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Bachelor Thesis

Creative City Dynamics: A Case Study of the  
 Gängeviertel and Hamburg

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## Summary

This thesis investigates how artists of the Gängeviertel, an inner-city artistic neighbourhood in Hamburg, perceive creative city policies and what strategies they employ to deal with consequences and enact their right to the creative city. The qualitative method is walking interviews. Hence, the findings suggest that artists in the Gängeviertel perceive creative city policies as non-existent and that they are more occupied in a constant struggle for space. Furthermore, vision and adaption, taking initiative, and protest and occupation have been identified as strategies that artists employ to enact their right to the creative city. This thesis emphasizes the importance of power delegation to local communities to ensure sustainable creative development. Further research could focus on the initial occupation of the Gängeviertel and how it relates to previous creative city policies, looking further into their possible consequences on urban communities.

## Introduction

Beaumont and Yildiz (2017) mention the notion of creativity in urban development that has become widespread in the last decade. Thus, policymakers orientate many of their policies towards a “creative class”, based on the creative city paradigm that suggests a dependency of economic prosperity on success in attracting and retaining creative talent in urban spaces. This creative class paradigm refers to the challenged separation of art and industry (Morgan & Ren, 2012), meaning a combination of creative industries and the creative class, the group of workers that policymakers aim to attract to enhance competitiveness and attraction, in a spatial unit (Beaumont & Yildiz, 2017). Thus, the role of urban actors in the creative city paradigm is centered around the fostering of creatives, and their industries and synergies, as well as the creation of new trendy parts of the city that aims to enable creative solutions and increase competitiveness. But in the light of attracting creatives and increasing competitiveness, different critiques arise to whether policymakers show tendencies to idealize the conception of creative workers and instrumentalize their culture (Beaumont & Yildiz, 2017).

Considering the increasing popularity of creative city policies, and at the same time the questionable causality that comes with it (Beaumont & Yildiz, 2017), it is crucial to bring light to the actors that are heavily affected by creative city policies and investigate their experiences of exclusion and gentrification. Facing such incidences of appropriation and exploitation of local culture in the context of the creative city paradigm, the question arises to whether local communities are in favor of creative policymaking, how this impacts their struggle for space and how they enact their right to the creative city in response.

As the case study of the Gängeviertel, an inner-city neighbourhood in Hamburg, has already been researched by Novy and Colomb (2013), with an emphasis on the transformation of urban

struggle within the creative city paradigm, this thesis intends to expand on that. Looking back at the history of the Gängeviertel, creative city policies have been implemented, and the municipality has been supporting the renovation of the quarter and long-term settlement of artists (Freie Hansestadt Hamburg, 2010a). Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore artists' perception of creative city policies and their strategies when enacting their right to the creative city.

The target population of this thesis are artists due to the existing theoretical framework that considers artists to be influential in the process of gentrification and urban revitalization (Harvey, 2002; Rich, 2019). Furthermore, artists have been discussed to not only be actors of change in urban development but also actors of resistance (Leeson, 2019; Novy & Colomb, 2013; Harvey, 2002) as they are often exposed to community displacement and disruption (Rich, 2019). The research question will be as follows:

"How do artists in the Gängeviertel in Hamburg perceive the implementation of creative city policies and what strategies do they employ to enact their right to the creative city?"

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. What are creative city policies implemented in Hamburg and in the Gängeviertel?
2. How do artists in the Gängeviertel perceive the impact of creative city policies?
3. What strategies do artists employ to enact their right to the creative city?

The following theoretical framework provides a summary of previous findings related to the creative city paradigm, the creative class and artists in connection with gentrification. Furthermore, the methodology outlines the data collection approach, methods and analysis. The findings will discuss artists' perceptions of creative city policies and how they enact their right to the creative city. Finally, the findings are related back to the literature framework, and artistic development in the Gängeviertel and Hamburg will be analyzed using Cameron and Coffees' (2005) theory of three stages of gentrification. The conclusion presents an overview of the findings and addresses the research question.

## Theoretical framework

Florida (2005) was one of the first scholars to explore the role and impact of the creative class on urban environment. He defines the creative class as professionals, knowledge and cultural workers that are highly necessary for economic renewal and growth for any urban environment. Hereby he mentions two key theories. The human capital theory states that people are the driving force behind regional economic growth, introducing a chain of attracting creating people that enhance economic growth, leading to greater attraction. Florida extends this relationship towards the creative capital theory, which is concerned with the fostering of creativity, and

argues that creative capital in particular has positive impacts on economic growth. He notes that the creative class is drawn to and creating diverse and inclusive places. In the light of the connection between creative capital and regional economic growth, Mengi and Guaralda (2020) also mention how, according to the beliefs of the creative city paradigm, creativity and local knowledge can fuel new economic development.

As already stated by Florida (2005), Morgan and Ren (2012) also mention a creative class and their human capital value for economic purposes. According to the authors, this creative underclass is characterized by active engagement in expressing resistance against inequalities, moralities and economic powers, and is often part of a bigger political picture. Furthermore, creativity seems to be rooted and evolving within communities. Thus, not only culture and economy are increasingly linked together but the human capital of this creative underclass also shows tendencies of a dynamic nature that carries great symbolic value next to creativity as a mere commodity (Ibid). Viewing the creative class as active players in a battle for urban space, the affected communities are often faced with gentrification and subject to official forms of urban management that is designed to use them as decoys (Ibid). Consequently, as also noted by Mengi and Guaralda (2020), it is necessary to nurture places instead of engineering them, as well as to draw governments' attention back on such repeatedly displaced communities (Morgan & Ren, 2012).

