

# Governance Innovation in Bamberg: Reconciling Conflicts of Mixed Uses in the Old Town

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## Introduction

Managing historic districts comes with its own complexities. Living heritage features mixed-use structures that equally serve residential, commercial, and touristic purposes. The variety of uses of a space characterises a liveable neighbourhood and indicates sustainability. At the same time, it can lead to conflicts. Accordingly, the challenge of effective district management is to enable mixed residential, commercial, and tourism use while mediating possible conflicts of interest. To do so, various stakeholders should be involved in the relevant decision-making processes as early as possible.

## Bamberg's Sand District

In the Sand District, the oldest neighbourhood in Bamberg, at the foot of Cathedral Hill (Figure 1a,b), conflicts of mixed use have been present for decades. From the 1980s to the 1990s, the narrow Sandstrasse was dominated by go-through car traffic. Ground-floor shops and restaurants remained empty, with only a few open at night. Living in Sandstrasse was rather unattractive. People who rented flats there tended to move out again after a short while. Hence, investors had little interest in spending money to renovate historical houses, which further led to the deterioration of the buildings.

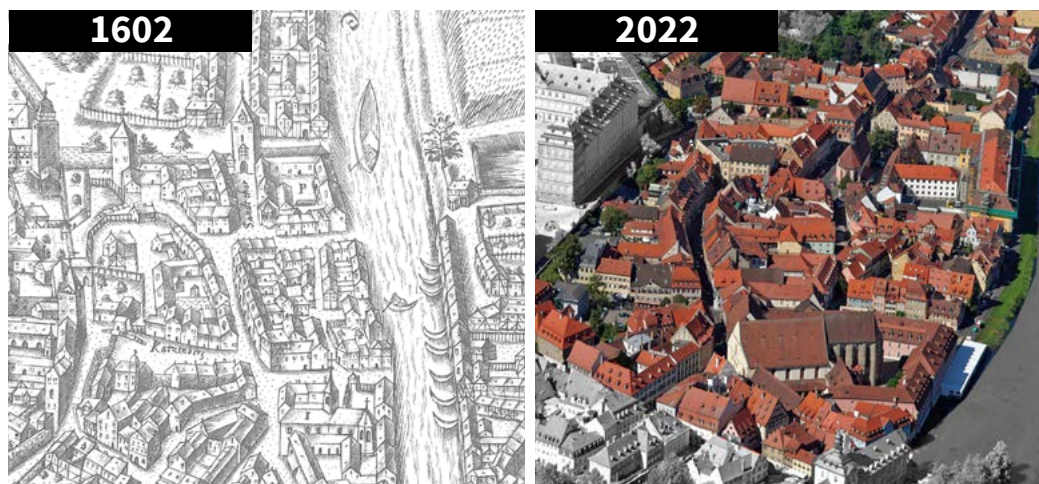


Figure 1a : Sand District on the city's oldest map by Petrus Zweidler from 1602. © Domberg Bamberg

Figure 1b : Sand District today. © Hajo Dietz Luftbild Nürnberg

The city government thus took action to reduce car traffic and renovate the historic houses in order to revitalise the neighbourhood. In 2007, Sandstrasse was newly paved and go-through car traffic was banned. This enormously increased local quality of life. However, new problems emerged. The neighbourhood, with its high concentration of bars and restaurants, has turned into a party hotspot for local students and visitors alike. So, while car noise has disappeared, rampant partying is now causing a noise nuisance, combined with dirty walkways and regular overcrowding. Ineffective response from both developers and city authorities called for different approaches led by the civil sector and aimed at involving a broader range of stakeholders in making Bamberg's city centre an inclusive and resilient place (Figure 2). The key innovative mechanisms of such an approach are described below.



Figure 2 : The traffic-free Sandstrasse is a tourist magnet.

### **Innovation 1: Civic association to promote civic participation**

<sup>1</sup> Stadt Bamberg, *Stadtсанierung "Sand"*.

