

**Wahlkreuzbesuch  
seminarium**

Kreuzberg Imaginarium  
/ Urban Transformation through Storytelling  
Edited by Petra Havelka

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*“The stories that we tell  
matter because they indicate  
how we see the world, and  
whether we believe we have  
the power and capacity to  
shape it for the better.”*

— The Dreaming City and the Power of Mass Imagination



*The workshop crew on the rooftop of 'Kotti' social housing block in Kreuzberg*

*Tutors:*

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Denica Indzhova

*Participants:*

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Valerie t'Hooft

Constant hunger for definition – through street mapping, guidebooks and technology tries to predefine the city. Nevertheless, through our personal experience we determine our own impression of the urban landscape. One becomes an actor as well as narrator. Both – the long term (residents) and short term (visitors) re-create the city's narrative every day.

How fundamental is this narrative of urban exploration, experience and storytelling in context of the quality of life and vitality of the city as such? Berlin Imaginarium explores the multi-layered urban neighbourhood of Kreuzberg as an experimental ground where limits are constantly re-defined.

The workshop supervised by Petra Havelka (*Marko&Placemakers*) and Denica Indzhova (*Hidden Borough*) took place in October 2014 as part of *Berlin Unlimited* urban arts festival organized by *Urban Transcripts*, *collagelab* and *Guerilla Architects*.

# kreuzberg

by Denica Indzhova and Nora Queck

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Berlin has an image of an alternative rebel and became a destination for cutting edge fashion, art, design and music. The consequence of that popularity is transforming the image of the city as market forces respond to the 'added value' this free spirit of Berlin and Berliners generated. But what makes up the spirit of Berlin and is it already fading away? Or has it found new quarters, parks and alleyways?

The districts of Berlin are very diverse, each having its own character; one can almost distinguish the citizens by the borough they live in. The residents of Kreuzberg, many of whom have squatted the area after the fall of the Berlin wall have created their own world within their community, and are known for being politically engaged. This area has also become very popular and touristic over the years, presenting potential to engage voices from different angles and viewpoints.

Intensity and density.

That comes to my mind when I think about Kreuzberg. Coexistence of different interests, ideologies and ideas; stitched together, becoming a thick, rich and multi-layered fabric. A fluently moving, changing and developing organism. Different pieces melting together and ripping apart at the same time.

Living in Kreuzberg means enjoying the many benefits that come along with a great diversity of people in one place. But it is also a constant struggle to define one's right to be here. This continuous change is intangible. It is frightening and inspiring at the same time. You can feel it in the streets and on the corners. You can hear people talk about it. You can see it written on the walls. Kreuzberg is telling a story which consists of the many stories of individuals. You just need to stop and listen.

# methodology

by Petra Havelka

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How can we contribute to the process of changing urban landscapes through storytelling? As designers, we have the power to invent and develop narratives beyond the physical design, in order to engage people and activate urban areas. Stories based on experience are retold and transformed, becoming part of the collective memory. The objective of the workshop was to explore the role of storytelling in creativity and city making, creating an *imaginarium*, where the limits and possibilities converge.

## *Day 1 and 2 - walking, observing, asking and listening*

The first two days were about absorbing as much information about Kreuzberg - both factual and emotional. Hours of walking and observing, combined with qualitative research based on tasting local food and interviews with local residents, business owners and visitors gave us an insight into Kreuzberg through its many voices and spatial rhythms.

