Clean Walls = Higher Rents?! 
Gentrification Debates in Legacy Cities
The Future of My City is an intercultural student project with the aim to promote the cultural exchange of students from the Ruhr Area in Germany and the Rust Belt in the United States. Students get the opportunity to share their ideas to get actively involved in planning the future of their respective geographical regions. The project was initiated by the University Alliance Ruhr and was established as a part of the Year of German-American Friendship. For further information visit: http://thefutureofmycity.org/
“As long as there have been cities and those cities have had neighborhoods, they have been changing, some moving upward and some downward.”

(Mallach, 2018, p.99)

Post-industrial cities, often called legacy cities, are known for structural change, population losses, high poverty, vacancy rates, and social and ethnic segregation. Dortmund in Germany and St. Louis in the United States are examples of legacy cities. Today, however, both cities are attracting attention for their growing technology sectors, creative industries, higher education institutions, and their urban lifestyle. As a result, each has a handful of upwardly ascending neighborhoods, such as Forest Park Southeast in St. Louis and Unionviertel in Dortmund.

These upwardly ascending neighborhoods are undergoing economic, physical, cultural, and social change. People often refer to these neighborhoods as “gentrification”, a term associated with real and perceived negative impacts of neighborhood change. While neighborhoods in legacy cities are experiencing transformation, sometimes in the form of gentrification, it is different from hot market cities, such as New York or Berlin. The main differences is that rents and housing prices do not increase as quickly or as much in weak market cities, such as Dortmund and St. Louis, compared to strong market cities.

Despite the absence of “classic” gentrification processes in legacy cities, there is still a range of mixed reactions from residents and stakeholders sparking heated discussions about neighborhood change. This paradoxical finding – which is not only true for Dortmund and St. Louis, but also for many other post-industrial cities in Germany and the U.S. – raises intriguing academic and political questions. If gentrification debates in old industrial cities are not about the usual concerns, then what do people mean when they talk about gentrification and what other worries or interests has the term encompassed? It is important to understand neighborhood change better so residents and planners can anticipate problems and work together to find solutions.

Therefore, this magazine aims to explore gentrification debates from a comparative perspective by asking three questions:

What does gentrification look like in Dortmund & St. Louis?
How do people talk about it?
What can be done about discrepancies between facts on the ground and perceptions?

To answer these questions both teams analyzed neighborhood change — physical, economic and cultural developments — in their home cities. Simultaneously, we conducted a media analysis, as well as stakeholder and resident interviews, to gain in-depth insight into the cities’ discourse on gentrification. Lastly, we shared research on interventions in the two cities to create a collective set of policy recommendations.

Since Ruth Glass first coined the term gentrification in 1964 to refer to the displacement of working class families from neighborhoods in London, the idea has not only developed into a multifaceted field of urban research and debate, it has also become a popular term associated with a wide range of city problems. The academic literature focuses on three related aspects: displacement of long-term residents, upgrading of physical assets, particularly housing stock, and change in neighborhood character. However, in public discourse, the term is used far more broadly. It is used synonymously with rising rents, limited affordable housing, displacement, cultural changes, and new businesses and amenities. The fact that gentrification has entered public discussion demonstrates its saliency — society is concerned about it more than ever.

Researchers who have studied gentrification in legacy cities conclude that the displacement of low-income residents by affluent in-movers is less likely because of suburbanization. The biggest challenge these cities are facing is that wealthy residents are moving away from urban centers and poor residents are being left behind in disinvested neighborhoods with increasingly concentrated poverty. The result is often intergenerational poverty, entrenched socio-economic segregation, and lack of social and economic opportunities. Although there are small revivals and ongoing re-urbanization, neighborhood decline is a far bigger concern than gentrification in legacy cities. However, gentrification is obviously relevant to these cities because residents and local activists often use the concept to articulate their hopes and concerns.
DORTMUND

With a population of 586,000 in 2017, Dortmund is the eighth largest city in Germany. The city is part of the country’s largest urban metropolitan region called the Ruhr which has about 5.1 million inhabitants. During the industrial era, Dortmund became one of the most important coal, steel, and brewery centers in Germany. Consequently, it was one of the most heavily bombed cities during World War II, with about 98 percent of buildings in the inner-city center destroyed. Today, after the collapse of its century-long steel and coal industries, Dortmund, like the rest of the Ruhr and other post-industrial areas around the globe, has to adapt to changing labor markets. This is accompanied by shifting economic trends and social issues, as the city tries to reinvent itself with a new city image and self-understanding at the same time that it acknowledges its industrial past and the costs of decline.

To choose study neighborhoods in Dortmund, connections between the terms gentrification and Dortmund were researched online. After a closer look at the history and current development of neighborhoods in Dortmund, two working-class neighborhoods were selected. Both are inner-city neighborhoods with comparatively low-price housing that have experienced noticeable structural change in the past but are currently widely discussed due to planned development projects. Unionviertel and Hafenviertel were and are still known as arrival neighborhoods for immigrants, with high rates of population turnover and, to some extent, profound issues related to poverty. Nevertheless, heated debates about gentrification in these neighborhoods are emerging.

The City of St. Louis, Missouri is a city in the Midwestern United States with the Mississippi River serving as its eastern boundary and suburban St. Louis County as its western boundary. At the turn of the 20th century, St. Louis was the fourth largest city in the country and a strong industrial and manufacturing center due to vibrant auto, milling, and garment industries. The city continued to grow in total population, peaking in the 1950s. At that time, many white residents began to move to surrounding suburbs marking an era of rapid suburbanization. This trend resulted in huge population decline, with the city losing approximately 65 percent of its 1950s population by 2017. Today, the population is only 314,867 making it the 21st largest city in the United States. Rapid population decline, paralleled by disinvestment, rising crime, high poverty, and increasing racial segregation are all issues that plague the City of St. Louis.

Research in St. Louis focuses on four neighborhoods that were selected based on two metrics: sharply increasing assessed property values and the neighborhood’s rebound story, how it has changed based on unique strengths and challenges.
DORTMUND
UNIONVIERTEL

Unionviertel is located west of the city center, along the main street Rheinische Straße. It was known for its breweries and factories as well as for its working-class and the diversity of its residents. From the 1970s until its designation as an urban redevelopment area in 2008, the neighborhood was marked by vacancies and social tensions. The neighborhood was rebranded as a creative quarter and named Unionviertel after the former Union brewery. Today, Unionviertel is home to an increasing number of students and artists. Currently, there are plans to redevelop an industrial brownfield, the former site of the HSP factory, which will have further impacts on the neighborhood structure. Despite some public praise for these changes, gentrification is a concern. Is the development of Unionviertel the start of a gentrification process or is the term misleading?

