

**HOTEL INVESTMENTS AS INSTRUMENTS FOR MANAGING
URBAN REVITALISATION: THE CASE OF GRIMM'S HOTEL AM
POTSDAMER PLATZ**

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Abstract. *The article examines hotel investments as instruments for managing urban revitalisation. The point of departure is the observation that hotels are usually analysed as tourism infrastructure or as market responses to visitor demand, while their urban role in shaping public space, local service ecosystems, everyday mobility and governance remains underexplored. The aim is to identify the conditions under which a hotel investment may become an effective instrument for the revitalisation of neglected urban areas rather than merely a commercial project benefiting from an improving location. The article draws on a theoretical-conceptual synthesis and multiple-case-study logic developed in doctoral research on German urban contexts: HafenCity Hamburg, Dresden Neumarkt and Taschenbergpalais, Hotel Adlon in Berlin and Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz. The main focus is Grimm's Hotel at Flottwellstraße 45, interpreted as a consolidating investment in the mature phase of the Potsdamer Platz transformation. The paper proposes a multidimensional framework for assessing spatial, economic, social, institutional and environmental*

effects and identifies six mechanisms of hotel-led revitalisation: demand generation, local value-chain and clustering effects, institutional signalling, spatial activation, symbolic re-framing and the generation of external risks. The findings show that hotel investments may support urban revitalisation only conditionally, depending on spatial integration, local embeddedness, active ground-floor interfaces, governance capacity, environmental responsibility and safeguards against gentrification and touristification. The article also formulates practical criteria for cities and investors to evaluate hotel projects before implementation and to monitor their effects after opening.

Keywords: *urban revitalisation; hotel industry; local development; Grimm's Hotel; Potsdamer Platz; urban governance; tourism and urban regeneration; local value chains.*

Introduction. The revitalisation of neglected urban areas is one of the central challenges of contemporary urban policy. European cities face the long-term consequences of deindustrialisation, suburbanisation, demographic decline, depreciation of historical building stock and the functional weakening of inner-city districts. Revitalisation is therefore no longer understood as the simple renovation of buildings, but as a multidimensional transformation involving spatial, social, economic, cultural, environmental and institutional change [16; 17]. In this context, private service investments, including hotels, increasingly participate in the restructuring of urban space.

The role of the hotel industry in revitalisation processes remains theoretically underdeveloped. In much of the literature, hotel investments are treated primarily as tourism infrastructure or as market responses to growing visitor demand. Less attention is paid to their capacity to influence local development, activate streets, stabilise user flows, support complementary services and become part of governance arrangements in revitalised areas. This gap is important in cities where public resources for regeneration are limited and private investment becomes a practical instrument of urban transformation [1; 15].

The research problem addressed in this article is the following: under what conditions can a hotel investment function as a genuine instrument for revitalising a neglected urban area, rather than as a commercial project that merely benefits from an improved location? The article advances a conditional thesis: hotel investments may support urban revitalisation if they are functionally and spatially integrated with their surroundings and embedded in a coherent governance model. Thus, it rejects the promotional assumption that every hotel automatically generates revitalisation benefits. The urban value of a hotel depends on local value chains, spatial interfaces, institutional coordination, operational responsibility and mechanisms limiting external costs such as gentrification, touristification and functional homogenisation [2; 7; 19].

The aim of the article is to identify the mechanisms through which hotel investments influence urban revitalisation and to formulate criteria for assessing when these mechanisms produce durable and inclusive effects. The main case is Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz, located at Flottwellstraße 45 in Berlin. The case is interpreted in a comparative perspective, with reference to HafenCity Hamburg, Dresden Neumarkt and Hotel Adlon in Berlin.

1. Literature background and research gap

Urban revitalisation is commonly defined as an integrated process aimed at moving degraded areas out of crisis through coordinated spatial, social, economic and environmental interventions [4; 16; 24; 27]. European approaches emphasise sustainable urban development, social inclusion and the protection of historical urban landscapes [17; 22]. In the German context, revitalisation is also linked with the reintegration of fragmented urban structures and the reconstruction of centrality after periods of industrial decline, war destruction or political rupture [14; 23; 28].