## *Day 3 - creating the story*

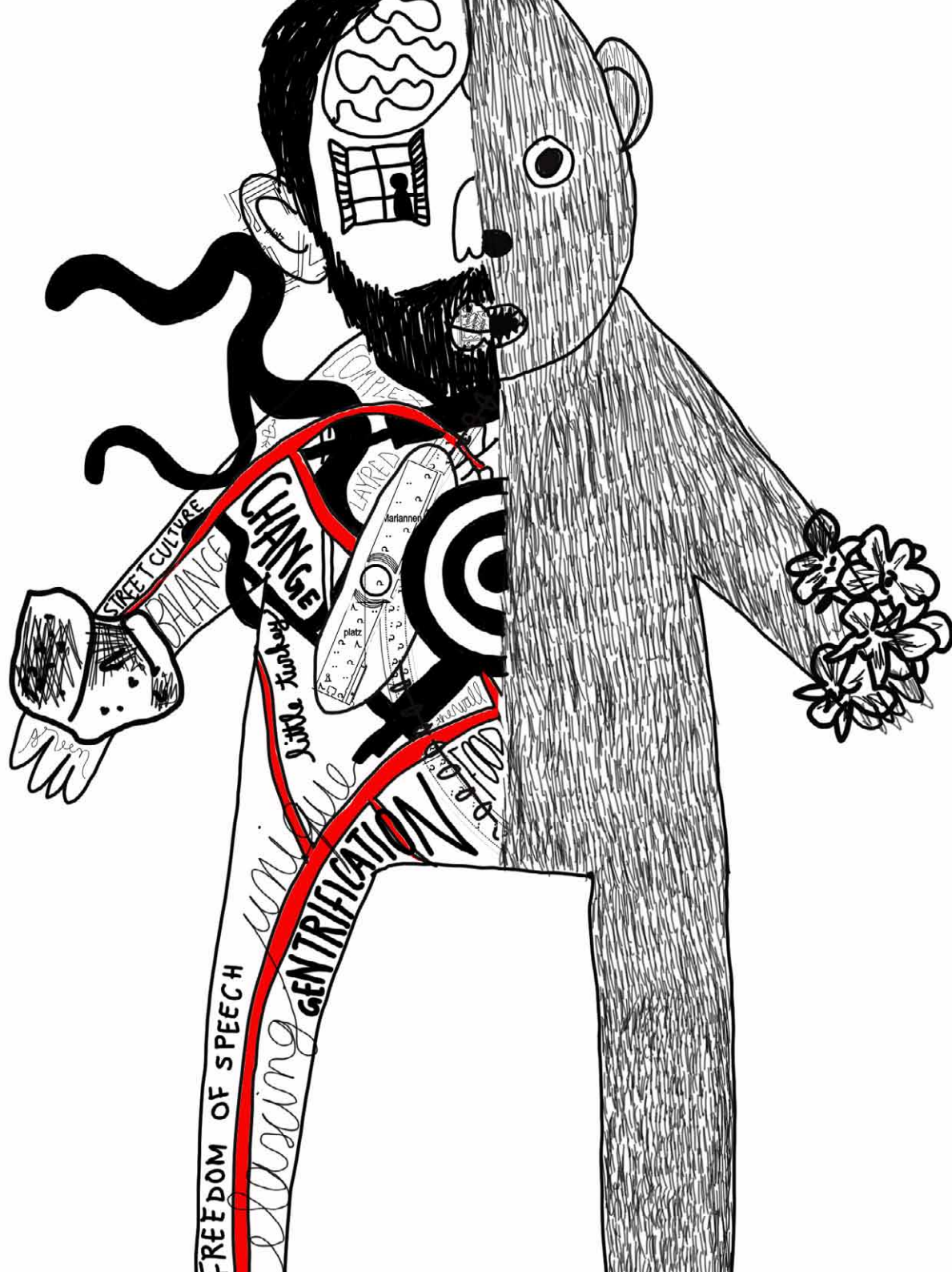
Having absorbed the different moods, spatial characters and aspirations of Kreuzbergers, each participant developed an impersonation of Kreuzberg in form of a fictional story. Through the metaphor of the story it was possible to synthesize the complex nature of Kreuzberg, its problems as well as opportunities through the personal lens of each participants. These subjective, yet very revealing stories converge and overlap on the most significant themes felt in the area - diversity, richness, as well as change, conflict, gentrification...

## *Day 4 - transforming*

The purpose of formulating these stories was not only to create an image of the area, but most importantly to encourage the participants to consider how the conflicts and tensions identified can be resolved by thinking about the personal needs of the protagonists of their stories. The ideas for transformation inspired by the stories initiate and enable social exchange, enhancing the quality of urban life through concrete proposals that range from large spatial interventions to temporary events and installations.

## *Day 5 - communicating*

Finally the stories and transformations come together in a joint narrative. This exercise in selection, hierarchisation and communication is an important part following a successful design development. Communicating not only the results, but also the process and methods is crucial in order to show reasoning behind and meaning of the outcomes.



