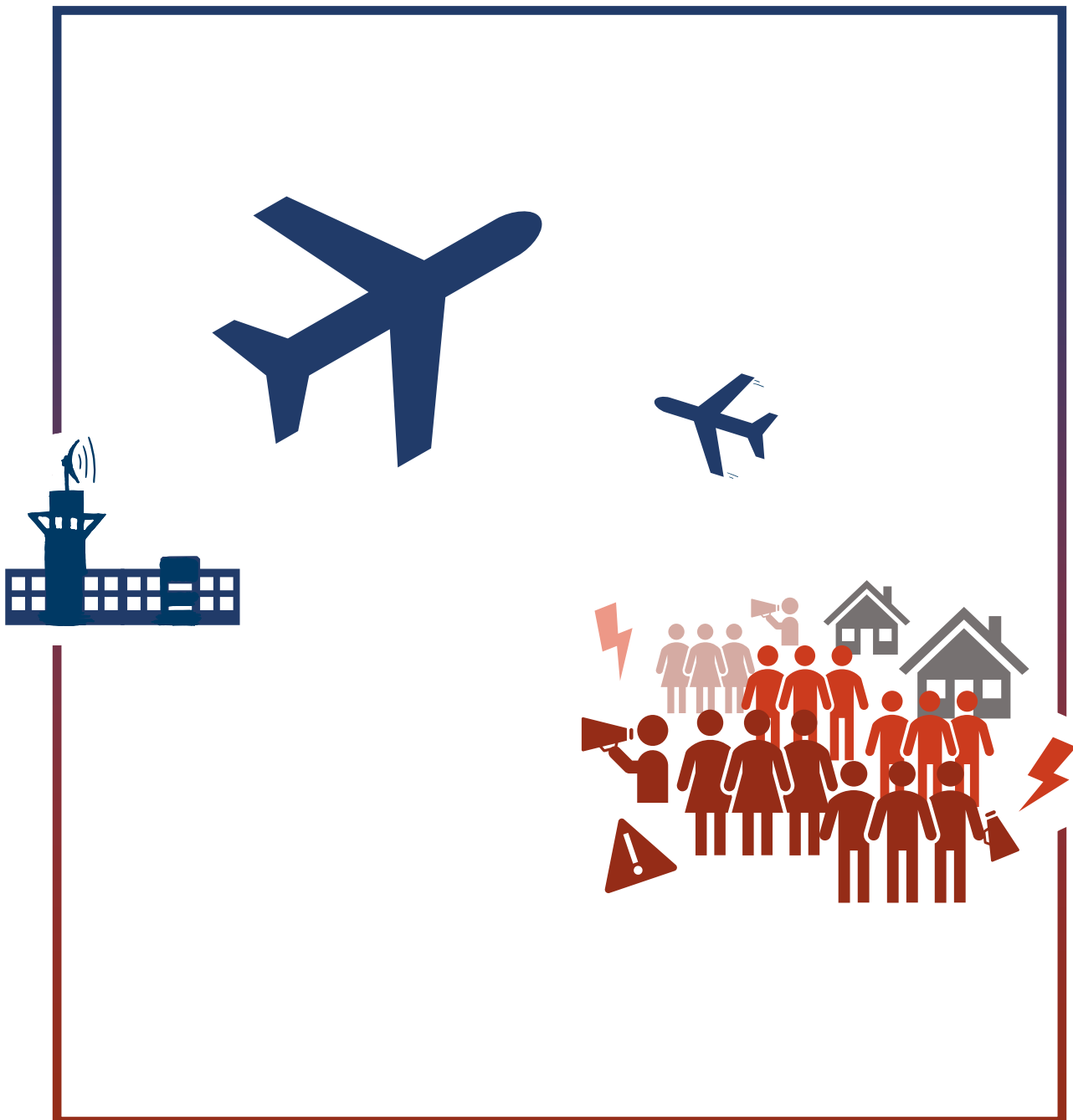


# The Role of civil protests in the social impact assessment of the Berlin airport (BER)

Bachelorproject – Social Aspects of Infrastructural Developments – Supervisor: Philippe Hanna

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## Summary

This study tries to contribute knowledge about the dynamics of protests in line with infrastructure developments. In this case, focused on the Berlin Airport (BER) and the surrounding municipalities and people.

Key objective is, on what level and to what extent protests can influence a project like the BER, this research tries to find out, why people started to protest and what have changed over time. Furthermore, what have been achieved by protesting people and municipalities during the approximately thirty years of process.

To find answers, in-depth interviews were hold with 5 different stakeholders, an active citizen, a neutral dialogue-forum, an aviation law expert, a mayor of an affected municipality and a representative of the aircraft noise grievance office.

These interviews formed an understanding of what triggered unrest and uncovered the complexity of the BER problems. A chronological narrative explains the different phases of the project. Forced by missing communication and transparency, the legacy of a location decision, which none of the respondents could explain nor understand, reoccurring reasons for unrest and protests is the feeling of not be taken seriously, the feeling of being betrayed and a following helplessness and lost in trust towards responsible institutions. A parallel tone of all held interviews is the perception, that the decision on this specific location, just beyond Berlins southern border, has been the starting point of all following problems, conflicts and discussions. A legacy the region now has to deal with.

