

Workingtitle:
36 is drifting. (ger.: Kreuzberg bleibt unhöflich)
a documentary film by Silke Botsch.

Synopsis.

„SO 36“ is drifting (Kreuzberg bleibt unhöflich)

I live in Kreuzberg, a district in Berlin best known for its contradictions: ghetto, hip; rebellious, chic; poor and lucrative. Where police once locked up all seven bridges to control the riots in the „trouble district“, now tourists flock to spend their money in the famously „colorful“ Kreuzberg. Rich and privileged entrepreneurs have appropriated much of the district, bringing employment and renewal, but pushing out many of the old communities. The conflict here is existential.

Kreuzberg yesterday

In the 70's class war was waged in the streets of Kreuzberg, its houses were taken over and turned into squats to save them from demolition. Kreuzberg teetered on the edge of western civilization, surrounded on three sides by Eastern Berlin, a district in hard times. Its residents were a colorful mix of Turkish foreign workers, punks, draft dodgers and leftover veterans from wars past. Shared toilets and coal heating were standard here. Alternative life styles and Turkish family values clashed and cohabited over the past thirty years. A multicultural, heterogeneous community arose. The postal code for this area, „SO 36,“ became synonymous with an alternative culture that had room for everyone.

Kreuzberg today.

The myth of Kreuzberg sells very well. Gentrification has already taken place. Kreuzberg „SO 36“ has been sold. International real estate speculators have bought up all that was to be had. They keep the facades the same, to make the tourists and the residents believe it's still the same old Kreuzberg. But behind those familiar facades, families and old people are being thrown out on the streets to make room for those who'll pay the most. The change has many advantages. Stores, bars and restaurants profit from the flow of tourists. Jobs have been created. Open attitudes here toward new cultural influences have increased the attractiveness for financial investment. But in whose interest? Less privileged communities can no longer afford to live here. Small stores for resident consumers can no longer pay the rents and make way for bars with Happy Hour Cocktails. Every free space, such as the Spree riverside banks, is being taken for new building projects. Town houses are being built on the empty lots - architectural gaps from WWII bombing which had become oases of green and playgrounds for city children. Real estate prices continue to rise. The Admirals Bridge in cozy evening reds, previously a romantic spot for lovers, now packed to the last square inch. Street musicians with no gift for music blast the nearby homes, all night long. Residents here can't open their windows in summer any longer. Their apartment house entryways have become public pissoires. Since the buildings are protected as historic monuments, they are not allowed to install gates to keep out the peeing public.

A low budget director has his office in a cheap four room apartment on the Heinrich Square. He rents the smallest room very profitably to students and tourists. A great side income for him. „In London it would be ten times more.“ This pays for his summer vacation.

No one wants to destroy, and yet developments bring change. Unnoticed by outsiders, friendly communal interchanges and public spaces are slowly disappearing.

In which ways and at what price will it be possible for Kreuzberg to remain an open, dynamic and tolerant home for these different groups?
Kreuzberg has never accepted its destiny lying down. Many are fighting for their homes here. People are taking to the streets in demonstration.
The eviction of an immigrant working class family draws protesting crowds so huge, the police have to be brought in by the busload.
Yet the new residents of Kreuzberg are also concerned with maintaining and improving the existing infrastructures of their new home district.
The old ways and mix of cultures is precisely why they moved here in the first place. They are seeking to become part of the multi-cultural, heterogeneous community.
Paradoxically, all the different players want the same thing: that Kreuzberg continues to stand for something, and to develop, and not just represent a myth from the past.
New residents want to give money for communal projects. Already established, local grass roots organizations try to stop them. Why? „You can't buy us with money!“

Since January 2012 Silke Botsch has trained her camera on the people, spaces and current events in Kreuzberg. The documentary will show the drama of confrontation and conflict in the streets, as well as small steps towards understanding and moving forward.

Through interviews and behind the scenes shooting the many different stories and perspectives will come to light.

Personal motivation/director's statement

Peace, Punk and Pancakes.

I grew up in West-Berlin (Gropiusstadt), just like my parents before me. As a teenager, Kreuzberg was my stomping ground, where I could play. Breaking the rules, going too far, all this was possible in Kreuzberg. Perfect for my confusing feelings of explosive energy, melancholy, freedom and joy of life.

I was fascinated and felt that I belonged, with my pink mohawk and the cool punk music in district SO 36: Kreuzberg.

I have lived in Kreuzberg for the past 21 years. My daughter (21) grew up here and also lives in this part of town. In 2000 I bought my apartment.

The once squatted apartments became available for sale to the residents at zero profit. Managed by ourselves and with an ecological, regenerative communal heating system with the newest technology. Shared terrace with a little sauna on the roof. I was lucky. No one back then could guess how much the property would rise in value.

Jogging by the Engelbecken pond, I'm bothered by the empty beer bottles lying scattered on the grass and the many glass shards on the path. As I pass, an older woman is busily collecting the bottles to improve her old age pension.

I, who was once part of „the problem“ – a rebel in rebellious Kreuzberg – have now joined the property-owning middle class. Or have I? Many of my generation stand between the radical, anti-authoritarian philosophies of their youth and the desire for a functioning infrastructure and healthy neighborhood community. What will it take to bring these different worlds together?

Facts and history for beginners.

Kreuzberg, a part of the combined Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg borough located south of Mitte since 2001, is one of the best-known areas of Berlin. Kreuzberg, colloquially also known as X-Berg, is often described as consisting of two distinctive parts: the SO 36, home to many immigrants; and SW 61, roughly coterminous with the old postal codes for the two areas in West Berlin. Kreuzberg has emerged from its history as one of the poorest quarters in Berlin in the late 1970s, during which it was an isolated section of West Berlin to one of Berlin's cultural centers in the middle of the now reunified city.

The borough is known for its very large percentage of immigrants and secondgeneration immigrants, many of whom are of Turkish ancestry. As of 2006, 31.6% of Kreuzberg's inhabitants did not have German citizenship. While Kreuzberg thrives on its diverse culture and is still an attractive area for many, the district is also characterized by high levels of unemployment and some of the lowest average incomes in Berlin.

The counterculture tradition of Kreuzberg led to a plurality of votes for the Green Party, which is unique among all Berlin boroughs. The local MP Hans-Christian Ströbele is the only Green politician directly elected to the federal Bundestag parliament.

After World War II, Kreuzberg's housing rents were regulated by law which made investments unattractive. As a result, housing was of low quality, but cheap, which made the borough a prime target for immigrants coming to Germany (and Berlin).[10] Starting in the late 1960s, increasing numbers of students, artists, and immigrants began moving to Kreuzberg. Enclosed by the Berlin Wall on three sides, the area became famous for its alternative lifestyle and its squatters, especially the SO 36 part of Kreuzberg.[11] Starting in 1987, there have been violent riots in SO 36 on Labour day.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kreuzberg suddenly found itself in the middle of the city again. The initially cheap rents and high degree of 19th century housing made some parts of the borough more attractive as a residential area for a much wider (and richer) variety of people. Today, Kreuzberg has one of the youngest populations of all European city boroughs; statistically, its population has been swapped completely twice in the last two decades.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kreuzberg>

<http://kottiundco.net/english>

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/Kreuzberg>