

Retiree Rebels: Urban Resistance in the age of 80

by Carolin Genz

10 senior citizens sit around tables, each covered with a yellow paper tablecloth, little flower bouquets in the middle. They chat about everything, but mostly about health problems that come with being 80 years or older. There is apple pie, coffee, tea and some gingerbread that is left over from last Christmas. The walls of their cramped community room are covered with newspaper articles and awards for civic commitment. Protest signs that lean on chairs and wheeled walkers, proclaim "Berlin's seniors are not 2nd class citizens" and "Politicians, get old and sick and then you'll see!". Christa Kaes, a thin 85-year-old woman with short white hair and red lipstick, wearing an orange top and a bright blue skirt, takes a seat behind a small keyboard. She starts playing the melody of "Bella Ciao", the hymn of the Italian resistance during World War II. Everybody in the rooms starts to sing the group's own resistance song. Their version is against an investment group that announced wide-ranging renovations in the housing complex located in the center of Berlin. According to those modernizations the seniors faced rising in 2014 and a choice: either to live with their fears of the changes, noise, dirt and future financial pressure or to move to a separate senior residence. For some of them none of the above was acceptable options. Resistance was.

Cultural and critical geographers, sociologist, anthropologist and historians are constantly concerned with the analysis of urban social movements, its actors and protest practices in the urban context (for example Castells 1983; Fainstein and Fainstein 1985; Harvey 2001, 2008; Marcuse 2009; Mayer 2009, 2016, Holm 2010; Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2012; Novy/Colomb 2013). This article contains a twofold aim. Firstly it brings new actors in the field of urban resistance to light: senior citizens as actors that have not found attention in either the traditional social movement research (Mayer 2009 /Holm 2011) or research studies on „new urban social movement“ (Novy and Colomb 2013). Novy and Colomb observed forms of urban resistance in Berlin and Hamburg especially new emerging protest groups in Berlin. Thus they concluded that a new generation of squatters had emerged, one with a high level of cultural capital, creative capabilities and formal educational references, one who shares a certain way of life and urban living space: the so-called "creative class" (Novy and Colomb 2013: 1830). I suggest there is another „new“ actor which Novy and Colomb failed to account for. Therefore I present a case study of the so-called "Senior

Gang of Moabit”¹ analyzing how these senior citizens are developing forms of collaborative resistance practices against raising rents and gentrification, forms that are appropriate and defined by the limitations of their age and health. Secondly the article seeks to contribute to the theoretical conceptualization of urban resistance practices to understand how "practice of urban resistance" can be typified and categorized. Therefore the article recaptures the concept of urban resistance as a social practice referring to de Certeau (1984). The article seeks to discuss the concept of strategies and tactics and enhance this concept to the question how “social practices” as a form of urban resistance can be examined. Referring to the case study the article can reveal that certain social and spatial practices, especially those that are rooted in everyday routines, can reinterpret space (Lefebvre 1991, de Certeau 1984) and therefore the urban fabric as a hole.

This article analyses the appropriation of new and old resistance practices from an ethnographic perspective. How do these new actors use existing resistance practices and what kind of possibilities and difficulties do they encounter? Which kinds of resistance strategies and organizational aspects are unique to this specific group of retirees? Why is this group still so underrepresented, especially compared to their share of the overall population? What is the role of their special physical circumstances, their deteriorating health, their uncertainty about sudden death, and their modest income as retirees? My aim is to explore the challenges and adaptations of senior citizens as civic actors, seeking to change the urban fabric by collaborative practices of resistance. In order to answer the research questions and contribute to the discourse of urban resistance practices the article is structured as followed: Firstly the article defines *urban resistance as a social practice* to contribute to the systematical and theoretical concept. Secondly I will explain the methodological ways of proceeding the case study and classify the case study in the context of Berlin’s current city development and why these new actors deserve scholarly attention. To structure the empiric data the analysis is subdivided in three different sections as modes of resistance: "mode of space", "mode of practice", "mode of time". For each substantive section I demonstrate that old practices of resistance, one can observe new hybrid ways of practice adapted by the actors. In conclusion I will present the challenges of this new actors adapting existing urban resistance practices and what kind of possibilities they encounter.

