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la scène culturelle du quartier artistique M50 à Shanghai*

*Arte, creatividad y turismo en los barrios creativos: trayectoria y tensiones en la
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Basile Michel

Introduction¹

- 1 Many artistic, cultural, and creative quarters have developed over the last decades, as localized clusters of places and organizations associated with the arts, culture, and creative activity (Evans, 2009b; Mommaas, 2004; Roodhouse, 2006). In parallel with the spontaneous emergence of such districts (Michel, 2018a), urban policies have integrated the planning of officially sanctioned creative quarters to meet various objectives, such as city renewal, economic development, and enhanced city attractiveness (Evans, 2009a; Montgomery, 2003). This urban model made its way across the globe and reached Asia. In China especially, it has been widely implemented by public authorities (Keane, 2009 and 2011; Michel, 2019). Beijing and Shanghai were among the first, leading Chinese cities to develop these creative clusters and quarters. In Shanghai, M50 is the most well-known (Zhong, 2011) and an emblematic case of the evolutions undergone by creative quarters in China with the interweaving of artistic, touristic, and urban components. This former textile industry site first took root as a creative hub when artists and gallery owners spontaneously arrived to set up studios and exhibition spaces. Shanghai municipal government later granted official

recognition and support to M50, which has become a hub of contemporary art and cultural tourism.

- 2 In general, literature puts forward urban renewal, economic development, brand image, gentrification, and the potential to attract tourists as the main stakes and challenges of creative quarters (Evans, 2009b and 2015; Montgomery, 2003; Pratt, 2009; Zukin and Braslow, 2011). In a systematic review of the literature, Caroline Chapain and Dominique Sagot-Duvaurox (2020) nevertheless indicate the need for further research into the touristic aims of creative quarters and their spread and development in Asia. Other authors have also suggested a need for more research into Asian creative quarters in order to elucidate their forms and the specific issues they face, in terms of gentrification and public policy (Currier, 2008; McCarthy and Wang, 2016).
- 3 Accordingly, this article aims to investigate and develop the conceptual framework of creative quarters and thus contribute to a detailed understanding of them—especially from the angle of their trajectories and tensions—by considering the case of Shanghai's M50. Three main components of this conceptual framework will be studied through the example of M50: first, the dynamics of these districts' formation; second, gentrification of these areas and the tensions it creates between their artistic, touristic, and commercial attributes; and finally, the trajectories followed by cultural scenes embedded in creative quarters. To this end, the article relies on qualitative research including semi-structured interviews, on-site observation, textual analysis of media coverage, and examination of official and bibliographic documents.
- 4 The article is organized as follows: The conceptual framework for cultural and creative industries (CCI), creative quarters, and cultural scenes is first defined. Then, questions arising from this conceptual framework, methods employed, and the context of creative quarters in China generally and Shanghai specifically are stated. Next, the case of M50 is presented, focusing on how it developed into an art district, how it later changed, and what it is today. Finally, M50 is analyzed through the conceptual framework, shedding light on four interrelated facets of cultural scenes (namely as *lived*, *experienced*, *built*, and *publicized scene*) that change interrelatedly as creative quarters follow their developmental trajectories.

Conceptual framework: CCIs, creative quarters, and cultural scenes

Reconsidering CCIs

- 5 At the turn of the century, CCIs were identified as hubs of activity based on creative work and the importance of creativity on the part of those involved (O'Connor, 2010a and b; Scott, 2000). Within CCIs, the visual and performing arts, cultural heritage, and diverse cultural (cinema, publishing, gaming, sound recordings, radio, television, and video) and creative (architecture, design, and advertising) activities meet to form the heart of the "creative economy" (Caves, 2000; Howkins, 2001). Initially, the global typology of CCIs was promoted by Britain's Labour government—notably through official reports (DCMS, 1998 and 2001)—as a rallying cry to drive Britain's emergence from the industrial crisis and its entry into the knowledge economy (Garnham, 2005). Since then, CCIs have been promoted, in both political discourse (KEA, 2006; UNCTAD, 2010) and some of the scientific literature (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002) as an effective

lever of urban renewal, a major factor in city development, and a main driver of the local and regional economies, helping to make "creativity" a buzzword. This has also contributed to legitimating a lexical shift from "artistic" and "cultural" to "creative," especially when describing creative spaces (e.g., cities, quarters, clusters, or districts). This shift is open to criticism (Garnham, 2005; Tremblay, 2008), notably because it artificially creates a gathering under a single category of activities that are diverse in nature and market-oriented rationale—from the arts to creative industries. Nonetheless it reflects certain realities, including an ever tighter interweave of the worlds of culture and creativity within the scope of careers (Markusen and King, 2003) and within cultural and creative spatial clusters (Michel, 2018a).

The concept of creative quarters: spatial embedding of CCIs and their networks

- 6 Riding the growing wave of popularity they have enjoyed in discourse, there has been much investigation centered on CCIs, and in particular, into the spatial agglomeration of participants in the creative economy (Chapain and Sagot-Duvaurox, 2020). Creative spaces have been the subject of analyses that apply the concept of creative quarters, also referred to as cultural or artistic (Bell and Jayne, 2004; Evans, 2009b; Legnér and Ponzini, 2009; Montgomery, 2003; Roodhouse, 2006). These quarters may be defined as clearly identifiable areas of urban space (i.e., urban districts) with a high density of cultural and creative organizations and venues often forming localized clusters.
- 7 The literature on creative quarters spotlights a tendency for cultural and creative activities to come together to a greater extent in certain urban districts, especially former industrial zones with inspiring histories in advantageous locations where rent is low (Keane, 2009; Michel, 2018a; Pratt, 2009). Part of the collaborative networks of cultural and creative milieus becomes established within these agglomerations, turning these districts into "villages" (Grabher, 2001 and 2002; Michel, 2018b), or even "clubs" (Michel, 2018a), where artists, gallery owners, architects, and other cultural and creative professionals mingle, interact, and work together. These professionals give the district where their activities and networks are developed and concentrated an artistic, neo-bohemian feel and atmosphere and contribute to the image of a "creative space" that is recognized and relayed by cultural milieus, or even beyond, within the sphere of tourism (Evans, 2015; Gravereau, 2013; Lloyd, 2002 and 2006; Pappalepore et al., 2014).