Highlighting the relationship between artists and gentrification, Cameron and Coaffee (2005) identify three stages of gentrification. The first stage involves artist settlement and artistic production. Discussing creative capital as a driving force of regional economic development, the second stage introduces artistic production as an increasing commodification. Furthermore, the area would be gentrified to an even greater extent through larger developments, and global capital and investments. Adding up to this picture of artists being a necessary part of gentrification, Rich (2019) also mentions how artists can be seen as first-wave settlers in gentrification processes and points out a paradox of displacement and protection for the artistic community. Thus, arts-themed developments purposefully address and attract this artistic community, but at the same time they close with displacement. To seek balance between preserving affordable housing for artists and building code enforcements for property sale, it is therefore crucial to further recognize their vulnerability instead of viewing artists and their creative human capital as tools for economic growth and aim for sustainable development that doesn't displace and disrupt communities. Furthermore, the author notes a lack of community involvement and representation of marginalized communities in the placemaking process (Ibid).

Artists, who are the target population for this thesis, represent a crucial part of the creative community. Some scholars refer to artists as a community that enhances art-driven

domestication, thus reinforcing the process of gentrification (Sacco et al., 2019). Others view artistic communities to be situated in and subject to gentrification, and instrumentalized by policymakers (Colomb & Novy, 2013; Beaumont & Yildiz, 2017; Rich, 2019). However, artists appear not only to create attractive urban places but are also attracted to them (Florida, 2005; Murzyn-Kupisz & Działek, 2021), introducing again the paradoxical dilemma of protection and displacement that the artistic community faces with art-themed urban development (Rich, 2019).

The nexus between artists and gentrification seems to be rather complex. However, scholars have been discussing how artists often struggle for space and to enact their right to the creative city. Harvey (2002) discusses the commodification of culture and how it enables cultural producers in urban settings to take unique roles in processes of gentrification. Thus, he suggests that cultural producers such as artists enhance the desirability of locations and higher property values, resulting in gentrification. But at the same time, Harvey (2002) argues that appropriation and exploitation of local culture are stimulating resistance among artists against the commodification of their work and neoliberal policies that often facilitate gentrification. While Harvey anticipated this resistant response of artists, Novy and Colomb (2013) support this theory that artists are agents of both change and resistance and suggest that conflicts related to appropriation of local culture and displacement of cultural producers are not only a widespread phenomenon but also make artists and creatives central in forming dynamics of urban settings as they express resistance. Furthermore, Berfelde (2021) argues as well how capitalist urbanism can unlock opportunities for emancipation of appropriated cultures and new forms of collective political identities. Finally, Tunali (2018) highlights the transformative potential of protest art and how artists can take powerful roles in shaping urban landscapes. Thus, these arguments suggest that artists are often in the center of gentrification (as actors of change and resistance) and situated in processes that enhance their struggle for space and therefore their enactment of their right to the creative city.

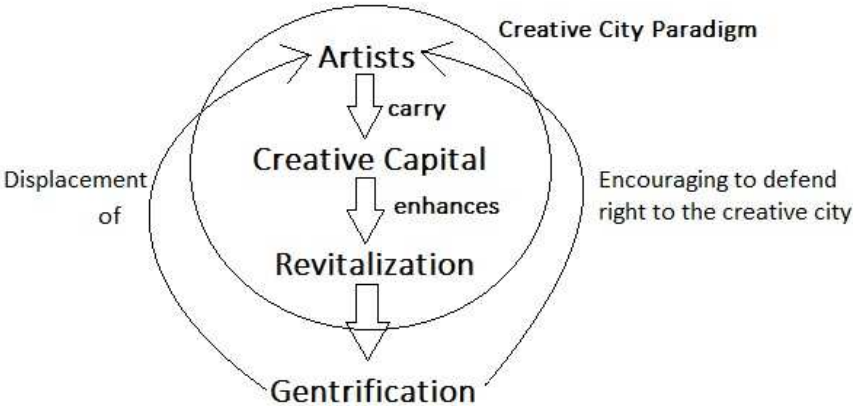


Figure 1: conceptual model

The conceptual model (see figure 1) illustrates the core concepts explained in the theoretical discussion. Hereby, artists represent the creative class (Florida, 2005) or the creative underclass (Morgan & Ren, 2012). This creative community carries creative human capital that is necessary for regional economic growth and urban revitalization (Florida, 2005; Mengi & Guaralda, 2020). Gentrification is thus indirectly a result of arts-themed development, artistic settlement and the upgraded neighbourhood attraction through the creative capital (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005; Rich, 2019; Harvey, 2002). The result is the displacement of the artists that originally revived the area (Rich, 2019), introducing the question again whether the artistic community might be instrumentalized by policymakers to upgrade urban spaces (Beaumont & Yildiz, 2017; Colomb & Novy, 2013). As artists get displaced, such developments create resistance among artists, driving them to defend their right to the creative city (Novy and Colomb, 2013; Berfelde, 2021).

## Methodology

Primary data was collected through walking interviews with artists from the Gängeviertel. Especially with the areas' history of resistance against displacing and disrupting communities and the cities final choice to repurchase the building of the Gängeviertel in 2009, walking interviews are useful for in-depth understanding of the participants experiences and recent perceptions about creative policy making. As mentioned by Evans and Jones (2011), walking interviews are beneficial for the collection of richer data due to the engagement of the participants with their surroundings. Furthermore, the thesis aims to investigate the relationship between artists, creative city policies and gentrification in the specific case study of the Gängeviertel as well as in the broader context of Hamburg. Thus, walking interviews contribute to the gathering of more place-specific data (Ibid) tailored to the neighbourhood with its history and culture. Furthermore, considering the outsider status of the researcher as well as the historical and emotional attachments of the artists to the Gängeviertel, walking interview also contribute to connecting with the participants through collective observations of urban transformations (Türeli & Al, 2018). To outline these observations, photo elicitation was conducted.

Furthermore, secondary data was drawn from policy documents (see appendix 2 and 3). Thus, policy document analysis was conducted to show what creative city policies have been implemented in the past and therefore how the participants perceive these policies.

Participant recruitment was carried out using a recruitment poster (see appendix 4) and via social media and contact forms. In total, there have been five walking interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated from German into English.