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# 1. Introduction

Germany's capital city Berlin used to have three airports. Tegel in the north-west, Tempelhof in centre and Schönefeld in the south-east, which can be seen in figure 1. In the early 1990's, closely after the German reunification, the idea came up to have a single airport for Berlin (RBB 2017). A location was needed, and the final decision fell on an expansion of the airport in Schönefeld, just behind the southern border of Berlin. Therefore, Tempelhof closed in 2008. The airport in Tegel was supposed to close as soon as the extension of the Schönefeld airport was done. But the process of Schönefeld airports expansion, to be Berlin's only airport, started to take longer than expected, so that last the flight from Tegel took place in November 2020. The location in Schönefeld was and is seen as not suitable for a project of that size, as the region is densely populated and still rising in numbers of inhabitants. This proximity to people's homes created a broad field of discussions about the construction in the first place, later on about the flying routes.

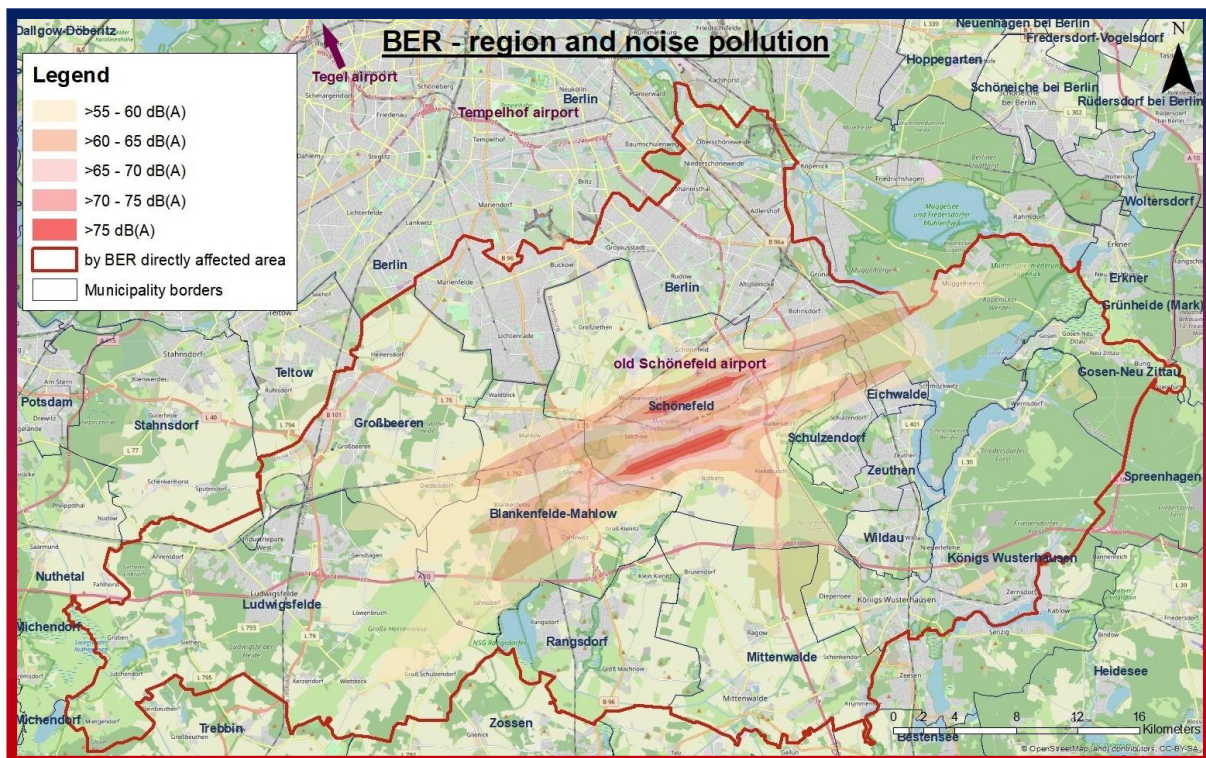


Figure 1: Airport region and noise pollution

In 2004 the airport got its permission to be built, date of opening back then was the year 2008. Four years before the permission was given, Nero and Black (2000) defined increasing airport operations and their negative impact on surrounding neighbourhoods as a major problem for aviation traffic in the 21st century. Especially noise nuisance does have a major and serious impact on surrounding communities (Morrell and Lu, 2000), thus mitigation actions are urgently needed (Al-Harthy et al., 2021). Therefore, negative impacts and mitigation measures are also expected to be proposed and established by the Berlin Brandenburg Airport "Willy Brandt" (BER) in Germany. Glucroft (2020) calls the airports planning a "start-to-finish failure" in his article for the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle. From first ideas and decisions on the current location, as well as the postponement of seven different dates of opening until the final opening in 2020, the almost thirty years long process has been full of controversies. Civil protests from surrounding municipalities and its people against noise, night flights and its negative social impacts emerged (Röhlig, 2012). Next to the projects widely known problems like fire security, incorrect numerated doors, or kilometres of erroneously placed cables (Böhling, 2019), its social impacts are less discussed outside the closer areas. But people protests can successfully force improvement of social impact assessments, as Hanna et al. (2016a) found out in the particular case of a dam in Brazil and its impacts on indigenous people

living there. This research aims to zoom into the role of protesting citizens in the case of the BER and understand the role of protests in such cases. This research will analyse how local people perceive the projects process and what triggered protests in particular. It is needed to know the different perceptions that different stakeholders have about participation and communication regarding social impacts and the protests.

