

Rave Against The Machine

A Discourse Analysis of Activism and Cultural Preservation
amidst Urban Development in Berlin



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Abstract

This thesis explores the discursive elements and practices of the activist community resisting the construction of the 17th extension of the A100 Highway in eastern Berlin. Focusing on linguistic strategies, rhetorical devices and methods of activism employed by actors opposing the highway project, this study utilises a combination of Manuel Castells' Urban Social Movement Theory and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis method (CDA) to examine how grassroots initiatives articulate their opposition and mobilise community support to influence policy-making and urban development in the state of Berlin.

Through analysis of semi-structured interviews, protest letters and media communications, this thesis identifies discursive elements such as emotive language, metaphors, modalities, framings of power & conflict dynamics as well as the use of digital media platforms. The otherwise quite diverse union of club-cultural, environmental, social and residential actors are able to find common ground in their resistance; positioning themselves against dominant institutional forces that supposedly prioritises economic development and car-centric infrastructure over environmental, cultural and social well-being.

Additionally, the use of "protest raves" as means of discursive practice and mobilising is identified.. Often rooted in the club-cultural sphere of Berlin, activists utilise these protest raves as both a symbolic and a practical tool to embed their actions within Berlin's unique club culture to garner wider public engagement. It also highlights the central role of cultural preservation and community space protection within the discourse of resistance.

Key words: Berlin, Discourse, Protests, Social Movements, Urban Planning

Words: 10 000

Acknowledgements

To Alfred, my Friend

To Stefan, my Rock

To Becca, my Heart

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1 - Introduction

“On Saturday, September 2, 2023, we declare the Markgrafendamm between Elsenbrücke and Ostkreuz from 2 PM to 10 PM as a car-free zone. As a civil society coalition of neighbourhood residents, climate activists, and club-goers, we crank up the bass and invite everyone to join the protest rave against the further construction of the A100 highway.”

The above text is a translated citation of a joint statement made by the Bürger*innenInitiative A100 (B-iA100) and the Berlin Club Commission calling people to join in an act of protest against a major infrastructure project planned to take place in eastern Berlin (Bi-A100 2023). The project in question, a long awaited extension of the A100 highway, has sparked much attention in Berlin due to its supposed impact on the cultural profile of the neighbourhood it is planned to be undertaken in.

The ongoing evolution of urban landscapes in densely populated areas displays a conflict of prioritisation and ideals. In Berlin, few things exemplify this trend more than the A100 highway, which sparked resistance from the grassroots level to the parliamentary sphere. Having been under construction since the 50s, the ambitious highway project has been the source of controversy in the city since the 70s (Flakin 2023). Today, the 17th and last extension is up next for construction, and the resistance has been intense as well as highly publicised (Braun 2023, Papenhausen 2024).

The A100 controversy is not occurring in a vacuum. Apart from environmental and social objections to the project, the construction of its 17th and latest extension comes in an already contentious context of gentrification and loss of cultural and social fabric. Much media attention has been given to the threat that the construction constitutes towards the UNESCO-heritage that is the Club Culture in Berlin (Deutsche UNESCO - Kommission 2024). On one hand, the highway would mean the end of several clubs and cultural venues in its way, but also as it is happening in the middle of a long-going trend of these cultural institutions being forced to move or shut down due to economic pressures; a trend colloquially known in Germany as “Clubsterben”, or “Club Death (Braun 2023, Garcia 2017, Pfaffinger & Poschmann 2012, Woolsey 2023).

While conflicts of interests surrounding urban development projects are by now means unique to Berlin, this intersection between concerns of social, environmental and cultural nature presents a unique set of circumstances with strong potential implications on the discourse of the conflict. This thesis aims to

explore this case; hoping to shed light on these themes of urban development and cultural heritage preservation.

1.1 - Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse and identify the discursive elements and praxes of the resistance against the A100 highway project in Berlin. With the help of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this is achieved by shedding light on the linguistic strategies, rhetorical devices and protest methods utilised by activists in their opposition efforts as well as spoken and written communications. The study aims to provide insights that can inform future research on urban activism, cultural resistance and policymaking, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of socio-political dynamics in urban development contexts.

1.2 - Thesis Statement

"What discursive elements and practices characterise the resistance against the 17th extension of the A100 Autobahn project in Berlin?"

1.3 - Previous Research

1.3.1 - Urban Social Movements

As this thesis aims to investigate social movements resisting and protesting institutionalised “mainstream” policies, it serves to establish a firm theoretical background on social movements.

One of the leading thinkers in this field (and primary theoretical base for this thesis) is catalan sociologist Manuel Castells. His theory on urban social movements was formulated through extensive empirical research in cities across Europe and the Americas; the subjects for his studies included tenant movements, squatters and neighbourhood associations, including their historical background, societal context, means of mobilisation and communication strategies in his analysis.

He formulated the theory in a time of significant shifts in urban centres around the world. It was a time of industrial restructuring, globalisation and technological advancement. The mid-1900s brought “substantial progress in “[...] spatial economy, land use planning, quantitative geography, regional development,

environmental symbolism, and urban design” (Castells 1983: xv), but Castells wished to deepen our understanding of the city and how it changes by studying the politics of urban management. The resulting work, *Urban Social Movements* (1983), will be providing the theoretical framework for this thesis (this will be further elaborated upon in [2 - Theory & Method](#)).

Worth mentioning is that Castells is far from the only researcher on urban movements. Della Porta & Diani (2020) also give a comprehensive introduction to the study of social movements, providing detailed examinations of theories, dynamics and political contexts of social movements globally. They identify four primary questions:

1. The relationship between structural change and transformations in patterns of social conflict.
2. Cultural representations in social conflict.
3. The process through which values, interests and ideas get turned into collective action.
4. How certain social, political and/or cultural contexts affect social movements’ chances of success.

(Della Porta & Diani 2020:Chapter 1)

They highlight how these facets are interconnected and essential for understanding the dynamics of social movements, using theories around new social movements, collective behaviour and resource mobilisation while also investigating urban social movements, Della Porta & Diani don’t limit themselves to exclusively urban groups in their analysis, but also on non-urban ones like farmer unions, agricultural movements and environmental activists.

1.3.2 - Urban Cultural Heritage & Value

As a significant portion of the anti-A100 movement is rooted in the club-cultural sphere of Berlin with the preservation of club venues as a main argument of opposition, it serves to look back on previous research and theorising on themes such as cultural heritage and value in postmodern, urban contexts.

Schofield (2014) uses Berlin in 1960-1989 as a backdrop as he formulates his ideas on cultural heritage, establishing that it is a concept which has changed (and is changing) in its semantic meaning. From having been primarily a place-centred concept, its utility has been broadened to also include people with “a focus on a healthy combination of the iconic and the everyday” (2014:274). *Character*, i.e things that make a place distinct or unique, is also highlighted. He brings up certain shapes, densities and styles of streets and social fabric as examples of this. Combined, heritage becomes an intricate web of meaning, allowing *heritage communities*, i.e groups of individuals with a shared interest in preserving a

culture for the benefit of present and future generations, to weave together the landscape with aesthetic expressions and social values to create a “*more nuanced, a more informed, and more socially meaningful framework from which to view future change*”. These principles are applicable on mainstream cultures as well as subcultures; Schofield brings up how music scenes are included in this (2014:275). Culture is thus not just something observed in the past, but something that is constantly created through active individuals and communities.

But what value does culture bring? What value does a heritage community see in preserving it, and how can they communicate and justify this to an “outside” which does not have the same ties to what is being protected? In *Economics and Culture* (2001), Here, Throsby (2001) seeks to shed light on the relationship between economic and cultural value. His outspoken purpose is to reason around the supposed conflict between these two supposedly separate values. While he does consider the relationship between these as “separate areas of intellectual endeavour (2001:xiii), he also recognises the relationship between these two concepts as “recognisable manifestations of human thought and action, observed in both a macro and a micro context” (2001:xiii). Expressed in more general terms, value is not only to be considered “the origin and motivation of all economic behaviour”, but has to be viewed from a broader perspective than this. Throsby argues that while value in the economic sphere is related to “utility, price and the worth that individuals or markets assign to commodities” (2001:19) Cultural value, however, is expressed differently. He highlights two main ways of viewing and expressing it: in *specific* terms (example given is the tone value of a music note), and in *general* terms; “An indication of the merit or worth of a work, an object, an experience or some other cultural thing” (2001:19).

This does however not mean that economic and cultural values are dialectically opposed. Thorsby highlights that value and valuation and the estimation of these are more similar than not between these two spheres. They do however differ in their *origin* of value, which means that their value often needs to be expressed differently (2001:26). You can express the value of a work of art or a musical performance without bringing up utility or price.

According to Throsby, cultural value can be further disaggregated into six different *characteristics*:

1. *Aesthetic value*: Beauty, harmony, style, fashion, taste
2. *Spiritual value*: the value stems from religious or spiritual traditions and attitudes
3. *Social Value*: Facilitates and conveys interpersonal connection, identity
4. *Historical value*: The historical context and connections of a piece of culture. How it reflects its time and “*illuminates the presents by providing a sense of continuity[...]*”
5. *Symbolic value*: Extraction of meaning
6. *Authenticity value*: Originality, uniqueness, “realness”, integrity

(Thorsby 2001:28-29)

2 - Theory & Method

2.1 - Urban Social Movements Theory

In “The City and the Grassroots - A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements”, Catalan sociologist Manuel Castells establishes a theoretical framework for the understanding of social movements in urban environments. Castelles utilises empirical examples of a multitude of social movements around the world in order to examine how these movements emerge as responses to economic and social grievances and pressures, but also how they can lead to significant changes in their societies.