Data analysis was carried out with the software ATLAS.ti, using open coding. Important code groups (see code groups and sub-codes in appendix 5) are “community characteristics” which builds the basis for what artists experience and how they perceive processes of gentrification and creative city policies. Furthermore, the code group “strategies” recognized reoccurring themes of how artists deal with these processes. Finally, other code themes were concerned with the municipality and how they are involved in creative development and other experiences of struggle for space. The policy documents were coded by categorizing into “policy goal”, “policy implemented” and “policy outcome”, thus exploring how planning processes are planned initially and how they turn out.

Ethical considerations were concerned with privacy issues, such as getting informed and written consent (see appendix 6) before the interview and sharing information in my thesis anonymized and only with individuals directly involved in the project. The 5 participants received pseudonyms for the results section (Adelle, Dora, Max, Nadine and Edith, also see participant table in appendix 7). Furthermore, the participant data was anonymized to protect their identities by removing any identifiable information from the transcripts. Collected data, including the audio recordings and transcripts, were stored on the university servers. Access to data was restricted using a secure password and two-factor authentication.

## Results

The Gängeviertel in Hamburg is an inner-city neighbourhood, marked by its creative character and historical value as the remaining 12 buildings of the Gängeviertel (see figure 2) are some of the oldest in Hamburg (Gängeviertel e.V., 2010). After the city council announced that the property of the Gängeviertel was to be sold and replanned in 2009, there was strong resistance among the locals, leading to the withdrawal of the plans. The community of the Gängeviertel achieved collaboration with the municipality and advocated for long-term settlement of artists (Fitz, 2009), making the Gängeviertel the creative quarter that it is today.





Figure 2: The 12 buildings of the Gängeviertel, surrounded by new buildings / Rehrmann (2012)

### 1. Creative city policies and how they are perceived

The interviews and policy documents suggested that the Gängeviertel and Hamburg differ in how and what creative city policies are implemented and hence the resulting place making processes. The following section will explore the situation in the Gängeviertel compared to the broader context of Hamburg.

- Gängeviertel redevelopment

The Gängeviertel was not only occupied and defended by artists due to monument protection of the historical quarter Gängeviertel, but also fought for to be a creative quarter. Artists considered the municipality to be the opponent in this conflict and the occupation of the artists was aimed towards the city politics due to the low availability and affordability of working spaces for artists. Nadine described the situation as following:

*“It was like a roller coaster, and it wasn't planned from the beginning that they would be so favorable towards us. There was a lot of criticism and a lot of arguing that it was a wonderful project for the city of Hamburg and enabled many things that the city urgently needed. In addition, there was the preservation of the historic quarter. Those were the arguments, and we were able to win over some politicians, but not all. So, it was a years-long fight.” -Nadine*

Thus, according to Nadine, the Gängeviertel established itself through the resistance and idealism of the community in the Gängeviertel and was fought for for years rather than given to them by the municipality. Furthermore, Max emphasized how the city provided a budget and tolerated the project, but left the renovation work to the community of the Gängeviertel.

*“They did everything themselves there. I remember that from my friend. When they did these renovation works, they did everything themselves. They got a small budget, but they really busted their ass and did everything themselves there. It's not like the city said, “Okay, we'll do it.” but rather like “Well, if it has to be done, then do it yourselves.” Yes, that's the feeling I have. .” -Max*

Hence, Max emphasizes as well how viewing the redevelopment of the Gängeviertel as artistic commitment by the city would be misleading. However, the municipality did collaborate and repurchased the 12 building of the Gängeviertel when offered the opportunity. Creative city policies implemented in the Gängeviertel can be considered the collaboration with the community, such as sharing responsibilities and delegating power in the place making process, including providing the community with a budget (Freie Hansestadt Hamburg, 2010a). Furthermore, dialogue with stakeholders from the Gängeviertel and real estate companies to discuss their interests and future utilization of the space (Ibid) enhanced the settlement of the creative quarter and can be considered efforts by the municipality to implement creative city policies.

- Lack of municipal engagement

In the broader context of Hamburg, the situation surrounding creative investments is unlike the Gängeviertel. Hence, the political pressure on policymakers that the Gängeviertel community established over years is not present for other artist communities in Hamburg. Dora stated how the municipality lacks active support and mentioned the following:

*“Hamburg focuses more on being “cooler than Berlin and having the Reeperbahn,” but I don't see them really supporting people. [...] The city doesn't actively say, “we offer you something.”” -Dora*

Dora's comment suggests a lack of involvement of the municipality in supporting artistic development that is experienced by the creative community. However, looking at past efforts by the municipality to enhance creative development, there have been approaches for cultural development in Hamburg since 2010. Thus, the municipality together with the Kreativgesellschaft (half-state owned initiative to support cultural development) started a program in 2020 that aimed to provide artists with cheap studio spaces (Freie Hansestadt Hamburg, 2010a). While the spaces were meant to be affordable, Adelle noted how the spaces were too expensive:

*“What the Kreativgesellschaft offers is more for creative startups that have written their business plan. But those are monthly rents that freelance artists cannot afford. Especially when these are artists who sell and exhibit in commercial galleries.” -Adelle*

Hence, Adelle demonstrates again how the municipality fails to implement policies that are actually experienced positively among the artist and ensure creative development. Furthermore, Max mentioned how the municipality and the Kreativgesellschaft mainly provide temporary spaces:

*“My old studio and now this one, is limited [in time], it leaves a sour taste. It's like we're just tolerated. And that also makes it difficult to establish centers like the Gängeviertel. [...] It's definitely annoying no matter what. We've been here for 8 or 9 months of the 2 years. That means we're already halfway, and then we have to start looking again on time. That's starting soon. And it's an absolute nightmare to move all this stuff around.” -Max*

Max's comment aligns with previous, suggesting that artists find themselves in a constant struggle for space as they have to deal with the limited affordability and availability of studio spaces that are vital for their work as artists, and as the city policies are not meeting the needs of artists.