### **1.1. Research Problem**

This research wants to support understanding the impact civil protests can have on a large-scale infrastructure project, and how the interaction between different stakeholders and are perceived and interpreted. To reach that aim, following main research question is formulated:

How have civil protests of surrounding settlements had an influence on the social impact assessment in the project of BER?

To narrow down different aspects of the protests, analysed through the lens of the by Hanna et al. (2016a) defined seven functions of protest, following sub-questions are aimed to be answered.

- 1) What are the driving forces behind the civil protests of surrounding municipalities?
- 2) How did the citizens protest and how was and is it perceived by representatives of the project and included politicians?
- 3) What did the participating citizens achieve due to their protests?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The articles by Vanclay et al. (2015), Hanna et al. (2016) and Josa and Aguado (2019) deal with the social aspects of infrastructure developments in three different ways.

Social impact is defined by Vanclay et al. (2015) as a content rich concept, including experiences and feelings in perceptual or corporeal ways on an individual, group, community or society scale. What combines the three articles is that they all see the need of more focus on social impacts in relation to environmental impacts. Hanna et al. (2016) asking for a serious consideration of the social, suggests that there is potential for an improvement of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in practice.

The literature of Vanclay et al. (2015) provides an in-depth guidance document for the use of SIA. They argue that a SIA is build up by four phases, from understanding the issues, over predicting and analysing the impact, to develop and implement strategies and monitoring programs (Vanclay et al.,2015). They also present reasons why SIA with participatory approaches provides positive results for all stakeholders. In giving people information about the project, a better sense of understanding and a more equal level of knowledge can be achieved. People are better prepared for changes and understand where they come from, thus they can become supportive and help the project to develop.

Hanna et al. (2016a) are focussed on protests, its different variations and functions. They outline, that protests have seven different but intertwined functions or purposes. Firstly, information is about to get distributed, secondly support will be organised through fundraising. Thirdly, media attention is needed in the publicity function. Followed by the mobilisation of participants. These participants are there to build a certain feeling of solidarity due to commitment and unity. A sixth purpose then is the application of pressure, mainly of political kind, on responsible and decision-making people or organisations. As a seventh function direct

action is given. Hence, Protest actions do not meet every function. Nevertheless, they can meet several, because they support and rely on each other. In their article, they underlined that protest is a result of former ongoing dissatisfaction and grievance.

Hanna et al. (2016) are reflecting on the implementation and procedure of SIA, using the explicit practical example of a dam in Brazil, and its social impacts on indigenous people. By interviewing and observing the different stakeholders of the SIA approach, and what the different perceptions of the process itself and its outcomes are, this paper can be seen as a critique on the execution of SIA in this particular project. Due to the pressure of protests by the indigenous people and their allies (e. g. NGOs), a social impact assessment was initiated. Therefore, the protests Hanna et al. (2016) refer, fulfil the purpose of building pressure on authorities (Hanna et al., 2016a) and the stakeholder group which is responsible for the infrastructure projects implementation and SIA.

Josa and Aguado (2019) analysed Civil Engineering and its role and influence on social impacts. By building upon literature about different categories of social impacts, they developed a deeper understanding about the two fields connections. Those categories are transport, water-technology, energy-technology, environment-technology, buildings and urban planning. Josa and Aguado (2019) proposed a model in the form of a cube (figure 2), with relations between social impacts (first dimension) and the working area of civil engineers (second dimension). In a third dimension they added three variables of stakeholders, time and others.

This cube consists of different parts which demonstrate a certain social meaning, civil engineering task and variable of time, important stakeholder or other. These parts of the cube will be filled with certain social impacts and defined during the research, to understand connections and relations within the BER development. Because Josa and Aguados (2019) model is very much focussed on the civil engineer's role, and therefore someone actively contributing to the project, another perspective than the protesters ones can be possibly understood.

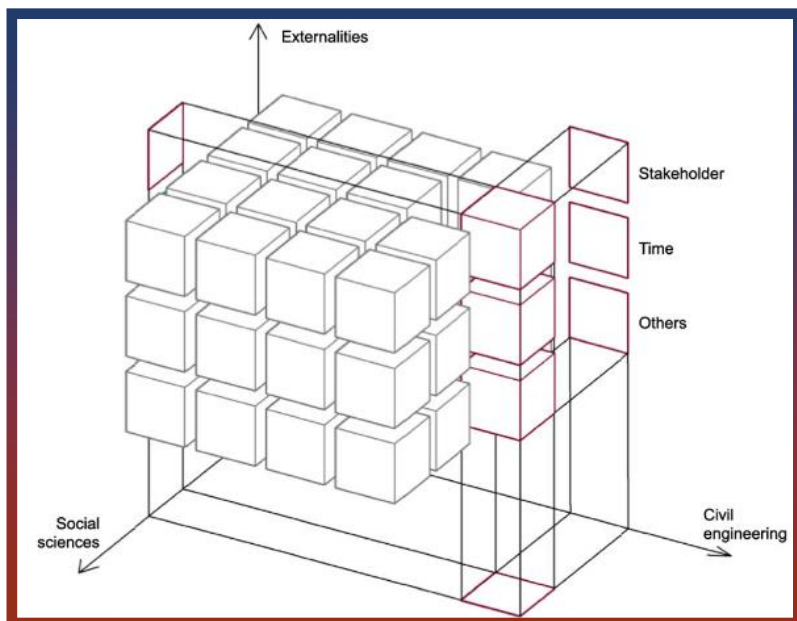


Figure 2: cube model representing the relationships between civil engineering and social sciences by Josa and Aguado (2019)

As the articles share the opinion of the need for more research between social impacts and infrastructure development, this research will try to help understand the fine connections between these two fields and what role the civil protests did play. As Vanclay et al. (2015) mention, social impacts start from early stages of an infrastructure development, thus the whole process of the BER needs to be touched. The focus, nevertheless is on the active protests and their purposes and final outcomes.