According to Castells, cities are the historical social products of “conflicting social interests and values” (1983:291, 302). Although socially dominant interests usually get institutionalised, grassroots demands and mobilisations still play a vital role in shaping the role, meaning and structure of the city. This process is not only the case with social movements representing grassroots initiatives which are successful or representative of the majority, but also those that deviate and differ from the “mainstream” narrative (1983:291). While economy and technology also undeniably plays a role in the shaping of a city, Castells argues that “the social process through which humankind appropriates space and time and constructs a social organisation, relentlessly challenged by the production of new values and the emergence of new social interests” must not be underestimated (1983:291).

Castells criticises earlier urban sociology for underestimating and downplaying the impact and potential power projection of social and urban movements. While many social and urban movements are able to acquire and project institutional power, they are also formed in the civil society and are thus not limited to “the rules of the game” or bound by “dominant values and norms” (1983:294). He also set much store by the relations of power at play in the state-grassroot dynamic. While he recognises the importance of class, he rejects certain aspects of classic Marxist theory for being simplistic, arguing that it is more than class that determines urban conflicts. Gender, ethnic, citizen and national movements are also rallying points for movements struggling for social change (1984:291), and should thus not be underestimated. This social change is produced through one of four processes:

1. The dominant class wields its institutional power to restructure society in accordance with its own interests and values. Examples include the deliberate abandonment of South Bronx and American industrial cities becoming “warehouses for unemployed minorities”.
2. A dominant class changes the meaning of a city through a “partial or total revolution”. Examples include the Cuban revolution or the 1915 workers housing reform in Glasgow.
3. A social movement forms its own interpretation within a specific area, which contrasts with the dominant meaning imposed by existing structures. One example is the feminist schemes .
4. A social mobilisation, which may not be rooted in a specific social class, establishes a fresh urban interpretation that opposes the established urban meaning dictated by institutions and runs counter to the interests of the ruling class. This scenario is where the notion of an urban social movement comes into play: a concerted collective effort focused on reshaping the institutionalised urban narrative in opposition to the principles, objectives, and values of the dominant class.

(Castells 1983:304-305)

The choice of Castells theory on urban social movements as the theoretical basis for this research project was done for several reasons. Firstly, it provides useful insight into the **understanding of grassroots initiatives** and how they emerge in response to social and economic grievances; something that aligns well with this thesis’s exploration of grassroot activism in the context of cultural preservation and urban development. Secondly, Castells emphasises the role of grassroots demands and mobilisations in **challenging dominant narratives and power dynamics** by providing a framework for understanding how these movements negotiate power and influence decision-making processes, something that can help shed light on the power struggles and conflicts of interest at play in the A100 conflict. The focus on power also synchronises well with the Critical Discourse Analysis method, as it also sets much store by analysing these dynamics. Lastly, its effort to elevate itself beyond a class-centric marxist analysis of social conflict by **acknowledging the importance of other social factors** translates well into the political profile of the movement in question; one that places importance on struggles related to everything from housing to racial and gender justice. These factors are expected to help shed light on the social and organisational context in which the discourse and practices of the anti-A100 movement occur. It sets this specific case in a theoretical context, making it possible to draw broader conclusions and speculations based on the result.

The reasoning for choosing Castell over aforementioned Della Porta & Diani (2020) was mainly motivated by its specific focus on *urban* social movements. Della Porta & Diani’s research is deep and would provide valuable insights as well, but being able to centre the analysis in an urban context would hopefully contribute with analytical accuracy. There is however a risk that this will bring

limitations to the method-theory relation, as Castells has less focus on the discourse of social movements than Della Porta & Diani. Therefore Della Porta & Diani will remain as a secondary, supporting theory.

2.2 - Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

As previously established, this thesis will employ a *Critical Discourse Analysis* (as formulated by Fairclough) to analyse how the framing of roles, motivations and power balances are manifested in the use of language and practices by representatives of the anti-A100 protests. Fairclough's approach states the centrality of discourse as a form of "social practice which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations [...] while simultaneously being shaped by other social practices and structures" (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 200:71). It can be considered a poststructuralist perspective through its stance that discursive practice is able to question structures by denoting what may lie outside of the structure; not just reproduce already existing discursive structures. In CDA, discourses are revealed through a *linguistic* analysis of the relevant material in order to make deeper conclusions than a standard text analysis, as it unlike the text analysis is able to reveal the connections between the material and the societal and cultural processes and structures (2000:71). CDA is often used due to its ability to draw conclusions regarding the linguistic-discursive nature of cultural and social phenomena. It has been used to study a wide range of topics, for example nationalism, mass communication and racism (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:67).

To Fairclough, discourse constructs social identities, relations as well as systems of knowledge and meaning. CDA also features two main dimensions of focus: there's the *communicative* event, denoting the case or text in question, and the *discursive order*, referring to the sum of the discourse types used within a social institution or domain (2000:73).

A typical CDA consists of five distinct steps. The following chapter provides a brief explanation of each step, as well as how they are applied in the context of this thesis.

Choice of and collection of material. There is relative freedom when it comes to choice of material in CDA, but important is that it is relevant within the social domain in question, and that it is accessible to the researcher (2000:84). For this research project, a relatively broad selection of sources will be utilised. Firstly, two were conducted with people and representatives of organisations who

played a role in the organisation of the protest movement. secondly, texts relating to the anti-a100 movement; more specifically three press releases regarding planned demonstrations, and one recounting of a panel discussion featuring a Berlin Green Party opposer of the A100 extension.

Transcription. It is imperative that the verbal material is transcribed! It is however a sensitive topic, as there is an inherent interpretive nature in the act of transcribing. This is especially relevant in interviews with several people, as sciences can be ascribed to certain people, or long exposés can be deemed as “monologues” (2000:84-85). For this project, complete transcriptions will be produced. This will be made possible by recording the audio for each interview.

Analysis: The purpose of the text analysis is to establish how the discourses are textually realised, enabling the one doing the analysis to establish and support their own interpretation. For this, a number of tools are at disposal, such as interactional control, ethos, metaphors and grammar. Another central one is transitivity, or how we frame things linguistically and what ideological consequences this has. Modality is also a common thing to look for in a CDA, referring to the level of subjectivity in the choice of language (2000: 87-88). Grammatical metaphors are also of interest, as they are useful tools for the speaker to emphasise the significance of certain words and make them stand out in the discourse (Fairclough 2004:12-13).

The main focus of this research project will be to utilise the linguistic side of CDA to uncover linguistic choices & framings, power relations & dynamics, ideological underpinnings and mobilisation strategies.

2.3 - Data Collection

2.3.1 - Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews have the capability of being used as simple information sourcing about certain events or phenomena, which in this context would include the instances of activism conducted by the club organisations. However, more importantly for this research project, they are also useful if the interviewer wants to learn about the subjective attitudes, values and paradigms of the respondents (Teorell & Svensson 2007:89). This is especially applicable to interviews of a less structured nature, which is the main reason for the interviews in this project being conducted in a semi-structured style. The ambition is to allow space for the interviewee to freely and openly express their own thoughts as well as to bring up what they consider relevant and important. By interviewing key stakeholders in the anti-A100 protests, it is possible to gather sufficient material to make conclusions and draw lessons from the discourse which manifests itself in the speech of these interviewees.

2.3.2 - Texts

As previously mentioned, three press releases relating to the anti-A100 protests will be analysed, as well as an article recalling the content of a political panel discussion on the topic focusing on the exchange between the Green Party traffic senator and a FDP representative of the Federal Ministry of Transport. The reasoning for focusing on press releases is that they hopefully will provide insight into how these organisations intentionally and unintentionally are portraying themselves to the general public. The intention was initially to only analyse press releases, but it was deemed beneficial to the analysis to include the rhetoric of active politicians, as it helps provide a larger diversity of perspectives. The article in question ([5.2.4 - Panel Discussion](#)) was also chosen based on the fact that the Berlin Green Party has been some of the most outspoken against the highway project in the local senate (Die Grüne Berlin 2024), and could thus be considered one of the more relevant representatives of the anti-A100 interests in the mainstream political sphere.

2.4 - Methodological Reflections

CDA is able to offer a robust methodological framework for examining how cultural values are articulated in the texts and interviews within the context of urban development and community activism. It was chosen for this study due to its emphasis on the uncovering of power dynamics, ideologies and social practices embedded within the discourse. CDA also allows for a nuanced analysis of language and linguistics, enabling the identification of linguistic features that may be intentionally or unintentionally utilised to affect the perception of cultural assets of the recipient of the message. It is central in order to learn about and draw conclusions regarding the strategies for community engagement utilised by the relevant organisations. By systematically analysing the material, it will be determined how language is used to construct and reproduce social realities; shedding light on the discursive mechanisms through which cultural values are negotiated and contested.