*“Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.”*

— Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

# kotti catalogue

by Aziliz Pierre

Kotti – 13h30 – A man – Turkish – 60 years old – in Berlin for 40 years – owner of a convenient store – He worked in a wagon firm but lost his job at the fall of the wall, then worked in a cleaning firm and finally opened this shop 8 years ago – Selling beer at the moment of the conversation

Kotti -14h00 – A man – German – 28 years old – comes from Freiburg to visit a friend- student – He is in Kreuzberg to test a very good restaurant his friend recommended to him and which is supposed to be famous – Sitting at the terrace of the restaurant with two friends at the moment of the conversation

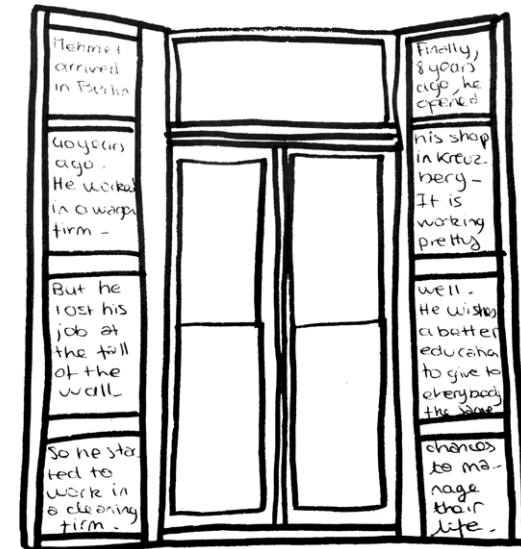
Kotti – 14h15 - A woman – Turkish – 38 years old – 2 children – in Berlin for 15 years – owner of a convenient store – She has two children and is worried for them cause she saw many terrible things in Kreuzberg and wishes that the district becomes cleaner – Working at the back of the shop at the moment of the conversation

Kotti – 14h30 – A man –German – 41 years old – living in Kreuzberg since he studied here – working in a book company settled in the Kreuzberg Zentrum – He wouldn't like to change anything to Kreuzberg – He is working at his office at the moment of the conversation

Kotti – 14h30 – A man – Turkish – 40 years old – in Berlin since 1968 – working in a betting company – he thinks that the Wall fell on them and made their life more difficult as Turkish people – He is waiting for the bets behind his desk at the moment of the conversation

Kotti – 14h50 – A man – Turkish – 32 years old – working in a Turkish book shop – he doesn't want to talk because there are all the time interviews and works going on about the gentrification of Kreuzberg – He is reading a book at the moment of the conversation

Kotti – 15h00 – A woman – Turkish – 35 years old – she has no job – 2 children- she moved to Berlin four years ago because she married a Turkish man working in the city – She doesn't know a lot of people and felt a bit strange when she arrived but now she likes Berlin – She is with her two children, bringing one to the doctor at the moment of the conversation



Kotti – 15h30 – A man – Turkish – 28 years old – student – he comes from Izmir to spend some holidays in Berlin with his friends – He drinks a beer at the café Kotti in which intellectuals are supposed to hang out at the moment of the conversation

Kotti – 15h40 – A man – Turkish – 24 years old – student – born in Berlin, he came back in 2000 to the city after few years away – He drinks a beer at the café Kotti in which intellectuals are supposed to hang on

Kotti – 13h00 – A man – German – 34 years old – working for the Green Party in the district of Kreuzberg – He helps all the people coming to his office with any kind of problems with the authorities – He often writes to landlords that want to evict the tenants of their flats to convince them not to do so, he says to them that they should think long-term and that if they kick out all the colourful people, Kreuzberg will lose its attraction power and thus its value and the rent will decrease - He just moved into a new place in Kreuzberg at the moment of the conversation

## *the animal dinner*

by Valerie T'Hooft

A group of friends comes together for dinner every first Monday of the month. They meet at 19 o'clock, but as usual Michael, the hare, is running late. He is always jumping around from place to place; managing his business, meeting people or discovering new things. While waiting the others are getting more and more hungry...

Xander, the raven, exclaims that he is not waiting again and that they should start. Of course Regina, the cat, really doesn't care, she wants to sneak around, stare at things or relax on top of the cupboard... But for now she just looks for a corner to stretch herself and have a drink.