On the former HSP site in Unionviertel there are plans for a new, mixed-use urban district. City, IHK Dortmund and Thelen Group are planning the project „Smart Rhino“. The project includes live, study, and work space surrounded by greenery close to the University of Applied Sciences. The establishment of a day care center is also part of the concept. A technology park with start-ups and innovative companies will be built as well as parks and green spaces.

HSP DEVELOPMENT

DORTMUND
HAFENVIERTEL

Hafenviertel is located north of the city center. It is the western part of the Inner-City North district, also called Nordstadt, which is characterized by a working-class and immigrant population due to its once prominent steel and coal industries. Today, Inner-City North is still an arrival district for immigrants especially from Southeast Europe and North Africa. Public opinion strongly associates the Inner-City North with poverty and crime. Despite the neighborhood’s stigmatization as a “problem quarter” area, companies in the harbor provide 5,000 jobs in logistics, industry, and trade service. Since the 1980s, numerous urban renewal programs have been implemented to improve public space, the local economy, and social networks. The underused eastern port, adjacent to residential use, triggered discussions about the direction of the neighborhood development and who will benefit. First fears of gentrification have been articulated. But how do gentrification and the still deprived neighborhood Hafenviertel go together?

With the City’s plans to develop the northern and southern Speicherstrasse and the harbor is being expanded to include urban uses along the waterfront and new working and leisure facilities are being created for the adjacent Inner-City North. The goal is to create a lively quarter with up to 5,000 new jobs in the digital and creative sector. With an attractive working environment and special urban design qualities, future-oriented users are addressed and are supposed to trigger a self-reinforcing dynamic of development.

HARBOR DEVELOPMENT
ST. LOUIS

FOREST PARK SOUTHEAST
Forest Park Southeast is a young, trendy neighborhood that includes The Grove, an independent business district with coffee shops, bars, restaurants, and music venues. There is a notable and historic LGBTQ+ community, a strong nightlife scene, and a growing population of young professionals and college students. The neighborhood is close to two universities, large hospitals, and a growing technology startup district. These anchor institutions are key to its rebound.

BOTTANICAL HEIGHTS
Botanical Heights was formerly known as McRee Town before a nonprofit development group, the Garden District Commission, purchased and razed significant portions of the neighborhood in the early 2000s. Prior to the renaming and rebranding of the neighborhood, it was known for high crime rates and poverty, earning it the nickname “new jack city” by residents because of the high rate of carjacking. Located next to historic Tower Grove Park, today, it is home to a small, but thriving and trendy restaurant scene and other independent businesses. After the transformative changes, including the name change, Botanical Heights neighborhood rebound is based on rebranding.

BENTON PARK
Close to once prominent industries along the Mississippi River, Benton Park has roots as a white, working-class neighborhood. It includes a popular public park, a handful of trendy restaurants and bars, and borders Cherokee Street, a business district known for its art galleries and thriving, diverse businesses. With some of the oldest surviving buildings in St. Louis, the neighborhood created a historic tax district to incentivize the preservation and historic renovation of the housing stock.

JEFF VANDER LOU & ST. LOUIS PLACE
Located in North St. Louis, the Jeff Vander Lou and St. Louis Place neighborhoods have experienced extreme depopulation since the 1950s due to white flight. Since then, these neighborhoods have suffered from disinvestment, blight, dropping housing prices, vacancy, high crime, and continued depopulation. In 2016, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency announced it would construct a 97-acre campus costing $700 million dollars on a site in St. Louis Place that borders Jeff Vander Lou. It has been a contentious project since its announcement with many neighborhood residents concerned about its impact. This is due in part to large-scale development plans that have failed in this area, like the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project. Residents fear that the neighborhood will experience gentrification that will fundamentally change what is left of their communities. This neighborhood clearly does not have a rebound story, it tells a much different story — one of disinvestment and the uneven development of neighborhoods in the city.
WHAT DOES GENTRIFICATION LOOK LIKE IN DORTMUND & ST. LOUIS?

Dortmund

Ten years ago, the mayor of Dortmund described Unionviertel as a transient area — residents lived there for a while and then moved away again. To attract and retain long-term residents, Unionviertel became part of the federal-state program Urban Redevelopment West, Stadtumbau West in German, and received urban development funding from 2008 to 2018 of 11.72 million euros, including 20 percent municipal contribution. Additionally, 2.6 million euros in public funds and 3.6 million euros from private sources were invested in the project. The private funds included particular investments in the renovation of facades in private buildings.

In the first stage, old and vacant housing stock required extensive renovation and had above-average vacancy rates. It was also important to address large brownfields, unattractive quarter entrances, and the lack of amenities for children and young people. The heterogenous quarter struggled because it had an overall bad reputation and lacked its own identity and name.

Three main impulses prompted the development of the neighborhood: The transformation of the U-Tower and its inclusion as part of the European Capital of Culture Ruhr:2010, traffic changes along Rheinische Straße, and the urban renewal program with a range of measures. Starting with the traffic reorganization in the surroundings of the U-Tower, street routes were changed and the tram was moved underground. In 2010, the new center for art and creativity opened with a mix of museum, educational and gastronomic uses. Within a very short time, the tower became one of the city’s most emblematic landmarks. The decision to transform the Dortmunder U-Tower into a center for art and creativity acted as a starting point for the development of the rest of the neighborhood.

Neighborhood management played an important role in the development of the neighborhood. It initiated regular owner meetings, residents’ round tables, a neighborhood fund for residents’ ideas, a district newspaper, and a neighborhood club. The neighborhood also needed a name and the name Unionviertel was born in a participatory process. Unionviertel was upgraded in many places and developed its own creative profile as empty shops were used as art studios or for employment-related projects and artist-initiated projects sprung up. Through public incentives in the neighborhood, the private sector was mobilized as well. In addition to the structural investments, a lively artistic and cultural scene emerged contributing to the new image.
In the last ten years, Hafenviertel did not experience as much physical change and upgrading as Unionviertel. However, with the planned redevelopment of the harbor and the associated upgrading of the adjacent residential area, the neighborhood is likely to face substantial change in the future. There have been attempts to upgrade the Inner-City North for a long time, including Hafenviertel. A notable redevelopment effort was the EU Community Initiative URBAN II, which took place from 2000 to 2006, upgrading buildings and the general appearance of the Inner-City North. After URBAN II, the City focused more on soft factors like education and employment in addition to the stabilization and upgrading of urban problem areas.