The 4. Distrikt (Sand District) association is Bamberg's oldest civic group. It was founded in 1891 and advocates the interests of the district's residents. Together with other citizens' associations in Bamberg, the association meets twice a year with Bamberg's Lord Mayor to discuss current issues. In addition, the association organises round tables with the restaurateurs of Sandstrasse to exchange views on specific problems. Simone Franke, Board Member of 4. Distrikt, summarizes the dilemma: 'If we have a nicely developed district, it attracts the crowds. Yet, what kind of alternative is it not to develop our district properly?

In 2006, the *Leben findet Innenstadt* funding programme led to the creation of the advocacy group IG interesSAND,<sup>1</sup> a spin-off from the Sand District civic association. The name is a pun on the German word *interessant*, which means

‘interesting’, and Sand, the name of the neighbourhood. The advocacy group works closely with the local government and even organises joint events such as the annual *Sandkirchweih*, a highly popular church fair. The group maintains good connections with local actors such as Stadtmarketing Bamberg e.V., banks, and the hotel and restaurant association.

The original government funding for IG interesSAND aimed at revitalising the inner city through the active participation of local stakeholders in public-private partnerships. Accordingly, funds were applied to promote intra-district communication and marketing measures. They were used to implement innovative ideas in culture and real estate management, as well as for investments to improve the quality of public spaces (Figure 3). The advocacy group was responsible for allocating the funds and managing projects. Between 2008 and 2018, the advocacy group received funding in the mid-four-digit range. This support proved more than successful for revitalising the Sand district, including through:

- Investments: art in public spaces, Christmas lighting, Christmas market huts
- Concepts: design consultations, implementation of a lighting master plan for private properties, construction site banners for educational purposes, district newspaper *Sandblatt*, homepage, modified office hours, ideas workshop
- Activities: flea market, Christmas market, antiques days, gourmet market, fashion show, open monument day

Currently, the interest group mainly relies on donations and membership fees amounting to EUR 360 per business annually.



Figure 3 : Street musicians as a tool to improve quality of public spaces.

## Innovation 2: Stakeholder roundtable for reconciliation of mixed uses

<sup>2</sup> H. Spitzner, “Civic association in Bamberg”, interview by P. Alberth, March 4, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> S. Franke, “InteresSAND in Bamberg”, interview by P. Alberth, March 4, 2022.

One of the major achievements of interesSAND has been the mediation of conflicts between catering establishments and residential users in busy Sandstrasse (Figure 4).<sup>2</sup> Excessive alcohol consumption and noise by partygoers have been leading to ongoing complaints from local residents. The legal framework at local, state, and federal level does not regulate the concentration of bars and restaurants in inner-city residential areas. To help address the problem, interesSAND, conservator and founding member of the advocacy group, has been organising regular roundtables and visits that bring restaurant and bar owners and residents, as well as representatives of the city administration, together to discuss solutions. Only during the Covid-19 pandemic were those meetings interrupted. Although no written agreement has come out of this exchange, a security firm was hired to calm the situation.



Figure 4 : Roundtables with interesSAND as a mediator.

In addition to night-time noise, the residents have also been disturbed by issues with garbage disposal. In the morning, local homeowners often have to navigate empty beer bottles, broken glass, and cigarette stubs in front of their houses. They suffer from littering associated with party activities in their street. Tenant turnover has remained an issue, and holiday rental flats, not all of them legally registered, continue to be prevalent.

While roundtables are an inevitable approach to tackling mixed use issues, they have their limitations. Any agreements are not legally binding, but rather depend on the good will of everyone involved. The city administration cannot assign staff to monitor compliance with those agreements. In general, local bar and restaurant owners are more committed to contributing to a peaceful neighbourhood than outside investors. Local entrepreneurs are more likely to identify with their neighbourhood. Bar and restaurant owners who live on Sandstrasse are obviously more sensitive to the disturbances caused by their customers and thus more likely to contribute to a solution. The successful work of interesSAND has affected other districts in Bamberg. An ongoing exchange has been taking place with the neighbouring district of Mitte and its civic association.<sup>3</sup>

### Innovation 3: Digital tools for civic participation

With activities reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic and public funding set to expire, the future of interesSAND is uncertain. Yet, the City of Bamberg receives more than EUR 15 million from the German Smart Cities Funding Programme. This opens new possibilities for civic dialogue.