Urban resistance as a spatial practice of the everyday

To understand and evaluate how everyday life can be an indicator for urban change it is

¹ The name was given by a documentary from Eva Simon and Gregor Eppinger, first broadcasted in local TV (rbb Fernsehen) 9.1.2016.

necessary to unpack the concept of "resistance", especially urban resistance as a social everyday practice.

In order to point out and to connect the case study to concepts of resistance I will tie it to the summarizing thoughts of the sociologist Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner (2004). Hollander and Einwohner figure that many activities or practices are traditionally classified as resistive, like demonstrations, strikes, or the founding of organizations and that the "most commonly studied mode of resistance is material or physical involving the resisters use of their bodies or other material objects" (2004, 535). As an political act, which can be "identity-based" and action and opposition are core elements of resistance (Hollander/Einwohner 2004, 537 pp.). Additionally the question of "recognition" and therefore visibility is a central aspect in order to categorize a practice as resistive (ebd., 540). So in order to qualify as a form of resistance through practice it should consist of an intended act and to be „recognized by target and observer“ (Hollander/Einwohner 2004, 542). This will help to frame the practices of the actors as practices of resistance.

According to Michael de Certeau resistance is inherent in everyday routine practices and thus allows space for autonomous actions and self-determination (Multani 2012, 56). De Certeau argues that the use of everyday routine practices like reading, writing, or speaking can manifest resistance as long as these actions manifest their own logic and spaces. The actors become producers. These everyday routine practices create resistive potential to challenge dominant powers, such as city structures (de Certeau 1998: 94). But what does „everyday routine practice“ or „social practice“ mean? And how can they be examined? The cultural sociologist Andreas Reckwitz, who discusses the term social practice states that the "social world" constitutes itself out of namable and "intertwined practices" (Reckwitz 2003, 290). He does so referring to the British sociologist Anthony Giddens and understands practice as a "typified, well-versed and sociably understandable bundle of activities" (Giddens [1989] 1997, 74). Giddens states that our life is organized around the repetition of similar pattern of behavior; "from day to day, week to week, month to month" (ibid.). He comes to the conclusion that "our everyday routines and the interaction that become necessary because of them [...] give our actions structure and form." (Giddens [1989] 1997, 76). Such a structure giving behavior can emerge from the practices of resistance as well. These practices have the capability to profoundly form and change our everyday actions and routines. Precisely the common ways of behavior led to the strengthening of the community and the transformation of existing processes.

To analyze the research questions and to conceptualize urban resistance as a

theoretical concept I will introduce the terms “tactics” and “strategies” as used by Michel de Certeau. A tactic has, according to de Certeau, some loopholes like „lacking its own place, lacking a view of the whole, [...], limited by the possibilities of the moment“ (de Certeau 1984: 38). As de Certeau argues, strategies and tactics correlate in a dialogue: “Strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the establishment of a place offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power.“ (de Certeau 1984: 38). A tactic is more located in the moment and uses a possibility and depends on it, the effect is neither appropriated nor spatially localized, therefore it creates surprises and can emerge, where it is not expected (ibid.). In this light a tactic is rooted in the moment, without being able to foresee or calculate the long-term effects. According to Certeau the „ordinary“ people are capable of defining space, because of their capacity to appropriate or define the spaces of the everyday (de Certeau, 1984). This thought can be developed further as to say that the actors of resistance are capable of re-defining space through social-spatial practices as well. This leads to a reinterpretation of the urban fabric. Just as Henri Lefebvre depicts a spatial practice in his theory on the production of space that produces meaning (Lefebvre 1991), the concept of case at hand can reveal that certain social and spatial practices, especially those that are rooted in everyday routines, can reinterpret space and therefore shape the urban fabric. This is important in respect to the analysis of the practices of resistance.