**St. Louis**

In St. Louis, quantifying physical change to determine if a neighborhood is gentrifying is a difficult task. Two indicators were used to measure physical change: independent coffee shops and vacancy rates. By analyzing these indicators for the four focus neighborhoods, it is possible to better understand each of their unique stories and trends.

Vacancy rates measure how much housing stock is unoccupied and characterize the physical infrastructure of a neighborhood. Higher vacancy rates are often caused by depopulation, disinvestment—prevalent issues in St. Louis—and are a special focus of nonprofit, and city government revitalization efforts. Low vacancy rates often are found in neighborhoods with stable populations, household wealth, and urban amenities.

Of the three rebounding focus neighborhoods, Benton Park and Botanical Heights have experienced about a 50 percent decrease in the number of vacant buildings between 2000 and 2014 signaling housing redevelopment and revitalization. Forest Park Southeast had a surge in the number of vacant buildings. However, this is not due to traditional causes, but rather an increase in housing construction and new, not-yet-occupied units. Here, a high rate, not a low rate of vacancy, is a strong sign of revitalization and gentrification. Overall, vacancy rates in these areas tell a story that these neighborhoods are rebounding or ascending.

Jeff Vander Lou and St. Louis Place have a much larger total number of vacant buildings than any of the three other neighborhoods. In 2010, Jeff Vander Lou had more than five times the number of vacant buildings as Forest Park Southeast. While both neighborhoods have experienced decreases in vacancy, the total number is so high that the negative effects of vacancy are still a threat to the neighborhood.
Independent coffee shops are often important neighborhood meeting places and anchors used for business meetings, studying, dining, and working. Most importantly, they are often located in wealthier neighborhoods and are part of thriving business districts — rarely are coffee shops located in high poverty or high crime areas. Therefore, the presence of coffee shops is a good measure of physical change and can signal gentrification-like processes in a neighborhood.

The map shows that there are relatively more coffee shops in three focus neighborhoods: Benton Park, Forest Park Southeast, and Botanical Heights. Specifically, Benton Park and Forest Park Southeast have four or more coffee shops, some of the highest rates in the city overall. Only one neighborhood in North St. Louis City has a coffee shop and none are located in Jeff Vander Lou or St. Louis Place. This exemplifies a stark divide in the city between North and South St. Louis, often called the Delmar Divide.
**Dortmund**

An essential part of the redevelopment strategy of Unionviertel was the promotion of the creative economy in a mixture of top-down and bottom-up approaches. To establish Unionviertel as a creative quarter, many projects for artists and creatives were implemented. Artists were engaged in the redevelopment process by the urban renewal department and vacant shops were rented by artists at a discount. The urban redevelopment project funded the Dortmunder U-Tower as well as street art meant to contribute to the neighborhood’s upgrading, image, and identity.

Unionviertel is still a multicultural neighborhood but some aspects of the social structure are changing. The neighborhood has become more attractive for young people, especially students. While the unemployment rate is still above the city average, it is declining and an increase in middle-class residents can be noticed.

Even though creative structures have existed in the neighborhood for a long time, creative activity has increased in the past decade. In Hafenviertel, a network of trendy bars and independent creatives are involved in the neighborhood redevelopment. In 2013, the Rekorder was established by an association of creatives that promotes the cultural network in Dortmund. As working building Projektspeicher offers offices and galleries for creative startups and artists. As part of the harbor’s redevelopment, the Office of Economic Development, Wirtschaftsförderung in German, plans to spread the image of a vibrant and creative neighborhood. How these plans involve the already established cultural institutions is still not clarified.

The social structure of Hafenviertel differs from the rest of Inner-City North. In comparison, the rate of social welfare receivers is about 7 percentage points lower and the rate of migrants is about 13 percentage points lower in Hafenviertel than in the rest of Inner-City North. In the past ten years, the unemployment rate clearly decreased but it is still very high compared to Dortmund overall. The population of Hafenviertel is young and multicultural. Compared to the rest of the city, it is still a neighborhood with social problems that are only changing very slowly.

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**Unionviertel**

- 12,458 Total population in 2017.
  - Population has increased by 4.8% since 2007.
- 67.2% of all households are one-person-households.
  - This rate is comparatively high and has increased by 4% since 2007.
- 41.3% of all residents are migrants (foreigners and Germans with migration background), which is above city average. It has slightly increased by 3.3% since 2007.
- 9.3% of all adult residents are unemployed.
  - This rate is above city average but decreased by 3.7% since 2007.
- 19.3% of all adult residents receive social welfare.
  - This rate is a little above city average but slowly decreased by 3.2% since 2007.
- 34.5 - 39.9 is the average age in 2013 which is below the city average.

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**Hafenviertel**

  - Population has increased by 7.5% since 2007.
- 64.6% of all households are one-person-households.
  - This rate is comparatively high and has increased by 6.5% since 2007.
- 62.3% of all residents are migrants (foreigners and Germans with migration background), which is one of the highest rates in the city. It has further increased by 9% since 2007.
- 14.6% of all adult residents are unemployed.
  - This rate is comparatively high, but decreased by 5.8% since 2007.
- 35.5% of all adult residents receive social welfare.
  - This rate is one of the highest in the city. It further increased by 1.5% since 2007.
- 37.2 - 39.4 is the average age in 2013 which is below the city average.

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**Dortmund**

- Looking at the whole city, the population has increased by 3.1% from 2007 to 2007.
- One-person-households make up 48.6% of all households. This rate has increased by 3.3%.
- 34.2% of the population are migrants. From 2007 to 2017, this rate has increased by 6%.
- The unemployment rate in 2017 was 8.1% and has decreased by 2.5% since 2007.
- Social welfare receivers make up 16.9% of the population, which has slightly increased by 0.8% since 2007.
- In 2013, the average age of Dortmund’s population was 43.6 years.
St. Louis

In St. Louis, social and cultural indicators of neighborhood change capture shifting power dynamics between new and existing residents. In literature, social and cultural indicators traditionally include race, ethnicity, age, and educational attainment among others. In the City of St. Louis, race is an especially important indicator given the population’s current composition (45.9 percent white residents and 47.6 percent black residents) as well as a recent focus on racial disparities and important historical spatial divisions that have led to deep racial segregation. To specifically capture race, the percentage increase of new white residents in a neighborhood was used to measure change.

In all three rebounding focus neighborhoods, the percentage of white residents increased significantly from 2000 to 2014 in comparison to the city. Forest Park Southeast had the largest increase in the proportion of white residents at 21.7 percent and the largest decrease in black residents. Due to the composition of the St. Louis population — 45.9 percent white residents and 47.6 percent black residents — there is a direct relationship between the increase in white residents and decrease in black residents in all focus neighborhoods. Namely, as new, white residents move in, black residents who already lived there leave. While Jeff Vander Lou and St. Louis Place did experience an increase in the percentage of white residents, it was relatively small suggesting that there was little, if any, change to the racial composition of these neighborhoods.