Through the use of a combination of texts and interviews, there is an ambition to gather a more nuanced picture of the contribution and activism of the anti-A100 protests. It is however worth noting that interviews bring potential bias in areas such as participant selection, question framing and response interpretation. It is important that measures are taken to mitigate these biases to ensure both the validity and reliability of the findings. Its qualitative nature, while bringing many analytical strengths to the analysis, does limit the ability to generalise the findings due to these being context-dependent and potentially inapplicable to other settings or populations. The participation rate was also lower than anticipated, with only

two interviews completed out of seven outreaches. Those who explained the reason for them not participating frequently cited lack of time as the main reason. One of the clubs initially requested to answer the questions written via email, but later declined participation altogether due to being overencumbered by an ongoing controversy related to a different topic. The low response-rate as well as the relatively low number of textual sources does pose an issue regarding reliability. The predictions of the future as well as general attitudes did differ between the two interviewees, hinting at the need for a broader pool of data to make any definite conclusions on the movement as a whole. This low response rate is unfortunately the most significant weakness of this project, and an area necessary for future research on the case and topic to mitigate. Additionally, as one interview ([Appendix 1](#)) was done in person in a quiet, secluded area, and the second interview ([Appendix 2](#)) was done remotely while the interviewee was travelling on public transport, the reliability of the results may be affected by the two interviews being undertaken under differing circumstances. Finally, as the interviews were conducted in English rather than German, there is a risk that not being able to express themselves in their native language may have affected their responses.

While the initial intention of this thesis was to exclusively focus on the club-cultural sphere of the anti-A100 protests, a decision was made to relax this criteria by using data from other actors as well, such as politicians and environmental organisations. The reason for this was in part due to lack of available texts and interviews from the club-cultural category, but it was also deemed beneficial to the study to include a wider array of actors and data in order to more sufficiently encompass the movement as a whole. While the resistance against the A100 is highly diverse, it is characterised by a relative unity and coherence in goals, motivations and aspirations, something elaborated upon in the section [6 - Discussion](#).

As the number of press releases relating to the contemporary anti-A100 movement is relatively low, the validity of the selection can be considered to be reasonably high, as the sample size constitutes a considerable portion of the available relevant material. The article on the panel discussion however, while useful in providing a more mainstream political perspective on the issue, could have benefitted from additional sources of its nature. This is however mitigated by its role as a secondary data source of supplementary utility.

There are alternative methods which could have been applicable for this project. For instance, the interviews could have been replaced by *surveys*, which would have been beneficial mainly for efficiency reasons. Surveys mean that the respondents are able to answer the questions at their own leisure, while also reducing the workload required to analyse the results. It is however important to recognise that surveys are less suitable for more open-ended inquiries. As we are interested in studying how the discourse manifests itself among the subjects, a survey was deemed insufficient to capture these features satisfactorily.

3 - Background & Contextualisation

In the following chapter, context will be given to three central themes surrounding the anti-A100 movement. The first and most obvious one being the history and current state of the A100 and its 17th and latest extension, followed by an overview over the organisations associated with past and present activism against the A100. Then there will be a brief rundown on the core tenets of environmentalism in order to contextualise the ideological background of the environmentalist spheres of the anti-A100 movement. The last section will be dealing with the gentrification taking place in Berlin; with a particular focus on the impact it has had and is having on the city's club culture. The reason for including this is that the threat to clubs is one of the main arguments and rallying points against the highway extension. Understanding this broader context is essential for comprehending the motivations and grievances of the communities engaged in this social movement.

3.1 - The A100 Autobahn

3.1.1 - History of the A100

Partially encircling the city centre of Berlin, the A100 Autobahn in its current state runs along the S41/S42 overground train line from Neukölln in the South all the way clockwise to Wedding in the north, going through the districts of Schöneberg, Tempelhof, Wilmersdorf and Charlottenburg ([Appendix 3](#)) It is a busy highway, even having been measured as Germany's busiest highway in 2007 (Bundesanstalt für Straßenwesen 2007). It was drawn up in the 1940s, and was confirmed in the *Generalverkehrsplan* in 1958. Originally a West German project, it was intended that the full "ring" around the city would be completed upon German reunification; a plan that was put on hold due to a number of issues ranging from economic to urban development factors (Manoukian 2023).

At its inception, the autobahn construction was not limited to the circular A100, but also aimed to establish a criss-cross network of highways all around the city centre. This land use plan (*Flächennutzungsplan*) was established in 1965, but most of it was never realised. If these plans had come true, areas like Kottbusser Tor would be defined by a big highway rather than the bustling city centres they are today. While these plans have been mostly scrapped, the ambition to finish the A100 lives on (Flakin 2023).

The circular highway has been periodically built upon in various stages of extension. The section currently being constructed is the 16th extension (BA 16), between Neukölln and Tempelhof, its construction beginning in 2013. This phase of the project has turned out to be costly, with the price tag reaching over 145,000

euros per metre. Furthermore, the overall budget for completing this stretch is anticipated to surpass 700 million euros, making it one of the most expensive undertakings in recent German infrastructure development history (RBB24 2022).

3.1.2 - The 17th Extension

The main focus for this thesis is the so-called *17th* extension (BA 17) of the A100 ([Appendix 4](#)). This extension would be the next step towards the aforementioned encircling of The Berlin city centre after BA 16. Officially published in 2022, the proposed highway extension would connect *Treptower-Körpernick* in the south/southeast with *Lichtenberg* in the northeast via *Friedrichshain* and *Kreuzberg*. The project is classified as “ongoing and firmly scheduled” in the Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan 2030 (in German: *Bundesverkehrswegeplan 2030*) and is in accordance with the current land use plan in Berlin. According to Die Autobahn GmbH des Bundes (2024), the planning includes multiple studies on current urban, traffic, and environmental conditions. This includes things such as traffic studies, environmental impact assessments as well as surveying and soil investigations. The primary aim is to as quickly as possible continue and complete the A100 in order to connect the eastern and western parts of Berlin, while simultaneously relieving traffic in the city centre.

3.1.3 - Resistance Against the A100

The 17th extension is not the first addition to the A100 to spark controversy. Already in the 70’s, its extensions sparked protests and civil resistance. Started by young students of the Social Democratic youth organisations, they became known as the *Bürgerinitiative* (now known by the more gender-inclusive name *Bürger*innenInitiative*), and their tactics involved among others door knocking and occupation of areas threatened by the constructions. The group was officially founded in 1974, and was originally intended as an effort of opposition to the removal of a small children’s playground called *Cheruskerpark*. Moving forward, they quickly expanded their scope, eventually becoming a resistance force against car-centric city planning. Their efforts were aided by the obligatory car-free Sundays implemented in the wake of the ‘73 oil crisis, as this spurred people to consider alternatives to cars. (Flakin 2023).

Today, *Bürger*innenInitiative* are still active in their struggle for a car free city, and their cause has been joined by several other organisations, including environmental NGOs like *Fridays For Future* and *Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland*, club-cultural organisations like the Club Commission, and affected clubs and other cultural institutions like *://AboutBlank*, *Kino am Ostkreuz* and *Salon Zur Wilden Renate* (Fridays for Future 2023, Protest Organiser Interview 2024). There are also organisations formed specifically as opposers of the A100, such as *A100 Stoppen*. In recent years, the resistance against the A100 appears to have been increasingly defined by its clubcultural

actors, largely due to their popular protest raves and the threatened club venues being well-publicised.

3.2 - Environmentalism

A significant portion of the resistance against the A100 is environmentally motivated. Not only are environmental concerns and arguments at the core of the resistance and its messages, but environmental organisations contribute greatly to organising, raising awareness and activism. This calls for the establishment of what exactly is meant by the concept “Environmentalism”.

In *Modern Environmentalism: An Introduction*, author David Pepper paints the picture of environmentalism as a heterogenous and multifaceted ideology which combines concerns about natural ecosystems with pressing social and political issues. At its core, environmentalism is *ecocentric*, and views it as humanity's moral obligation to “respect plants, animals and all nature, which has a right to existence and humane treatment (Pepper 1996:15). This view posits that the prevailing exploitative relationship with nature is symptomatic of deeper societal issues - that environmental degradation and social injustice are fundamentally interconnected. Thus, environmentalism takes a stance against projects that would exacerbate environmental degradation and disregard community well-being.

Pepper also uses this opportunity to provide an alternative view of *progressiveness*. He argues that there is a prevailing attitude in society that anything which is good is inherently better in larger amounts. That we view what is technologically complicated and that which generates most economic growth, by extension, is more progressive and thus most beneficial for society. In order to provide a counterweight to this mindset, environmentalists emphasise the importance of responsible resource management; something they argue is incompatible with ideals of profit maximisation and urbanisation (1996:14).

3.3 - Gentrification & “Clubsterben”

Rental gentrification has been a highly controversial topic in Berlin for some time.. In the late 1990s, the consensus among academics, professionals and urban movements started to become undermined by the shift towards privately funded renovations, reducing the budgets for public projects. This period saw the emergence of forceful evictions of original tenants, sparking political debates on prevention. At the same time, numerous buildings in the regeneration zones of East Berlin continued to be in a state of disrepair, prompting intense debates over the type of urban transformation occurring; especially in now residentially attractive areas such as Prenzlauer Berg (Bernt & Holm 2010).

The threat towards the club-cultural character of Berlin by gentrification has sparked much debate and publicity in the last decade. The supposed threats are many, but the main ones usually brought up are increased rents & costs and noise complaints (Pfaffinger & Poschmann 2012). Already, some 100 venues have faced their end during this trend, a phenomenon which by the media has been dubbed “Clubsterben”; or in “Club Death” in English (Garcia 2017:471, Woolsey 2023). The Berlin scene had in large part been started by members of various subcultures who capitalised on the sparse population and abundant empty spaces that defined the Berlin landscape in the 90’s. Large parts of the city stood mostly empty and was thus ripe stumping ground for underground culture and clubs. As time has passed, these spaces have been bought up by real estate investors, and underutilised land and venues have been seized for the sake of development (Garcia 2027:472). Venue owners and other stakeholders have expressed much frustration and concern about the future prospects of the club scene of the city. As phrased by the organisers of the *Cocktail D’Amore* party at Griebmühle: “It’s time for regulators, politicians and local authorities to pay the industry its due respect. Recognition, support, protection, and real help are now priorities – we must save club culture.” (Dawson 2020).