Methods

To show the appropriation of new and old resistance practices from an ethnographic perspective and to explore the complexities of the field I worked with participatory research methods, such as participant observations, field notes, mental mappings, discourse analysis and in-depth interviews and meta analysis. The research for the case study is ongoing, and started in July 2015. The ethnographic data contains interview material, informal questionnaires, newspaper articles and media discourse, as well as a netnography of the case. The research methods are settled in the intersection of human geography and urban anthropology.

Berlin - a "tenant's city"?

It is important to classify the role of “old people”² in the context of Berlin’s city development

² The actors of the field are in average around 80 years old mostly between 70 and 90 years old. This is considered to be a higher age segments, which includes people around 80 years old and older. The current statutory pensionable age in Germany is 65 years.

and the rising urban resistance against neoliberal logics, to understand and classify the practice of resistance it is essential to understand the specifics of Berlin's housing policy and development.

Berlin is considered to be a "tenant's city" with relatively low cost housing options. In 2003 the former mayor of Berlin Klaus Wowereit was advertising the city as extremely cheap and thus attractive with his claim: "Berlin. Poor, but sexy." Berlin was financially broke but at the same time wanted to become a „European metropolis“ like Paris and London. But due the development of the city and its specific historical context after the fall of the wall and along other city planning decisions Berlin currently has a debt of around 60 billion Euros. Selling the land-owned property was a city strategy to deal with the problem. In 2005 statistics point to economic recovery and population growth and Berlin gained new popularity, attracting younger residents and artists because of the comparably low living costs (Uffer 2014, pp. 10).

However, recent developments show increasing foreign property investment and the sale of public property by the city has its consequences. At the same time more and more actors are reclaiming their right to housing and therefore their right to the city and accumulate new forms of collaborative cultures, and urban resistance practices. Increasingly urban citizens are facing the issues of displacement and rising rents, which shape their everyday life and the space they live in. Civil actors challenge these developments with new forms of initiatives and alternative ways of protest. Related to specific local conflicts these practices of urban resistance can be observed on a global scale.

In Berlin one can observe a new group of actors of resistance, who are not linked to the typical idea of urban movements: retirees. People who are between 70 and 90 years old, who put up resistance against their landlords and the political leaders of Berlin, who squat their homes and houses, organize online-petitions, demonstrate, collaborate, develop international networks, do flash-mobs and media campaigns. There are several groups next to the retiree rebels who put pressure on the city's government and force them as well as private companies involved to cooperation and communication; groups and confederations of actors, like "Wir bleiben alle!" (We stay all!) or "Berlin für alle" (Berlin for all!) who join forces to demand a re-communalization of housing projects, especially in the area of socially affordable housing. All these initiatives influence the transformation of the housing market, the government's urban policy ideas, and thus the city's overall fabric. This is not only about the housing market but much more. It is a negotiation of how we want to live in the future, in what kind of democracy, what kind of society, because "all the future issues of humanity will be decided in the cities." (Kraft/Aichinger/Zhang 2016, 5) The process of urbanization

features a transformative power that influences our society's structure, especially with the question of which ideas of living are livable (ibid.) Cities have always transformed the lives of their inhabitants, nowadays faster than ever. Thus everyday life is an indicator for change (Kraft 2014, Schmid 2016). This evades scientific analysis.

"Daily life cannot be described without the people who live it,
without their emotions and their states of mind."
(Kraft/Aichinger/Zhang 2016, 6)