Creative quarters as scenes

- 8 In this sense, creative quarters may be considered cultural scenes. The combination of the open and restricted visions of cultural scenes recently proposed in the literature² (Straw, 2014) indeed allows us to define a cultural scene as a visible network of artists and art professionals united around certain cultural values and practices and embedded in a place (e.g., a city, or a district) of whose identity, image, and atmosphere it is both the product and a component (Ambrosino and Sagot-Duvaurox, 2018; Straw, 2015; Wen, 2012). Thus, a scene is characterized by, firstly, the existence of an innovative artistic community embedded within a given space; secondly, a unique urban ambiance that is the result of this embedding and experienced by those present;

thirdly, the construction and storytelling of a "creative space" by the actors involved; and fourthly, its image and reputation in the media.³

- 9 These various attributes directly echo the diversity of creative quarters. Some, like the Olivettes district in Nantes (Michel, 2018a), are characterized by the vibrancy of the network of creative professionals they host, while others stand out for their artistic and festive feels, as illustrated by Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles (Barrette, 2014). Still others are marked by institutional planning that delimits, decrees, and promotes "creative" zones in accordance with a marketing and renewal strategy that has become a frequent hallmark of urban planning policies (Evans, 2009a; Foord, 2008; Mommaas, 2004). This has led to the multiplication of officially designated creative quarters, in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Beijing, Manchester, Saint-Étienne, and elsewhere. Finally, some creative districts—e.g., New York's Soho and Paris's Montmartre—are primarily characterized by their reputation, in the media and the world of tourism, as artistic and creative spaces whose images are historically associated with art (Vivant and Charmes, 2008; Zukin, 1982).

Differentiating variables

- 10 Much research on creative quarters has sought to demonstrate their diversity (Evans, 2009b; Cinti, 2008; Mommaas, 2004). Among the differentiating factors described in literature, three may be highlighted. To begin with, creative quarters may differ by their position along the value chain: either striking a balance between creative activity and the dissemination and consumption of art and culture, or tipping the scale towards one or the other.
- 11 Next, there is variability in the relative importance, within creative quarters, of artistic and cultural dimensions on the one hand and commercial aspects, leisure, and entertainment on the other. Changes in certain creative quarters have created tension between these dimensions as commercial and leisure-related activity (e.g., bar, restaurant, and boutique operations) sometimes acquires greater prominence than artistic activity (e.g., artistic creation and gallery exhibits) (McCarthy and Wang, 2016), calling into question the merit of applying the descriptors "artistic" and "creative" to these places. This trend may be explained by the growth of cultural and creative tourism, which creates an incentive for promoting the touristic value of creative quarters in political strategies (Richards, 2011). In this way, creative quarters become focal points for tourism and add to the touristic attractiveness of cities (Richards and Wilson, 2007).
- 12 And lastly, creative quarters also differ according to their mode of formation: while some exhibit bottom-up organic growth driven by the initiative of artists, others are the product of top-down planning by public authorities. This leads us to the question of the involvement and interactions of actors from the different layers of the creative city that have been defined by Patrick Cohendet, David Grandadam, and Laurent Simon (2010)—namely, the *underground* (alternative and informal, creative and artistic activities exploring outside institutional bounds), the *upperground* (creative and cultural institutions and firms integrated into the market), and the *middleground* (intermediaries between the two previous layers, bridging the formal and the informal).

Creative quarters and gentrification

- 13 Beyond these variables illustrating the diversity of creative quarters, the literature also casts light on the dynamics of the economic, urban, and social transformation that these areas often undergo, gentrification being frequently observed (Currier, 2008; Lloyd, 2002; Pratt, 2009; Zukin and Braslow, 2011). The connection between artists and gentrification has been the topic of many debates, as artists are sometimes perceived as pioneers preceding the influx of members of the middle and upper classes into working-class districts (Ley, 2003) and sometimes as tools of the real estate promotion strategies of public actors and private investors (Smith, 1996). The reality is generally somewhere in between.
- 14 In any case, former industrial areas transformed by the cultural activity, whether through the spontaneous agglomeration of artists or through culture-led urban policies, typically follow a particular path of development: the arrival of artists (followed by other cultural and creative professionals) or the establishment of culturally oriented facilities and infrastructure in abandoned industrial areas and urban interstices helps change the image and ambiance of a district and boost real estate value (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005; Mathews, 2010; Lloyd, 2002). Some of the effects of this process are higher rents, displacement of former residents to make way for more affluent populations, and the transformation of cityscapes and the economic and commercial fabric (Gainza, 2017; Zukin, 1982). Thus gentrification is identified as the consequence, whether or not intended, of culture-based urban projects (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005; Mathews, 2010). It is beyond the control of the artists themselves, even questioning their presence in the districts they helped revitalize and driving them to establish new clusters elsewhere in the city or to disperse (Currid, 2007; Smith, 1996; Sun and Chen, 2021; Zukin and Braslow, 2011).
- 15 Still, the standard arts-led gentrification narrative for creative quarters appears to be too general: the onset and progression of gentrification do not follow universal rules (Gainza, 2017; Grodach et al., 2018). How its specificities are linked to local context—in China, for example—is only partly addressed in the literature (Currier, 2008; McCarthy and Wang, 2016).

Theoretical questions, methods, and context: the case of the M50 art district in Shanghai

Three key components of the conceptual framework to be tested by reference to M50

- 16 This article seeks to question, test, and inform the conceptual framework presented above by applying it to a study of Shanghai's M50 art district, thereby contributing to our understanding of creative spaces, the issues they face, their trajectories, and their tensions. The key components of the framework that this case study will help to elucidate are as follows:
1. The dynamics of the formation of creative quarters, between spontaneous growth and planned development, and interactions between actors from the different layers of the creative city (underground, middleground, and upperground);

2. Gentrification associated with cultural and creative clustering in former industrial zones, and the resulting tensions between their artistic, touristic, and commercial dimensions;
3. Trajectories of cultural scenes, here considered on the scale of a creative quarter, through the respective yet interrelated development of their various attributes: the embedding of an artistic community within the area, a unique urban ambiance generated by this embedding, storytelling about the creative space by the parties involved, and their media image and reputation.

Methods of investigation in the M50 art district

- 17 This article presents the findings of fieldwork and research on M50 undertaken between 2018 and 2020,⁴ relying on twenty-something semi-structured interviews, nonparticipant observation, analysis of media discourse, and the study of official and bibliographic documents.
- 18 Interviews were conducted with artists (37%) and gallery owners (63%) whose average date of establishment in the district was 2008. The interviews offered an understanding of community and cluster dynamics in M50, how and why these artists and gallery owners set up shop there, their visions of how it has changed since their arrival, and the pros and cons of their presence in the district.
- 19 On-site observations were made at different times in 2018 and were supplemented by systematic note-taking, informal discussions with visitors, and photographing. These observations focused on the spatial configuration and ambiance of the district, an exhaustive survey of activity there (e.g., locations and numbers of artists, galleries, and restaurants), and the recording of tourist volumes and habits.
- 20 To complement the study of tourism in the district, textual analysis of comments posted by tourists on the TripAdvisor website after their visit to M50 was performed.⁵ Textual analysis was also employed to evaluate the image and reputation of M50 conveyed through media discourse. Four corpora were considered: general press, specialized publications on contemporary art, travel guides, and main Internet search results for M50.⁶ A web scraping was performed on each of these four corpora, as well as on the reviews on TripAdvisor, in order to extract and collect the textual data and to create a structured corpus of discourses on M50. The Iramuteq software package for statistical analysis of textual data was used to facilitate the interpretation and analysis of these corpora. This software automatically splits a corpus into consistent text segments. It then classifies the different segments into several distinct types of discourse and provides the characteristic keywords for each. The results will be analyzed in the section devoted to the case of M50 and illustrated by a discourse classification diagram (Figure 1) and a table of discourse types (Table 1).
- 21 In addition to the above methods, I studied archives, gallery websites, scientific literature, and other documents on the district and its artistic activities to learn its history and how it has changed, while comparing information between sources.

