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From Referral to Stage: The Role of Social Networks in Performance Bookings

The organization of cultural events in bars and clubs often relies on informal network structures. Recommendations, personal contacts, and existing networks play a central role in allocating performance opportunities. Especially in medium-sized cities like Mainz, little is known about how these networks are constituted and which mechanisms govern the mediation of performances. Therefore, this project aims to investigate how networks surrounding a specific event location in Mainz develop.

For this purpose, we selected the bar The Blue Raincoat in Mainz's Neustadt district. It exists since May 2024 and is located in a neighborhood characterized by significant social, cultural, and economic transformation processes, particularly gentrification, alternative cultural offerings, and a growing creative scene.

The goal of our study is to map the network structures of the bar and explore the mechanisms behind access mediation. The focus of our research is to answer the question: How do artists secure a performance at The Blue Raincoat? To do so, we apply a qualitative methodological approach, combining participant observations and expert interviews. Through repeated visits to The Blue Raincoat, we aim to observe the interactions between artists, organizers, and audiences in order to understand how connections are established and performances are arranged. Supplementary interviews with expert key actors such as bar operators, bookers and artists will also be conducted. These interviews are intended to provide deeper insights into the decision-making processes and network structures involved in the allocation of performance slots, thereby contributing to network research in the cultural scene.