- Hamburg's creative quarters

The municipality aimed to develop a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches when creating cultural centers (Freie Hansestadt Hamburg, 2010b and b), however none of the artists seemed to recognize this effort. Additionally, policy implementation was mainly concentrated around the neighbourhoods Schanze and St.Pauli, promoting them as cultural centers. However, as Dora noted in the following comment, long-term creative development seems to be absent in these neighbourhoods:

*“But in the Schanze, that's also what people expect from the neighborhood, that you can find cool unique pieces there, and the hipster sits there with his cappuccino and sunglasses, talking about his vernissage. But it's no longer a hip and interesting district but rather an alternative culture broken down into bite-sized pieces for people who don't really want alternative culture.” -Dora*

As Dora states, neighbourhoods like Schanze and St. Pauli have been gentrified and there is decreasing diversity and opportunities for creative practices in these areas.

Moreover, city politics aimed to establish a more user-friendly infrastructure and public transport to facilitate artistic settlement in new neighbourhoods (Freie Hansestadt Hamburg, 2010b). While the artists did not recognize these efforts, they mentioned that opportunities to create new niches and take control of new artistic quarters are not present in Hamburg due to the limitation of space. Thus, Edith said the following:

*“There are no opportunities. Where are the niches where you can build something? Maybe in Berlin, although I don’t believe that anymore, that time is over. And the Gängeviertel was a really interesting object. Also very peculiar somehow.” -Edith*

Edith illustrates how the Gängeveiertel was an exception, emphasizing again how unique the Gängeviertel is as a creative space in Hamburg and how artists have to fight for those spaces.

- ‘Open City’ Hamburg

Other policies are concerned with promoting Hamburg as an “Open City”. Thus, there was a shift in property policy that set new guidelines for the sale of municipal properties and how they are connected to creative economic use (Freie Hansestadt Hamburg, 2010b). While this policy aimed to enhance the creative economy and investments, the new concept of the “Open City Hamburg” also promoted Hamburg as a creative city nation-wide (Freie Hansestadt Hamburg, 2010b). However, Dora notes the following:

*“I don’t know of people [working for the city] responsible for culture. Given how the city presents itself as a cultural city, there should be more visible people who represent that and are responsible for that and actively do things.” -Dora*

Thus, according to Dora, Hamburg is not a city that offers special cultural opportunities for artists, challenging the nation-wide image of Hamburg as a creative center. Furthermore, Adelle stated the following:

*“A major argument or pillar was that there was a great artistic scene and talented artists and so on, but the city is actually doing very little to provide the conditions that artists need.” - Adelle*

Hence, Adelle criticized as well how the municipality promoted itself as supporting artists while neglecting conditions that are necessary for creative development.

## **2. Community characteristics and perception of creative city policies**

The data analysis suggested that there are certain community characteristics of artists that influence the way they perceive creative city policies. Thus, these characteristics are vulnerability, internal struggle, the creation of niches, and resilience.

- Vulnerability and struggle for space

As vulnerability was a recurring theme in the analysis, Edith illustrates this characteristic with the following anecdote:

*“It’s like with this children’s story about the cricket and the mouse. Where all the other animals collected food all summer to survive in winter, but the cricket made music and brought*

*joy all summer long. In the end, they all hid in their holes and had enough to eat, but the cricket froze and had nothing to eat. And if the mouse, as a compassionate giver, hadn't been there, the cricket would have died.” -Edith*

Hence, Edith explained how artists often take risks, also in the light of being self-employed, and give a lot without having much security on the other side, making them specifically vulnerable to displacement. Furthermore, the artists emphasized how they struggle to get affordable and long-term working spaces. Edith elaborates on this issue as follows:

*“It's a problem that you have very few opportunities to exhibit your work. And very few opportunities to find event spaces. Rehearsal spaces. Practice spaces. Performance spaces. For everything, you have to pay.” -Edith*

Thus, Edith demonstrates the crucial need but also struggle for such spaces as they are often unavailable and unaffordable. Therefore, this struggle for space makes artists vulnerable and can heavily influence the working and place making process.

- Dynamic nature and internal struggle

As mentioned above, artists often deal with issues of gentrification. In this light, there are constantly changing dynamics of their communities as they get disrupted with displacement. Furthermore, artists mentioned internally changing dynamics as actors and dominant concepts within the community change. Adelle describes the situation as follows:

*“It always changes which concept dominates here and it changes constantly. It's always being negotiated. Also, the entire question of space use is always a point of conflict, leading to interesting debates.” -Adelle*

Reflecting on Adelle's comment, it becomes evident how the persistent struggle for space for artists influences their dynamics as they are not only subject to displacement but are also negotiating and self-managing spaces like the Gängeviertel. Adelle mentioned as well that public spaces in the Gängeviertel are vital in keeping those debates alive and enhancing healthy community dynamics. One of those important public spaces at the backside of the Gängeviertel can be seen in figure 3 and was described by Adelle as a place of coming together after work.



Figure 3: Public space in the Gängeviertel, office buildings in the background / private

But in the light of fighting for spaces and managing their own community, Adelle notes the following:

*“There were many processes unrelated to art-making, and many realized that if they wanted to create the conditions for their artistic work, they couldn’t focus on art anymore. [...] It’s easy to lose focus on your art when you get caught up in the struggle for space, but this fight is always exhausting.” -Adelle*

Thus, Adelle addresses how taking control and managing the internal structure of the community as well as negotiating with authorities externally prevents the community from working freely as artist, introducing their struggle to enact their right to the creative city.

- Creation of niches

Artists repeatedly mentioned in the interviews how they create their own places and structures, even if the conditions for it are not ideal. The Gängeviertel in its entirety is an example of that characteristic, as the community fought for the place to be a creative quarter. To demonstrate this narrative, Nadine mentioned how she and her team were closely involved in creating artistic programs in one of the Gängeviertel buildings (Speckhaus) right after the occupation in 2009 when the Gängeviertel was not renovated yet, leaving the buildings cold and barely useable. She was also involved in the renovation process, making the Speckhaus habitable again (see figure 4 and 5):

*“I made friends [in the Gängeviertel] and, above all, started getting involved in one of the houses. That was the Speckhaus in Speckstraße, and together with others, mostly younger*



*artists, we started to create an artistic program there. We also invited various people who realized different ideas in the spaces, many group exhibitions.” -Nadine*

Thus, Nadine demonstrates how artists seem to naturally seek out niches in their working processes, working with incredible idealism.