“Old Lives matter”: Urban Resistance 80 +

Christa Kaes, 85, is at the center of the protests of the retirees from Hansa Ufer 5. Besides her there is another core group of seniors in the age between 75 and 94 that have joined the resistance and are publicly visible actors. Among them are Werner Knut, 84, Gisela Jungebauer, 82, and Ingeborg Koske, 88, an old former “rubble woman”. There are also supporters from outside their residence and out of the neighborhood. This group of actors belongs to neither the traditional resistance groups nor the “creative class”. These are retirees between the ages of 70 and 90 or above, who have never been parts of any protest groups. Many of those have witnessed World War II and have contributed to the rebuilding of Berlin with their own hands, some of them are linked to the so-called “rubble women”. In their case, protest against urban city developments can be understood as a “new appropriation of resistance practice”. One can observe classical or traditional forms of urban resistance practices, such as demonstrations or squatting. New forms of digital resistance have emerged due to the rise of social media. They have changed the discourse permanently. Local forms of resistance are more visible und thus transcend more easily into the coverage of newspapers and TV stations. This gives these “civic actors” a new form of political articulation. In the case presented the actors are “new” in the field of urban resistance. Those actors deserve scholarly examination. It is important to make senior citizens in the field of urban resistances visible because in the long term these elderly protesters will not be as unique as they are now. Germany's population lives longer and elderly people become a larger group. Due to the aging prognosis of the state of Berlin the average age in the city will rise between 2015 and 2030 from 42,9 years to 44,3 years. In Berlin the number of over 80 year old people will raise about 62 %. According to the city government's department for urban development this is an " over proportional rise" (SenStadt 2016). One's living space, be it an apartment or a flat or a house, becomes more and more important with a rising age, as well as the immediate environment of it. Many people want to remain independently in their own living space and familiar neighborhood even with continuing age, it “allows them to stay in contact with their

family, with friends and gives them an adequate quality of life, for example due to the environment, goods, and services.“ (SenStadt 2016). Not all elderly people live in senior citizens housing complexes or in retirement homes. Many live in flats that are part of the free housing market and thus part of the capitalistic utilization logic of urban city development. This is not only true for housing space but for communal rooms as well. Another example is “Stille Straße” in Berlin’s northern district of Pankow, a communal room that was squatted by senior citizens in 2012 for 80 days because the district wanted to sell the property (Stille Straße 10 et. all., 2015). These elderly resistance gave hope and impetus to other retirees, especially at Hansa Ufer 5.

Hansa-Ufer 5 is a distinctive white building in Moabit, a district of Berlin’s central borough Mitte. The building lies directly at the waterfront of Berlin’s main river Spree. It is longish, with bow fronts facing towards the water. A small pointed roof sits at the center top. The old windows could use a lick of paint; they reveal the fact that the building was erected in the 1970s. It was built specifically as a senior citizen's housing complex.



Figure 1: Housing Complex at Hansa Ufer 5 (photo by the author)

Hansa Ufer 5 features 62 modest apartments on six floors, most of them modest with a single small room with views towards the river, a small kitchen and a small bathroom that is age-appropriated. Handrails are installed everywhere to help its inhabitants walking. There is enough space in front of every apartment for a walker. There is an escalator that has a seat; on all floors there are sitting areas next to its entrance. There is one communal room on the ground floor, where all residents can meet and spend time together.

When most of the residents signed their rental contracts over 20 years ago the building was still owned by the city and part of a government-funded social housing program. From 1975 to 2007 the housing complex was a secure space for elderly people that could not compete on the free market for apartments and flats. It included a so-called safeguard clause

in the rental contracts. Rents in Berlin started to rise after the city's and Germany's reunification but most senior pensions did not. This opened the door to dislodge the elderly through the beginning modernization and gentrification processes. For many residents of Hansa Ufer 5, this was the deciding argument for moving into the housing complex since the city's government promised them that they could enjoy getting old there without worrying. But in 2006 Berlin's city government cut the housing subsidies for the district of "Mitte". The district was under pressure to create revenue for its own budget. Selling city-owned real estate to private investors was a standard practice during that time. In 2007 the district sold the former communally owned senior resident houses on Hansa Ufer 5 as well as two others it owned to a Swedish investment firm, Akelius. All three senior residences were sold as a package without the safeguard clause, "for peanuts". In this case peanuts means 5.5 million Euro, according to one of the residents. The selling contract is still undisclosed, despite of the demands of the local parliament of the "Mitte" district. In 2014 the new owner announced that it intended to modernize the buildings and subsequently raise the rents profoundly. The investment group's plans included building new floors with penthouse apartments, a new insulation, the walling-in of the arcades at the back of the building as well as a complete exchange of the sanitary installations. This was the start point of the senior's resistance.