Political strategy for CCIs in China and Shanghai in particular

- 22 China is characterized by an authoritarian political system dominated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Nathan, 2003). Artists and other cultural professionals are constantly monitored, or even censored, by the authorities, who see them as a potential

source of disruption (Ren and Sun, 2012; Zheng and Chan, 2014). At the same time, they are increasingly integrated into political strategies that value them as vectors of international renown, economic growth, and the development of tourism. Since the early 2000s, the CCP has officially embraced CCIs to increase its soft power, help fuel its economic liftoff, and drive the transition from "made in China" into "created in China" (Keane, 2013; McCarthy and Wang, 2016; O'Connor and Gu, 2006).

- 23 To support the development of CCIs in the major cities of China, the CCP has chosen to rely primarily on the establishment of creative clusters (*chuangyi jiju*) by local authorities (Keane, 2009 and 2013). This strategic choice amounts to a replication of the model of creative clusters and quarters that were initially developed in Europe and North America to promote urban renewal, economic development, and cities' attractiveness (Evans, 2009a; Foord, 2008; Van Tuijl et al., 2013). This illustrates the extent to which urban models are disseminated internationally (McCann and Ward, 2011; Michel, 2019). In the Chinese context, these clusters have mainly served to repurpose abandoned industrial zones, with the goal of increasing tourism and the value of real estate (Keane, 2013; Michel, 2019).
- 24 The municipal government of Shanghai in particular has developed this model. In 2005 alone, the first year of the strategy's rollout, the Shanghai Economic Commission accredited, labeled, and promoted 14 creative clusters (Keane, 2009). Now there are 75 in the central districts (Zheng and Chan, 2014) and over a hundred across the city (Jin and Munier, 2014). A large proportion of these clusters represent real estate speculation and promotion operations without any cultural or creative dimension beyond their marketed image that aims to increase the value of real estate in and around the officially designated "creative" quarter (Keane, 2009 and 2011; O'Connor and Gu, 2014). Only a few of the city's creative clusters actually exhibit creative attributes. Among them are M50; Tianzifang, a former workers' and artisans' district occupied by artists; Red Town, an old steel factory converted into a space for sculptures; and 1933 Old Millfun, previously a slaughterhouse of exceptional architectural value and now a center for design and fashion (Gu, 2014; O'Connor and Gu, 2014). M50 is the most famous of these successful Shanghai creative quarters (White and Xu, 2012; Zhong, 2011). It is interesting to analyze this case study for two main reasons: Firstly, it is indicative of the key evolutions experienced by Chinese creative districts. Secondly, it still has a significant artistic orientation, unlike many others such as 798 in Beijing and Tianzifang in Shanghai.

Trajectories and tensions of the M50 cultural scene

- 25 In light of the conceptual framework presented earlier and the areas of inquiry that were subsequently defined, it is necessary to examine how M50 became a center of art in Shanghai and what trajectory it has followed, in terms of purposes and activities.

Origin: spontaneous artistic clustering at 50 Moganshan Road

- 26 The M50 district is in central Shanghai, on the banks of Suzhou Creek, and was once the site of industrial textile production. With the decline of industrial activity in the 1980s, plastic and visual artists (mainly painters), followed at the turn of the millennium by art galleries, spontaneously set up shop in the district's old warehouses and industrial

workshops to pursue their respective activities of creation, exhibition, and dissemination of artwork. There they found affordable spaces suited to their artistic activities in a district marked by an inspiring history and near the city center. They also found networks of artists and art professionals. Many Chinese artists established in M50 benefited from the support of famous galleries⁷ in the district, such as ShanghArt, Eastlink, and BizArt. This helped launch their careers at a time when hardly any Chinese contemporary art could be found on the global art market. Artists such as Xu Zhen, Xue Song, Ding Yi, and Zhang Enli became known while officially represented by these galleries, through exhibits in M50 and the showcasing of their work at international contemporary art events like Art Basel and Paris's International Contemporary Art Fair (FIAC). It was through these networks that innovative artistic practices associated with pop art and geometric abstraction developed in China. As the base of these networks, M50 asserted its identity as an avant-garde art district in Shanghai as early as the dawn of the millennium.

Official recognition of M50 and shift in cultural activities

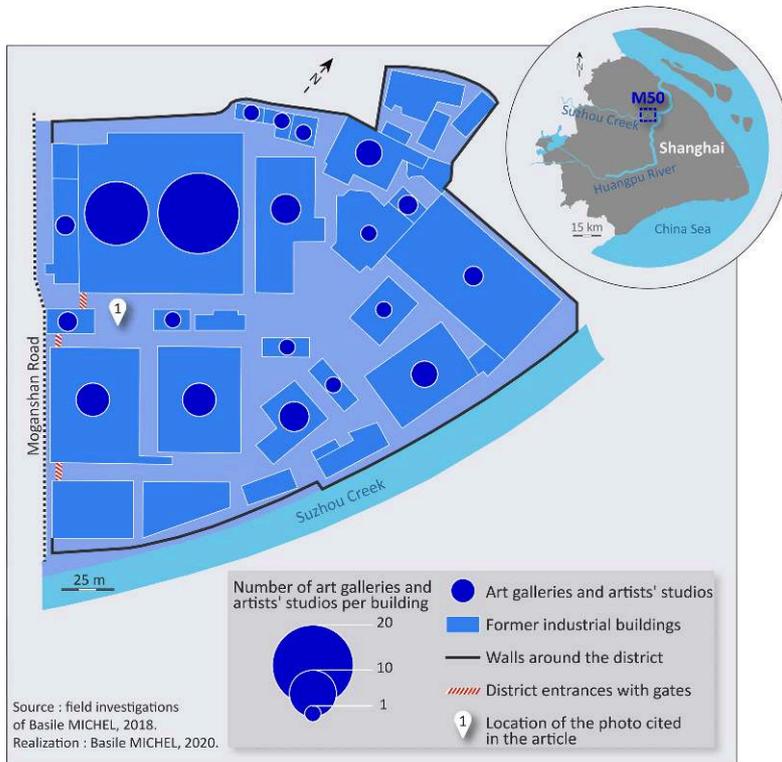
- 27 Shanghai's municipal government had initially planned to demolish the M50 district to pursue its campaign of urban modernization already in progress elsewhere in the city. The strategic decision of the CCP to favor CCIs, and the establishment of creative clusters by Shanghai local authorities in 2005, deflected the trajectory of M50. Where once it was an organically created art district threatened with destruction, it became a branded and partly planned art district after the Shanghai municipal government recognized and defined it as an official and institutional "creative cluster" under the new name M50 Creative Park. This branding strategy was aimed at attracting tourists through the artistic and creative attributes of the M50 district. Accordingly, the local authorities granted further accreditations highlighting its new touristic purpose, dubbing M50 a "Demonstration Base of National Industrial Tourism" and "AAA Travel Tourist Attraction." M50 under the planning of local authorities also underwent several infrastructural changes to promote tourism: renovation of its plazas and streets, in which a new logo was displayed; upgrade of buildings to comply with safety standards; integration of signage showing maps, directions to galleries, and other information; and stationing of guards as well as installation of entrance barriers and video cameras (indicative of the authoritarian political environment). The strategy applied by the local authorities effectively drew more visitors to M50, with the growth of cultural and creative tourism (Richards and Wilson, 2007) and international fascination for Chinese contemporary art (DeBevoise, 2014; Pownall, 2017). The following remarks by a M50 gallery owner bear witness to this: *"It's a popular spot, tourists come up here and not only from China but also from international. The tourists come from all over the world to see the galleries, the design and shops"* (2018 interview).
- 28 Taking advantage of the new attractiveness of M50 to tourists, the state company that manages the district decided to raise rents. On average, studio and gallery rent increased tenfold between 2002 and 2009, from 0.4 to 4 yuan per square meter per day (Zhong, 2011). This altered the profile of activities in M50. The number of artists fell from 100 in 2004 to 50 in 2009, and there are currently fewer than 20.⁸ Meanwhile, the number of art galleries rose, encouraged by a growing volume of tourists, the artistic image of the district, and its official status as a creative quarter since 2005. One M50 gallery owner explained the massive influx of art galleries he observed in 2009:

"Galleries started renting the spaces out of the factories because the Chinese government really wanted to rent that spaces, change the center to become a cultural center. So that's when like 20 galleries pop out" (2018 interview). Next to arrive were more profitable commercial undertakings, such as architecture and design firms, clothing boutiques, and restaurants.⁹ In a 2018 interview, an M50 artist gave the following account of this change in activity within the district: "Art studios, like painters, that was very abundant three or four years ago. But now, in the past years, they were push out because of really high rent. So when you go to second floor, you see a lot of design studios, clothing design, advertising studios. So all the art studios have been push out because they can't afford the rent" (2018 interview).

M50 today: a center of art and tourism

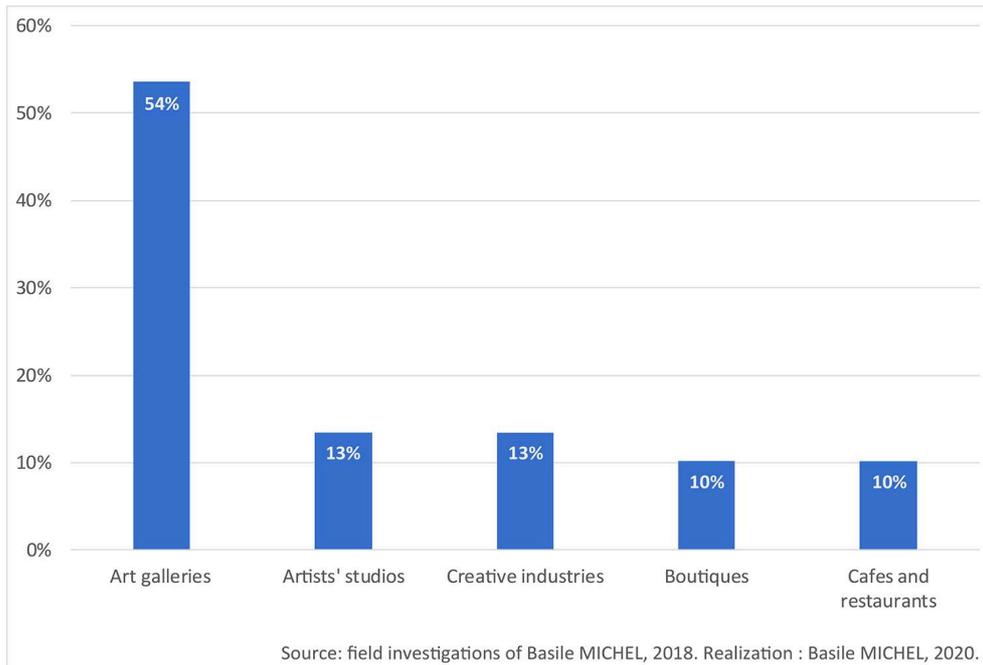
- 29 In spite of this mutation, M50 remains a nexus of contemporary art today (Map 1). Galleries—and to a lesser extent, the gallery-studios of artists—represent the main activity in the district, ahead of creative industries, boutiques, restaurants, and cafés (Graphic 1). The galleries are places dedicated to visual art exhibitions, mainly paintings. Like the M50 pioneers, the artists are mostly painters. They are characterized by a large diversity of aesthetics—e.g., pop art, calligraphy, landscape paintings—and notoriety—from famous artists like Xue Song to unknown artists. They work in their artists' studios that combine both creation (studio) and exhibition (gallery) facilities. The galleries and artists' studios vary greatly in size but are all housed in former industrial buildings and are mostly fitted out in a minimalist manner, leaving the traces of the industrial past visible.
- 30 The predominance of cultural activities is manifested through the work of artists in their studios, the art in the streets and on walls, contemporary art exhibits open to the public, and cultural events like concerts and art fairs. Artistic activity is ubiquitous here, creating an atmosphere expressive of contemporary art and an industrial past. This atmosphere is all the more pronounced as M50 is a relatively small enclave (2.5 hectares, surrounded by walls),¹⁰ giving one the feeling of being immersed in an artistic microcosm.

Map 1: Clustering of artists and galleries within the M50 district in Shanghai



Source: research by Basile Michel, 2018. Realization: Basile Michel, 2020

Graphic 1: Types of activity in M50

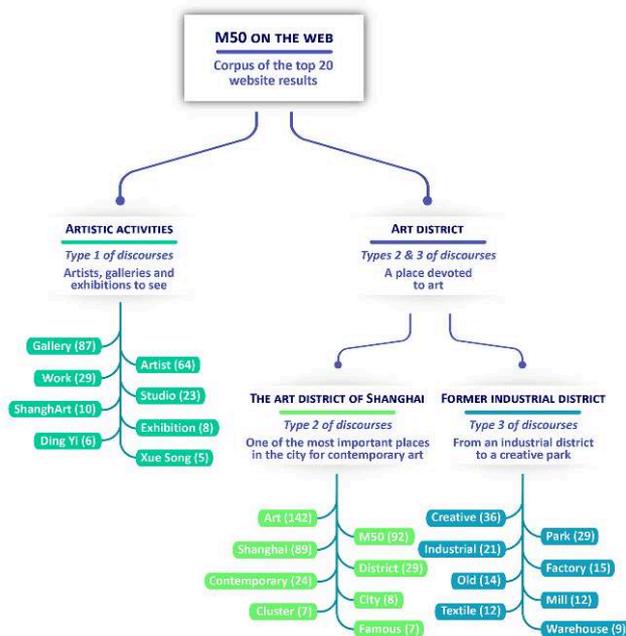


Source: research by Basile Michel, 2018. Realization: Basile Michel, 2020

- 31 Because of the presence of artists and galleries, M50 is portrayed as an art district by the media. General interest newspapers like the *Shanghai Daily* and the *Independent* refer

