

Call

Demonstration – 9th September 2 pm – Oranienplatz (Kreuzberg)

To whom does the city belong?

Standing together in solidarity against high rents & evictions! – For a grassroots city!

“... and the city belongs to you.”, “Berlin will stay affordable” – these and other hollow phrases defined Berlin’s cityscape a year ago. Ever since the brutal forced eviction of the community and social center Friedel54 on 29th of June 2017, it’s quite clear that the city should belong to those residents who pay the most. Even under Berlin’s current left-leaning “Rot-Rot-Grün” coalition government it is a daily occurrence that people are being thrown on the streets, their rental contracts terminated, while they are slowly displaced, criminalized and battered. Ultimately it all comes down to one principle: to defend the “principle of property” in order to make profit for the proprietors. Apparently, the new coalition also wants to guarantee this. The cost of the police action to partially evict the refugees from the Gerhart-Hauptmann-Schule and to violently evict the Friedel54 community center could have been enough to buy entire houses and to cover annual rents. This underlines once more how the principle of property is intertwined with high costs and violence. The aim is to scare neighbors and attract investors. We do not think that marking an insignificant cross at the ballot box this autumn will change anything.

Therefore the question “to whom does the city belong?” can only be answered practically. Not in court, not in parliament, not in back rooms. It is answered on the streets and squares of this city; in the houses full of people, in their stairways and backyards; in the metro, the bus, or the tram when security and ticket inspectors might annoy some of us for riding public transportation without a ticket. It is answered in every situation where people come together to resist the exploitation of their living space and to fight for autonomy. The answer is our action – and this is not only based on our knowledge that those in power have no interest in responding to our needs, but also that we know that we can do it better.

This conviction gives birth to rather different forms of resistance. Resistance can be the current occupation of the former carpet factory in Berlin-Stralau by homeless kids and activists, or the housing community at Zossenerstraße 18 who pushed the district office of Kreuzberg to exercise their purchase option. Or it can be the protest of the juveniles of the youth centers Potse & Drugstore (Schöneberg) against their displacement, or the occupation of the senior center ‘Stille Straße’ (Pankow) by pensioners. The protest against displacement is already very diverse. The utopia of a **grassroots city** should support this diversity by respecting the needs of the individuals instead of the profit of only a few. That should be the benchmark for successful city politics.

Therefore, on 8th September there will be a nationwide and decentralized action day by the campaign ‘Mietenwahnsinn stoppen’ (Stop Rental Madness). On 9th September together with you we want to answer the question “to whom does the city belong?” in practice. Come join us on the street! Be angry, loud, creative and rebellious on both days!

For the right for all new Berliners to remain in the city, the legalization of occupations of empty buildings, a moratorium on evictions, and the right to a living space.

Against unwanted modernization, racism on the rental market, structural displacement, and the criminalization of neighborhoods acting in solidarity.