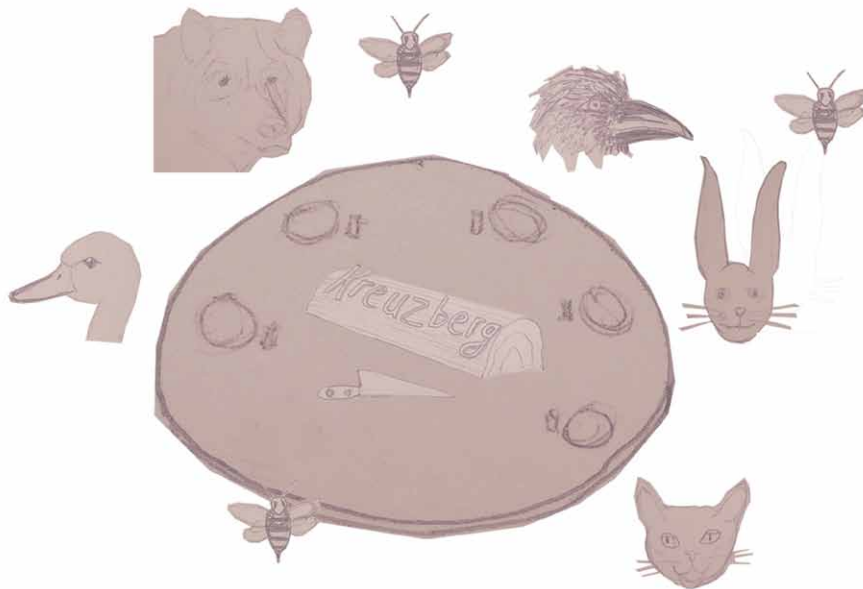
Even when Xander starts to pick onto the table, no one really listens, so he screeches even louder. Suddenly a bee zooms in, disturbing Annie's quacking. Even though Jean, the bee, was not invited, she has found her way to the dinner. It is Annie the duck that is worried about getting the kids in bed on time and about Michael, whether something may have happened to him... Starting to get really grumpy of all the noises, Sükrü, the bear, moans.

When the Kreuzberg Dish arrives, all eyes are on the table again. Finally they can eat. Annie suggests they should cut it into equal pieces but Sükrü complains that he needs a bigger piece. Regina sneaks in and starts licking everywhere, tasting the different ingredients. She can't help herself.

"Me too!" caws Xander, flying around the food. Everybody is now grabbing at the plate, it is pulled back and forth between Sükrü, Annie and Michael. Jean was able to taste most of it, as she is so small and nobody was noticing her while they were all too busy grabbing a piece. She buzzes over the table once again, and quickly leaves.

The raven is picking at the bear, so he holds the dish higher. But the duck and the hare are on it, pushing each other away. When the cat tries to climb the bear's arm, her claws scratch him and he lets go of the plate.

The Kreuzberg Dish falls apart on the floor and nothing is left to eat.