The second way that social and cultural change was measured is educational attainment, measured by the percentage of residents over the age of 25 with a bachelor’s degree or higher. Overall, between 2000 and 2014, educational attainment in St. Louis City rose almost ten percent closing the gap with the national. Comparatively, educational attainment rose by an even greater amount in the rebounding focus neighborhoods, on average 24 percent. The largest percentage gain was in Botanical Heights where educational attainment increased by 32 percent (299 residents) from seven percent in 2000. Much like the other indicators, there was a huge discrepancy between educational attainment by neighborhood with St. Louis Place and Jeff Vander Lou experiencing increases below the city average.
ECONOMIC CHANGES IN DORTMUND

Dortmund

Most of the apartments in Unionviertel are for one- and two-person households which are often cited as the biggest obstacle for the neighborhood’s development becoming family-oriented. Two-thirds of the housing stock is owned by private owners, but the cooperative Spar- und Bauverein eG is the biggest owner of whole housing blocks. The non-profit cooperative offers affordable rents and social housing.

Due to low rental prices and little demand for apartments in the past, owners did not invest in Unionviertel which led to high vacancy rates and housing stock in need of renovation. The redevelopment around the former Union brewery increased investment in housing and decreased vacancy. In addition, the rental prices in Dortmund increased, incentivizing property owners to renovate and modernize housing stock between 2008 and 2018. Until now, the investments are spatially uneven — west of Dorstfelder Brücke investments are only selective whereas they are extensive in the eastern part of Unionviertel.

The investments and improved image of the neighborhood, as well as a tight rental market in the adjacent Kreuzviertel, led to an increased demand for apartments in Unionviertel. The rate of average rent increase in this neighborhood was above the city’s average from 2008 to 2014. Since then, due to the saturation of the market, the rents in the other parts of the city are rising more than the rents in the Unionviertel. This can be explained by the quality of the housing structure here which is not suitable for upscale buyers.

Since the neighborhood is already densely populated no further building activity was possible. This will change with the conversion of the former HSP area with newly planned residential buildings which is expected to have significant change of the neighborhood as a whole and, especially, for the western part.

While the majority of the housing stock in Hafenviertel is privately owned, housing associations like Spar- and Bauverein and DOGEWO still hold a significant amount. A 2010 report showed that most buildings were in bad condition — maintenance, modernization, and energy-related restoration were needed. Most available residential space is one to three-room apartments.

The rate of apartment rentals is below city average. In the southern part of the Hafenviertel, rents increased above average from 2011 to 2014. The increase was 0.81 Euros/m² whereas in Dortmund in total it only increased by 0.59 Euros/m². Contrary, from 2012 until 2016, the southeastern part of the neighborhood stayed the same whereas the rents in the whole city increased by 0.95 Euros/m². Looking at the whole neighborhood, the ground and property values are higher in the southern part than in the northern part.

Since there are few land parcels available for residential development left in this neighborhood, there is no new building activity for housing but only upgrading of the existing stock. This will not change with the development of the harbor since no residential uses are included in the plans.

Overall, the physical, social, cultural, and economic changes in Union- and Hafenviertel have shown that the neighborhoods are still affected by their ongoing struggles with disinvestment and poverty. Initial signs of gentrification-like processes can be observed. Nevertheless, they are not indicating any overall gentrification in the classical sense right now. However, keeping in mind future development of HSP and the harbor, critical attention needs to be paid to these plans and their effects on their surroundings.

RENTAL SITUATION

St. Louis

In St. Louis, several economic variables were used to identify rebounding neighborhoods. With the goal of capturing different aspects of economic change, the following three variables were used: percentage change in assessed property value, trends in residential sales prices and number of sales, and change in neighborhood poverty rates.

Since market value data is not accessible, the assessed property value designated by the city government for taxing purposes is a reliable proxy for economic change. From 2000 to 2014, Botanical Heights, Forest Park Southeast, and Benton Park all experienced sharp increases in assessed property value. While Forest Park Southeast saw a great amount of development between 2014 and 2018, much of it was tax-abated and, therefore, assessed property value in the neighborhood may be artificially low.

Trends in residential sales prices and the number of sales also provide insight into the strength of neighborhood markets. Rebounding neighborhoods are expected to have recovered from the 2008 financial crisis and generally appreciate in value over time. Benton Park appears to have the healthiest

“"The great demand makes it harder to find an apartment in Unionviertel. If the apartment is in good condition, property owners can choose their tenants from many applicants.""

(Stadt Dortmund 2018: 62)
real estate market, with an average of 65 annual residential sales from 2000 to 2018. Botanical Heights and St. Louis Place had the fewest annual sales, with averages of seven and ten, respectively. Unfortunately, the St. Louis Place and Jeff Vander Lou neighborhoods had significantly fewer sales following 2008, suggesting they never recovered from the financial crisis. Jeff Vander Lou averaged only five annual residential sales between 2009 and 2018.

The last consideration is the change in poverty rate between 2000 and 2014. Since gentrifiers can be college students, artists, and single-occupant households, the focus was on poverty rates instead of incomes. Benton Park, Botanical Heights, and Forest Park Southeast experienced sharp declines in poverty during the time period above, while the City of St. Louis poverty rate rose slightly. Only Benton Park has a 2014 poverty rate below city average — 17 percent versus 26 percent for the city. The concentration of poverty is apparent in Jeff Vander Lou and St. Louis Place neighborhoods.

Overall, economic results in Benton Park, Botanical Heights and Forest Park Southeast are like what might be expected in gentrifying neighborhoods. All three experienced sharp increases in assessed property value and average residential sales prices. Housing sales have recovered since the financial crisis and poverty has declined.

Based on economic indicators, the gentrification processes in St. Louis are less pronounced than in hot market cities. Economic inequality is severe in St. Louis and within the focus neighborhoods themselves. Findings in St. Louis Place and Jeff Vander Lou are not consistent with the traditional gentrification model, and disinvestment is likely the greatest threat to these neighborhoods despite people viewing these places as undergoing gentrification.
The Future of My City

Clean Walls = Higher Rents?!

How do people talk about gentrification and neighborhood change?