Urban practices of appropriation can be signs of resistance or can have the goal of achieving a change. In the case study the demand is a change in a current situation that touches an urban political debate on the meta level: the selling of housing space to private investors, therefore touching the question of how we want to organize the social life in a city as a whole. Thus the goal of the resistance is to explain one's own situation, to put pressure on political actors, but to point out a general urban shortcoming that affects large parts of the population. This way the resistance becomes a citywide political issue, and through that context it becomes "urban" resistance. Thus according to the typology of resistance from Hollander and Einwohner (2004) the case at hand represents a intended act (to bring the investor to stop, and abandon the renovations), and is additionally recognized by target (due to the huge interest of the local press) and observer in order to qualify as a form of resistance through practices that are effective as good publicity and press coverage.

Modes of Space: One's Own Room: Requirement of Resistance

The affected residents met in early 2014 in their communal room on the first floor to discuss their options. The meeting helped to exchange thoughts and fears, and to catch the spirit of the inhabitants. The communal room was used as a space to collect information, step by step.

They elected tenant representatives to coordinate. Thus the communal room was and is an important space for the retirees, one that became symbolic for their resistance. It is a familiar space because here they meet every Monday afternoon to sing in a little choir, led by Christa Kaes. It is a room they had already appropriated for themselves and where they liked to come to, it is connected to many good memories, through weekly routines like sharing coffee, exchanging thoughts on health issues and singing together. It is a space where the community gets together, "week to week, month to month" (Giddens 1997). In this light the strategy of the social and spatial arrangement of a space is the precondition for a resistive practice.

It is additionally a specific form of "knowledge" that can only be accumulated at this appropriated space. The social scientist Mörtenböck and Mooshammer explain the concept of "knowledge as resistance" in their study on the Occupy Movement (2012, pp. 61). To reach a condition of resistance, physically, intellectually or legally is a question of space. But it is not only a spatial question, but also a question of time and persistence (ibid.) Throughout the last three years of resistance practices the communal room was reinterpreted in its logic but it remained part of the everyday routines, for example to sing together every Monday, an activity that is regularly unattached to the resident's protest. The communal room is the precondition and the result of the senior's resistance at the same time. They have re-defined the room into a space of resistance without this being obvious or even visible. For outsiders this space became and tangible only when these practices started to be presented in the forms of awards, or newspaper articles about the resistance that hang in the windows. This space is pivotal for the practice of resistance.



Figure 2: Window front of the community room showing awards for civic commitment (photos by the author)

The appropriation of this space of resistance was possible because the space already has been a part of the everyday routine practice of the seniors - the room already has been appropriated; this is why the practice of resistance could evolve as a spatial everyday practice.

Modes of Practice: Demonstration 80+

Traditional forms of marches and demonstrations are part of the practices of resistance of the retirees. But these "traditional" forms of resistance practices must be viewed in light of the age of the retired seniors who are between 70 and 90 years old, an age that greatly influences their capabilities and ways of resistance.

For example these protesters have to live with a reduced mobility; they need walkers and help to get on or of buses. They cannot sit or stand for a long time. Thus they need special equipment for their protests: foldable camping chairs, a special bus that must be ordered to get them from and to the places they want to protest and back to their homes. They need supporters who help them while traveling and while demonstrating. Someone is always tired or feels queasy. Then someone has to motivate them, like A. did at one demonstration in September 30, 2014 at Leipziger Platz in Berlin (Leipzig Square) a prestigious square in the Western center of the city, right at the headquarter of Akelius, the Swedish investor. The drive there, being there together, their protest there together – acts of resistance like these have helped the community of Hansa Ufer 5 to grow closer. "We will to everything imaginable, now we are one, we will fight together." In this regard the practice of resistance can be (1) understood as a political action, but also (2) as "identity-based" (Hollander/Einwohner 2004, 537), and furthermore as "identity-establishing".