to and tout it as a place dedicated to contemporary art. The *New York Times* called M50 "a huge arts community set in a prewar textile manufacturing complex,"¹¹ and went on to describe the most interesting galleries there. Furthermore, magazines, newspapers, and websites specialized in contemporary art—including *Artnet* (which has called it an "art district in Shanghai"¹²), *Frieze*, *ArtFacts*, *The Art Newspaper*, and *Artforum International*—have also helped mold and project its image as a center for art, hosting famous galleries and artists, cultural events, and exhibits. In addition to general and special interest media, actors in the tourist industry have also helped relay the image of M50 as an art district. M50 is listed in travel guides like *Lonely Planet*, which ranks the district seventh in its list of "highlights in Shanghai"¹³ and among the "top things to do"¹⁴ in the city—a place "where galleries have set up in disused factories and cotton mills, utilizing the vast space to showcase emerging and established contemporary artists"—and adds that "there's a lot to see, so plan to spend half a day poking around the site."¹⁵ On the Internet, tourist industry actors are the main vectors broadcasting the image of M50. A Google search with the keywords "M50" and "Shanghai" yields, on average, among the first 20 hits, 16 sites related to tourism, including websites for travel guides, travel agencies, and tourists' reviews. The remaining results are online publication and news websites. Textual analysis of the main hits for an Internet search on the topic of M50 revealed that the websites mainly present and promote the district in terms of its artistic attributes, employing any of three types of discourse that are centered on the artistic activities based in the district (type 1), and its status as a place of art (type 2 and 3), both as the leading art district in Shanghai (type 2) and its conversion from a former industrial site to a "creative park" (type 3) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Classification of online discourse on M50



Note: the classification of the corpus into three types of discourses is obtained using the Iramuteq software. For each type of discourse, the list of the main related keywords is presented with the number of occurrences of the word in the corpus in brackets. The meanings and attributes given to the types of discourses result from the researcher's analysis. Source: web research on Google. Processing and realization: Basile MICHEL, 2020.

Source: Google search results. Realization: Basile Michel, 2020

32 Tourism in M50 is linked to its artistic activity, atmosphere, and image. Based on observations, M50 welcomes, on average, 1,000 daily visitors,¹⁶ most of whom are young (55% approximately 20 to 30 years old) and in small groups (64%), and some foreigners (22%). The majority of the tourists walk down the streets taking photographs; visit galleries, artists' studios, and boutiques; and stop at sidewalk cafés (Photo 1). The high density of art venues in M50 lets them immerse themselves in the district's postindustrial, artistic atmosphere. As shown in Table 1 resulting from the textual analysis, reviews posted on the TripAdvisor website mostly value the artistic dimension of M50, indicating the presence of many galleries and artists' studios, and recommend a visit because of its atmosphere. To a lesser extent, tourists also highlight the district's industrial past, or the chance to shop or go to restaurants or cafés.

Photo 1: Tourists in M50



Source: photo by Basile Michel, 2018

Table 1: Tourists' reviews of M50 on TripAdvisor

TYPES OF DISCOURSES	PERCENTAGES OF REVIEWS	MAIN RELATED KEYWORDS (NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES IN THE CORPUS)
M50 as an art district	92%	Art (429) - Gallery (256) Artist (131) - Studio (61)
M50 as a nice place to visit	81%	Visit (105) - Great (101) See (83) - Nice (81)
M50 as a place of consumption	41%	Shop (76) - Cafe (44) Coffee (43) - Buy (35)
M50 as a former industrial district	19%	Old (29) - Industrial (22) Factory (18) - Warehouse (13)

Source: TripAdvisor. Processing and realization: Basile MICHEL, 2020.

Source: TripAdvisor. Realization: Basile Michel, 2020

- 33 In addition to M50's proximity to other cultural activities, its ability to attract tourists and the fame it enjoys among them have become the main reasons gallery owners and artists set up in the district (67% of interviewees). One gallery owner explained why he came: "If you are a foreigner, a tourist, if you are looking for artworks, there are only several places in Shanghai to look for, like a condense area for galleries, and this [M50] is one of them, so that's a big plus" (2018 interview). Thus, growing their professional networks is not a priority for the artists and gallery owners of M50 today, whereas it might have been in the early 2000s. This can be felt in the district, where professional relations within the cluster are poorly developed despite friendly interactions: "We [the artists of M50 district] discuss from time to time, maybe go out for drinks, but there is no working relationship. It's not very professional" (artist interviewed in 2018); "Everybody knows everybody. But everybody is doing his own business" (gallery owner interviewed in 2018). Yet they occasionally work together to attract visitors: "When we are arranging openings or exhibitions, it's on the same weekend, so people will come and visit the different galleries" (gallery owner interviewed in 2018).
- 34 Artists and gallery owners are conscious of the current reality of this art district oriented towards cultural consumption and tourism: "When I came to M50 [in 2004], it was just artists who were there creating art. Then it became more commercial" (artist interviewed in 2018). They consider the fact that M50 draws tourists to be good for their activity, because it increases visibility and revenues: "Tourism is good because there are some businessmen, some collectors, coming in M50. And we focus on them. Our clients are European and American. So the tourists are essential for our survival. Some people come here and see for the first time our work, and they buy one of our artworks" (gallery owner interviewed in 2018). Yet some (39% of interviewees) complain that the growth of tourism has made the district noisier, congested its streets, and hasn't drawn any more collectors and buyers: "A lot of tourists come, but not our type of tourists. It's more and more tourists coming

to visit and look, but not more and more collectors" (interview with gallery owner, 2018). Similarly, they see negatively how the profile of professional activities in the district has changed: "We don't like the direction that M50 takes because it's more and more design and clothes shops, and less and less art galleries. They [M50 district managers] don't want to preserve the high art quality" (gallery owner interviewed in 2018).

The M50 art district through the lens of the conceptual framework

- 35 It is now appropriate to consider the case of M50 in the light of the conceptual framework and the questions identified earlier.