Regina  
the cat



Annie  
the duck



Michael  
the hare



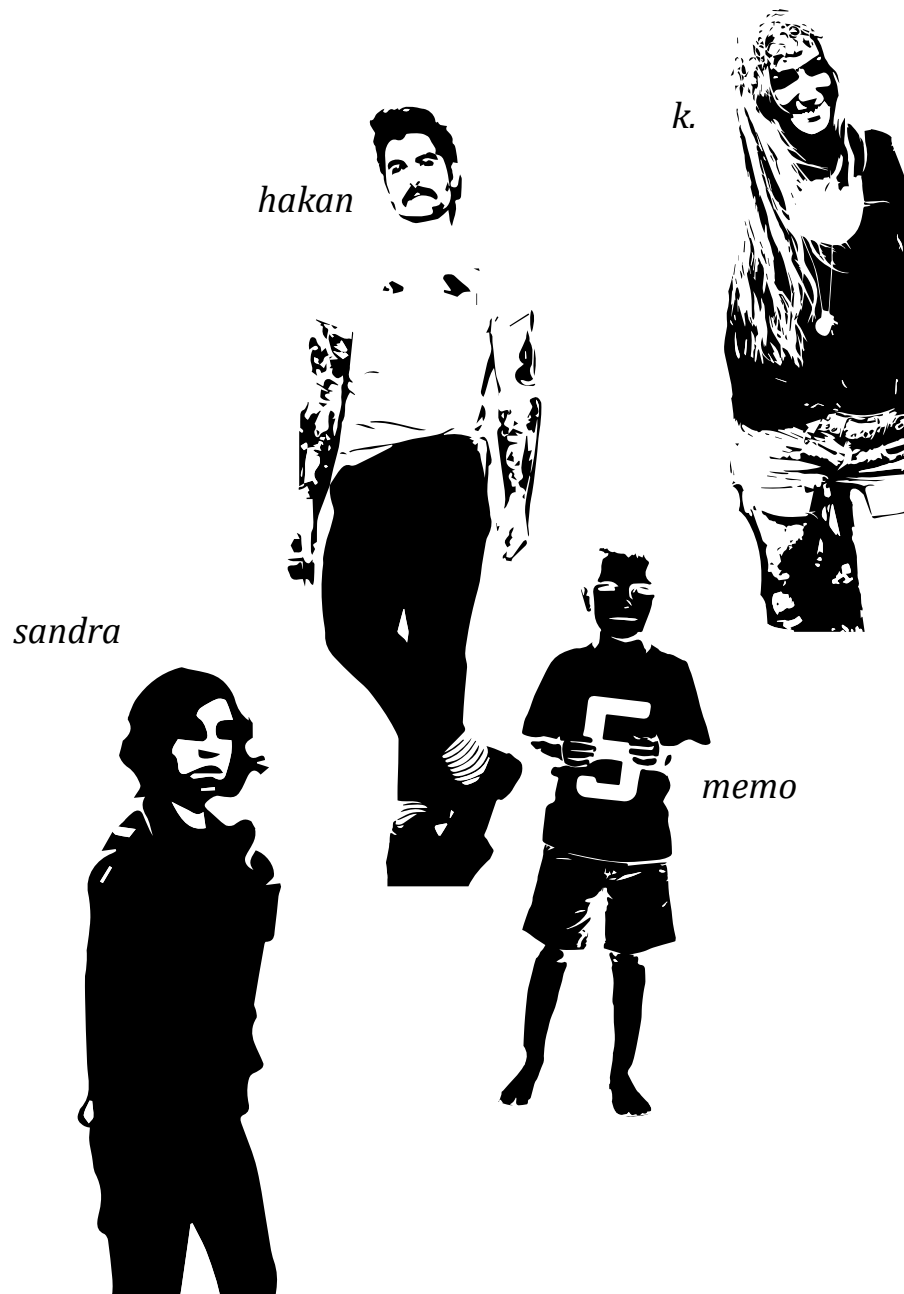
Sukru  
the bear



Xander  
the raven



Jean  
the bee



## k.

by Marta Busnelli

Today is a cloudy and windy day. K. is awake since 4 in the morning. She has cleaned her van twice and tidied her clothes. She couldn't sleep tonight. It's nearly 9 a.m. and she is shining. She doesn't seem like the same person a few months ago. Her hair and her skin are clean and bright, she is wearing a long blue skirt and a thigh white top that really fits her. She is outside the van planting some flowers in the common garden and waiting for Hakan. Today is the day when Hakan brings Memo to her place. This will be her week with Memo.

Memo is the 7 year old son of Hakan and K.'s love and he is an incredibly smart and special kid. Every mum believes her kid is special and extraordinary, but K. is not an ordinary mum and Memo is not an ordinary kid. He has already experienced so much for being so young. He learnt about tolerance, diversity and sharing, living with K. in the van almost all his life; when K. started to take drugs again Hakan took Memo away from her.

At Memo's birth Hakan and K. were still living together. They moved from the van to a small flat in the big social housing block in Kotti to give their son a chance for a normal life. K. didn't like to live in a flat but loved Hakan very much and trusted him about this decision. Hakan will never stop loving the mother of his child, but he is also conscious he cannot live how they were used to. K. is an incredible mother, an extraordinary person and artist, but she is not able to stop using drugs. Hakan stopped using drugs and slowed down his participation in collective neighbourhood actions. K. never did.

Now Hakan is seriously dating with a new girl, Sandra. Sandra has an ordinary job, ordinary appearance and ordinary opinions according to K. But Memo likes her and K. knows she should try to understand Sandra in order to be part of Memo's life again. Now that K. is clean again Memo can spend more time with his mum, and Hakan knows this is right.