After an hour of preparing the setting and the dispositions, all signs are ready, the camping chairs have been put in three rows, curated to be visible for by-passers. The signs lean against the chairs and walkers. Then the police ask the retirees to change their location to the other side of the street, because they parked their "dispositions of resistance" in a no-parking-zone. What would be easy for younger protesters takes a great amount of time for these retiree rebels, like removing and arranging the setting with all this equipment and material or finding another place. But with soup spoons and griddles, with whistles and self-made signs the demonstration can eventually start.

The retirees joint another demonstration in September 2014, organized by the initiative "Wir bleiben alle!"(We stay all!) under the claim: "Living space should not be a commodity" the seniors were carried on a carriage on a plateau wagon by four supporters. But sitting for a longer time is not possible for all the older people, therefore they had to leave the

demonstration early: "We already waited for an hour that the demonstration could start. Some had to go to bathroom, I didn't know where to go with them." (Christa Kaes, Interview 15.06.2016) At yet another demonstration they took a "bike-taxi" or rishka to take part in the demonstration. The retiree's age and the health issues are one of the main challenges that define their forms of resistance and protest: They need to adopt and reinterpret tactics and find creative which fit more their limited possibilities effetely to be politically active and make themselves visible. As a lot of other actors of resistance the retirees had to acquire new practices to maintain in the field of resistance. Thus, many of them do not incorporate the social capital or habitus to perform confidently. One can figure out an inhibition threshold, which cannot be overcome by all of the elderly protesters, but which might be necessary in order to become and stay visible. However, every resistance has its limits, and in this case the physical limitations of the actors create tight boundaries. The old women and man acquire new forms of practices of resistance, but they do not incorporate them, they do not evolve an everyday practice in the sense that Giddens or de Certeau described.

For their demonstration in public spaces the rent rebels produced signs, all hand-written with sharpies. They formulated claims and fears on cardboards and paper. It was important for the rent rebels that the claims were well formulated, straightforward, and sparkling. Some of them had difficulties to write, because their fingers are rusty, they cannot feel them anymore, some cannot move their fingers or even their wrists. The letters are traced with black color, to make them look thicker. That is easily done on a computer and takes only a second. The seniors with their limited capabilities needed 10 minutes for every single character. "I need to emphasize the characters, to make them visible and good to read." (Simon/Eppinger 2016, 2/2) Finally the sign is finished. It has an A1 format size and says in big black letters: "No speculation with housing space"; "Berlin's seniors are not 2nd class citizens."; "You politicians, you will see how we feel when you are old and sick."; "We have a right to live here, we will not be removed."



Figure 3: Christa Kaes, 85, (photo by the author) and senior citizens with protest signs during preparations (photo not permitted yet)

However, with their limited capabilities the seniors do not have the resources to professionalize their protest like other groups with younger more tech-affiliated members. Novy and Colomb stated in Berlin “cultural and artistic resistance, i.e. the critical intervention of artists and cultural producers in urban struggles”, defined as “new actors and coalitions” and members of the “creative class” (2003). The retirees are not part of this “creative class”. Most of them were born in the 1930s or 1940s, they were trained to work in the retail industry or as dental nurses. All have lived to experience World War II, some became orphans because of it. The seniors do not have access to the resources, practices knowledge the actors of the so-called „creative class“ can rely on. The seniors do not have a logo, graphics, sticker, flyers, there is no own branded visual language that accomplishes other protesters. The seniors do not have the cultural or social capital or resources to do so. Thus they need to adapt.