Assorted dynamics of formation and difficult articulation of the creative city's layers

- 36 The case of M50 spotlights the interplay between spontaneous development and planning that is behind its emergence and affirmation as a center of art and creativity in the city. The district first took shape organically as artists and gallery owners migrated to the site. It was then an avant-garde art district. Later, when CCIs received official support on a national scale, M50 became more institutionalized and an object of political planning and branding. Designated a creative cluster, it was formally dubbed the M50 Creative Park. The transition from spontaneous to planned growth seen in M50 is also characteristic of other Chinese creative quarters, including Beijing's 798 (McCarthy and Wang, 2016; Sepe, 2018). Michael Keane (2011) suggests this reflects the Chinese regime's urge to control and plan creativity, which is expressed in its creative cluster policy. Clusters may be seen as instruments through which the CCP may extend its power and control over spontaneous artistic production and have recourse to censorship (Zheng and Chan, 2014). This also reflects how the consideration granted by the Chinese authorities to former industrial areas has changed, as they become instruments of heritage valorization for economic and touristic development (Wang, 2012; Zhong, 2011). While M50 was facing the threat of complete demolition in the authorities' urban plans in the early 2000s, an effort was made by tenant artists and gallery owners to prevent its destruction. They were joined in the struggle by the Research Center for National Historic Cities (RCNHC) headed by Ruan Yisan, a well-known professor committed to heritage preservation. Their joint actions—publication of reports, artistic events, media coverage, negotiations with the authorities—helped to make the Shanghai municipal government aware of the economic value and potential of M50 as a former industrial site invested by artists. The similar process took place in Tianzifang with the same actors involved—local government, tenant artists and gallery owners, RCNHC and Ruan Yisan—and the same conclusion—i.e., the formal recognition and branding as a "creative cluster" (Wang, 2012).¹⁷
- 37 The trajectory followed by M50 reveals the rough junctures between the different layers of the creative city (Cohendet et al., 2010) in creative quarters. Underground artists and middleground gallery owners played a major role in the beginning, introducing innovations to the art world, establishing M50 as an art district, and helping to preserve it as an industrial heritage site. But official recognition in 2005 suggests the intention of local authorities (the upperground) to take control of the

district. As has been observed within other Chinese creative clusters (Keane, 2011), by seizing the reins the authorities have placed artists and gallery owners directly under their control and greatly excluded them from decision-making. Thus, upperground management leaves artists and gallery owners with little say over the functioning, attributes, image, and development of their district. And it sometimes even leaves them unable to continue working there as the upperground imposes rent increases. Ultimately, according to Jane Zheng and Roger Chan (2014), this drastically limits the artistic and creative potential of quarters designated "creative clusters" by the Chinese authorities.

Commercial and tourism gentrification linked to economic and urban oriented strategy of local authorities

- 38 M50 has undergone gentrification, as evidenced by rising rent and the displacement of artists to make room for new residents operating art galleries, boutiques, restaurants, and cafés, which are more profitable. Yet as Jennifer Currier (2008) has suggested, in studying the example of 798 in Beijing, we are not dealing with classic gentrification in these cases. Unlike initially defined forms of gentrification, through which poor or decaying areas are transformed into trendy and affluent residential neighborhoods (Glass, 1964; Ley, 2003), the former industrial site of M50 was scarcely inhabited, and thus subsequent development did not result in the transformation of the social profile of its inhabitants.¹⁸ Here we have a case of commercial gentrification, whereby art studios are replaced by commercial establishments, and it is no longer a given that artists—the very population that first helped revitalize M50—belong in the district. The progression of this gentrification is linked with the growth of tourism and the leisure economy—growth that the local authorities desire and encourage through the creative cluster strategy, which adapts to tourist consumption habits. In this sense, M50 is witnessing "tourism gentrification" (Gotham, 2005)¹⁹ of a commercial nature, as its economic fabric is transformed by the influx of tourists.
- 39 This process is transforming M50 in two ways, the first signs of which were observed by Zhong (2011 and 2012): Firstly, the district is increasingly oriented towards cultural consumption and less and less towards creation and production of art, as witnessed by the decline in the number of artists producing on-site and the rising number of galleries and boutiques exhibiting and selling diverse cultural and creative products. Secondly, there has been an expansion of leisure and entertainment activities, which are vying for territory with representatives of the art world. The commercial establishments in the district encourage shopping, dining, and other commercial and touristic activities.
- 40 In light of the above, there is clearly a tension between artistic and touristic activity in M50, which has become both an art district and a tourist district. This is a fate shared by other creative clusters around the world under the effect of growing cultural and creative tourism, of which they are an important catalyst (Richards, 2011; Richards and Wilson, 2007). The ambivalent, even paradoxical, attitudes of artists and gallery owners towards the development of tourism in M50 illustrates the heightened degree of this tension: on the one hand, tourism is seen as an economic necessity and beneficial because it increases the visibility of artwork; on the other, it is criticized for bringing noise, crowding the streets, and diluting artistic creation in a commercialized

environment. The tension is only exacerbated by the local authorities' management of the district, which is conducive to the transition from a place of artistic creation to a place of touristic consumption. However, in comparison with the trajectories of other Chinese creative quarters, this transition remains limited in the case of M50. Art is still the predominant factor in its economic fabric, atmosphere, image, and the activities of visitors. The same cannot be said of other Chinese creative clusters, whose artistic elements are vanishing in the face of rising commercial activity and tourism, as Xin Gu (2014) has demonstrated to be the case for Tianzifang, also in Shanghai. Research conducted in 2018 within the former art district, designated a creative cluster in 2005, confirms this. Today Tianzifang is mostly home to souvenir shops and fast-food stands; only a very few artists with studios and galleries are left there. In the case of 1933 Old Millfun (Gu, 2014; Zheng, 2010), the conversion of the former slaughterhouses was led from the beginning by the local authorities (i.e., top-down planning) with an explicit focus on cultural consumption and entertainment for the purpose of economic profitability (notably by high rents). The authorities sought to accommodate restaurants and large companies offering high-end design products and exhibiting expensive goods (such as Ferrari cars) to attract consumers and tourists. As in the case of M50, Tianzifang and others, the conversion of 1933 into a creative cluster also provided an opportunity for the authorities to engage in extensive urban regeneration of the surrounding area, even forcing the removal of over 5,000 local residents.

- 41 Thus, the official recognition and labeling of creative clusters in Shanghai—and in China in general—brings with it growth in tourism and consumption, urban regeneration and real estate promotion of the surrounding area, and various forms of gentrification. All of this is a result of the "entrepreneurial state" approach (Duckett, 1998; Zheng, 2010 and 2011) adopted by the Chinese local authorities²⁰ to pursue both local urban growth and their own economic gains, using creative clusters as tools to generate revenues and improve the city's image, rather than as a support to artist communities. This reflects that local governments' creative cluster policies focus on the economic and real estate development of former industrial sites and their surroundings, leading to unsuitable evolutions and conditions for underground artists and artistic creation.