Figure 4: Speckhaus before renovation 2021  
/ Verein Gängeviertel e.V. (2021)



Figure 5: Speckhaus after renovation 2024 / private

Furthermore, Dora emphasized how special the location of the Gängeviertel is, given that the 12 buildings of the quarter are surrounded by office and high-rise buildings (see figure 3, 5 and 6). It supports the previous argument that artist communities create their own places in originally unideal environments.

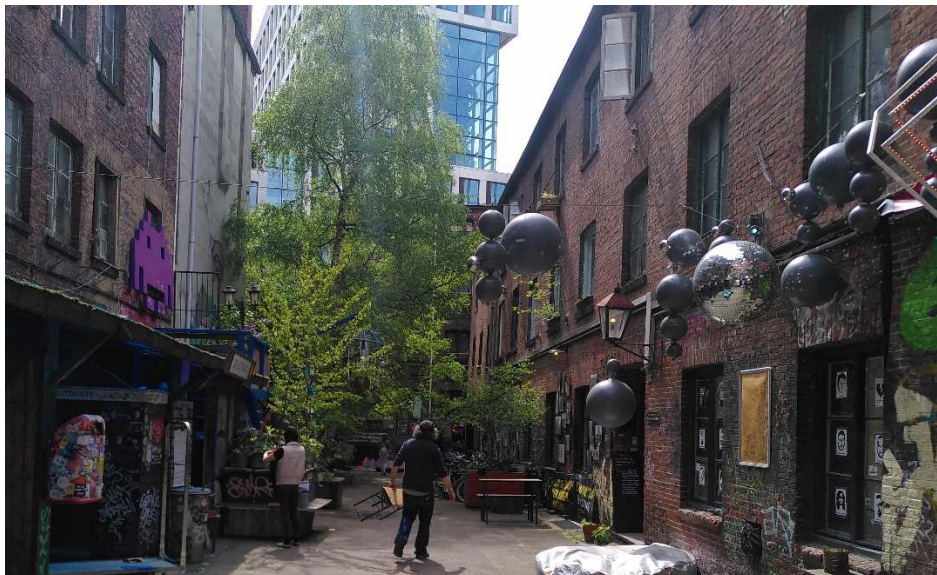


Figure 6: Office building behind the Gängeviertel /private

This narrative illustrates how the Gängeviertel was a unique project in the context of the gentrified neighbourhood that it is located in as well as its occupation history with the great idealism and resilience that the artists introduced.

- Resilience

As the previous section already touched on the crucial role of resilience in the development of the Gängeviertel, artists emphasized how persistent they must be to be taken seriously by the authorities. Thus, it seems that artist communities not only operate with great idealism but are also resistant in realizing their visions. Max notes the following:

*“But the fact that we're all here in this studio building and pushing and saying, “We need more space,” that's what we can do. Showing that we're here and saying what we need. [...] I assume they [the Gängeviertel community] were a bit of a pain in the ass. I think it often happens that it doesn't happen voluntarily. They just stayed there, and at some point, the city said, “Fuck it, let's do it now.”” -Max*

Thus, according to Max, the persistent efforts of the community eventually compelled the city to address their demands. This demonstrates how resilience is not only an idealistic trait that the artist community employs but also a tactical tool to achieve their goals and gain attention from the authorities.

The findings suggest that artists create their own places regardless of policies, highlighting the dominant role of their idealism, resilience, and the role of their internal structures in the place making process. However, the artists perceived a shortcoming in policies for better affordability and availability of working spaces, suggesting that policies can still have great impact on working conditions for artists. Concluding on artists perception on creative city policies, it becomes evident that artists perceive policies more as non-existent than specifically negative or positive and view themselves and their practices as primarily place-making in cultural centers like the Gängeviertel. Additionally, they emphasized how the conditions to practice art in Hamburg are not ideal.

### **3. Struggle for a right to the creative city**

As the previous discussion has already touched on artists fighting for space, certain patterns of behaviour have been identified that artists employ as they deal with these issues. Thus, the following section will discuss artist's strategies to enact their right to the creative city, and responses to gentrification and struggle for space.



- Vision and adaption

Exploring possibilities of improvement and identifying niches for artistic creation in urban spaces was a recurring theme among the artists. Thus, Nadine notes the following:

*“You have to imagine it as a space of possibility; many people discover it for themselves, and it wasn't easy to assert oneself” -Nadine*

Hence, Nadine demonstrates how artists would connect to their idealistic mindset when dealing with suboptimal conditions. However, alongside this idealism, there was also a sense of acceptance as artists were confronted with their struggle for space. Max explains his experience as follows:

*“Everyone says, of course, that rents are increasing. But I don't know how to deal with that. You simply have to adapt to it; there is no alternative. The moment the rents are too high, you have to adjust – either shrink or move to less popular areas. I feel there's not much you can do against it.” -Max*

Max's comment suggests a feeling of powerlessness and resignation. Thus, these perspectives demonstrate the duality of how artists approach to defend their right to the creative city: striving for a better future while accepting and adapting to current processes.

- Taking initiative

However, in the light of struggling for working spaces and more creative centers, each participant emphasized the importance of taking things into their own hands. Thus, Dora mentioned the following:

*“If you don't organize it yourself, nothing happens. Usually, it's a hassle to organize something yourself because there are no resources.” -Dora*

Hence, Dora emphasizes the importance of taking initiative and touches again on the recurring theme of lacking municipality involvement in artistic development in Hamburg. Furthermore, Nadine supports the idea of taking control and talks about the occupation in the Gängeviertel:

*“The next step was that as an autonomous quarter, we also wanted to remain autonomous, so we didn't want to just enter into a rental agreement. Instead, we wanted more and wanted to take matters into our own hands.” -Nadine*

Thus, she emphasizes how autonomy was favorable and had to be acquired, thus negotiated with the city, demonstrating how artists can self-manage their own creative environments despite limited municipal support.