They used other practices of resistances to “brand” themselves: One main visual trademark, a branding if you will, that the seniors created are their "hats", their own distinctive mark. They are simple straw hats from the last football world cup." They exchanged the ribbons. It is a simple adaption yet it works as a tool of identification and affiliation; it represents the group as the elderly “rent rebels”. Another aspect of their performance is the clothes they are wearing wherever they represent their case. There is one rule: nothing in black. The reason is not fear of being linked to left wing political groups that were black while at demonstrations. The reason is that they want to be seen in public wearing dresses that could symbolize sadness. They want to represent themselves as “colorful”, as joyful, and life-affirming. Their dresses are consciously chosen to de-code social prejudices and cultural biases about elderly people’s tame attitudes and appearances.

Modes of Time: Modern Forms of Urban Resistance – the Appropriation of the Internet

Incorporating the media, collecting signatures, the organization of neighborhood meetings in public or demonstrations – all of these is traditional and known practices of urban resistance. The seniors used some of these classic possibilities as well, to the extent that their health allowed them and further faced a new challenge: how to maintain visible?

At a neighborhood party in 2014 they collected 300 handwritten signatures in one day. Some of the signees and neighbors were more willing to sign with a "digital signature", so inspired to initiate an online-petition that started in September 2014. It is a short video excerpt where five retirees and one supporter of the seniors asked for change. It is addressed to some

of the city's politicians and to the investor Akelius. With that video and the online-petition on the platform change.org they collected 16,000 online signatures in two days, 108,033 altogether.³ This online tool helped the retirees to generate a great amount of signatures in a much shorter time as well as a wider range of attention in general. Additionally change.org created an account on the social media platform Facebook, something none of the retirees or their most important supporters had ever had. However, "that account is by far not that important to us", as one of the seniors explained during the field work.

With growing public pressure and awareness, due to local newspaper articles and reports on local television the investor Akelius reacted. First on its website, by presenting a "press release", later by letter. Elke Schilling, the district's representative for seniors feels like it was "unique" that citizens over 70 started using the Internet for their own means. "They totally got into those modern forms of resistance." (Simon/Eppinger 2016, 2/2). She says the online petition was a test and the feedback was surprising. The online petition helped to inform the public and shape its opinion. Local newspapers reported about the retirees and the investor Akelius responded and announced that it would take back the raise of the rents. Moreover they showed a willingness to start a discussion. However, at this point the senior's website is offline and their account on Facebook has seen no updates after the online-petition in 2014.

If one wants to conceive an online petition as a new form of urban resistance and examine actors for whom accessing the internet is no self-evident action but an extensive appropriation of new knowledge, it is imminent to observe that these have been snapshots. Their visibility online has been temporarily. The representation of their protest to the outside world illustrates the past but not the present. The seniors accomplished to generate public interest at a certain point of time and reached results because of that. To review their efforts in the light of de Certeau's arguments: they established a tactic out of a strategy. The online-petition was "limited by the possibility of the moment" (de Certeau 1984, 38), because using social-media as a tool of resistance has no "own place" in the everyday practice of the senior citizens. Furthermore the lacking view of a whole is important in that issue. Facebook or social-media tools are "not that important" for the everyday practice and therefore no incorporated part of resistance practices.

To show why using social media platforms is not working on a long-term perspective in the case of the senior citizens, I want to refer to the concept of habitus from the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu as a theoretical and anthropological approach to understand and

³ Online-Petition of the Seniors of Hansa Ufer 5: www.change.org/hansa-ufer-5, Date of Access: 14.09.2016.

capture the sociological relevance of practice of resistance as everyday practice (Fuchs-Heinritz and König 2005,113). If a certain kind of everyday practice is incorporated in the attitude of the actor, its dispositions and everyday habits, its preferences and moral values one can speak about habitus (ibid.). "Through the Habitus, people are able to participate in social practices and create social practices." (Krais and Gebauer 2002, 5) If you are not using Facebook, Twitter or other social media platforms as a practice of your everyday routine, incorporated in your social settings and actions, this practice cannot develop into a practice of resistance. Consequently is social or everyday practice no strategic interaction, as Bourdieu contains (Bourdieu 1972, 1976, pp. 115). This is important for the case study and the practice of resistance of the senior citizens and further for the conceptualization of practices of urban resistance: if the social practices of the everyday, as practices of resistance, are not pre-practiced, or habitually incorporated as an everyday routine, these practices are not capable to incorporate into continuous practices of urban resistance.