## 2.1. Conceptual Model

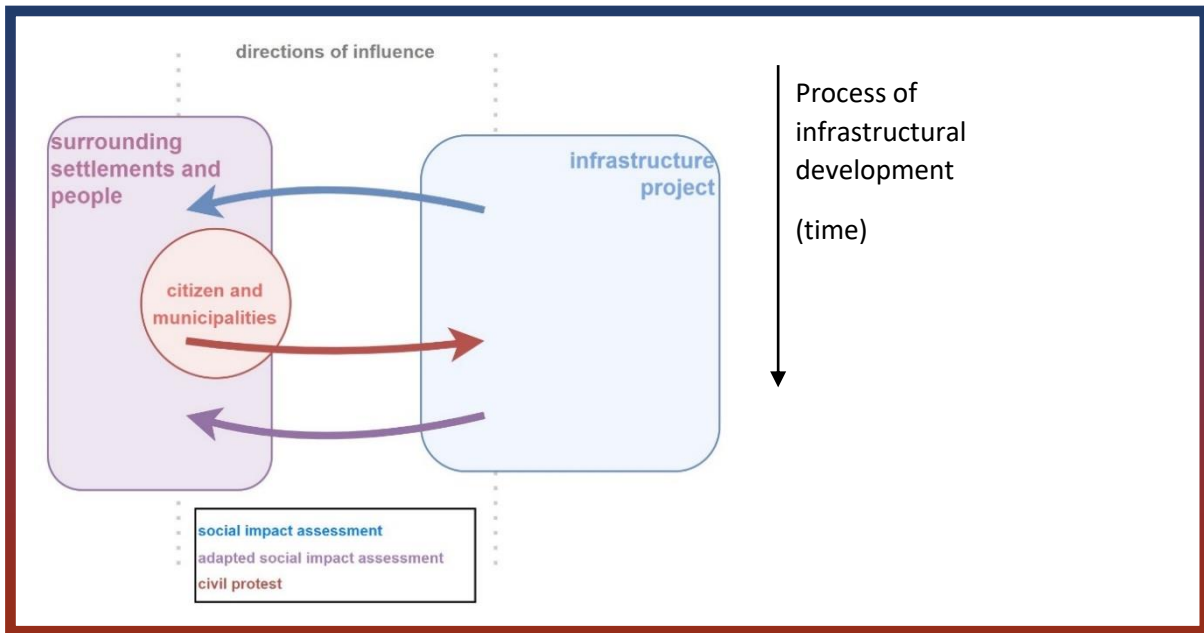


Figure 3: Conceptual model

To conclude the theoretical framework and transform into a visual, a conceptual model, figure 3 contains of key features this study is oriented at. The two fields in figure 3, settlements and people and infrastructure project, interact with each other. The infrastructure project (BER) (blue field) affects the surrounding areas (purple field) and a part of people living there, also supported by a few outsiders like people from similar situations (Frankfurt a. M.), that does not agree with the development (red circle). The red circle represents the active part of the affected area, who expressed their dissatisfaction and organised protests, in form of demonstrations on the streets, proactive communication with their representatives or legal actions against the project. A reaction by the project site follows to the citizens protests in form of an improved and adapted SIA. To implement a temporary dimension, like in the cube model by Josa and Aguado (2019), the model consists of a from top to bottom process development.

## 2.2. Hypothesis

Following Hanna et al. (2016a), successful protests do have influence on broad positive results. The interviews and analyses are there to proof if this is the case in the particular case of the BER. That can change the social impacts on themselves by influencing a project's handling of its SIA. The interviews are expected to include accusations, emotional statements and, due to the long-term process, unavoidable lack of memory about details. Furthermore, ongoing discussions about soundproofing constructions and measures are about to influence responds, because of its topical relevance. Nevertheless, a positive influence on the airports SIA by the protests is assumed as a main outcome of this research.

## 3. Methodology

To answer the questions this research is driven by, a qualitative approach of in-depth interviews is used. By conducting interviews with the aim to let the respondents tell their stories about their life with the airport, different perspectives can be discovered and help understanding the mechanisms behind actions and behaviours. Different stakeholders, and especially people who participated in the protests, are asked about their perception of the projects and its outcomes regarding social impacts and the social impact assessment. These

stakeholders are inhabitants of the closer municipalities of the airport site. From this group further participants were identified, using the snowball method. Other stakeholders were identified during interviews with people involved in the protests, as they were expected to be mentioned by them as the ones they wanted to address with their protests.

Reading newspapers, asking family members who have lived in the area for more than twenty years now, and using the researcher's memories, stakeholders were defined and approached by email. In case of the active citizen the researcher cycled through some of the affected municipalities and watched out for stickers on mailboxes used by the citizen initiatives and protesting people. Following this, the researcher rang on bells and asked for their willingness to speak about the BER and the protests.

To reach the aim of a multi-perspective analysis, persons listed in table 1 participated in 30 to 45 minutes interviews.