- Protest and occupation

Given the few opportunities that artists have to voice their concerns to authorities and frequent experiences of displacement, protesting was mentioned by some of the artists when asked how they deal with gentrification. Edith said the following:

*“There's no chance. You can collect signatures, organize demonstrations, hold events. But they don't care anyway.”* -Edith

Hence, she questioned the effectiveness of protesting as it often achieves nothing due to the low political pressure. However, as an extension of protesting to create pressure, occupation was mentioned by multiple artists to fight displacement and create new artistic places. Thus, the Gängeviertel with its effective occupation is an example of that (see figure 7 and 8).



Figure 7: Occupants of the Gängeviertel in 2009 / Magunia (2009)



Figure 8: Occupants of the Gängeviertel in 2011 after signing the cooperation agreement / Recht auf Stadt (2019)

However, other artists(groups) employed this strategy as well when being threatened to give up their creative spaces, as Max mentioned here:

*“I also know that it was done in Wilhelmsburg, that they occupied houses there. And someone from my old studio also suggested that we should do that here too.” -Max*

Therefore, according to Max, occupation seems to be emerging as artists face their struggle for space and is an increasingly common tool to claim their right to the city.

Concluding on the findings, it becomes evident that the story of the Gängeviertel illustrates not only the struggle for space of artists but also their triumph in establishing a creative space in Hamburg. Thus, the resilience that the community showed is embedded in Hamburg’s policy making that neglected conditions for creative developments, leaving originally alternative areas like Schanze and St. Pauli gentrified. Creative city policies hence show a disparity between Hamburg and the Gängeviertel as the Gängeviertel achieved successful collaboration with authorities and an autonomous status. In contrast, other parts of Hamburg have not benefited from such municipal support and artists primarily mentioned the unaffordability and unavailability of working spaces, also in discontent with the city’s image. Thus, the Gängeviertel tells a story of resilience and self-management, highlighting the importance of collaboration, while the broader struggles in Hamburg suggest a necessity of supporting policies that do justice to Hamburg’s image as a creative center.

## Discussion

Cameron and Coafee (2005) identify three phases gentrification involving artistic settlement. As the Gängeviertel and other neighbourhoods in Hamburg widely differ in how artistic settlement emerged and evolved, it becomes evident that these three phases apply differently. According to the artists, other neighbourhoods in Hamburg with larger creative economies, such as the Schanze and St. Pauli, experienced displacements of the artist community and a decrease in diversity. Also considering that these neighbourhoods have a reputation of being trendy, and the increasing touristification in the areas, it can be stated that Schanze and St. Pauli have reached increasing commodification of artistic production, introducing the second stage of gentrification with increasing displacement of artists. Looking at the Gängeviertel, artists mentioned that the quarter is not only a flagship for the city of Hamburg but that tourists would go there as well. However, there is no increasing commodification of artistic production leading to the displacement of the Gängeviertel community as the quarter is managed by them, preventing gentrification and large-scale investment. The Gängeviertel would thus be placed

in the first phase of Cameron and Coafee's (2005) gentrification model, with the expectation to remain there in the long-term.

While neighbourhoods like Schanze and St. Pauli have witnessed displacement of artists, confirming the development that the theoretical framework suggests, the Gängeviertel community occupied and revitalized the quarter, but remained resistant against external forces for further economic development. Thus, the findings suggest that communities taking control of their own spaces enables neighbourhood revitalization without displacing the actors. As local communities taking control seems to be a key mechanism in successfully upgrading neighbourhoods, the findings propose a dilemma: When taking initiative and thus enacting their right to the creative city, artists have to navigate many processes unrelated to artmaking. Therefore, this introduces a struggle to enact their right to the creative city as they attempt to balance artistic practice with the demands of creating better conditions for artistic practice.

However, the question arises to what role creative city policies and the instrumentalization of artists play in this scenario. It is evident that artists are often subject to gentrification, as suggested by Morgan and Ren (2012). But considering that the municipality was more forced into supporting the transformation of the Gängeviertel rather than being proactively engaged in it, there seems to be no instrumentalization of the artists in this specific quarter after 2009. Nevertheless, the Gängeviertel occupation is a consequence of city policies that deteriorated conditions for artistic development over centuries, resulting in unaffordability and unavailability of spaces. In that light, the occupation might have been a reaction to the negative impacts of previous creative city policies and neglecting true artistic value. Looking at other Hamburg neighbourhoods, the artists mainly mentioned the issue of displacement before anything else, challenging Rich's (2019) theory that creative city policies carry protection for artists before displacement. However, the findings support Rich's (2019) notion to recognize artists vulnerability as well as artists carrying creative capital that enhances the expression of resistance against inequalities, moralities and economic powers (Morgan & Ren, 2012), as shown in the occupation of the Gängeviertel.

Additionally, the findings suggest that artists do not perceive themselves as actively enhancing art-driven domestication but more as subjects to gentrification. Thus, artists may not be agents of domestication as suggested by Sacco et al. (2019), but victims of it, and in that context agents of resistance. The artists recognized how they are vulnerable to displacement but expressed resistance against such negative impacts. Hence, their role in change is not limited to their influence in gentrification but includes their initiative in protesting, enabling them to change places through resistance, adding up to the argument that artists have an ambivalent nature as actors of both change and resistance (Harvey, 2002; Novy and Colomb, 2013).