The literature on urban tourism and hospitality highlights the economic role of hotels in generating visitor expenditure, jobs and demand for complementary services [3; 12; 15]. However, the dominant hospitality perspective is often firm-centred: it focuses on occupancy, revenue, market segmentation and service quality. Conversely, urban studies usually examine regeneration through public policy, planning, housing,

social justice or cultural heritage, while treating hotels as only one of many commercial land uses. The result is a fragmented field in which hotels are rarely conceptualised as urban actors.

This article identifies four main research gaps. First, there is a lack of an integrated analytical framework linking the spatial, economic, social, institutional and environmental effects of hotel investments. Second, existing studies tend to privilege flagship or luxury developments, while smaller consolidating hotels in mature revitalisation areas remain under-analysed. Third, the spatial effects of hotels, such as the quality of ground floors, pedestrian continuity and interfaces with public space, are less often operationalised than financial indicators. Fourth, the role of the manager-researcher, who has access to operational knowledge of a hotel embedded in a revitalised district, remains methodologically underused, although it may reveal tacit mechanisms unavailable in purely external studies.

The article responds to these gaps by treating the hotel not merely as an accommodation facility, but as a node in an urban system. A hotel may distribute visitor demand, support local services, activate pedestrian routes, shape the image of a district and signal investment confidence. At the same time, it may contribute to displacement or the privatisation of public benefits if it is poorly integrated with planning and social safeguards. Management literature is relevant here because revitalisation areas are characterised by uncertainty, institutional fragmentation and the need to coordinate multiple actors. In this respect, the management of hotel investments in sensitive urban environments may be interpreted through the lens of strategic flexibility, early diagnosis and adaptive response [20; 21].

2. Methodology and research design

The article is based on a theoretical-conceptual and case-study approach. It draws on selected findings from a doctoral thesis on the role of the hotel industry in managing the revitalisation of neglected urban areas. The methodological foundation is an interpretative-pragmatic paradigm, combining sensitivity to context with an orientation towards practical recommendations for urban governance. Such an

approach is appropriate where the aim is not statistical generalisation, but analytical generalisation concerning mechanisms and boundary conditions [8; 9; 10; 18].

The research strategy is a multiple case study. The cases were selected purposively rather than randomly. Their value lies in typological diversity and a common institutional context. HafenCity Hamburg represents a megaproject and mixed-use waterfront transformation; Dresden Neumarkt and Taschenbergpalais represent heritage-led regeneration; Hotel Adlon Berlin illustrates the reconstruction of a symbolic urban landmark; Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz represents a consolidating hotel investment in the mature phase of urban transformation. The unit of analysis is not the hotel as a building, but the hotel in relation to the surrounding spatial, economic and institutional system.

Table 1. Research design and analytical operationalisation

Element	Specification in the article	Analytical function
Research problem	Conditions under which a hotel investment becomes an instrument of revitalisation rather than only a commercial project.	Defines the central explanatory question.
Research strategy	Multiple case study: HafenCity, Dresden Neumarkt/Taschenbergpalais, Hotel Adlon, Grimm's Hotel.	Enables comparison of different revitalisation contexts.
Main case	Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz, Flottwellstraße 45, Berlin.	Illustrates a consolidating hotel investment in a mature transformation area.
Analytical dimensions	Spatial, economic, social, institutional and environmental dimensions.	Provides a framework for assessing hotel-city relations.
Type of inference	Analytical generalisation based on mechanisms and boundary conditions.	Avoids unsupported statistical claims and supports theory building.

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the doctoral manuscript and verified literature sources.

The empirical material used in the doctoral research combined a literature review, document analysis, planning and contextual data, field observation, interpretation of selected hotel and tourism indicators, and operational knowledge related to the Grimm's Hotel case. Triangulation was used to separate publicly verifiable information, contextual interpretation and expert-practical insight. The article therefore does not claim to provide a full econometric assessment of hotel impacts. Rather, it reconstructs the mechanisms through which such impacts are generated and conditioned [5; 18].

The researcher's position as a hotel manager requires methodological reflexivity. Access to tacit knowledge may increase the depth of interpretation, but it may also generate interpretive bias. For this reason, the manager-researcher position is treated as a source of contextual insight rather than as a substitute for triangulation. Claims concerning the hotel's urban role are formulated as mechanism-based interpretations and related to comparative cases and the literature.

