

## MORE THAN A CORNER STORE: SPÄTIS STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN A CHANGING BERLIN

### A push to save the Späti

Yet it's not just Sunday hours that threaten these cherished businesses. Spätis are not immune to the forces of gentrification happening around them, and recent years have seen a number of owners turfed out or threatened with eviction.

Felix Lange, a member of the activist group "Bizim Kiez", told The Local the problem lies in the fact that "small stores in most cases do not have the financial resources to sustain the enormous rent increases they are threatened with," he said. "German legislation offers little regulation on rents for business tenants."

The group was founded after the closure of the neighbourhood supermarket Bizim Bakkal in 2015, but since then many more small businesses and Spätis have closed or are under threat, including the Oranienspäti on the quickly-gentrifying Oranienstrasse in Kreuzberg, which Lange says "still faces eviction...the situation remains dire... these small stores in most cases do not have the financial resources to sustain the enormous rent increases they are threatened with."

The Späti was among the businesses which the group illuminated with lanterns on Saturday evening, November 17th, to bring attention to the development sweeping through the neighbourhood.

The very existence of groups like Bizim Kiez is some comfort, however, and rallies to save the Oranienspäti - and other businesses like it - will continue later this month. It's clear that Berliners understand the value that spätis add to the fabric and culture of their city; staying up with the revellers and offering all manner of weird and wonderful trinkets - whatever the hour of day, or night, may be.