What other movements call "social media campaigns", using the platforms, as a communication strategy to achieve their protest goals, was not performed in the stated case. As de Certeau points out: "Power is bound by its very visibility." (1984, 36-37) Without a long-term visibility and the establishment of a long-term visibility of resistances, the practice of resistance itself does not develop into an everyday practice and therefore has no impact on long-term power relations. This arises two questions: Does using social-media platforms lead to a long-term visibility of resistance? And how can one establish a long-term visibility of resistance if you don't know if you wake up the next morning?

"Well, five minutes after eight in the morning the phone rings. It's Frau Jungebauer saying: „Hello, did you sleep well?“. And then we knew we survived the night."⁴

In the fall of 2015 the „Senior Gang of Moabit“ added another level of resistance to their protests: A "Flash Mob" and their "Resistance Song", filmed and published in a documentary way. It was published on their own YouTube Chanel with around 14.000 invocations. The seniors assemble „suddenly“ in public space, in-front of their house at Hansa Ufer 5, and performed their own „Resistance Song“, as a political and artistic expression. Together with supporters and neighbors the choir consisted in the end of more than 40 people. With each verse new people joined the choir. The „Resistance Song“ is accompanied by the melody of „Bella Ciao“, the hymn of the Italian resistance during World War II: „At Hansa Ufer, we will remain / We live here and that's for sure / Our home for many years /We never go away from

⁴ Ingeborg Koske, Interview from 18.07.2016.

here!“.

This resistance song can be understood as a mobile object. It can be used for all manner of things, but the most important function of the song is the strengthening of the community (Diederichsen 2015). As stated in the beginning of the article resistance can be “identity-based” (Hollander/Einwohner 2004, 537). And in this matter resistance is not only „identity-based“, but identity-shifting. Through the song the seniors are able to tell their story, it is therefore a collective song of labor and a collective act of resistance practice including a deep inner and generational cohesion to the history of their own lives and the history of Berlin since the World War II: „Displacing retirees - don’t do this! [...] For your prosperity we slogged a hole life.“ The former song of the Italian Resistance is undergoing a process of transition, linked to the actors and to the network of the coalition of supporters and therefore to the neighborhood. And further it can be seen as a „political act“, which responds to current development of Berlin’s housing market: „Akelius is promising things / But we do not trust the investor / We want true yield with high rents / We will never go away from here!“ The Flash Mob including the Resistance Song makes the senior citizens visible on a long term and for a wider audience. They got a pledge from the investor Akelius that the modernization effort would be paused but that did not mean that they were off the table, on the contrary. One supporter of the retirees has called the attitude of the Swedish investor as “waiting for a biological solution to their problem” meaning that the seniors would all die eventually because of their age and that their protest would collapse the lesser people were still part of the group.

CONCLUSIONS

In the case study one could observe three different modes of resistance practices, through space, practice and time. The practices of resistance, which are partly traditional forms of resistance had to be adapted in new hybrid ways, due to the special physical circumstances and the deteriorating health of the actors and the limitation in capacity and social capital, as to the limitation of time. Like for many other actors in the field of urban movements in Berlin, the options to express resistance in the long term are particularly limited in the case of these new actors in the field of urban resistance. The retirees face other challenges and represent a demographic group that is a large fraction of Berlin’s population which wants to and has to get politically involved but can not because of certain circumstances such as physical mobility, lack of certain resources or subject-specific knowledge that can not be obtained in the short period of time they have available since it is not inherently incorporated in their

daily routines or their habitus. In addition to that the actors face the particular challenge of urban resistance practice and stand up for a cause with no prospect of witnessing success during their own lifetime because of their high age. Despite the fact that after two years of ongoing resistance there are considerably less actors and many of the remaining ones are older and physically more limited, “not that vigorous anymore”. The retiree rebels want to make a difference and continue the fight.

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