which aims to provide a coordinated management approach led by one stakeholder and financed by the public and private sectors.
- There is currently no indicator-based evaluation in HafenCity. Current assessment extends to informal observations, and does not yet include counting or surveying users.

Transferable aspects of the case study

The place-making and place-keeping activities in HafenCity are quite specific at the moment, because this is a very prominent urban development under the management of the development agency, HCH. With clear political support and public funding, it has been possible to create a completely new large-scale area with consistent design principles for both public and private land. This is usually not the “normal” situation in urban development. The HafenCity case clearly demonstrates the growing relevance and importance of open spaces in urban developments with different functions and designs.

Regarding the place-keeping of open spaces, this case study shows that overall responsibility for these issues and related questions is helpful to achieve higher quality spaces than “business as usual”, consistently across a large development. The big question for the future will be how these qualities and standards can be retained once HCH is no longer responsible for the management of the open spaces and the public administration will take over. It is therefore useful for us to continue to follow the HafenCity story to assess the developments and results over the long-term.

Glossary

Hafen-City Hamburg GmbH: a development agency that is a subsidiary company under full control of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

Open Space Concept: is part of the HafenCity Masterplan and conceptualising the importance of public open spaces along HafenCity's waterfront and in the whole area.

'Place-making': creating high quality places that people want to visit, experience and enjoy. It implies a people-centred approach which emphasises designing spaces that promote health, wellbeing and happiness. Such spaces engender a sense of belonging and connection for those who use them.

'Place-keeping': relates to maintaining the qualities and benefits – social, environmental and economic – of places through long-term management. The management required to maintain these qualities and benefits, the approach adopted and the timescale will depend on the 'place-making' aims, the available resources and the life span of the 'place'.

Partnership: is defined as agreed shared responsibility between public, private and community sectors. It is a relationship which, in this context, is normally formed between governmental and non-governmental sectors – i.e. it is a manifestation of governance relationships.

Engagement: is a cross-cutting issue which describes successful models of working with communities and encouraging appropriate use. Engagement is an aspect of governance particularly relevant in forms of participatory governance and is intrinsic to the concept of 'governance' as defined below.

Governance: relates to the relationship between and within government and non-governmental forces. The term implies wider participation in decision-making than representative democracy or other forms of government, recognising a wider range of actors other than the state, and allowing for varying governance contexts and processes.

Finance: describes financial models for efficient long-term management.

Policy: is discussed within the context of embedding best practice into spatial planning and other policy.

Valuation: describes the economic impacts of improvements to open spaces, but also relates to wider socio-economic and environmental benefits.

Notes on this report

This report forms part of the output from MP4 Making Place Profitable – Public and Private Open Spaces, a project funded by the EU through its Interreg IVB North Sea Region programme 2007-2013. This report is based on the findings from interviews carried out with Ms. Schwöppe and Ms. Schlimm from HafenCity Hamburg GmbH HCH (01.10.09) and with Mr. Krauß from the Ministry of Urban Development and the Environment (*Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt BSU*) – Task Force HafenCity (07.10.09), who granted permission for MP4 members to use their responses in this report. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using the question schedule used in the data collection for all MP4 case studies.

Other sources for the report are: participation at the Symposium "Better Living In Green And Blue – Public Spaces in Waterfront Projects" on June 25th – 26th 2009 in HafenCity; several personal visits to HafenCity; conversations with relevant stakeholders and desktop research of several HafenCity publications and websites (also see footnotes).

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More pictures are available from: www.presse.hafencity.com/

More information

- HafenCity Hamburg Development GmbH website: www.hafencity.com
- HafenCity Hamburg GmbH (2010): Facts and Figures – March 2010: www.hafencity.com/upload/files/artikel/Data_Facts.pdf
- HafenCity Hamburg GmbH (2009) HafenCity Hamburg Projects: Insight into current developments: http://en.hafencity.com/upload/files/broschueren/z_en_broschueren_27_Projekte_GB.pdf

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