Trajectories of cultural scenes: from the lived scene to the experienced, built, and publicized scene

- 42 The existence of a cultural scene in M50 art district is evident. It combines the different facets of a scene defined in literature. First of all, M50 is characterized by the historical embedding of a community of artists and gallery owners developing networks of personal and professional relationships that are more limited today. Thus, it harbors a *lived scene*. Second, the embedding of this artistic community has created a unique post-industrial atmosphere evoking memories of an industrial past and current artistic production. Tourists feel this atmosphere when they come to the district. So M50 presents itself as an *experienced scene*. Thirdly, M50 is the object of storytelling and a promotional strategy whose primary agents are the local authorities, through official branding and centralized management that pitches it as a district for art and tourism. In this sense, it is a *built scene*. Fourth, through media channels—for the general public, a contemporary art audience, and tourists—M50 enjoys an international reputation and

visibility. It is extolled as the main art district to visit in Shanghai. M50 is consequently a *publicized scene*.

- 43 With these four attributes, M50 demonstrates several issues faced by creative quarters and described in the literature. It confirms the importance of CCI locations within environments conducive to artistic and creative activities, such as abandoned industrial districts, even though the relative scarcity of networking in M50 fails to make it a true "village" (Grabher, 2001 and 2002) or "club" (Michel, 2018a), in contrast with what occasionally occurs elsewhere. M50 also reveals the capacity of artists and other cultural actors to create an image and an atmosphere that are cool and neo-bohemian by connecting with the urban morphology and unique history of the site (Gravereau, 2013; Lloyd, 2002 and 2006; Pappalepore et al., 2014). Furthermore, it illustrates the development of political strategies aimed at the formal recognition and promotion of creative spaces within cities, to make them known far and wide, attract tourists, and stand out among other international metropolises competing with each other to develop (Evans, 2015; Van Tuijl et al., 2013). Finally, it illustrates the important role art and culture play in constructing and enhancing images conveyed by the media of the spaces, districts, and cities with which they are associated (Bennett, 2002; Vivant, 2007).
- 44 Above all, this M50 case analysis shows how the different attributes of cultural scenes can change in an interrelated manner as creative quarters follow their developmental trajectories. The seizure of control by the local authorities, welcoming of tourists, and growth in media coverage since 2005 have been accompanied by shrinking of the artist population and weakening of the dynamics of professional networks in M50. With time, M50 has increasingly become a scene experienced by tourists, built by the local authorities, and publicized by the press and the tourist industry. Today it is more defined by institutional and media storytelling that tout it as a center of art and tourism, and by the experiences of visitors, than by the vitality of the art community embedded there, jeopardizing its status as a cultural scene. The question of the mutation and potential disappearance of the scene in M50 indeed remains open within the context of creative spaces that are mutating and perpetually moving within cities (Zukin and Braslow, 2011), and that are forced to adapt to increasing commercial consumption, real estate promotion, and tourism in urban areas.

Conclusion

- 45 This article clarifies, through the example of M50, some of the developmental realities and issues associated with cultural and creative clustering in urban districts. In particular, it defines four facets of cultural scenes that are interwoven and change interrelatedly: the *lived scene* of an art community embedded in a specific place; the *experienced scene*, whose urban ambiances generated by this embedding are felt by those present; the *built scene*, which is the product of storytelling by the actors involved; and the *publicized scene*, having acquired an image and a reputation through media exposure.
- 46 More precisely, as an epicenter of contemporary art and cultural tourism in Shanghai, the experience of M50 has shown that the trajectory of creative quarters produces tensions, particularly between the artistic, commercial, and touristic activities that develop and interact within them. The trajectory taken by M50 is marked by a

threefold mutation. First, it has transitioned from an art district that emerged spontaneously (i.e., bottom-up organic growth) to one managed and branded by the local authorities with an eye to developing tourism and real estate according to an entrepreneurial approach (i.e., top-down planning). This has shifted the balance of power between the parties involved, calling into question the place of artists in M50 and the degree of freedom they enjoy in the face of increased control and surveillance by the public authorities and greater economic pressure due to rent increases. Second, the focus in M50 has moved from artistic production to cultural consumption with the shrinking artist population and the rise in the number of art galleries. Third, the original predominance of art in the district is generally losing ground to an increasingly greater orientation towards leisure activity as more and more boutiques, cafés, and restaurants open, a phenomenon already observed in creative quarters of New York, for example (Zukin and Braslow, 2011).

- 47 The last two mutations described are the result of commercial and tourism gentrification, straining interactions between M50's artistic and touristic attributes. For the time being, art remains the greatest common denominator of the activities, atmosphere, image, and practices of M50. Yet the triple mutation determining the trajectory of this creative quarter is changing the nature of the cultural scene. Today it is characterized less by the vitality of the art community (*lived scene*) than by the importance of what tourists feel and experience there (*experienced scene*), its branding by the public authorities as a center of creativity and tourism (*built scene*), and a reputation in the media as an art district and tourist attraction (*publicized scene*).
- 48 To conclude, with the growth of cultural and creative tourism (Richards, 2011; Richards and Wilson, 2007), creative quarters are clearly helping attract tourism to metropolises. They are the object of political strategies aimed at promoting their respective cities, which are in competition with one another to draw tourists and boost their own economies (Evans, 2009b; McCarthy and Wang, 2016).²¹ The case of Shanghai's M50 suggests that these strategies, and the increased attractiveness to tourists resulting from them, strains—and in the long term, even imperils—the artistic and creative identities of art districts, although the growth in tourism and commercial consumption in M50 has yet to extinguish the flame of art within the embedded cultural scene.

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NOTES

1. The research presented here was undertaken under the auspices of the Joint Institute of the Universities of Ningbo and Angers, in China, and as part of the SCAENA project financed by the French National Research Agency (ANR).
2. The restricted conception of the scene was initially associated with popular music studies and considers the territorialized networks of cultural actors in a given field (Straw, 1991). The open conception dovetails with research on urban ambiance and amenities (Silver et al., 2011; Silver and Clark, 2015) and embraces a wider perspective, understanding the scene as that dimension of the cultural and social vitality of an area that one can see and experience as a special atmosphere. Through the blending of the two perspectives, the concept of the scene evokes both the spatial embedding of artistic networks and communities and the ambiance and image that are the result of this embedding (Morteau and Vivant, 2020).
3. These different attributes of cultural scenes are defined within the scope of the SCAENA research project (<https://scaena.hypotheses.org/>).
4. Research on M50 was supplemented by investigations in other art districts and creative quarters in Shanghai (Tianzifang) and Beijing (798).
5. The 240 tourists' reviews of M50 posted on TripAdvisor in English were submitted to a textual analysis.
6. Data were collected using Factiva and Europresse databases for the general press, in the leading specialized media (websites, newspapers, and other media) for publications on contemporary art (e.g., *Artnet*, *Frieze*, *ArtFacts*) and tourism (e.g., *Lonely Planet*, *Le Routard*), and using Google for main internet search results.
7. For example, ArtFacts ranks ShanghArt among the top 10 galleries in China and the top 100 worldwide.
8. If some artists, like painters Xue Song and Yang Xiaojian or the visual artist Pianzi being still present, set up in the early 2000s, many young artists have been forced to leave the district because of increasing rent prices, moving to cheaper urban areas in the periphery.
9. Some of these are even replacing art galleries, such as the restaurant We Bar recently established in the former Na Space gallery space.
10. The size of M50 is similar to other creative clusters in Shanghai such as Tianzifang but is much smaller than the famous 798 in Beijing. Also, the enclosed configuration of the district is a result of its past as an industrial site and Chinese urban planning code, which requires city blocks to be surrounded by walls.
11. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/28/travel/shanghai-china-budget-affordable-dumplings-art.html> (accessed 10 November 2020).
12. <https://news.artnet.com/market/art-basel-miami-beach-new-galleries-2017-1162025> (accessed 10 November 2020).
13. <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/china/shanghai> (accessed 10 November 2020).
14. <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/china/shanghai/top-things-to-do> (accessed 10 November 2020).
15. <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/china/shanghai/attractions/m-50/a/poi-sig/1242142/356068> (accessed 10 November 2020).