3. The hotel as an urban actor: analytical framework and mechanisms

The central conceptual assumption of the article is that a hotel in a revitalisation area should not be analysed only as an enterprise or a real-estate asset. It should also be understood as an urban actor. This does not imply that a hotel exercises public authority, but that it affects the city through repeated everyday interactions: arrivals and departures, employment, procurement, delivery logistics, ground-floor activity, lighting, visibility, branding and the relationship between private interiors and public space.

The proposed analytical framework consists of four core dimensions and one cross-cutting environmental dimension. The spatial dimension concerns the insertion of the hotel into the urban fabric, including pedestrian continuity, permeability of the frontage, relationship to public transport, ground-floor quality and perceived safety. The economic dimension concerns employment, procurement, visitor expenditure, multiplier effects and the influence on surrounding services. The social dimension concerns accessibility, conflicts between residents and visitors, the balance between everyday and tourist functions, and the risk of displacement. The institutional

dimension concerns planning obligations, monitoring, participation, negotiated public benefits and the ability of public authorities to prevent the enclosure of revitalisation gains. The environmental dimension concerns energy, water, logistics, waste, noise and links to green-blue infrastructure.

The usefulness of this framework lies in its capacity to connect different indicators without reducing hotel-led revitalisation to a single economic measure. A hotel may be profitable and yet weakly integrated with the city. Conversely, a medium-scale hotel may have moderate symbolic visibility but significant cumulative impact if it stabilises everyday use, supports local services and strengthens pedestrian continuity. This distinction is crucial for interpreting Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz.

Table 2. Dimensions for assessing hotel investments in revitalisation areas

Dimension	Main question	Selected indicators
Spatial	Does the hotel strengthen the public-space system and everyday urbanity?	Ground-floor activity, pedestrian continuity, permeability, lighting, access to public transport, relation to parks and cultural facilities.
Economic	Does the hotel create local development effects rather than only internal profitability?	Local employment, procurement, cooperation with SMEs, visitor spending, tax contribution, complementary services.
Social	Does the hotel limit exclusionary effects and support balanced use of the area?	Resident complaints, rent pressure, balance of services, accessibility, conflict between tourist and everyday functions.
Institutional	Is the hotel embedded in governance mechanisms capable of directing private value towards public benefit?	Planning agreements, monitoring, stakeholder coordination, participation mechanisms, value-capture instruments.
Environmental	Does the hotel reduce operational burdens and contribute to sustainable urban transformation?	Energy use, waste management, delivery logistics, noise, water use, green-blue infrastructure links.

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the doctoral manuscript and verified literature sources.

The article distinguishes six mechanisms of hotel-led revitalisation. The first is the demand mechanism: hotels generate tourist, event-related and business demand,

stabilising the intensity of use in areas that may previously have been underused [12; 15]. The second is the supply-chain and clustering mechanism: a hotel may stimulate restaurants, retail, transport, cultural services, maintenance, laundry and food supply. The third is institutional signalling: hotel investment may signal confidence in an area previously perceived as risky or peripheral. The fourth is spatial activation: hotels affect the city through entrances, façades, ground-floor uses, pedestrian routes, lighting and visibility [6; 11]. The fifth is the symbolic and narrative mechanism: hotels may refer to heritage, local identity, cultural memory or the broader image of a district. The sixth is the external-risk mechanism: hotels may contribute to rising rents, displacement, touristification and symbolic homogenisation if governance capacity is weak [2; 7; 19].

4. Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz in its urban context

Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz is located at Flottwellstraße 45 in Berlin [26]. In the logic of the doctoral research, the hotel does not initiate the transformation of the area. Instead, it enters a mature phase of change and performs a consolidating role: it fills a gap in the urban fabric, stabilises the intensity of use and connects the metropolitan functions of Potsdamer Platz with the green-blue resources of Park am Gleisdreieck and the Landwehrkanal corridor.

The hotel represents the three-star/three-star-plus urban segment. The case material indicates a gross floor area of approximately 4,500 m², 110 rooms including seven apartments, a restaurant, two conference rooms, and fitness and sauna facilities. The investment process covered the years 2012-2016, while the hotel began operating in July 2015, before the final completion of all project-related works. These parameters position the hotel not as a luxury icon, but as a functional urban accommodation facility combining leisure, business and event-related demand.

The spatial value of the case lies in its intermediate location. The hotel is close enough to Potsdamer Platz to benefit from centrality, transport accessibility and cultural visibility, but it is also embedded in a more everyday urban environment connected with recreation, walking and neighbourhood-scale services. This dual positioning allows the hotel to connect two urban logics: the metropolitan economy

of offices, events and symbolic centrality, and the experiential economy of parks, pedestrian movement and local urban life.