## Conclusion

Coming back to the research question, it becomes evident that creative city policies in the Gängeviertel and Hamburg differ widely and therefore also their perception. While some artists in the Gängeviertel view the municipality as an opponent in creating a creative quarter, others appreciated to be heard by the authorities eventually. In the wider area of Hamburg, the artists did not perceive impact from creative city policies or support from the city that would enhance artistic development in the long term. Furthermore, diverse strategies have been identified that define the artists' struggle for a right to the creative city and include vision and adaptation, taking initiative, and protest and occupation. These strategies reflect the characteristics of artist communities, demonstrating how they work with adaptability, idealism and resilience in their struggle for space. This thesis highlighted the unique development of the Gängeviertel and how local communities taking initiative can make crucial impacts in keeping their communities safe and autonomous. Further research could focus on the initial occupation of the Gängeviertel and how it relates to previous creative city policies, looking further into their possible consequences on urban communities.

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## Appendix 1: Figures

- **Figure 1:** Conceptual model
- **Figure 2:** The 12 buildings of the Gängeviertel / M.O. Rehrmann (2012). *Ein Rundgang durch das Gängeviertel*. Accessed on 17-05-2024, retrieved from: <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/hamburg/Ein-Rundgang-durch-Gaengeviertel,gaengeviertelrundgang101.html>, NDR
- **Figure 3:** Public space in the Gängeviertel, office buildings in the background / private photo
- **Figure 4:** Speckhaus before renovation 2021 / Verein Gängeviertel e.V. (2021). *Start der Sanierung 2.0 in Gängeviertel: Das Speckhaus*. Accessed on 17-05-2024, retrieved from: <https://das-gaengeviertel.info/neues/details/article/start-der-sanierung-20-in-gaengeviertel-das-speckhaus.html>
- **Figure 5:** Speckhaus after renovation 2024 / private photo
- **Figure 6:** Office building behind the Gängeviertel / private photo
- **Figure 7:** Occupants of the Gängeviertel in 2009 / Magunia, R. (2009) In Mischke, J. (2023). *Ein historisches Viertel kam in in die Gänge*. Accessed on 12-06-2024, retrieved from: <https://www.abendblatt.de/hamburg/article239243301/Ein-historisches-Viertel-kam-in-die-Gaenge.html>. Hamburger Abendblatt
- **Figure 8:** Occupants of the Gängeviertel in 2011 after signing the cooperation agreement / Recht auf Stadt (2019). *10 Jahre später: Das Gängeviertel ist gesichert!*. Accessed on 12-06-2024, retrieved from: <http://www.rechtaufstadt.net/10-jahre-spaeter-das-gaengeviertel-ist-gesichert/>



## Appendix 2: policy document overview

Policy document	Reason for selection	Content
<b><i>Kreative Milieus und offene Räume in Hamburg</i></b> [Creative Milieus and Open Spaces in Hamburg], Freie Hansestadt Hamburg (2010b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of creative developments in Hamburg</li> <li>- Plans implemented since 2010, still ongoing policy implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overview of creative quarters in Hamburg and their development</li> <li>- Future plans for these quarters and other possible new creative spaces</li> <li>- Policy goals of creative development</li> <li>- Critical reflection on impacts of creative city policies</li> </ul>
<b><i>Creative Milieus and Open Spaces in Hamburg: Abstract of the Expert Report</i></b> , Freie Hansestadt Hamburg (2010a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Summary of the analysis</li> <li>- English version of expert report</li> <li>- Includes example of a case study (the Gängeviertel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concise overview over policy goals and development of creative spaces</li> <li>- Case study of the Gängeviertel</li> </ul>
<b><i>Nutzungs- und Sanierungskonzept</i></b> [Usage and renovation concept of the Gängeviertel], Gängeviertel e.V. (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy proposal made by the Gängeviertel community</li> <li>- Accepted by city council in 2010, policy implementation is ongoing</li> </ul>	<p>Proposal for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Historical preservation of the Gängeviertel,</li> <li>- Space usage (for art &amp; culture, social activities, living &amp; working, trade),</li> <li>- Organizational structure of the community,</li> <li>- Space allocation, and</li> <li>- Building and renovation processes</li> </ul>

**Appendix 3:** policies implemented in Hamburg and the Gängeviertel

Policies implemented in Hamburg	Policies implemented in the Gängeviertel	Policy goal
Reduced rents for studio spaces since Covid		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support for artists during Covid,</li> <li>- Provide artists with affordable spaces</li> </ul>
Temporary use of studios spaces		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent empty buildings &amp; lack of spaces,</li> <li>- Provide artists with affordable spaces</li> </ul>
Explore balance between top-down and bottom-up processes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-organizational potential of the market and creative stakeholder</li> </ul>
User-oriented infrastructure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhancing artistic settlement in new neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
Hamburg as "Open City" - shift in property policy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connecting sale of municipal properties to concepts for creative economic use</li> </ul>
Promoting Hamburg as national creative city		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote tourism &amp; investment</li> </ul>
	Shared responsibilities with artist community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create artistic quarter,</li> <li>- Act on political pressure</li> </ul>
	Interdisciplinary dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discuss space utilization with stakeholders,</li> <li>- New considerations &amp; ideas,</li> <li>- New collaborations</li> </ul>
	Budget allocation for renovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monument protection,</li> <li>- Empowerment of community</li> </ul>

## Appendix 4: recruitment poster

**Kreative Stadtpolitik im Gängeviertel**  
By Marlene Seibt, University of Groningen

**Was?**  
Das Ziel meiner Forschung ist es, die Folgen von kreativer Stadtentwicklungspolitik im Gängeviertel in Hamburg zu erkunden.

**Wer?**  
Künstler, Stadtplaner, kreative Raumgestalter in Verbindung mit dem Gängeviertel

**Wie?**  
Sie werden gebeten, an einem Interview teilzunehmen, das ca. 40 Minuten dauern wird. Ich möchte mehr darüber erfahren, wie die Stadt künstlerische Entwicklung fördert und wie das lokale Künstler beeinflusst.

**Anmerkung**  
Zu keiner Zeit wird der Forscher Informationen ohne Ihre schriftliche Zustimmung an Personen oder Institutionen weitergeben, die nicht am Projekt beteiligt sind. Während des Datenverarbeitungsprozesses wird Ihr Name anonymisiert.