Interviewee number	Participant	Further information	Environment of Interview
1	Mayor of affected municipality		In person
2	Active citizen	Member of citizen initiative BVBB (Bürgerverein Berlin-Brandenburg)	In person
3	Representative Dialogforum	Meeting at Dialogforum	In person
4	Aviation law expert	Independent from BER project	In person
5	Representative of aircraft noise grievance office		online

Table 1: List of participants

For the analysis, the interviews firstly got transcribed, using a mix of self-transcribing and using Transkriptor.com. Secondly for coding the software, Atlas.ti got used. Next to topic related codes like: location, dialogue-forum, protest or routes, judgemental codes like: negative, different assumption or positive were used. In addition to that, emotions and feelings got marked using codes like: anger, betrayal, helpless. Just looking at these codes, and the following analysis, it can be said, that people are fairly unsatisfied with the airport and its process. In chapter 5, 'Results', this will be elaborated in detail.

The aim to get different perspectives is not completely reached in this research. The communication with the airport did not work as wished. An interview with the airport did not take place as the airport did either ignored contact, or said that they first have to find a suitable person for the interview. The interviews, which took place were held in an open minded, interested and conflict free atmosphere. Being a person, familiar with the region, seemed to help gaining peoples trust and having conversations on a constructive level and create such an atmosphere.

### 3.1. Ethics

The researcher himself grew up in one of the surrounding municipalities. As he has seen protest banners in his neighbourhood and followed those protest actions through the eyes of a teenager, and definitely experienced a change in noise during recent visits in the area, a familiarity with the local culture and the project is given. This knowledge about the area and its



people, is beneficial to decode and understand mentioned places, names or specific sayings from the area.

In line with acting respectful and ethically in a professional manner, every participant was informed about the purpose of the research and what data will be used. The interviews were recorded after consent from the participants was given. The recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed during the research, and will be deleted after finishing the bachelor project. The participants have control of their data as they can stop their participation without giving a reason, as are able to request deleting data. To protect privacy and beware anonymity and avoid any potential harm for the participants, no data to identify the participants identity will be used. The collected data will only be used for this research and will not be shared with third parties. All participation is voluntarily and took place accepting the consent form, which can be found in the Appendix.

## 4. Results

To give structure to the long-term and complex process of the airport, the interviews followed a chronological order, oriented on peak-points of discussions and protests. To convert this in the research and for further understanding this chronological approach will be continued in the following section. All used quotes were translated from German into English by the researcher himself.

### 4.1. Location (1990s)

After Germany's reunion, the new capital of Berlin strived for a new airport. One airport for the city of Berlin. This decision to focus on a single-airport met with incomprehension, as the aviation law expert concludes:

*„From the very beginnings, 1992, Berlins politics regarding the airport were, that there should be only one airport in the region, one international airport in the region. This approach is not understandable, because every big metropole has more than one airport. And that is of good reason. [...] several locations with several functions with different functions, than more people will be charged. But not all of them up to 100%, and then it is bearable. This has been dispensed with here, to put it mildly.”*

~ interviewee 4

Especially the quotes last sentence, reproduces the common perception of the interviewed people. As mentioned earlier, the airport's location was, following reports, seen as the most unfavourable of seven. While the interviewed mayor, years before his tenure, reflects on that he wondered how the location was chosen, even though it was given bad evaluations, the citizen and member of citizen initiative BVBB felt calmed by the politician:

*„And then in media, I heard the minister how he said: 'No, not Schönefeld.' Of course I was reassured.”* ~ interviewee 2

Especially these words of promise triggered a feeling of betrayal within the surrounding municipalities. Resentment grew, and citizen initiatives started to emerge. This decision for Schönefeld as location started first protests against the planned airport development in this particular location. During the plan approval process, citizens were allowed to attend and ask. Hence, this act of participation or communication was perceived as an act of formality and did not aim to discuss and find solutions to people's interests. The mayor, by that time an interested and active citizen remembers:

*„... I had the feeling, that some of these things that were presented there, were not taken into account really. They listened, and said: 'yes, yes, but not gonna' happen, next one.'. There you did not feel taken seriously as a citizen. And then you got the feeling, this is clear, and it is all about keeping formality, the procedure has to be done, because it is the law, but the result was already fixed.” ~ interviewee 1*

The BER project started with the decision on a location, and so started the protests. Speaking about the location, none of the interviewed persons did understand the decision. A common dissatisfaction with the location and the decision process itself, can be seen as a kick-off for a long period of discussions, problems and protests within the area surrounding the BER.

#### **4.2. Routes (2011/12)**

In 2012, when the airport was supposed to open, the flying-routes were reason of a second wave of legal actions and protests. A year before the opening date, the routes of landing and starting planes got finally defined and published. To irritation of some municipalities and inhabitants, because the routes differed from the previously assumed routes. Interviewee 5, who participated in the aircraft noise commission, that took place every second week in 2011, remembers the moment municipalities got informed about the routes:

*„... then they projected the flying-routes onto the wall, and everyone in the aircraft noise commission sat there with such eyes, these that were affected suddenly. [naming several municipalities] were very surprised, and so the citizens, who got the information then through media, so that people felt screwed.” ~ interviewee 5*