To make matters worse for the clubs, the Covid-19 pandemic that hit Europe in 2020 posed an unprecedented challenge for the scene, as restrictions meant that many venues had to struggle with closures and financial uncertainty (Dümcke 2021:20). The pandemic came at an already poor time for the scene, and it put many venues in much more precarious situations than they had been in before; despite some financial support from the state.

There have been two cultural recognitions given to the Berlin club scene that many hoped would help alleviate this trend. The first was a 2021 motion in the German parliament which granted clubs equal cultural recognition to things such as opera houses and theatres (Deutscher Bundestag 2021). Before this decision, clubs had been of the same classification as for instance brothels and casinos (Akingbehin 2021). The only notable exception to this being Berghain, which achieved its cultural status after a legal battle with the Berlin Government (Garcia 2017:471). The second recognition was the decision which granted “Berlin Techno” the official status of a UNESCO World Heritage in 2024 (Deutsche UNESCO - Kommission 2024). This acknowledgement highlights not just the music, but also the club scene’s role in shaping global music and nightlife trends and culture. This movement towards formal recognition aimed to safeguard the cultural landscapes that clubs contribute to while also attempting to ensure their ability to withstand the pressures of an increasingly gentrified city.

5 - Analysis

5.1 - Interviews

5.1.1 - Protest Organiser ([Appendix 1](#))

This person was involved in an organising role in several of the anti-A100 protests; including one that is taking place later this year. Starting out in a cultural collective, she also worked with the Berlin Club Commission before moving on to working for the German left party *Die Linke* in 2017; where club culture has been one of her main focal points.

Coming from both the perspective of an activist and a politician, she puts significant focus on how these two spheres are able to intersect and influence each other. She emphasises the importance of grassroots activism by stating that “from my experience, politics always need some pressure from the streets [...]”. She also made sure to make it clear that this is a broad issue that concerns multiple groups and levels of society. Cultural preservation is highlighted, but so is the livability of the area; which the respondent claims has many families living in it. She recollects how some of the residents she had talked to testify of being poorly informed of the actual effects and implications of the autobahn construction. The mutual interests of local community, cultural/club scene and environment activists is portrayed as central to the movement, and internal divisions and conflicts are apparently not much of an issue. On the topic of cultural preservation, she shares that she has little faith that the recent UNESCO-status of the scene will have any tangible effect on the ongoing crisis; saying that the culture is a living phenomenon that cannot simply be put in a museum.

There was some discussion on the power dynamics at play in the debate over the A100, with conflicting interests between political parties, urban planners, and community activists. The interviewee’s critique of the highway project as detrimental to the social fabric of Berlin underscores the power struggle between neoliberal development agendas and grassroots movements advocating for community empowerment and social justice. The respondent specifically describes the first demonstration rave that she helped organise as a demonstration against the right wing. When asked about whether she views the A100 conflict to be a left-right issue politically, she states that party-politically it most definitely is, with the left and green party in Berlin being against and the conservative (CDU) and liberal (FDP) parties being for. The deciding factor according to her will be the Social Democrats (SPD), which have yet remained undecided.

We also discussed communication strategies, where she explained that much of their activities in regards to the demonstrations happen online and are primarily aimed at a younger audience. The protests are organised in such a fashion that they are fun and entertaining dance music events. “We give them lifting music, and then we politicise them a little bit - that’s the concept”, she said. This rings similar to some of the statements that have been made before regarding the inherent political nature of underground party culture (as referenced in [4-5 - Gentrification & “Clubsterben”](#)), and seems to tie into the overall notion of the political potential as well as cultural value of club culture. These strategies of protests, political lobbying and online advocacy reflect a multi-faceted approach to engaging with both the public and decision-makers, underscoring the importance of collective action in challenging hegemonic power structures.

Overall, the interview shows an emphasis on broader socio-political dynamics, where individuals are able to negotiate power relations and advocate for their interests within larger social movements and urban contexts.

5.1.2 - Stage Manager ([Appendix 2](#))

At the time of last year's protests, this person was working for one of the affected clubs in an administrative capacity. Due to her experience in event organising and stage management, she ended up organising a DJ stage that the club in question was going to contribute with for the protest.

More critical than the first interviewee, this person frequently circles back to the importance of representational agency.. She expresses a desire to have done more, but being unable to do so due to the limitations in organisational capacity of the venue she was representing. This could be seen as an illustration of a critical aspect of grassroots movements: the struggle for adequate representation and effective agency towards larger structural challenges.

When asked about what she finds most concerning about the highway, the first thing she mentioned is its impact on the environment, rather than the impact on “her” field (club culture). She exemplifies these issues by bringing up the highway’s proximity to residential areas, including a kindergarten. Seemingly, it is a framing technique which serves to broaden the appeal of the protest by linking it to a wide selection of issues; thus appealing to a broader demographic. She does emphasise the club-cultural side of the argument later in the conversation; highlighting the need for the preservation of “safe spaces” for escapism and human connections. This combined with her mention of the UNESCO recognition seems to be an appeal to ideals of cultural preservation.

She also expresses much critique towards the Club Commission. Her language becomes combative and emotionally charged; using phrases like “[they] should do more”, and “they don’t do shit”. With many years in the industry, she considers the job security for club workers very substandard; a symptom of the clubsterben trend of clubs facing uncertainty about their futures and financial capabilities. According to her, since clubs are struggling to such an extent to just stay afloat,

organisations like the Club Commission should step up and provide support where it's needed to a larger extent than they currently do.

While the Protest Organiser described the local residents of the area as supportive of the anti-A100 cause, the Stage Manager highlighted supposed articles featuring interviews with local residents, in which they were complaining about the protests; more specifically the noise and the littering. This may reflect a critical challenge in grassroots activism; that of controlling the narrative and combative unfavourable media portrayals that may undermine public support.

5.2 - Texts

5.2.1 - "Protest-Rave A100 stoppen" (A100 stoppen! 2019)

This text is an announcement stating that there will be a protest event against the A100, in which a collection of arguments against the construction are brought up. The first one is that it would be counterproductive to construct a highway for the sake of sustainability. "Berlin aims to be sustainable, low-emission and innovative in its transportation policy? Then please, let's not continue building the highway!" (A100stoppen.de 2019). It also claims that the highway would generate more car traffic, divide neighbourhoods and jeopardise the operation of clubs.

The press release also brings up the current state of the Elsenbrücke; the bridge over the river Spree currently connecting Alt-Treptow and Friedrichshein. It is deemed unsafe and highly optimised for car traffic with no safe options for pedestrians along the northern banks of the river. The press demands a restructuring of the bridge into a "Spree Balcony" suitable for pedestrians and cyclists.

Although short, this text manages to convey several discursive messages. The authors position themselves ideologically through the use of terms like "emissionsarm (low-emission) and "verkehrspolitisch nachhaltig" (sustainable transportation policy). These terms reflect a claim to commitment towards eco-friendly and socially responsible urban planning. It embodies ideologies of environmental justice, community empowerment and participatory democracy. By advocating for a "menschen- und umweltgerechten Wiederaufbau der Elsenbrücke" (people- and environmentally-friendly reconstruction of the Elsenbrücke), the authors assert the right of communities to shape their urban environments in accordance with principles of sustainability and social equity. The framing of the protest as a celebration of community solidarity and cultural diversity reinforces the ideological stance of the activists as champions of a more inclusive and sustainable city. Although not explicitly, the groups who have co-authored the press release are establishing a framing of power relations. The text implies a power struggle between grassroots activists and the government and other authorities pushing for the continuation of the highway project, and also that

there is an imbalance of power between the activists and the supporters of the construction.

The text employs imperative language and rhetorical questions to convey a sense of urgency and mobilise support for the cause. The bolded introduction seems to command attention and prompt action from its audience. There is also a point in bringing up the use of “catchphrases” in the text. “No Highway through Paradise” is an example of the emotive, more persuasive side of the text. It evokes a sense of activism, urgency and resistance against threats to an idealised urban environment. Additionally, the use of vivid imagery, such as "Eine Brücke, die genügend einladenden Raum für Fußgänger, Radfahrer und Sonnenuntergangsanebeter bietet" (A bridge that provides sufficient inviting space for pedestrians, cyclists, and sunset lovers), appeals to the reader's senses and emotions, creating a compelling narrative. The use of “no highway through paradise” is also a case of nominalisation. It appears that by highlighting the threats posed to cultural spaces and community cohesion, the authors are trying to mobilise support from local residents, environmentalists and cultural advocates alike. This combined with the inclusion of links to relevant websites and the mentioning of speakers from related organisations demonstrate a desire to frame the resistance to the A100 as collaborative and harmonious; displaying a unified front behind the cause.

5.2.2 - “A100 Wegbassen” (Club Commission 2023)

Like the previous text, this statement from the Club Commission invites protestors to partake in protest against the A100 construction. It also brings up counter-arguments such as criticism of a car-centred urban environment, promotion of green spaces and housing and the denouncement of the destruction of sub- and club-cultural venues and institutions. The A100 extension is deemed as bringing increased noise and emissions as well as constituting the end for more than 20 clubs, cultural venues and neighbourhood communities (Clubcommission 2023).