E-Mail: [m.seibt@student.rug.nl](mailto:m.seibt@student.rug.nl), Tel: +4915774932983

[Translation:

Creative city policy in the Gängeviertel, by Marlene Seibt, University of Groningen

What?

The aim of my research is to explore the consequences of creative city policy in the Gängeviertel in Hamburg.

Who?

Artists, urban planners, creative place makers connected to the Gängeviertel

How?

You are asked to participate in an interview, which will last approximately 40 minutes. I would like to learn more about how the city fosters artistic development and how it influences local artists.

Note

At no time will the researcher disclose information to individuals or institutions not involved in the project without your written consent. Your name will be anonymized during data processing.]

## Appendix 5: code groups

Code group	Sub code
<b>Community characteristic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating niches/places</li> <li>- Dynamic nature / internal struggle / connectivity</li> <li>- Giving joy / vulnerability</li> <li>- Resilience / Idealsim</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acceptance / Dream of better</li> <li>- Pressuring / Protest / Occupation</li> <li>- Taking initiative</li> </ul>
<b>Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy goal</li> <li>- Policy implemented</li> <li>- Policy outcome</li> <li>- Creative policy / city policy</li> <li>- Anti creative policy</li> </ul>
<b>Struggle for space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Code group <b>“strategy”</b></li> <li>- Code group <b>“artists wishes”</b></li> <li>- Code group <b>“community characteristics”</b></li> <li>- Commodification / Flagship</li> <li>- Fighting for space</li> <li>- Gentrification</li> <li>- Lack of space</li> <li>- Making space</li> <li>- Space is freedom</li> <li>- Self-control is (not) freedom</li> <li>- Temporary spaces</li> </ul>
<b>City involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City not wanted [by the artists]</li> <li>- (anti) Creative policy</li> <li>- Gängeviertel &amp; Hamburg as Flagship</li> <li>- Gängeviertel special</li> <li>- Negative image of the city</li> <li>- No city support</li> </ul>
<b>Artists wishes / complaints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- [lack of] Appreciation</li> <li>- Lack of spaces</li> <li>- [high] Rents</li> <li>- Vulnerability</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 6: consent form**

Thank you very much for your interest in participating in this study. Below you will find a summary and information about the procedure. Please take a moment to read this information carefully.

The study deals with neighborhood promotion in the Gängeviertel and the role of the settlement of artists in urban development. Participation in this study involves an interview of approximately 40-60 minutes.

### **Consent Form**

#### **Title of the Study: Creative Urban Development in the Gängeviertel**

#### **Name of Participant:**

- I have read the above information and have had the opportunity to ask the researchers any additional questions.
- I understand that I can ask questions about the study at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent at any time without providing a reason.
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions at any time without any consequences.

#### **Data Protection**

- I understand that none of my individual information will be shared with people outside the study team and my name will not be published.
- I understand that the information provided will only be used for this research and publications directly related to this research project.

Having read and understood all of the above, I agree to participate in the research study: Yes / No

#### **Date**

#### **Signature**

To be filled out by the research management

- I declare that I have thoroughly informed the research participant about the research study and have answered all remaining questions to the best of my knowledge.

- I agree that this person participates in the research study.

**Date**

**Signature**

**Appendix 7:** participant table

<b>Participant number</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Reason for recruitment</b>
1	<b>Adelle</b>	- Part of the Gängeviertel since 2009 → active participation in redevelopment - Insights into Gängeviertel community dynamics
2	<b>Dora</b>	- Active in the Gängeviertel since 2021 - Insights into artist communities in wider Hamburg area
3	<b>Max</b>	- Active in the Gängeviertel since 2009 - Collaboration with Kreativgesellschaft - Insights into artist communities in wider Hamburg area
4	<b>Nadine</b>	- Part of the Gängeviertel since 2009 → active participation in redevelopment - Familiar with collaboration process with the city
5	<b>Edith</b>	- Active in the Gängeviertel since 2014 - Collaboration with Kreativgesellschaft - Insights into artist communities in wider Hamburg area

**Appendix 8:** translation of the interview guide

Opening questions:

- Can you tell me your name?
- Can you tell me a bit about your background as an artist and your involvement in the Gängeviertel?
  - o What do you do as an artist (in the Gängeviertel)
  - o How long have you been practicing your art here?
  - o What drew you to the Gängeviertel initially?

Main questions:

**1. Before 2009 (If applicable for that artist)**

- What was the artistic community like in the Gängeviertel before 2009?
- What challenges/opportunities did artists in the Gängeviertel have before 2009?
- Did the city of Hamburg have any involvement with the Gängeviertel before 2009?

**2. Renewal project 2009 – now**

- The city Hamburg has been involved in the reconstruction of the Gängeviertel for long-term artistic settlement since 2009.
  - o Can you describe how the city was involved?
  - o How did the city enhance artistic development in the Gängeviertel?
  - o How did that affect local artists?
  - o How did these policies evolve until now?
  - o And how has the Gängeviertel and its art scene evolved since then (2009)?
- How is your experience working (and living) here?
- How has working (and living) in the Gängeviertel impacted your artistic practice?
- Have you noticed any changes in the Gängeviertel that have influenced your work or living situation?
  - o How would you describe these changes?
  - o What impact do these changes have on the artistic community here?
  - o What impact do these changes have on your work?
- Thinking back to the artist initiative that saved the Gängeviertel from renewal in 2009 –
  - o How does the artistic community cope with changes in the neighbourhood today?
  - o Are there any challenges that have to be/are addressed by local initiatives?

**3. Reflection on the future**

- o Looking ahead, what are your hopes or concerns regarding the future of the Gängeviertel art scene?
- o What (if so) should the city Hamburg do differently in the future for the artistic community?

Closing question:

- Is there anything else you would like to share?
- Do you think I have a good picture of your experiences with artists and creative policies in the Gängeviertel?

- Do you know more artists that would be willing to do an interview with me?