From the perspective of revitalisation management, the most important feature of Grimm's Hotel is its consolidating rather than spectacular character. It does not operate as a landmark in the manner of Hotel Adlon, nor as an element of a centrally planned waterfront megaproject in the manner of HafenCity. Its function is more subtle: it stabilises the use of a street, supports mixed demand, increases the visibility of the area and contributes to continuity between high-intensity metropolitan spaces and everyday pedestrian environments.

The hotel's operational programme is also relevant. The combination of accommodation, restaurant functions, meeting facilities, fitness and sauna services extends both the range of users and the times of use. A purely overnight facility would generate weaker public-space effects. By contrast, a hotel with food, meeting and service functions can produce more continuous activity and a broader urban interface. The public value of such a hotel becomes visible when the investment is aligned with planning rules, mobility patterns, local services and environmental management.

5. Comparative perspective: German revitalisation contexts

The comparative cases show that hotel investments may operate through different revitalisation logics. HafenCity Hamburg demonstrates how hotels may form part of a planned mixed-use megaproject [25]. Their role is embedded in a broader urban development corporation, a waterfront identity and a phased programme of housing, offices, culture, mobility and public space. In this context, hotel functions support the credibility and intensity of a new urban district, but they also depend on the ability of the megaproject to avoid social selectivity and market-cycle vulnerability.

Dresden Neumarkt and Taschenbergpalais illustrate a heritage-led mechanism. Here, hotel functions are linked to the reconstruction of urban memory, symbolic capital and tourism demand [29]. The hotel becomes part of a wider attempt to restore the legibility of historical urban form. The risk is that heritage may be commodified,

becoming an aesthetic resource for visitors while everyday social functions are weakened.

Table 3. Comparative interpretation of hotel investments in selected German revitalisation contexts

Case	Revitalisation context	Main hotel-related mechanism	Key risk
HafenCity Hamburg	Megaproject and waterfront mixed-use transformation.	Institutional signalling and demand generation within a planned urban programme.	Selective urban space and high dependence on market cycles.
Dresden Neumarkt / Taschenbergpalais	Heritage-led reconstruction and tourism-oriented centrality.	Symbolic and cultural capital converted into tourism demand.	Commodification of heritage and overdependence on visitor economy.
Hotel Adlon Berlin	Reconstruction of representative urban identity.	Prestige, place branding and re-anchoring of symbolic centrality.	Social selectivity and enclave effects.
Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz	Consolidating investment in a mature transformation area.	Spatial activation, demand stabilisation and connection between centrality and everyday urbanity.	Competition, operational pressures and touristification if unmanaged.

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the doctoral manuscript and verified literature sources.

Hotel Adlon Berlin represents a symbolic-representational mechanism. Hospitality participates in the reconstruction of prestige and the image of the national capital. Such a hotel has high symbolic visibility and contributes strongly to place branding, but it may also generate enclave effects and reinforce social selectivity. Its revitalisation impact is therefore not reducible to prestige; it must be examined in relation to accessibility, public space and surrounding functions.

Compared with these cases, Grimm's Hotel has lower symbolic visibility but high analytical significance. It shows that revitalisation effects do not always depend

on flagship investments. A medium-scale hotel may support urban consolidation when it strengthens pedestrian continuity, diversifies demand, complements local services and operates within a planning regime capable of controlling nuisances such as traffic, deliveries, waste and noise.

6. Governance implications and monitoring protocol

The comparative analysis supports a conditional interpretation of hotel-led revitalisation. Hotels may contribute to urban regeneration, but only when they are embedded in a wider spatial and institutional framework. The decisive factor is not the mere presence of a hotel, nor even its architectural quality, but the relationship between the investment and the surrounding system of public space, services, mobility, governance and the local community.

Four conditions appear particularly important. The first is local value-chain embeddedness. The more a hotel purchases locally, employs locally and cooperates with neighbourhood services, the stronger its economic contribution to local development. The second condition is spatial permeability: the hotel should contribute to the street and not withdraw behind closed façades. The third condition is institutional coordination, including planning rules, negotiated obligations, monitoring and the capacity of public authorities to capture and redistribute part of the value generated by revitalisation. The fourth condition is social sensitivity, meaning that hotel development should be accompanied by measures limiting negative effects on housing, everyday services and access to public space.