Bambergers are to be given a greater say in shaping their city (Figure 5). Proven structures, such as civic dialogue and citizen information events, are already making a contribution. Additional digital options for civic participation are to be introduced as part of the Smart City programme. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that conversation needs to continue even at times of enforced social distancing. Therefore, the online services of the city administration are to be expanded. Many administrative services are to be offered online as much as possible. Internally, too, processes will be improved and accelerated so that more end-to-end digital processes are available to provide residents with better and faster service.



Figure 5 :  
Bambergers in  
shaping their city.

For Sandstrasse, opportunities offered by the Smart City programme include technical means of reducing overcrowding. The narrow alleys of Bamberg's old town are often highly frequented by tourists and locals alike. To monitor people movements, the local administration is planning to install a system featuring a network of small sensors at strategic locations throughout the city. The system uses these sensors to capture anonymous, freely available data sent via a wide range of user devices via the Internet of Things (IoT). Personal data remains anonymous. Crowd frequencies as measured and extrapolated using these data are displayed in a web app and used for route guidance and linked to the data platform for points of interest (POIs) in the background. Guests can thus benefit from smart trip planning that allows them to avoid hotspots, shows alternatives if necessary and, ideally, is able to guide a visit in advance to relieve pressure on public spaces. The underlying technology is based on open-source software and builds on content with universal data standards. This ensures that, once the project is fundamentally set up, it will not lead to in high subsequent costs or permanent licensing fees.

A centrally maintained database of POIs – sights, museums, leisure facilities, paths, and attractions – in the city will be combined with real-time information on the current pedestrian frequency in central areas. This web app not only provides

users with an overview of attractions in and around Bamberg that may be of interest, but simultaneously shows the routes that can be used to avoid overcrowded areas, thereby lessening strain on these spaces. In addition, the web app offers alternative visiting times and places that relieve pressure on the old town. Furthermore, clever links with public transport, park and ride facilities, and event information add value to this application. The project is set to begin with a pilot in late 2022.

## Conclusion

The case study explores how the engagement of civic societies contributes to solving land use conflicts in historical districts through civic associations, stakeholder roundtables, and digital participation. It reflects governance innovation from three aspects.

1. **A fixed community governance institution.** Rooted in local residents, a civic association provides timely expertise to help solve problems in the neighbourhood.
2. **A flexible form of self-governance.** Stakeholder roundtable is an effective mode of governance for co-ordinating interests between local residents, entrepreneurs, and the city administration in order to cope with the challenges of a mixed-use neighbourhood.
3. **Integration of new technology with civic participation.** In the era of digitalisation, the harnessing of digital tools and civic participation consolidates heritage management.

The example of Sandstrasse in Bamberg demonstrates commitment to the historic building fabric based on participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning and management. The community pursues a two-stage approach: collaboration is used to mediate conflicts based on a mixed use of urban space, while technology serves to reduce overcrowding.

The lessons that can be learned from this case are threefold. Firstly, public funding is key for launching community projects, such as Bamberg's interesSAND. However, sustainable funding strategies are required to ensure the continuity of multi-stakeholder-initiatives. Secondly, the involvement of stakeholders can differ in dimension and scale and therefore needs to be organised flexibly depending on the topic involved. Thirdly, digital technologies can offer solutions to common challenges like overcrowding in historic cities. Maintaining a regular exchange with local government representatives helps to tap into the latest funding programmes for joint projects.

Historically, the City of Bamberg has had a particularly strong body of civic associations dedicated to heritage conservation. Still, in many cities and regions throughout the world, a top-down approach to decision-making in urban governance is more prevalent. The case of interesSAND provides inspiration of how stakeholders with different interests can be co-ordinated by a civic association to solve issues of land use and heritage management where legal frameworks of urban planning laws or regulations are missing.