Dortmund

In recent years, the former academic term gentrification has transformed into a widely known and discussed buzzword. This has led people to having different perceptions of gentrification regarding their own communities. Even though there seems to be a broad consensus about key aspects of gentrification, residents and stakeholders throughout Dortmund and St. Louis have divergent perceptions about the term and put varying emphasis on it. Thus, the term gentrification is contested and can be described as a slippery and divisive word.

Are the neighborhoods gentrifying?

After having a closer look at what is happening in the focus neighborhoods, it is important to document stakeholders’ perceptions about developments in their communities to see if those are consistent with the empirical findings. A group of experts consisting of planners, politicians, activists, and artists of Unionviertel were able to critically reflect the past developments of the neighborhood and almost all concluded that no gentrification is occurring. Many mentioned, however, that changes in Unionviertel are accompanied by discussions about gentrification. Only small-scale changes have occurred which do not add up to gentrification. They argue that rents, if they increased at all, increased moderately and did not displace any population groups. Additionally, the presence of housing cooperatives and their public interest can ensure a balanced and fair market with their influence on their housing stock. One local artist took a different view. They described the situation as controversial and that the “Gentrification is always an expression of the fact that something is developing.” (Artist)

“Gentrification always depends very much on your perspective and how you perceive your neighborhood.”

For me, gentrification is a negatively connoted term that implies a causal link between redevelopment, rising rents, and the resulting exchange of the population.” (Hafenviertel Resident)

“With gentrification I associate above all a word case which is predominantly used by left-wing groups in order to stir up fears in the population.” (Hafenviertel Resident)

“Powerlessness and fear as a synonym for gentrification.” (Planner)

“Without gentrification no renewal would take place and the neighborhoods would be left to decay. But if this gentrification takes place too quickly and does not grow naturally, it leads to displacement which is dreadful.” (Politician)

Gentrification resistant. Neighborhood planners in Hafenviertel confirmed that Inner-City North is unlikely to be subject to gentrification because the social structure is too restless for the processes of gentrification. Developments are not expected to pressure residents to relocate. Experts also said that they have the impression that people living in the northern parts of Dortmund have more pressing concerns than the fear of gentrification’s side effects. Further, it was discussed that more students, younger people in general, and fewer low-income groups are occupying public spaces. A shift in the population structure is increasingly becoming the defining experience of the neighborhood.

Since many experts think that no empirical gentrification can be proven, residents’ opinions about their neighborhood’s changes are particular interesting to explain why there are gentrification debates anyway. 43 residents, of those 19 from Unionviertel and 24 from Hafenviertel, expressed their views on changes in their neighborhoods in an online survey with open questions.

Residents’ answers about Unionviertel vary drastically from people agreeing that no gentrification is taking place to people claiming it is already in full swing. Those that...
do not believe it is happening see no rent increase but an increase in the livability of the quarter. With different emphases, residents describe that the process has slowly begun, measuring changes by the presence of street art, the number of new construction sites, and the upgrading of playgrounds. Respondents who believe that the quarter is impacted by gentrification point to existential fears, instilled by the displacement of locals, an increase of land values and rents, and the decreasing availability of affordable housing units. The housing stock of the cooperatives are mentioned as a possible counterbalance to the negative effects of gentrification. Some residents in Unionviertel are not sure if the neighborhood is or will be gentrifying. This uncertainty of the respondents could be explained by the current lack of communication regarding the official plans for the HSP site leading to unknown future impacts on present-day residents.

Answers about Hafenviertel show that some people believe that the neighborhood is not being gentrified. They point to run-down areas and it being an arrival neighborhood with a high percentage of poor and foreign population which may deter investments. It is striking that respondents also state that Hafenviertel is not yet being captured by gentrification. Other residents say that they have noticed some pioneers but think that they are not yet in a critical mass which could trigger gentrification. However, there are also many arguments why gentrification is already occurring: upgrading of the neighborhood is not benefiting residents, locals are relocated by rising rents, more hip stores and cafes are opening, development is taking place too fast and not naturally as well as top-down and nontransparent decision making that excludes the local population.

This shows that residents of both neighborhoods do not agree on whether gentrification is taking place or not. Reasons for the differences between the answers could be the varying definitions about the term gentrification itself and different perceptions of the neighborhoods’ developments. In order to further explore the different opinions on gentrification, it is important to find out which developments in the neighborhoods are noticed by the respondents.

Changes noticed by residents in recent years
In Unionviertel, over half of the respondents hold the opinion that the neighborhood’s image has changed over the years and that this is due in-part to redevelopment activities. Some people say that the neighborhood is becoming more popular, with special attention towards the positive spatial developments around the U-Tower. In Hafenviertel, social change is mentioned most often. The inhabitants are perceived to have become more diverse as more students and younger people are moving in. Further, residents think that housing demand and rents have increased. They also notice intensified renovation and modernization activities and more cultural events taking place. Many answers can be linked to gentrification-like processes. In Hafenviertel, the alteration of the population structure and, in Unionviertel, the change of the neighborhoods’ character are mentioned most often.

How do the residents of the focus neighborhoods feel about these changes?
Around half of the respondents perceive the changes in both neighborhoods as positive. At the same time, many people also see the changes critically, showing concern for an unknown future. Only a few are explicitly negative about their neighborhood’s development. This ambivalent perception is also expressed in the expert interviews. On the one hand, the interviewed stakeholders see a positive future for both neighborhoods. On the other hand, they also stress the importance of paying attention to unwanted side effects for certain groups.

Neighborhood relations
In order to understand how people talk about gentrification, it is not only important to know how they perceive the changes occurring in their neighborhoods, but also to know relevant actors and disputes.

Even though there is a broad consensus in the local gentrification discourse about who the relevant stakeholders are, there is no consensus about the roles they play. The residents agree that the city administration is the most important and powerful actor. On the one hand, the City is criticized for not properly using all available planning tools for the housing market. On the other hand, the City is praised for the implementation of neighborhood management acting as a link between official actors and residents.

**Top 5 “What changes did you notice?”**

**Unionviertel**
1. Image has changed, renovation activities
2. More popular
3. Positive developments around U-Tower
4. No change
5. Street Art

**Hafenviertel**
1. Altered, more diverse, younger social structure
2. More rubbish
3. Gentrification
4. Increasing rents
5. Higher housing demand

**“In my opinion, no gentrification in the academic sense has taken place in Hafenviertel so far.”** (Planner)

**“There is not one actor who has the most influence but instead everything is connected. And at best, everyone works hand in hand.”** (Planner)
“I’ve observed that I am an initiator of gentrification. I do not want to say I am directly responsible for the neighborhood gentrifying, but students, artists, and subcultures are crucial factors. I am also affected by it. This is at the same time exciting, absurd, and paradox.”