Like the A100 Stoppen press release, this statement from the Club Commission portrays a power dynamic where it critiques the power held by governmental actions such as the Federal Ministry of Transport and the Autobahn GmbH for pursuing the completion of the A100 despite public opposition. The resistance is portrayed as a unified front against the big, powerful, careless state. By positioning the activists as defenders of cultural diversity, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability, the text implicitly criticises the political and economic interests driving the A100 extension and advocates for alternative visions of urban development that prioritise people over cars.

By aligning with environmental and social justice ideologies, the text frames the construction project as destructive, highlighting its negative impact on these communities. This interdiscursivity strengthens the case for collective action to oppose the highway project and promote alternative visions of urban

development. It also utilises nominalisations in a similar fashion to the previous texts; for instance “wreck all highways” as a way of expressing the process of working against highways as well as “environmental protection” and “car pollution” as representative of actions or concepts related to protecting the environment.. The framing of the protest as a "protest rave" reinforces the ideological stance of the activists as advocates for creative forms of resistance and collective expression. Metaphors such as "Wreck all highways" and "autobahnfreien Zone" (motorway-free zone) evokes a sense of resistance and rebellion against the dominance of automobiles and infrastructure projects.

5.2.3 - Press Conference Invitation (Fridays for Future Berlin 2023)

In this text, environmental activist movement Fridays for Future invite the to a joint press conference for the aforementioned “A100 Wegbassen” alliance. This civil society alliance “of neighbourhood residents, climate activists, and club-goers” are said to be declaring Markgrafendamm a car-free zone and to be the spot for a “protest rave” in an act of demonstration against the A100 extension after the press conference. The text highlights the advancement of construction plans pushed by the Federal Ministry of Transport, and denounces these due to their claimed impact on clubs & cultural venues, spaces, social projects and neighbourhood communities. It also aligns itself with “leftist struggles”. Criticism towards a supposed carecentric Berlin government is brought up, as well as the prioritisation of the automobile industry and car drivers over the needs and concerns of residents and “established neighbourhood structures”.

Although arguably less combative than the previous texts, the FfF text still utilises a language characterised by empowerment. The choice of words are assertive, but inclusive. “Warmly invite” and “join us” encourage community participation and emphasises solidarity. It frames the A100 extension as a conflict between governmental plans and community needs; emphasising this division by using words like “threat”, “destruction”, and “misguided” to describe the impact of the construction.

This community vs government discourse constructs a narrative of resistance, depicting the community and activist groups as defenders of local culture and environment against the perceived detrimental actions of the government. It is also noticeable how the text seeks to highlight the movement’s alignment with broader environmental and social justice movements; not least reflected in the list of speakers planned for the event. The self-reported ambition to “connect leftist struggles with those of the impacted” is also a clear ideological stance.

Announcing a press conference and a large-scale protest with such detailed logistical information seems to serve as a way to increase visibility and encourage a broad participation. By mentioning various community and environmental groups , it highlights a coalition-building strategy; enhancing their credibility and appeal across diverse social groups.

5.2.4 - Panel Discussion (Berliner Morgenpost 2022)

Bettina Janouch, a member of the German Green Party, is the traffic senator for Berlin. The text features excerpts of a panel discussion where Jarasch announces plans to amend the city's land use plan to obstruct the construction of the 17th extension; the intention being to designate essential citywide needs such as schools and housing on the disputed properties. This move is framed as a strategy to convince the federal government to reconsider its plans for the highway's extension pushed forward by the Federal Ministry of Transport, led by the market liberal Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP).

The article outlines opposition from various local political figures and parties against the extension. The FDP representative Ralf Brodel criticises Jarasch's plans as ineffective "sleight of hand tricks" and insists on the importance of the A100 extension for Eastern Berlin. He argues that the senate should support the federal planning instead of wasting resources on obstruction, highlighting a clear conflict between federal infrastructure ambitions and local governmental priorities focused on urban and social development needs.

In the few quotes given by Jarasch, there seems to be a strategic use of language. "We want to change" and "the federal government cannot ignore this" reflects a proactive and assertive approach, indicating an intention to challenge federal decisions within legal and bureaucratic frameworks. In countering these assertions, Brodel uses phrases like "sleight of hand tricks" and "won't help", which comes across as dismissive of Jarasch's efforts, framing them as ineffective and trivial. The clash illustrates differing visions for the city's future, the role of transportation in urban planning, and policy prioritisation between the two camps.

Like the other textual sources, Jarasch legitimises her stance by directly and subtextually aligning it with broader social needs, in her case, education, housing and environmentalism: reflecting her green and socially oriented political identity. It suggests an intention of prioritising morality and practicality over federal plans. The framing is however conveyed slightly differently than the other texts. Here, emphasis is put on the conflict between the local (Berlin Senate) and the federal (German Federal Ministry of Transport) level. Still, local efforts are portrayed as responsive to community needs, while federal actions are viewed as nonconsensual imposition of unwanted infrastructure.

6 - Discussion

Throughout the interviews and protest letters, there appears to be a clear, common theme of the preservation of cultural heritage and protection of community spaces. By framing their activism within the discourse of cultural preservation, activist groups are mobilising symbolic resources to assert the value of cultural diversity and social cohesion in the face of gentrification and displacement. According to Castells theory on urban social movements, the A100 conflict can be seen as a case of grassroots initiatives mobilising in an attempt to shape the meaning and structure of the city; not just as physical space, but also in terms of values and prioritisation.

While having occasional examples of political representation through individual members of politics and parliament, the movement is still anchored in civil society and underground culture. While this means lower institutional power, it does free the movement from the constraints imposed by what Castells referred to as “the rules of the game” (Castells 1983:294). The choice of protest raves as a form of demonstration is an example of the movement utilising the methods at disposal to be seen, heard and attract attendants. It could also be connected to the statement by the interview with the protest organiser regarding Berlin techno/club culture as a living phenomenon that wouldn’t survive in a museum.

A protest rave seems to not only be a convenient way of attracting larger numbers of people to your cause, but it is also a powerful tool for displaying the living, participatory nature of the scene. Although one could argue that it could be seen as the movement bringing a less “serious” character to the resistance through this focus on recreation, it appears to come across slightly differently in a city like Berlin, given its historical heritage surrounding these forms of cultural expressions. Also, they also have a core community of regulars and other fans of the venue to promote the protest to; providing a source of attendees already partial to the cause of the movement in their desire to keep their venue. Additionally, clubs are able to deliver much of the materials necessary for such an event; such as speakers, DJ equipment and decorations. This allows them to provide target groups and supplies otherwise outside the economic reach of other activists and grassroots organisations.

Della porta & Diani write extensively about protests, pointing out the benefits of formulating methods of protests that are not only externally beneficial, but internally so as well. By adapting the shape and form of the protest, activist groups are able to cultivate community, collective identity and group spirit (2020:Chapter 7.3). This would be another advantage with the deployment of protest raves.

Shofield's description of heritage communities rings highly familiar when looking at these protests, with a community aiming to preserve something for the present and future by keeping the culture alive and active. If a culture is only observable in the past, it is not *being* a culture, but simply *was* one. It can also be seen as a way to appeal to ideas of value as formulated by Throsby. The Stage Manager's mention of clubs as safe spaces for social experiences refers almost directly to the social dimension of value, and bringing this setting to the streets in the light of day could be viewed as a way of displaying what may be lost.

Castells' framework provides a valuable lens through which to analyse the mobilisation strategies and discursive elements employed in this conflict. The mobilisation of these cultural communities reflect broader struggles for influence and control over urban space, highlighting the contested nature of urban politics in present-day Berlin. Media and communication technologies also play an important role in the shaping of discourse and mobilisation efforts of these activist groups. Digital platforms evidently lend themselves well to these movements, as they provide effective means for a decentralised form of resistance; amplifying the voices of marginalised communities and challenging mainstream narratives of urban planning and development. The use of social media and online advocacy campaigns reflects the adaptability and resilience of grassroots activism in the information age, enabling broader participation and engagement in urban politics.

The emotive language used in the protest letters suggests a common strategy among the various activist groups to evoke a strong emotional response and sense of urgency among the public. The discourse frames the resistance within cultural and environmental contexts, using metaphors and references that highlight the impact of the A100 on community spaces and the environment. This suggests a strategic emphasis on broader socio-environmental implications rather than just localised issues. Using "paradise" as a metaphor for the area at risk and referring to the Elsebrücke as a "balcony on the Spree for everyone" are both examples of using metaphors to frame the conflict a certain way. It comes across as an attempt to reframe the parameters of the A100 project, pointing to what is at stake to be lost by the project. It symbolises the transformation of space from merely functional to culturally and communally significant, framing the discourse within a larger narrative of quality of life and urban livability.

The modality present in the rhetoric of the resistance to the A100 shows a clear construction of power dynamics and ideological struggles. They are effectively able to position themselves as grounded in the people against the state bureaucrats and their supposed limited insight into the effects of their own policies, and are able to frame the conflict as a "left vs right" as well as a "state vs federal" issue.

Currently, the conflict can be seen through Castells theory on the four types of urban change (Castells 1983:304). The activists frame the issue as being an example of the *first* category; i.e the dominant class using institutional power to restructure society according to its interests and values. To provide an alternative, the activists seem to provide an example of the *fourth* category; that of a social

collective mobilisation effort which opposes the urban meaning, principles, objectives and/or values dictated by the dominant institutions.