These conditions lead to an important governance implication. Public authorities should not treat hotel investors merely as sources of capital, but as partners whose projects must be assessed *ex ante* and monitored *ex post*. This requires criteria that go beyond the number of rooms, jobs and tax revenues. Cities should evaluate whether a hotel strengthens pedestrian continuity, activates the ground floor, cooperates with local suppliers, contributes to public space and reduces operational nuisances. In sensitive urban areas, the public value of a hotel investment should be negotiated and made measurable.

A practical monitoring protocol should include five groups of indicators. The first concerns spatial performance: pedestrian flows, frontage quality, accessibility, perceived safety and continuity of public routes. The second concerns economic embeddedness: local employment, procurement, cooperation with local suppliers and visitor spending outside the hotel. The third concerns social balance: resident complaints, displacement signals, service substitution and the relationship between tourist and everyday functions. The fourth concerns institutional capacity: planning agreements, reporting duties, participation channels and corrective procedures. The fifth concerns environmental performance: energy use, waste management, delivery logistics, noise and links to green-blue infrastructure.

Table 4. Proposed monitoring protocol for hotel investments in revitalisation areas

Area of monitoring	Example indicators	Interpretive question
Spatial performance	Pedestrian flows, active frontage, night-time lighting, accessibility, perceived safety.	Does the hotel strengthen the everyday usability of the area?
Economic embeddedness	Local procurement share, jobs, cooperation with SMEs, visitor expenditure in nearby services.	Does the investment generate local spillovers or mainly internalise value?
Social balance	Rent pressure, resident complaints, service substitution, conflicts between users.	Are revitalisation benefits socially inclusive and not only visitor-oriented?
Institutional capacity	Planning agreements, reporting duties, participation mechanisms, corrective procedures.	Can the city steer, monitor and adjust the effects of the hotel investment?
Environmental responsibility	Energy use, water use, waste, deliveries, noise, connection to green-blue infrastructure.	Does the hotel reduce operational burdens and support sustainable urban transformation?

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the doctoral manuscript and verified literature sources.

The protocol is intentionally pragmatic. It does not require cities to prove full causality in every case, which would often be methodologically unrealistic. Instead, it encourages municipalities and investors to monitor mechanisms and warning signals. Such an approach is consistent with the actual nature of urban revitalisation, where multiple processes overlap and where governance often depends on the ability to adjust interventions during implementation.

7. Conclusions

The article has shown that hotel investments can make a substantive contribution to the revitalisation of neglected urban areas, but this contribution is neither automatic nor universally positive. A hotel may become a cornerstone of urban transformation, a consolidating element of a maturing district or an enclave that concentrates benefits while externalising costs. The outcome depends primarily on governance capacity, spatial integration and the structure of local economic relations.

The main theoretical contribution of the article is the proposal to treat the hotel as an urban actor operating across spatial, economic, social, institutional and environmental dimensions. This framework makes it possible to move beyond the narrow view of hotels as accommodation infrastructure and to evaluate them as instruments of urban management. The article also distinguishes the consolidating hotel investment as a type of intervention that does not initiate regeneration, but fills gaps, stabilises use and strengthens continuity in an area already undergoing transformation.

The practical implication is that cities should assess hotel projects through both *ex ante* and *ex post* criteria. Before approving or supporting a hotel investment, local authorities should examine whether it will contribute to street life, local value chains, public-space quality and inclusive development. After implementation, they should monitor not only financial and tourism indicators, but also spatial, social, institutional and environmental effects. Such an approach may reduce the risk that private gains from revitalisation are captured narrowly while public costs are borne by residents.

The study has limitations. The cases are drawn from the German context, which has specific planning traditions and institutional capacities. The article is based

on the reconstruction of mechanisms rather than on a full statistical measurement of causal effects. Further research should expand the quantitative component, compare Central and Eastern European contexts, and examine how platform-based tourism and short-term rental markets alter the relationship between hotels, revitalisation and local communities. In conclusion, Grimm's Hotel am Potsdamer Platz shows that medium-scale, non-flagship hotels can be analytically important precisely because they reveal the everyday mechanisms through which hospitality participates in the production, stabilisation and management of revitalised urban areas.

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