Hakan and Memo should arrival any minute. K is really nervous and excited. She hasn't seen her baby for such a long time. Some friends told her that Sandra took care of Memo during this period, teaching him new things. K. was upset about this, but Hakan knows that things will always change and he wants the best for Memo's future. In a few weeks Hakan will move into a new apartment on the other side of the park, where once the Berlin wall stood. Memo will be able to spend more time with his mother again, as K.'s van is close to the park on the other side. He will spend some days in the van with K. and others in the flat with Hakan and Sandra. K. knows Memo will become even more extraordinary, carrying in him these two worlds.



# colour(less)ful heart

by Tamar Gurciyan

Now, I can recognise the X through the colourless ones. Don't ask how I am doing this. I had high pressure.

Ahhh...Anyway.

X is walking through the red colourful places. X couldn't change his colour but he is hungry and he decides to buy a döner kebab. His old friend Y is coming towards him. X knows that Y likes to talk about himself too much. Even though he hasn't seen X for two years, now, he is talking about the grey street where the last party he went to was. However, X hates the drug parties. Y changes his colour from grey to red. He orders a döner kebab too. After dinner, Y prefers to stay in the red street. X keeps walking.

Ahhh..my high pressure..

He arrives to the yellow space. He doesn't like yellow streets either. Five days ago, he turned his colour to yellow, he spent some money to see the spatial creations, although he doesn't understand art. Now many colourless people buy tickets to enter the yellow street. The yellow people are rising in numbers, while at the same time the colourless people start to overcome the colourful spaces.

Ahh what a high pressure..COLOURLESSNESS. Colourless people evolve and multiply in front of him within minutes. Colourlessness makes me blind. Do you see any colours?

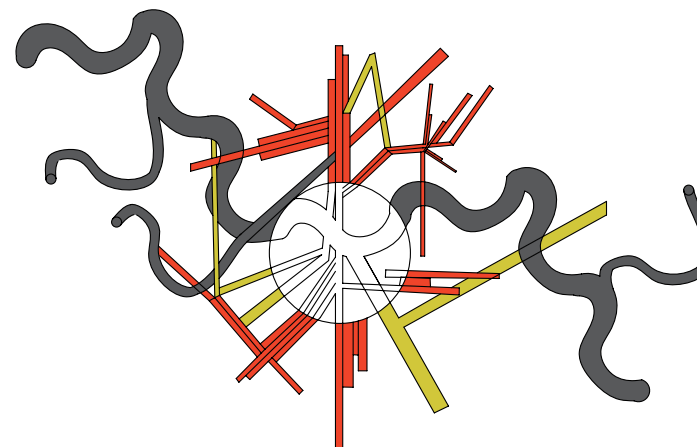
Ahhh...

Someone changes their colour to purple, another guy too. More people change their colour within a minute.

My alternative colour,  
My medicine,  
Purple!

What is happening? Yellow and grey places are purple now, X is purple too. My heart has high blood pressure but I am alright.

X changes his colour from purple to....ahh.



This is the heart of the Kreuzberg, Kotti (Kottbusser Tor). I have colourful streets and spaces that represent all my veins and arteries. If people want to connect with the places, they can adapt their colours to the colour of the street. Unless they desire to alter their colour, they can wander through my streets in the passive colourless way. Don't worry, nobody will mind.



My underground is full of drugs. People who want to use drugs can visit me. The colour of this place is grey and the streets are winding in a way that can cause dizziness. Be careful before you decide to change your colour!

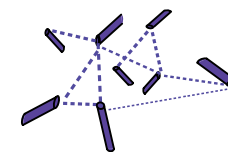
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I am the place where artists work and exhibit their creations. The colour here is yellow. Before you decide to change your colour, don't forget to pay some money in order to see these spatial artworks.