Although hindered by the substandard response rate, this investigation has provided insight into the discourse surrounding grassroots activism in Berlin. Its parameters could be expanded upon in future research, for instance by expanding the geographical scope beyond Berlin; comparing different urban development conflicts in other global cities. There is also the possibility of deploying a more historical perspective by for instance investigating the historical trends and effects of urban planning decisions, gentrification and their grassroots resisters. An example would be to monitor changes pre- and post-A100 construction to assess its real impacts, should the extension ever be realised. Also, as both interviews conducted for this project were with club-cultural individuals, the results do bear a certain level of bias. Future research on the topic would benefit from conducting more interviews with representatives from the other spheres of the movement, such as environmental.

7 - Conclusions

The discourse found among the resistance against the A100 Autobahn project is strongly characterised by grassroots efforts attempting to influence the urban structure and cultural values of Berlin. Beyond simply protesting a physical infrastructure project, they deploy a strong thematic focus on preserving cultural heritage and protecting community spaces. They do this by mobilising a diverse set of values, drawing from environmental, cultural social and symbolic arguments to form a diverse, unified front with a common goal of hindering the highway construction. In both texts and interviews, the people involved in the activism employ emotive language and metaphors; seemingly to provoke a strong public response. Terms like “paradise” and visual metaphors like “balcony on the Spree” are used to highlight what is to be lost. The conflict is portrayed not just as a local issue, but as embodying broader ideological conflicts; such as “left vs right” and “local vs federal”.

The deployment of “protest raves” appears to be one of the more unique aspects of the A100 resistance. It is beneficial not only for its ability to attract a larger number of attendees, but it is also an effective and symbolic way to culturally contextualise within the unique historical and social fabric of the city; integrating ideals of cultural value and heritage. One interviewee however

testified that the noise and littering that came with a previous protest rave antagonised some local residents, hinting at the difficulties faced by grassroots movements in maintaining public opinion.

Although seeing its inception far before the birth of social media, digital platforms and social media are evidently crucial in shaping the discourse and mobilising support for these activist groups. They present an unprecedented opportunity for a decentralised form of resistance, amplification of marginalised voices and challenging mainstream narratives of infrastructure, culture and the environment.

The anti-A100 movement and its strategic mobilisation of cultural communities in Berlin can be understood through Manuel Castells' theories on urban social movements. The conflict exemplifies how grassroots movements are able to oppose dominant institutional powers and propose alternative vision for the city which prioritises community values and sustainable urban development. The way the activists frame the conflict aligns with Castells first type of urban change; that of the dominant class using its power to to shape society to their benefit. Conversely, activists seem to attempt to embody Castell's fourth category, mobilising collectively to challenge and redefine urban norms imposed by ruling powers.

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9 - List of Interviews

Protest Organiser 2024. *Interview with Protest Organiser* [interview] (04 Apr. 2024).

Stage Manager 2024. *Interview with Stage Manager* [interview] (28 Apr. 2024).

10 - Appendices

10.1 - Appendix 1

[Interviewer]: I would like to ask you first, your involvement in this, how did you get involved? First of all, what is your role within, like, the sort of club cultural sphere of this town? Like, I assume that you came into these protests from a particular perspective? And like, which one was that?

[Interviewee]: Yeah, it's even two perspectives because I started to do this demonstration I do since 2017. With my collective while I was working at Clubcommission Berlin, but at the same time, the same year 2017, I joined the Left Party Die Linke. Right. So this is how the rest of the collective found me because someone in the party told them, hey, we have one new member in the Club commission, maybe she could help you with getting club commission into the demos demonstration. So we met and the rest is history to that day. We are close friends.

[Interviewer]: What Collective is it?

[Interviewee]: It's called Kollektiv Kirsch, that means collective cherry, because we like cherry liqueur. And just because it's red.

[Interviewer]: I like it. Alright, so. So you became involved, like, specifically with the A100? Or are you involved in more of a larger scale? I assume if you've been with the club commission that doesn't stop at that.

[Interviewee]: In 2017 bidding for the building of the A100 wasn't a topic back then. But we did this demonstration, "TANZ DEMO - Wem gehört die Stadt?" dance demonstration to Whom belongs to city. We did this since 2017. And last year, our core topic was demonstrating against the a100. So we have coretopic every year. For example, this year, we are demonstrating why against the right wing people at an upcoming Nazir in Berlin

[Interviewer]: Do you feel like the A100 has become a left-right issue?

[Interviewee]: Well in politics it is because I also worked in the German Bundestag in Germany parliament before. And this is a place where decisions

are made about autobahns And there is absolutely a topic between left and right because the left and the Green Party are absolutely against it. And the liberals and the conservatives are absolutely Pro. And now the pointer says the SPD are socialists. I'm not sure if you can say that to the German SPD. It's now on them to make a decision. And probably the rest will follow along. But since the DBJ of the German government meant is now very bad at the moment, nobody thinks that this Autobahn will be built further in the next year is next year, because it's very expensive.

[Interviewer]: So what do you think? What do you think will happen instead? Like they should? Do you reckon you should be rerouted? Or should they just cancel things to where they are? It's like I know, you don't necessarily have to give a perfect answer to what is like, more like what the general talk is in the crowd? What do people present the options, or is it more "We just simply don't want it to be done this way. figure something else out"

[Interviewee]: In the left scene, people don't want a highway there at all, because it's a very dense district anyway. Friedrichshain and we have more than enough cars in the city, nobody really thinks that new highways lead cars out of the city.

[Interviewer]: Yeah, because that was one of the main arguments that there was going to lead traffic away from the service centre, right.

[Interviewee]: Yeah, but other experts say that it will lead to even more traffic into the city. And also the point is that it will be built for years and years; Berlin is famous for everything that is built takes way longer and gets stuck and gets way more expensive than it said before. And it's like why it will be built, Friedrichshain will be put on hold like that. all the traffic in Friedrichshain will have huge problems for us during the building.

[Interviewer]: So do you feel like this also this dimension of like when when it's not just with A100, but with like the gentrification and club scene and urban development in general, there's a lot of talk about preserving a cultural identity, because like, I've heard a lot of arguments saying that Berlin is like, the Berlin scene is very unique and it's worth, protecting from these things. Even, even if you were able to, for example, lead traffic away. There's always work like you always have to take into consideration protecting something that is unique about the city. Would you agree with that statement?

[Interviewee]: I would, even when UNESCO didn't lately, right. Berlin techno is now an UNESCO world heritage

[Interviewer] Do you think that matters?

[Interviewee]: No, actually I think for actual politics, it doesn't have to have a huge effect. It's more like a symbolic decision.

[Interviewer]: Yeah, I talked with one of your colleagues at the club commission, he said something similar about that 2021 decision of cultural status of clubs on the same level as opera houses and stuff, it's like it's nice, but yet, it doesn't actually mean anything in practice.

[Interviewee]: Exactly, That's why a club commission level was reinforcing that idea that came from the founder of left right, Dr. Matta, also the business of the opinion that it's, like, putting techno into a museum doesn't doesn't have with preserving technical future.

[Interviewer]: Yeah, yeah. It's a culture that is, that is living. But like, so in your activities? Like what are some of the strategies, strategies and actions and actions that you use as a part of this, like, obviously, the demonstrations and demonstration raves, what other forms of activism, do you partake in

[Interviewee]: Well in, in my party to Linke, the left party, there are different forms of activism against this, for example, online. And also, to take place, not only my demonstration that I organised with my collective but several demonstrations, every party always sets a call out to go there. And also, I was a part of the district government of Friedrichshain/Kreuzberg until last year. And obviously, the Like Left Party is in there and just try to stop further bidding of the A100. Because it's just very bad for the district, it might be nice for some people who live in outer district. And then if the A100 would be built, it would be easier to get from the northeast to the south east of Berlin faster. But it's really devastating for our district, not only uncontrolled levels, which is obvious, but also for the people who live here. The area where it should it's supposed to be built is quite a quiet area at the moment, with a lot of families living there with children. And with a highway running through it, that all will be gone. Yeah. And that lot of living quality will be quite with it. Yeah,

[Interviewer]: I've noticed that as well, that it seems like there's a lot of different interests, that kind of kind of crossfade over this issue. Like I said, a lot of the demonstrations have had climate activists tied to them as well. So how efficient Do you feel like your efforts have been like, do you feel like, Do you feel like it has worked or people listening? You said that it might not be built because of costs, for instance, butlike, Have you been able to gather enough support for it's like, are you feeling optimistic? Maybe my question can be like, does it feel like you've accomplished something?

[Interviewee]: My experience, politics always need some pressure from the streets as an argument to why they are trying to enforce this or that right. And some we've tried to build some pressure from the streets against these plans which are, by the way, also very old, they are from 1957 or 58, the original plans to build this highway ring. And I think it needs this pressure from the

streets. And I think we could manage to make a lot of people aware of the plans. Because in my experience when I started talking about this topic in public, also in other demonstrations, I made a lot of people afterwards who said, "I'm living right there, but I had no idea that it's going to be that huge and that problematic and that's right next to my house. Oh my god, thank you for telling us". So actually, a lot of people were not too much into politics don't know if you don't tell them

[Interviewer]: So you feel like they haven't been informed properly. No,

[Interviewee]: Not at all. If they don't read the newspaper?