In previous plans, the routes were marked as going straight, and therefore barely crossed densely populated areas. Due to security during an independent use of two lanes, a divergence of 15° is needed. This 15° forced the routes to cross a more populated area. A lot of people felt that they were lied to by the previous plans, and citizen initiatives became active. Some newly formed, others reactivated in their anger. The by interviewee 5 mentioned aircraft noise commission contained of municipality representatives, airport representatives and others, working related to the airport. Citizens and initiatives were not part of the commission. In addition to that, the only information of what was discussed, distributed via press conferences after the meetings. During these meetings protesters tried to let the commission hear their voices as one respondent, who took part, remembers:

*„... in front of the airport-world, different citizen initiatives from different municipalities gathered, and protested against the flying-routes with signs and whistles, and it was a very exciting time, to say until 2012.” ~ interviewee 5*

After the flying routes were published, municipalities that now would be affected by noise nuisance applied to become a member of the commission. One municipality's mayor reflected, that the leading ministry approved the applications very fast, to avoid further unrest. Hence, this resulted in an overcrowded commission, where discussions became more complex and the path towards solutions was out of any sight. Every municipality fought for itself, and division between the fellow municipalities emerged.

According to the aviation-law expert, the mistake was the miscommunication about the routes in the first hand. A representative of the dialogue-forum agrees with that, as it is not enough education regarding these complex topics for the people. The expert continued, that people should know what the plans are like for the region's future, and should be informed about possible nuisance or developments with negative impacts. To communicate is also in the politicians and airports interest as it can help to avoid protests and anger like in the case of the BER. The expert concluded this in the following quote:

„... when you get the feeling of getting treated in an honest manner, then you already decrease your level of aggressivity. I think a main part of the anger just emerges because the people felt betrayed.” ~ interviewee 4

This feeling of betrayal was mentioned by the citizen, mayor, expert and the independent grievance office as a repeating trigger for anger and protests. People and municipalities are losing their trust in the leading institutions. A representative of a grievance office, which gets emails and phone calls on a daily basis said, that he understands the anger and questions the way municipalities and people got treated:

„You just cannot draw something and say that this is the way, and after, you do it a complete different way. Trust in words erodes, not only of the politicians, but also of administration and the airport. The airport in general does not have a good standing anyways.” ~ interviewee 5

### 4.3. Hoffmann-Kurve (2020)

During the discussions about flying routes, the so-called Hoffmann-Kurve (Hoffmann-Curve, named after hobby-pilot Marcel Hoffmann, who came up with the idea) was invented to minimise the nuisance, with planes flying a u-turn or s-form like route straight after leaving the ground (figure 4). This was a reaction to the protests against the new routes as they



Figure 4: Hoffmann-Kurve (red) and straight route crossing settlements (purple) (RBB, 2021)

crossed high populated areas. A mayor mentioned the curve as a big win for the municipality of Schulzendorf, as the starting planes do not cross the settlement anymore. But he also reflected that the curve does have a negative impact on other, smaller settlements like Kiekebusch and Rotberg, located south of the BER. Reason for the curve's implementation was, that less people are affected. Discussions started again, as the mayor remembered:

„So, you have to explain to the people, you are a loser now, because the others are more [people]. You cannot explain that to people. And that is why the discussion was that heated.” ~ interviewee 1

As in figure 4 shows, the new starting route continues in two directions. Direction west, planes cross the mentioned settlements of Kiekebusch and Rotberg, heading direction east, planes follow the highway A10 to minimise nuisance for the towns of Wildau and Königs-Wusterhausen. These municipalities were not expecting to be affected by any aircraft related noise nuisance. Nevertheless, they are complaining about noise produced by planes using the Hoffmann-Kurve. But even though a municipality like Schulzendorf is seen as a winner of the curves invention, new problems occurred as in 2020 planes did not use the route and went straight over the settlements instead. An inhabitant of Schulzendorf remarked:

„But when they started flying, you often noticed, some planes are not flying it [the Hoffmann-Kurve].” ~ interviewee 2

This led to dissatisfaction within Schulzendorf and its neighbouring municipalities Zeuthen and Eichwalde. Again, things did not happen as said before, anger and protests, discussions and questions about reliability of the airport started growing.

#### 4.4. Dialogforum

To keep up communication between municipalities, the airport and responsible ministries, a dialogue forum was founded in 2006. Its purpose was to continue discussing airport related issues in a neutral and closed environment. Such a dialogue forum is common at every bigger project site like airports or train-stations. In the case of the BER the dialogue forum, or as it is called Dialogforum in German, is now located at the same building the former Airport-World was located. It was firstly led by the planning resort of Berlin and Brandenburg. In 2008/9 the Dialogforum was given to the hands of the municipalities. Members are eight municipalities, four cities, three districts (Landkreise) and two companies. First company is the Flughafen Berlin-Brandenburg (FBB) as the airport, second is the managing company Berlin-Brandenburg Area Development Company GmbH (BADC). Within that, one working group relating aircraft noise was created. In this two citizen initiatives, one of them was the BVBB, were initially part of. Nevertheless, according to a representative of the Dialogforum, these two initiatives do not participate in the group meetings anymore since the opening in 2020. Trying to understand why the representative reflected on the role and tasks the Dialogforum have now:

*„... our tasks are more like. Dealing with challenges that occur due to the airport, commercial settlement, traffic, population growth, social infrastructure, these are all problems too,..." ~ interviewee 3*

As a reason why the citizen initiatives are not participating anymore, the Dialogforums representative assumes, that they were there to get the maximum of compensation. But as the requirements and the procedure are settled by the plan approval decision, they see no reason to continue their participation. The mayor, who also participates in the working group on aircraft noise, reflects that they moved on to deal with the situation and development of the region:

*"... and now we have a situation in which much more is questioned. What are we actually doing here, what do we actually want. and we have now come so far that we can tick off the soundproofing issue. The airport has issued its entitlements there, has determined who is entitled and to what extent. Each individual would now have to complain if he is dissatisfied with it. Now it's about implementation. Implementation has been a priority for a long time." ~ interviewee 1*

The Dialogforum does help the region to come together and work on solutions. But this only is the case for the municipalities, because they collaborate on a regional structure and feel no support from ministries. The mayor added that the mindset is changing towards a self-reliant group of affected municipalities. This togetherness is a success, because during the discussions about flying routes, municipalities argued against each other, developing a heated atmosphere. Groups of common interests emerged and as mentioned earlier, arguments existed against every option. During the interview with the mayor, he explained that over time the municipalities developed a proactive position. This can be explained by losing trust and belief in ministry and airport helping them. This common feeling brought the municipalities together in taking the situation as given and trying to do the best out of it.

#### 4.5. Protests

Regarding the protests, two ways stand out. The protest on the streets or in front of airport buildings and legal actions. Especially the citizen initiative BVBB organised protests and presented themselves with yellow sign and black messages on in (figure 5). This continued over the whole process and can be seen in form of stickers or little banners in the front garden of some inhabitants.

Nevertheless protests were organised by citizen initiatives and representatives of the affected municipalities joined these. The mayor and the citizen spoke about the protest and gave the same story, that they went by bicycle to the airport, passing by other inhabitants gardens. There they opened conversations about the protests and why these people are not joining the protests. They therefore underlined the differences of peoples assumptions and expectations about the airport, even though they live in the same area as protesting people. Respondents, that participated in the protests fear, that the protests could have been stronger in message if everyone would have realised what is to expect from the airports daily business.



Figure 5: Logo of the BVBB, often used as sticker, (Bürgerverein Brandenburg-Berlin e.V., n.d.)

Due to the long process and slow starting of the airport, created by the pandemic situation, the interest and protests decreased over time. Events like strong increasing air traffic can reactivate people's interest and attention to the BER. The almost thirty years of project development and its therefore very slow process and changes are a possible reason why affected people lost motivation, believe or even their concerns about the airport. As the interviewed mayor used a phrase to explain the process, while affected people are represented by the frog:

*"..., when a frog is in a water bath and the water bath is heated and begins to boil, it does not save itself because it always gets used to the rising temperature. But if you throw a frog into boiling water, it will immediately try to get out to save itself. And apparently it is here too." ~ interviewee 1*

The grievance office gets calls and emails from citizen complaining about aircraft noise. During our interview, the representative explained that they receive a very diverse kind of messages. From neutral, reflective and informed citizens up to very angry, shouting citizens touching on assault and formulating threats of violence.

*"And there are really people at who, where you almost get into the area of threatening a crime, through which people then have to point it out. They then say: '... I also have weapons here and if necessary I'll get them down', so such statements are made there too. So others just scream through the phone. But there are also some people you can talk to normally. So there is the whole range. [...] But I'm just saying that we're all slowly getting to know those who are moderately hardcore, so they're not just a handful of people expressing themselves in this way. Which then revise themselves again. 'Well, I don't know what you mean when you say wait a minute, if this goes in this direction, then I have to let the police know, because otherwise I'll be liable to prosecution if I don't report it when they threaten it and afterwards manipulate or want to do something on the plane.'" ~ interviewee 5*

Talking about the protests the seven functions of protest (Hanna et al., 2016a) a majority is clearly visible. The distribution of information, firstly through media, but further on by people themselves distributing information within the citizen initiatives. Media attention is gained, also

given the medias interest in the case itself, the protesters presence made a medial distribution of their reasons possible. In this particular the Commission meetings in 2011/12 were used as convenient opportunities, having a given tie and location combined with the media's presence. Due to stickers, banners and distribution of flyers the protest organising initiatives reached out to inhabitants of affected municipalities. Sharing the feeling of betrayal and unfairly treated, people no matter what political opinion or societal status joined to create a power that can work against the airport and ministries. Following the respondent's opinions about the protests, it can be said, that political pressure developed throughout the process.

A follow-up on that location decision was how this was communicated. Breaking made promises and acting contrary to earlier statements in which people trusted, lead to dissatisfaction and anger. At the time the flying routes discussions were central point of conflicts, again previous statements were broken. Another loss in trust and reliability. Next to that, protesting inhabitants and municipalities, trying legal actions and protests, felt not taken serious and helpless. As mentioned in section 4.1. on the location choice period, complaining parties did have the feeling that the results are decided and nothing in their interest can be achieved. As a result, from this period the aviation law expert thinks the airport development created a dilemma:

*"We are in a dilemma here, which is now at the expense of the residents. This failed planning decision is carried out on their backs, if you will." ~ interviewee 4*

## 5. Conclusion

After speaking to people with different positions and relations to the BER, one key problem stood out, influencing all discussions and conflicts. The decision on the location in Schönefeld was mentioned in every interview as either a mistake or a decision that no one can understand. It appears that the legacy of that decision is lying heavy on the BERs reputation and region. Even though the airports negative impacts, predominately noise from starting and landing aircrafts, are stronger than expected, the region is growing, in population and as an economic location. Property prices in the region are rapidly rising. For example, in Schulzendorf, a new development, a completely new neighbourhood is built, providing housing for many new citizens. Therefore, the municipality is expecting to reach the mark of 10.000 inhabitants within the near future.

