

## **Displacement and Cultural Capital in East Harlem: Use of Community Space in Affordable Artist Housing**

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**Abstract :** As New York City weathers a swelling 'affordability crisis' marked by rapid transformation in land development and urban culture, much of the associated scholarly debate has turned to questions of the underlying mechanisms of gentrification. Though classically approached from the point of view of urban planning, increasingly these questions have been addressed with an eye to understanding the role of cultural capital in neighborhood valuation. This paper will examine the construction of an artist-specific affordable housing development in the Spanish Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan in order to identify and discuss several cultural parameters of gentrification. This study's goal is not to argue that the development in question, named Art space PS 109, straightforwardly increases or decreases the rate of gentrification in Spanish Harlem, but rather to study dynamics present in the construction of Art space PS 109 as a case study considered against the broader landscape of gentrification in New York, particularly with respect to the impact of artist communities on housing supply. In the end, what Art space PS 109 most valuably offers us is a reference point for a comparative analysis of affordable housing strategies currently being pursued within municipal government. Our study of Art space PS 109 has allowed us to examine a microcosm of the city's response and evaluate its overall strategy accordingly. As a base line, the city must aggressively pursue an affordability strategy specifically suited to the needs of each of its neighborhoods. It must also conduct this in such a way so as not to undermine its own efforts by rendering them susceptible to the exploitative involvement of real estate developers seeking to identify successive waves of trendy neighborhoods. Though Art space PS 109 offers an invaluable resource for the city's legitimate aim of preserving its artist communities, with such a high inclusion rate of artists from outside of the community the project risks additional displacement, strongly suggesting the need for further study of the implications of sites of cultural capital for neighborhood planning.

**Keywords :** artist housing, displacement, east Harlem, urban planning

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