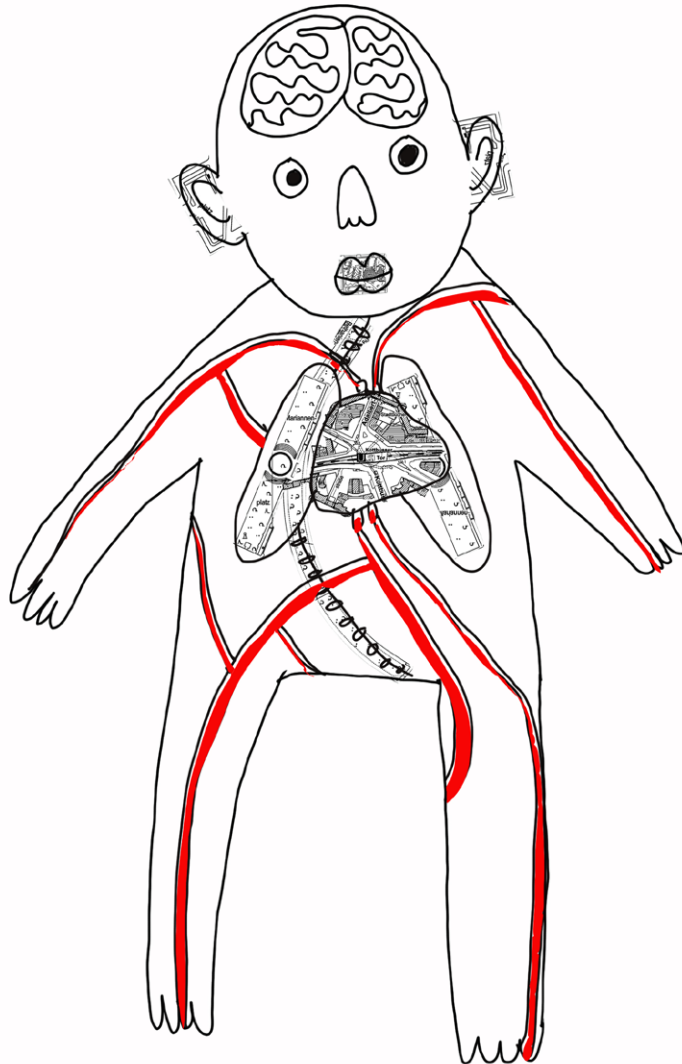
I have narrow streets where I generally dance and I'm full of people. Expanding my streets is quite difficult. The colour of these places is red. If you want to change your colour to red, first this must be approved by the community. However, you have the opportunity to eat delicious food in these streets without changing your colour.



I have an alternative colour, which is purple. It can occur in any part of my space. Purple is a conscience part of my body.

## *kreuzberg anatomy*

by Filipa Besteiro Lacerda



The blood is running through the veins of Kreuzberg, finding paths to his different organs. Reaching his heart, the blood it lingers for a bit and finds its way out again. What a problematic heart he has now, after beating for almost 200 years. Things were different when he was younger. He used to be very healthy, his heart used to beat calmly and no problems seemed to affect him or his body.

Suddenly things started to change and he started having terrible migraines. He thinks it is due to the millions of voices inside his head. They evoke complex and contradictory feelings that he does not know how to deal with. He often wishes he could find a way to release the pressure he has along his spine. He realizes now it certainly got damaged during the stressful time when half of his body was paralysed and he could not move for years.

Despite all of these tensions, Kreuzberg's true nature is optimistic and relaxed, he likes to open his eyes to everything that surrounds him, listen to people's opinions, contemplate how different they can be and how lucky he is to testimony that. His lungs have never given him a reasons to worry, they are clean and still allow him to take long walks or cycle. He enjoys walking bare feet, connected to the earth, to breathe in fresh air and smell the different scents around him. He also likes to put his hands on the ground and cultivate the food that will later feed him. Eating is one of his biggest passions, the second, they say, is Friedrichstrain. Legend believes they were in love since the first time they saw each other, but since their families were from different backgrounds, they would never allow them to see each other. They met in secret, made love in silence. No one knew about their love until Spree was born, uniting and separating them forever.

Kreuzberg hides in places no one else knows. The depths of his body, dark places of his soul. He sometimes acts out of animalistic instincts and his body does not fight the many viruses that attack him. They are part of his wild nature. He is worried though that things will change and he won't be able to adjust, that he will die along the way... but what is death to a creature like him? He frequently reminds himself of what his grandmother used to say: "nothing ever dies, everything transforms into something else..."

And he wonders, what will he transform into?