Following Vanclay et al. (2015) and their suggestions for participatory processes, the BER lacked of clear structure to inform, educate and implement the regions municipalities and inhabitants. This eroded reliability got another decrease in recent times, because of aircrafts not flying the Hoffmann-Kurve.

The protests around the BER did not achieve the first goals they set and reason they started building in the first place. The airport was built and is still there. Nevertheless, putting pressure on responsible positions, achieved the creation of communication opportunities between municipalities, which strengthened the bond between those. In addition to that the compensation model was implemented. A successful story were the protests and legal actions against night flights. A resting period during night-time was implemented after a high number of affected people took legal action. In case of night flights current talks about a possible extension are held.

In the project, the time factor, that also plays a key role at Josa and Aguados (2019) model, has influenced the protests and therefore the projects development. That also got recognised by some of the interviewed people, like the mayor got quoted about the frogs and the heated water bath. A slow process can create the feeling of no differences, because the change is

stretched over a long time and not noticeable as it would be in case of a sudden and significant change. Regarding the BER situation the water got boiled very slow and over a long period of time, giving people a feeling like nothing changed.

To conclude, the unrest and steady protests for the people living in the by noise pollution affected municipalities led to more awareness and attention towards the people's needs. The case of the BER airport is still not at its end of discussions and conflicts, but keeping its style without violence and a growing inclusion of municipalities and citizens solutions for a life together can lead towards a satisfying life with the neighbour BER. What will be interesting to follow are future developments in the region, regarding the aviation traffic being expected to increase in an upcoming post-pandemic time period.

## 5.1. Recommendations

Similar projects, like the Lelystad airport project in the Netherlands, should take the BER as an example of where problems can occur, and what is needed to avoid these. A clear transparent communication is needed. Complex but important facts should be made accessible for everyone to understand. For any project, and in particular of one the size the BER is, first steps need to be discussed with a broad group of different stakeholders including all possibly affected municipalities, citizens, aviation experts, and all responsible politicians, to start open minded and set an atmosphere that makes optimal outcomes possible.

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## 7. Appendix

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Consent Form

**Project Title:**

The Role of civil protests in the social impact assessment of the Berlin airport (BER)

**Researcher:** Adam Rindelhardt is a 3<sup>rd</sup> year student of the programme Human Geography and Planning at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen.

**Contact:** [a.rindelhardt@student.rug.nl](mailto:a.rindelhardt@student.rug.nl)

Description: The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding how protests can influence the actions of large infrastructural developments like the Berlin airport BER. During this study you will be asked questions about your perspective on the airport and the protests against it. The interview length will approximately be between 30 and 45 minutes. Depending on your personal wish it can be shortened or lengthened. If you do not want to answer certain questions, you do not have to. Is this the case, we will move on with another question.

All the information will be kept in a way that you cannot be identified. The data will not be shared with people who are not part of the research. Only the researcher itself and his supervisor will have access to the data. Following the completion of the project, the data will be destroyed.

If you have any comments or complaints about this research, you may contact my supervisor, Philippe Hanna on [p.hanna@rug.nl](mailto:p.hanna@rug.nl)

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Participant's agreement:

I am aware that my participation on this study is voluntary. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation. I understand the intend and purpose of this research, and the risks involved in my participation.

I am aware that the data will be used in a bachelorthesis. I understand that my personal identity will not be revealed, unless I specifically approve of such disclosure. I grant permission for the use of this information for the research purpose.

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Participant's name

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Participant's signature

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Interviewer's signature

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Date

## **Interview Guide (adapted during research with handwritten notes)**

### **Housing and Living – People, newcomers and locals**

Did you move here knowing about the airport development?

- Did it play a role in moving decision?
  - o What about noise?
- Changes in property value?
  
- You ever had thoughts about leaving the area?
- or adjust your accommodation because of noise?
  - o Any use of noise protection offers?

### **Protests – mainly civil initiatives**

- What moment you started feel treated unfair?
- What did you know about the routes?
- 
- How did you perceive the protest community?
- Structure of the protests?

Who did you address with your protest?

What are key impacts you protesting against?

- Did you feel taken serious by the people you addressed?

Did any communication take place between you organised protesters and the ones you addressed?

Do you feel that something has changed since your protests?

### **Airport**

How did you get informed about the airport development?

When did you know about the routes?

Have you ever visited the Info Tower?

- Did you learn something
- Anything that could be done better
- Why did you go there in the first place? (motivation)
- Did you talk to someone?

Dialogforum

- Do you know about the dialogforum?
  - o What do you know?
  - o You ever had contact?
  - o Any results?

Contact with the Airport citizen service?

### **Questions for interviews with politicians**

What do expect of the now intensifying plane traffic?

- Peoples grievance?

Dialogforums outcomes so far?

- Participation of people?

Perception of the airport side

Cooperation between municipalities

How did you notice there were protests?

- Did you know you are someone they addressed their protests?

Can you shortly reflect on the airports SIA approach?

Did the protests influence our actions?

How did and do you perceive the protesting groups?

- Did/Do you feel offended by them?

### **BER representatives**

Explain the projects SIA approach

Why the BER Nachbar

Perception of citizens protests