[Interviewer]: Yeah. But so again, like this sort of converging of interests? How, like, how would you say that the sort of club cultural side of things contributes to the overall discussions? Because like obviously, culture and cultural preservation is a big part of it. So do you feel like there's anything else that is important when it specifically comes to the like nightlife and the club culture scene in terms of this? Like? There are a lot of like, like venues, shutting down, venues closing, etc. Like, are there any other issues that in terms of this that you feel aren't being raised? Or?

[Interviewee]: No, I think the issues are raised. But many, many, many people, even inside of club culture, don't know, maybe club Commission has told you, is that those five main clubs that are in danger of if the highway is further built, they would be actually safe if it's not for the build, because they are either on the district's ground or underground that belongs to the city on ground that belongs to the to the trains. I think. So there's all areas that can be protected and where the clubs wouldn't be in danger, they would be safe there. Like because the CDU, the Conservative Party likes, likes to say, Oh, well, gentrification happens anyway, clubs will be drawn from there anyway, because it's getting more expensive, and someone will build a very expensive living tower there something.

[Interviewer]: And I've heard that argument before as well as a good point because they're gonna move anyways, because it's too expensive.

[Interviewee]: Exactly, you you could ask that Commissioner, actually those five clubs and speaking off ://AboutBlank, Renate Zunkunft am Ostkreuz, Club OST even, they would be safe, because they are on ground off the city and there is enough Progressive might in the city to protect them

[Interviewer]: So which then means that the A100 from your perspective is the main threat to the venues

[Interviewee]: Definitely! ://AboutBlank already is there since 12 years, and we would run, run forever. It's wiped all up and one of the oldest, most popular venues in Berlin.

[Interviewer] : Have you encountered any obstacles or challenges in mobilising support?

[Interviewee]: No, not really, of course, we've built a closer network to the club threatened by the a100. But we are already a good network. We were already known by them. We have been doing this since 2017. It was my problem, like finding a date for a meeting to network or to speak about the demonstration. Because everyone's so busy in clubs. Every weekend is for party. Like it's really hard to catch someone. You're experiencing that now with ://AboutBlank too, right?

[Interviewer]: Yea, and I've been involved in Renate a bit, and I've done some things at Kitty As well. so I know how busy these people are. Because no, it's Berlin. There's always something going on. It's always something that's being organised. So it's mainly a schedule thing. And I don't know, you wouldn't say there are any conflicting interests or other like things.

[Interviewee]: No, not at all. We are even thinking about doing the demonstration that then happened in September against a100 done by the clubs and our demonstration TANZ DEMO - Wem gehört die Stadt together, we were thinking about putting it together somehow, because our goals were absolutely the same. It was just a question of dates and time, which didn't happen. So we made two demonstrations.

[Interviewer]: So if I understand you, at the moment, mainly involved from the political side with the linke. Right? You're no longer with the club commission. Are you still with the club commission?

[Interviewee]: Well, I still have a good network, but I'm still with die Linke, officially yes.

[Interviewer]: So, like, how is the sort of goals and messages of this movement, for lack of better words, like how are they communicated to the public? Like what avenues of communication do you use?

[Interviewee]: As die Linke?

[Interviewer]: Yeah, as die Linke or if you have insight in how things are done with the clubcommission as well.

[Interviewee]: Well, I worked with the Club commission like six, seven years ago, I really can't speak for both;I can tell you how we do it in our collective. We use a lot of social media, it's important to know the algorithms there because they change all the time. And we try to produce content that fits the algorithm as optimally as possible. And of course, we also put advertisements on this content. It's an advertisement for the demonstration, but also an advertisement to rise against the further building of A100. To pay for the

advertisement, we pay for the advertisement, you have to at least meet our concert with Facebook, Facebook, and Instagram, because otherwise you have no visibility. But as we have heard on our demonstration, we have a very young audience, we also had more and more to Tiktok, where we don't pay for advertisements. But even more, I have to do the right content to get along with the algorithms there. But so far, it works very well. Last year, we had like 9000 people on the street. But during the pandemic, if you had even 12,000. Last year, we had very bad weather. And I think this year, because we're doing it on the 8th of June, it's going to be warmer. So I think we've got to have between 10,000 to 15,000 people on the street.

[Interviewer]: And it's also like, protest rave. Yeah. Yeah,

[Interviewee]: Yeah, we've seven tracks, electronic music, but in between their speeches of activists and politicians. And the goal audience is very young, we get them lifting music, and then we politicise them a little bit. That's the concept.

[Interviewer]: We're kind of wrapping up. So I would like to just, at the end, just look a bit into the future, like you're already discussed this upcoming demonstration, which I assume has a lot of the focal focal point organisational wise, like, apart from that, how do you see the future of the resistance to the 100? Like? How do you envision the role of clubs and nightlife culture in shaping this future? Just keep going the way you have or?

[Interviewee]: I expect us to be very loud and clear about this. Because there would be so many [clubs] at once, that would be gone. And that just can't be in the year of 2024, not for cars, you know, I really can't accept it, and I expect the clubs and club culture to be very loud and very clear about that, that this can't be our Berlin, and they have to be as loud so that the politicians in the German parliament who have to decide this will hear them especially the ones of SPD party, because that is the party who is undecided yet and who in the end will make the decision.

[Interviewer]: Right so they're the ones that one ought to focus on in a way? I see. Anything else you would like to add to anything you feel like it should be emphasised?

[Interviewee]: Come to my demonstration? On the eighth of June if you're here in berlin!

10.2 - Appendix 2

[Interviewer]: So like I said before I'm doing this to kind of investigate the, the like sort of activism against the A100. Because you were involved in some capacity in organising against the A100, right?.

[Interviewee]: Yea! So, like last year, in autumn, we organised a super big demonstration [...]. I came in last because I actually didn't know about this demonstration because I did not have all the information. I was part of the side of Club OST, and everyone was involved with basically which clubs and which collectives [would] be affected by the A100, so there was also Zukunft am Ostern, ://AboutBlank was involved. Renate and Else were involved, and some smaller collectives.

[Interviewer]: So kind of like, you were working there and then involved in that work became then also to, like, organise against this, like, was it voluntary? Or was it something that everybody had to do?

[Interviewee]: I mean, it was organised by the club commission first and then it was up to the club if you want to join and Club OST was obviously the least organised of them all, .So we came in last because there was just no one taking care of this. So I was one of the few people that were working there [intelligible]. Yeah, but I wish we could have done more than we would have been working on when we came on in like the last two weeks for the demonstration so we had to organise the stage and organise some speakers. And I think we had the coolest stage, but that's just my opinion.

[Interviewer]: But like, to you personally, like what aspects of the A100 are, like, the most concerning?

[Interviewee]: I think it's most concerning when you think about the co2 emissions that are going that are going to be exactly in the midst of Friedrichsheim, whereas a bunch of there's a bunch of apartments and slides also really [unintelligible] kindergarten and obviously also when you think about right now, Berlin, just last year, Clubs got like UNESCO world heritage, the protecting countries in UNESCO heritage when you consider this on the strip of land with A100 is going to be built with so many clubs that are going to be I think even in the last in the segment it's different area and I think in the last area even OXI it's going to be the central area and and right now this there's no incentive, I mean from this coming from the city of Berlin to culturally help us or to make the process easier to to get get LTE. [unintelligible]. So far, theres gonna be more information coming up if there's going to be more talks or if there's gonna be a programme you know, this is very concerning to me because right now the whole club scene is very gentrified already and it's so hard to predict economically for clubs that aren't for example Berghain, because, because they're not affected by the a100.

[Interviewer]: yes, it was breaking up a little bit there but I think I got it. But so like, I feel like I know kind of the answer but like So in your opinion, like what value does clubs and nightlife bring to Berlin. Like, why is it worth protecting?

[Interviewee]: Excuse me, I didn't hear the last bit.

[Interviewer]: That's fine. Like, what value do clubs and nightlife bring to Berlin? Like, what, what why to you? Isn't something worth protecting?

[Interviewee]: Well, first and foremost, it's a, it's a safe space for a lot of people, things that you cannot experience in a normal life. So we all go to clubs and get connected. And then we're safe there, obviously. But I also think, from a musical aspect, like, it's super important that we have different types of music, and different types of clubs. And also that smaller DJs and smaller artists that cannot play in Berghain obviously, get the chance to get a platform in these small clubs and get an audience. And we also get to listen to new artists and new music.

[Interviewer]: Yeah, to keep keep keeping, keep the culture living, basically? and developing?

[Pause]

[Interviewer]: So could you describe any of the strategies or actions that you've been involved in? To oppose the 100? You mentioned protests that you helped organise. How did that work? What were you? What did you do?

[Interviewee]: I mean, the only thing we did is like stage organising. And then the club commission. And I can't remember what political party was involved. But it was like a lot of political rhetoric involved in there as well. It was Geradedenken!

[Interviewer]: Who did you say organise? there was a lot of background noise

[Interviewee]: they organised a lot of press that came and documented the whole demonstration. And also they were doing some interviews that a lot of people that were involved in. So there was a lot of press at the demonstration, but also, the demonstration was expected to be the only thing we did collectively as clubs. And then it's going to happen, probably again, I mean, I'm not involved in that anymore, but I'm still in this picture. So it's looking like it's gonna happen again. But there's not a lot you can do from a club perspective. I think the club commission should be doing way more. I mean, I'm not there, I don't see what they're doing. But from my point of view, they don't do a lot. I don't know what to call it the "club commission". Because they don't do shit. Sorry. Oh, my language?