(Artist)

Thus, communication and transparency can be increased and residents are offered a trusted third party. While private investors and housing companies are criticized for triggering gentrification processes, non-profit public sector housing corporations and especially cooperative housing initiatives are praised as an effective tool against it.

The majority of the surveyed residents ask for more political participation and decision-making opportunities. At the same time, there is some criticism that only very few people actually make use of the already existing participation opportunities. Furthermore, many citizens are torn between the positives of improved living conditions and negatives of neighborhood change, such as displacement and loss of character. Particularly engaged residents have already joined forces to create initiatives that deal with future developments.

Artists in the neighborhoods acknowledge that they play an important part as pioneers and thus want to raise awareness for gentrification-like processes.

Finally, the interviews have shown that there are tensions between the local actors. Both neighborhoods will experience large-scale urban development which cannot be predicted yet but are very likely to have substantial effects. This creates tensions between citizens, the City, and private actors about the future of the neighborhoods. What can be concluded from this is that the relevant stakeholders are in a mutual relationship and influence each other - directly or indirectly. Thus, to achieve the common goal of inclusive and sustainable neighborhoods the different actors have to improve the preconditions of their dialogue and communication.

In order to better understand how people discuss gentrification and neighborhood change in St. Louis, both residents and local experts were engaged in conversations in the places where they live, work, and play. Thought leaders, local professionals, academics who work in community development, and residents had a wide range of opinions about the definition of gentrification, where it is occurring, and what could be done to promote equitable development. Among the thought leaders, there was a consensus that most St. Louis neighborhoods are not gentrifying, and, in fact, are declining in terms of poverty rates, property values, and quality of life. Residents, however, overwhelmingly, agree that something is going on within their communities. They observe real, physical changes to the streetscape in the form of new businesses, houses, and neighbors. Most also recognize that the physical changes bring other, less visible changes to their neighborhoods, as well. For example, a new strip of houses in Botanical Heights may make the area look prettier and more attractive, but it also increases property values and rents. These changes put both real and perceived pressures on residents, who in turn often feel left out of the growth of their community.

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Some professionals disagreed about the direction of growth within the neighborhoods. Benton Park, in particular, seemed to elicit a mixed response. One non-profit developer felt that the prospects for this neighborhood were grim, noting that the police reduced their presence in the area which could be correlated with a spike in crime. Despite this prognosis, several other thought leaders felt that Benton Park was the next neighborhood to experience rapid gentrification and attention from the government and developers since its historical housing stock has been the target of restoration and preservation efforts. This is where thought leaders from all around the city seem to agree with one practitioner in saying that returning buildings to their original, designed use is not gentrification, it is reclamation and revitalization.

There was more agreement about Forest Park Southeast and Botanical Heights. Botanical Heights was described in several interviews as being the wrong way to revitalize a neighborhood. Since much of Botanical Heights was demolished to make way for new housing, experts agree that relations between developers and residents have been permanently scarred. Forest Park Southeast was described more than the other neighborhoods as an example of positive neighborhood investment because planners worked with residents to create equitable development strategies.

“St. Louis reeks of desperation - we bend over backwards for top-down development.”  
(Expert)

According to several practitioners, there was a concerted approach to involve the residents in the neighborhood planning process. Efforts to improve transparency were appreciated by all parties, but many are still concerned that areas where development is already occurring are receiving more attention than other disadvantaged areas. Across the board, thought leaders acknowledged the need to include residents in the planning process. Several developers stated that it is easier to work in a neighborhood where there is already a plan and a set of guidelines for development rather than in those where there is no community involvement. In this way, consensus is already built in cases like the former, and a developer knows what the desire of the community residents is before beginning a project. This is preferable to uncertainty and unexpected opposition.

“The processes that feel inclusive - it’s probably because they are inclusive. Inclusion is subjective, not objective.”  
(Expert)

Finally, the word gentrification itself has become a proxy for other frustrations. A planner in Forest Park Southeast explained people who have been historically disenfranchised now see development beginning to return to parts of the city. They are wary of what it will mean for them and their neighborhoods, especially since there is an assumption that some residents will benefit from the changes while others will be damaged.

“People can smell it - when you’re talking about redevelopment, you’re not talking about me.”  
(Expert)

Overall, developers, community practitioners, and academics seem to agree that St. Louis’ neighborhoods need investment and that there is a way to accomplish this while still including the residents of those neighborhoods in the planning process and in the benefits of the investments. There is also evidence of a broader understanding across public, private, and non-profit sectors of the need for inclusionary processes. One interesting perspective from a practitioner in Forest Park Southeast is that due to the slower rate of neighborhood change, St. Louis has the opportunity to do neighborhood revitalization in a better way than many other rapidly gentrifying cities like New York and San Francisco. In this way, St. Louis and other legacy cities are in a unique position to address the issues surrounding gentrification and its processes in innovative ways.
in the neighborhoods that were experiencing observable upticks in educational attainment and property values claimed that the people moving into the neighborhood were also causing unplanned and, often, unwanted cultural changes as they gentrified the neighborhood. In this way, new in-movers are perceived to introduce economically positive effects and culturally negative effects on the community as a whole.

This was especially important for people living in Botanical Heights and Forest Park Southeast. People in these communities are tired of the legacy of crime in their area and want to rebrand their neighborhoods as something more positive. Most residents recognize that this kind of rebranding might give them more attention from developers and the government in addition to giving them a say in their future development.

However, people’s perceptions of neighborhood change differ between areas in St. Louis. Young homeowners in Forest Park Southeast are generally pleased with the changes, noting that new businesses and parks enhance the nightlife and provide more economic opportunity. Nonetheless, residents holding out in the blighted northern neighborhoods of the city fear large developments will do more harm than good. They are concerned that there is a possibility that they will be evicted from their homes to make room for developments or be forced out as the cost of living increases. They feel that future developments will fundamentally change what is left of their communities, thus, they are critical of developments even if they are small or planned for a future date.

Interestingly, everyone had an answer as to what gentrification was and how they felt about it. According to one resident, the term gentrification has become politicized, representing the hopes, fears, and perceptions that locals experience regarding their communities. St. Louisans generally understand and talk about gentrification as a racial, economic, and cultural phenomenon that involves governments or community planners showing favor to one group of residents over another. For example, an African American resident in Forest Park Southeast suggested that the police did not use to respond to calls on their street back when crime and poverty were more rampant. But, now that things have changed, and more wealthy, white people live in the area, the police respond very quickly to every call.

A neighborhood’s history also played into people’s perceptions of gentrification. As one resident pointed out, traditionally white neighborhoods like Benton Park have not changed as much culturally. Appropriately, physical changes and changes to the cost of living are the most significant aspects of gentrification.