16. According to the Chinese administration's regulations, the "AAA Travel Tourist Attraction" label granted to M50 implies an annual attendance of over 300,000 visitors. M50 visitor volumes nevertheless fluctuate greatly, depending on the time of day and event programming.

17. However, the case of Tianzifang differs from the sparsely inhabited M50 in the presence of local residents who resisted its demolition.

18. As a former industrial site, there is little or no permanent residential population at M50. As a result, the primary users of the district are tourists and artists, gallery owners, and other workers in the district's cultural and commercial industries.

19. Kevin F. Gotham (2005) defines tourism gentrification as the transformation of middle-class neighborhoods into tourist enclaves with wealthy residents and an economy based on leisure and entertainment.

20. These include municipal government, district governments, and street offices.

21. For example, in Shanghai, local authorities are developing a cultural quarter project called West Bund to attract visitors and tourists to the museums, art galleries and other cultural facilities clustering in this former wasteland, alongside major technology companies, among others.

ABSTRACTS

Artistic, cultural, or creative quarters are developing in major cities around the world, especially in China. These areas are often integrated into culture-based urban projects, with the aim of contributing to their renewal, attractiveness, and economic development, and increasing tourism. This article looks at the example of Shanghai's M50 art district to investigate the trajectories and tensions of creative quarters by focusing on three aspects: (i) the dynamics of their formation, (ii) gentrification and the tensions between their artistic and touristic attributes, and (iii) the transformations of cultural scenes embedded within them. Three main findings are discussed. First, M50 stakes its claim as a center for art and tourism in the city through the interplay of the underground (spontaneous artistic creation), the middleground (art galleries), and the upperground (planning by local authorities). This interplay complicates interactions between the parties involved, especially as the authorities have seized control, leaving the role of artists in M50 and the freedom allowed them open questions. Second, M50 presents a unique form of gentrification, whose touristic and commercial character bears witness to both local authorities' strategies focused on urban and economic growth, and the district's transformation from a center of artistic creation to one of cultural consumption. Third, M50 illustrates the mutation that cultural scenes can undergo, progressing from a *lived scene*, characterized by a dynamic art community; to an *experienced scene*, whose atmosphere is felt by tourists; a *built scene*, marked by an institutional strategy of formal recognition and branding; and finally, a *publicized scene*, with a high media exposure.

Des quartiers artistiques, culturels et créatifs se développent dans les métropoles à l'échelle mondiale, et notamment en Chine. Ces quartiers sont souvent intégrés dans des projets urbains basés sur la culture afin de contribuer à la régénération urbaine des villes, à leur attractivité et à leur développement économique et touristique. En mobilisant le cas du quartier artistique M50 à Shanghai, cet article vise à interroger les trajectoires et les tensions des quartiers créatifs suivant trois axes : leur dynamique de formation, la gentrification et les tensions entre leurs attributs

artistiques et touristiques, et les transformations des scènes culturelles qui y sont encadrées. L'article met en avant trois principaux résultats. Tout d'abord, c'est du croisement des dynamiques spontanées d'artistes (*underground*) et de galeries d'art (*middleground*) avec la logique planificatrice des autorités locales (*upperground*) que le M50 s'est affirmé comme un haut-lieu de l'art et du tourisme dans la ville. Ce croisement entraîne une difficile articulation des acteurs, en particulier avec la prise de contrôle des autorités qui interroge la place des artistes au M50 et leur degré de liberté. Ensuite, le M50 illustre une forme singulière de gentrification dont la nature touristique et commerciale met en évidence à la fois les stratégies des autorités locales centrées sur la croissance urbaine et économique, et la transformation d'un quartier de création artistique vers un quartier de consommation culturelle. Enfin, le M50 montre la mutation que peuvent connaître les scènes culturelles : d'une *scène vécue*, caractérisée par le dynamisme de sa communauté artistique, vers une *scène éprouvée*, singularisée par une ambiance expérimentée par les touristes, une *scène construite*, marquée par une stratégie institutionnelle de labellisation, et une *scène médiatique*, dominée par sa notoriété dans les médias.

Los barrios artísticos, culturales y creativos se han desarrollado en las metrópolis de escala mundial, como es el caso de China. Estos espacios son generalmente integrados en los proyectos urbanos sostenidos en la cultura, con el fin de contribuir a la regeneración urbana de las ciudades y propiciar una atraktividad, desarrollo económico y turismo. A partir del caso del barrio artístico M50 de Shanghái, este artículo tiene como objetivo cuestionar las trayectorias y tensiones que experimentan los barrios creativos por medio de tres ejes: su dinámica de formación, gentrificación y tensiones entre sus atributos artísticos-turísticos, y las transformaciones de las escenas culturales que se desarrollan.

El artículo presenta tres resultados relevantes. El primero corresponde a considerar el cruce de las dinámicas espontáneas de artistas (*underground*), las galerías de arte (*middleground*) y la lógica planificadora de las autoridades locales (*upperground*), donde a partir de ellas el M50 se posicionó como un lugar imprescindible del arte y turismo en la ciudad. Este cruce conlleva una compleja articulación de actores, en particular bajo el contexto de control por parte de las autoridades que cuestionan el lugar de los artistas en el M50 y su grado de libertad.

Posteriormente, el M50 expresa una forma singular de gentrificación que con su esencia turística y comercial visibiliza las estrategias de las autoridades locales focalizadas en el crecimiento urbano, económico y la transformación de un barrio de creación artística hacia un barrio de consumo cultural. Finalmente, el M50 exhibe la mutación que pueden experimentar las escenas culturales: pasar de una *escena vivida*, caracterizada por el dinamismo de su comunidad artística, hacia una *escena probada*, singularizada por un ambiente experimentado por los turistas, a una *escena construida*, marcada por una estrategia institucional de certificación, y a una *escena mediática*, dominada por su notoriedad en los medios.

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