[Interviewer]: No, no. Why? So what would you like them to do?

[Interviewee]: I would like them to get way more involved. And there's so many issues that club workers are facing, and especially now that the a100 is there.

And because of the economic position of clubs, there's a lot of people being let go by the fear of the A100

[Interviewer]: It's almost kind of like a union capacity?

[Interviewee]: Yeah. And the Club Commission is very unapproachable. In my opinion, they don't actually do a lot. At the club, and the club may not be updated. What are you actively doing? What are you changing? Why are we part of the customer's house? It's benefiting nicely, you know, it's very confusing. There's no clear system of structure that you can orient yourself orientate yourself from and yeah, I wish to be more open and more vocal about stuff. Because this is one of the greatest things happen in like, in like a decade of Berlin clubs, you know what I mean? So I wish they would do more. Especially talk more to the press and keep the ball rolling.

[Interviewer]: So okay. So, I've been studying this highway now for quite some time. And the resistance seems to be coming from a lot of different directions like there's climate activists, and there's politicians as grassroots activists, etc. As someone who's comes more from like, the club cultural side of things, How do you feel like the club scene kind of contributes to the struggle, like rhetorically or otherwise?

[Interviewee]: Let me think...

[Interviewer]: So for instance, like protests at the fact that there are protests raves that have a very musical and party profile, for instance, is something that I think is very much affiliated with clubs. Like that's something that the clubs seem to bring. Would you agree with?

[Interviewee]: Yeah, I agree with this. But also after the demonstration, there were some articles, where neighbours complained about a demonstration that was so loud and it was so annoying, and about trash was laying around and saying something about that like that they are glad when these clubs are out of business, Alt Stralau and Renate etc

[Interviewer]: Oh shit, ok...

[Interviewee]: So this was one of the main big articles that was featured. And this is just annoying for, you put all this effort in and then this is what the press is featuring, the clubs, you know...

[Interviewer]: So, I mean, this is already part of that, But have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in kind of mobilising support for the anti-A100 movements?

[Interviewee]: Yeah, because it's helped them because a lot of clubs are so insanely understaffed and underfunded to barely keep themselves afloat. And

then you should also organise yourself to get the A100 gone, organise this demonstration. So this is what I meant with the club commission should do more, Because the clubs themselves, it's really, really hard for them to all come together constantly with their own schedule with the insane pressure that they're under.

[Interviewer]: Right, yeah, I heard that from other people as well. It's like, it's just, they are very busy people that don't have a lot of time to, to organise things.

[Interviewee]: Yeah. I mean, you have to keep yourself afloat and constantly work on filling the club every week, or even every day of the week. How are you supposed to organise with administration, and also, you know, articles about this topic company too much. And that's where the club commission should come in.

[Interviewer]: Right! to sort of provide support where the clubs don't have the ability or the time or the funds.

[Interviewee]: Yeah, I mean, they should organise it, we can help, you know, the clubs can help, but the club commission should carry the heavy weight.

[Interviewer]: Did you have any insight into like, communication strategies when you were involved, like, how the movement communicates its goals and messages to the general public.

[Interviewee]: I mean, a lot of us communicated over telegram, some stuff, especially the politics was involved, I think we communicated a lot on telegram. And then obviously over social media, this was the main thing that all the clubs will also continue putting it out, I created a newsletter. Also I sent newsletters to all the promoters and all the DJs that were involved in Club OST, and I did just because I also wanted the promoters to share, but also not a lot of people did, and this is totally typical club culture. It's like it preaches values, but if it's just a tiny bit of effort you need to put in, most people will back out, you know. even when something is done collectively, if it cuts over your timeline you won't do it.

[interviewer]: : Wait, so the newsletter was, you, was it from you personally or did you do it on behalf of Club OST?

[Interviewee]: Yea, from the club! I'm just saying that agents promoters some promoters they did not share it they don't post it although i really did ask for it I mean, their futures tied together with the clubs still existing but some things we would like just doing of course was already

[Interviewer]: do you have any memorable experiences like are moments from your moments like anything that you particularly remember as bad or good?

[Interviewee]: From the demonstration?

[Interviewer]: Yeah, or just your involvement with Anti-A100 overall?

[Interviewee]: I mean, it was, everything was super last minute so I only had like one week to plan the whole stage. And it's really nice to see that, ehm, some people connected "Buttons" Especially "lecken" helped out a lot, they helped me plan the speeches, because they really felt heard and represented. And lots of people were really scared about moving...

[Interviewer]: Can you repeat that?

[Interviewee]: A lot of people were really scared about thought about needing their spaces. For the first time when it finally made it, we're like, wow, we can actually use these spaces. And obviously, I really have no extra time regarding the turnaround. So I was on top of Club OST looking down, and like, really, 100 000 people down there, you know, and it was way more than we anticipated. So, yeah, we're really happy with the outcome. But since then, it got really quiet. So I really hope this can change. We were talking more about.

[Interviewer]: Yeah.

[Interviewee]: But it is, I mean, it's gonna happen, you know, it's gonna happen, the A100 is going to come and we cannot really do anything about it. It's nice to be demonstrating. And for me to demonstrate was more about telling people how important club culture itself is and how important those steps are. But that the autobahn is gonna come, and we just have to work around the place, you know, find a solution, how did that concern continuously exist? Or how we can build new clubs? in my opinion

[Interviewer]: Yeah, that's kind of like, the thing that I viewed as the best case scenario will be a sort of, like, there'll be Review Südost situation where, yeah, it's a shame that they lost the venue, but they were able to actually find something really good and create something cool and new and fresh with it

[Interviewee]: exactly, but it takes so much money in support, you know, especially for smaller clubs. And I really want the club commission to come up with a programme or at least some workshops, how to get investors.

[Interviewer]: So I guess my question is, like, how do you view the, you've already answered this a little bit of like, the future of the resistance to this so to you, you feel like it's kind of inevitable, inevitable that this highway is going to be constructed in some capacity? If I understood that work?

[Interviewee]: Yeah, I think it's, it's gonna happen 100%. We cannot do anything about it. It was already built 30 years ago, they already started. And they're

not gonna, they're not gonna, they're not gonna stop this multi billion euros project just because of a few clubs. And by the way, this is also important information,

[Interviewer]: Yes.

[Interviewee]: When these clubs are being built, or be built, or rented, or whatever, it was clear right from the start that if the Autobahn is coming, these clubs will move. In the contract of club OST, it says very clearly, that in case of A100 being built, Club OST will be brought down, so yea. You know, people just forget about it was always like, above our heads, and we have a really long time to prepare for it, but nothing was prepared.

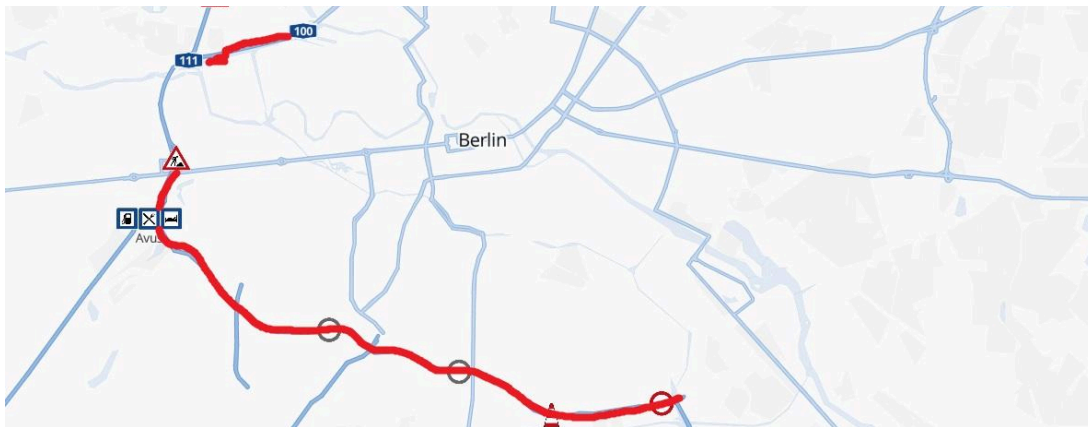
[Interviewer]: Okay, so then, yeah, my them, I only have one more question that, that is just is there anything that you would like to add or emphasise something that you think is particularly important?

[Interviewee]: Um, I think just what I said before about, really the commitment to do something, you know, it's a good topic, but just, if they cannot get involved, like financially, it was worth up to whatever, and just update people and keep them informed about the current data. You know? Because when I was working in Club OST, I had no information whatsoever about the a100. Some people were like, reaching out for interviews, and I had no clue what they were talking about. Yeah. So this is the first step, I think this is the most important step that they should be taking.

[Interviewer]: Right? So kinda like the protection for not just the clubs themselves, but the people who rely on them for a living, for salary, etc.

[Interviewee]: Like, yeah, and also just the guests you know, also just the guests that learn to love these clubs and see them as a second home, you know, it kind of owed to them that you at least keep them informed about what's going on.

10.3 - Appendix 3



[Image] Die Autobahn GmbH Des Bundes. (2024a). *Die Autobahn*. (Image edited by author) [online] Original available at: <https://www.autobahn.de/die-autobahn>. [Accessed 7 May 2024]

10.4 - Appendix 4



[Image] RBB24 (2023). *Wie es nun mit der A100 weitergeht*. [online] Available at: <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2023/03/berlin-autobahn-a100-verlaengerung-cdu-spd-wie-geht-es-weiter-faq.html>. [Accessed 7. May 2024]