Finally, most people had suggestions that were relevant to their communities’ physical needs while fewer addressed the less visible problems associated with neighborhood change and gentrification. Matters regarding housing is important to residents in communities experiencing more in-movers, like in Botanical Heights and Forest Park Southeast. Whereas, making new developments accountable to the local residents is the focus of people in Benton Park and North St. Louis. Overall, residents would often return to similar development goals for their communities: increase affordable housing, reduce vacancies, improve infrastructure, increase new business development, attract new residents who share the community’s values, fight crime more effectively, and enforce developers and politicians to be accountable to the residents.

While most of the focus neighborhoods discussed gentrification in terms of race, wealth, and culture, residents in the blighted northern side of the city viewed these issues with nuance. Since depopulation and disinvestment is the leading story in the North, residents are afraid that their children will have nothing to inherit or that they will not want to continue living in the community. As matters stand, the opposite of positive change is happening to the northern neighborhoods, but the specter of future developments still makes people talk about gentrification.

“I personally like the changes. As long as the neighborhood keeps looking better, more good people will move into the area.” (Benton Park Resident)

“Gentrification is us, isn’t it? White, young, professionals moving into neighborhoods, replacing the urban-afro culture with coffee shops and manicured lawns?” (Forest Park Southeast Resident)

“The developer bought all those buildings next to NGA and knocked them down. He promised he’d fix them, now they’re just empty lots.” (St. Louis Place Resident)

“If we don’t keep the developer accountable, there will be more gentrification issues.” (Forest Park Southeast Resident)
As the quantitative and qualitative data suggest, St. Louis and Dortmund have two problems. One, there are several neighborhoods experiencing gentrification-like development and change. Two, the cities also have areas that are not gentrifying at all but are perceived to be gentrifying. In fact, there are more neighborhoods in St. Louis that are experiencing disinvestment than are gentrifying. In Dortmund, the two study neighborhoods only show slow observable changes, however many residents still express their worries about gentrification. Hence, there are discrepancies between what is happening and how it is talked about. The case studies show that the word gentrification is used to refer to very different kinds of neighborhood changes.

In principle, the revitalization of disinvested neighborhoods is needed in legacy cities to tackle poverty and decline. The question, therefore, is how to shape development in these neighborhoods to the benefit of the entire city. Both St. Louis and Dortmund, as shown by our interviews, have residents who feel disempowered by neighborhood change and left alone with their fears. In addition, communities and neighborhood organizations lack effective communication structures. This leads to misunderstanding and misinformation that can block equitable neighborhood development.

The following policy recommendations provide strategies for legacy cities to improve communication among neighborhood stakeholders and engage residents, so they are empowered to be involved in the neighborhood development process. These recommendations, however, are not the sole solution for gentrification processes. Addressing the negative effects of gentrification is just as important, but there are already many policies discussed, such as rent control, affordable housing strategies. Instead, the focus here is on the special situation in neighborhoods in old industrial cities - the discrepancies between what is happening and how it is talked about - and how to face feelings of powerlessness and communication deficits between actors.

Some of the succeeding policies are already applied to the studied neighborhoods and were perceived as helpful. Therefore, they should be strengthened and improved. Others were identified as useful tools to address these problems. Of course, the political, legal, and social framework differs across legacy cities and, thus, between Dortmund and St. Louis. Regardless, the policies serve as suggestions and can be adopted by other legacy cities.
Communication Tools for an Inclusive Neighborhood Development

Within disinvested neighborhoods, perceptions of neighborhood change and a lack of communication among neighborhood stakeholders often lead to feelings of disempowerment among residents. Empowering citizens of disinvested communities and creating productive communication channels for information flows can help inclusive growth to occur. Community-fostered growth is a prevention approach to gentrification because engaging residents to participate in neighborhood change processes allows them to tailor the growth of their neighborhood as they see fit. The following strategies seek to meaningfully engage citizens and create open channels of communication.

Community Development Corporations
One strategy towards strengthening community capacity and civic engagement is improving the community development network within cities. In St. Louis, Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are non-profit organizations serving defined geographic areas to provide programming and facilitating development activities. They are often formed to focus on struggling neighborhoods. CDCs are typically staffed by professionals trained in community engagement and best practices in development strategies. The CDC forms and coordinates collaborative committees and task forces of neighborhood stakeholders. The community approach to neighborhood development ensures all community voices are present within decision making and allows for transparent community analysis of the distribution of risks and benefits of neighborhood development activities.

CDC activities vary and are scaled towards the capacity of both the neighborhood and the organization itself, which are sometimes underfunded and understaffed compared to the needs of their service area. Example activities include community visioning, community organizing initiatives, creating affordable housing, economic development, educational programs, and physical infrastructure improvements. CDCs may also use development tools such as establishing Community Improvement Districts and Special Business Districts with the city, which generate funding through special tax assessments. The funds, managed by the CDC, can be used to implement programs and development activities based on community needs. St. Louis has about 19 CDCs, but that number is shrinking. Existing organizations are also competing for a limited pool of resources. Investing in CDCs with both public and private funding can help them create more impactful and meaningful change to address disinvestment.

Neighborhood Planning
Robust neighborhood planning that includes the residents’ perspectives is important to address disinvestment in a way that prevents gentrification. Many neighborhood residents only become aware of new development projects when they are physically visible and are on the track toward creating neighborhood change. Requiring neighborhood planning in advance of project approval allows for an analysis of the risks and benefits it may pose to the neighborhood. Stakeholders are able to understand the cost and timeline of proposed project implementation. Professional tools such as Health Impact Assessments may be utilized to understand the social and physical health impacts of a development project. Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) between the developer and the community can insure that positive aspects are included in the development. One aspect of a CBA could be a mandatory inclusion of affordable housing in a new development. Neighborhood planning would provide the space for community members to voice their opinions and formulate any requirements they see fit before development projects move forward. In Germany, integrated action plans, Integrierte Handlungskonzepte in German, are a tool to set goals, measures, and projects for neighborhood development. The participation of residents in the process is part of the integrated approach but often criticized for being superficial. When meaningful participation reaches as many groups of residents as possible, neighborhood planning can be an important tool to ensure that neighborhood change benefits all residents.

Neighborhood Managements
In a neighborhood that finds itself in the middle of revitalization processes, a place to talk to a responsible person can be an important anchor for residents. The neighborhood management can offer such a place. In the case of the Unionviertel in Dortmund, it is often named by different actors as a reason for the successful communication between city officials, residents, and property owners. Planners or social workers function as contact persons for residents and stakeholders. They organize projects and events, provide information about development processes, the acquisition of subsidies as well as solve conflicts. Therefore, they promote inclusive neighborhood development by engaging residents and improving communication among stakeholders.

The establishment of neighborhood management is often part of the federal redevelopment programs in Germany, such as “Soziale Stadt” and “Stadtumbau”. When these programs come to an end and financial support stops, the continuation is up to the City’s own financial resources. The goals and effects of neighborhood management always depend on the requirements and agendas of the responsible municipal institutions. In neighborhoods showing signs of gentrification processes, neighborhood management has an important role for equitable neighborhood development and there is good reason to continue funding.
Empowering the Existing Community

At the heart of conversations about gentrification are people’s feelings of powerlessness during change. The feeling that the changes occurring around them are not investments made for their benefit but for the benefit of others, is an aspect that must be addressed in any equitable redevelopment plan. The goal is to empower through participation structures that not only let residents be part of neighborhood development but emphasize that they are primary benefactors of its growth.

Small Business Associations
Small Business Associations (SBA) are social-professional groups that pool knowledge, resources, and in order to strengthen neighborhood business districts. Their mission is to bolster local entrepreneurship through support and marketing. Establishment, expansion, and support of a Small Business Association in an area of redevelopment can empower local business owners and provide a network of support. This makes it a great mechanism to implement and spread social and economic investment directly into a community. SBAs benefit areas that have seen disinvestment and are confronted with harms from gentrification due to their core mission.

Activity Centers
Activity centers, or drop-in centers, are spaces for youth or adults to congregate. They provide access to the internet, places to rest, wash clothes, and to get access to resources. Activity centers are founded as a direct investment in underserved local populations and are a component of empowerment strategies. Activity centers serve workforce development, support socioeconomic diversity, and are often seen as positive and proactive solutions to problems associated with crime and homelessness. Incorporated as a part of a complete redevelopment strategy, they fight the not-for-us narrative of disempowerment. They also serve as another gateway to civic engagement and empowerment, if utilized for citizen participation.

Local Initiatives
The list of individual manifestations of direct community investment initiatives is as long as imagination allows. Each neighborhood has different strengths and needs, and both can be incorporated into a strategic policy plan to remedy feelings of disempowerment in an area. Assets and needs mapping can lead to personalized local initiatives that prioritize empowerment for longtime residents of an area. Looking at the history of an area is an excellent resource. Helping locals to tell their story through events and outreach can help to combat feelings of erasure in the face of change by lift up the historical identity of an area. In areas where access to fresh, quality food is scarce, the organization of community gardens and farmers’ markets that are designed around local vendors, serves as an economic catalyst to those in the community, provides access to fresh foods in the neighborhood, and can strengthen existing community relations. Longtime residents with creative talents can be highlighted through music nights in parks featuring local public artists.

Residents’ Associations
Residents’ associations are interest groups formed by residents of a house, a street or a whole neighborhood that are often directly affected by rent increases. In Germany, a growing number of associations are engaging in neighborhood development. Some are part of a bigger network like the Right to the City movement, some only act in a small area or refer to a specific project. Their goals and member structure are therefore diverse. What all of them have in common is that they unite the voices of many individuals under a collective purpose. This purpose is not to prevent any new developments but to participate in them. Planners and city officials need to listen to and seek for ways to include residents’ associations in the development process. The situation in Hafenviertel shows that communication between local associations and city officials is often characterized by tensions. Nevertheless, it is a way for residents to have a common forum to express their wishes and fears. Residents’ associations are usually built bottom-up, therefore it is not easy for the City to initiate residents’ associations. But upon associations being founded, they should be supported from the City’s side.

“We are far too little, we need more publicity, we need more young thinkers. We need more citizens that act for their interests.”

(Planner)
So do clean walls, signalling the upgrading of a neighborhood, automatically lead to higher rents and therefore to the displacement of long established residents and gentrification? This research has shown that in the case of legacy cities a few rebound stories can be observed, gentrification in the classical academic sense does not take place, at least, not yet. Nevertheless, as St. Louis and Dortmund have shown, gentrification-like processes and neighborhood change are both elusive ideas and tangible realities people encounter on a day-to-day basis. These changes often define how people view their communities, especially when the pressures of change around them lead them to believe that they are being left out or neglected. Whether or not actual neighborhood change is occurring in St. Louis and Dortmund, the residents have strong feelings about how their neighborhoods could change for the better or worse.

There can be a huge gap between what is happening in neighborhoods and how people talk about those changes, meaning that there are discrepancies between statistics and people’s perceptions. This also leads to different conclusions regarding whether a neighborhood is gentrifying or not, whether the focus is on empirical facts for gentrification or emotional feelings towards change. Addressing the gap between facts and feelings is an important factor in the development of socially inclusive neighborhoods. Inclusive and innovative policies that help to improve communication between residents and other stakeholders can help to close this gap. Since legacy cities are undergoing gradual change, it is important to listen to residents’ voices to understand their feelings of powerlessness within the community and their requirements for equitable development.

Finally, ensuring equitable development is paramount to residents, especially for those who feel threatened by the changes they see. While every city possesses different characteristics and unique cultures, city planners and developers must address the gap between physical and perceived neighborhood change as they move forward, building-up their communities. The research recommends participation structures that foster empowerment and help to close the divide in cities like St. Louis and Dortmund. Other post-industrial, legacy cities might be able to benefit from pursuing similar development strategies.
The Future of My City

Clean Walls = Higher Rents?!

FURTHER READING

If you want to read more, we recommend these publications:


The German team consists of five Master students from the School of Spatial Planning of TU Dortmund University of Technology. The group members hold bachelor’s degrees of diverse disciplines. The group was formed in the context of a Master study course researching gentrification debates in American Rust Belt Cities. Within the framework of the German-American cooperation project documented here, they are now asking similar questions with regard to their hometown, the old industrial City of Dortmund. Both projects were supervised by Prof. Dr. Susanne Frank, head of the Department of Urban and Regional Sociology at TU Dortmund University of Technology, and Dr. Sabine Weck, deputy director of research of the ILS - Institute for Regional and Urban Development Research and deputy head of the research group „Urban Social Space”.

The American team is composed of Political Science and Public Policy graduate students from the University of Missouri - St. Louis and Washington University in St. Louis. Eight of the students are enrolled in Professor Todd Swanstrom’s Independent Study on Gentrification, a course focused on examining neighborhood change in post-industrial American cities, particularly St. Louis City. Todd Swanstrom, Des Lee Endowed Professor in Community Collaboration and Public Policy Administration, leads the American team.

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