Kreuzberg VS Google

K**reuzberg** is Berlin's most hip and cool area of the city, going from the poorest neighbourhood of West Berlin to the coolest, hosting the best punk and alternative punk scene. Since the 1970s this area has been the **heart of resistance and social protest**, but nowadays it also has the best nightlife and it gathers together creatives and startups. This, in fact, is the main reason why the technology giant Google wants to create a Campus right in this area.

The designated space is some square meters inside the **Umspannwerk**, which means "*transformer station*", as it is a former **power station** used nowadays for parties, events, restaurants. So reserving a space to Google for its campus is actually a good idea. The place will be little, just for ten Google employees but big enough for a dozen of startups to work and get together there. Google's aim is to create a place where they can support and empower local startups and entrepeneurship. **But what will happen if Google goes to Berlin?**



Photo: Gunnar Klack / Flickr CC

Supporting this protest is the website **Fuck Off Google**, which explains the reasons why they don't want Google to move to Berlin. They explain with articles and example the biggest concerns around Google, like the fact that they evade taxes and go against the law (their motto is "do the right thing"), or the fact that they were caught red-handed participating in NSA's mass surveillance. These very negative aspects around this technology giant are all thoroughly explained on the website and related articles. If you have anything to share with the world, they invite you to take action and participate in their wiki.

The main issue is **gentrification**: locals from Kreuzberg are

afraid of the arrival of this giant firm because workers will want to live closer to the campus, so housing rents will rise and locals will have to leave their homes, looking for a cheaper place to stay. This is already happening in the city, an issue that hits every European capital, such as London. Besides the fact that the whole city is undergoing a rapid gentrification, the biggest fear for locals is that Google will forcily move locals from the nearby houses. This happened in San Francisco, where, as an example, Jack Halprin, lawyer of Google, purchased a house in San Francisco and evicted the seven families in the building under the Ellis Act. This caused immediate protests, with signs saying "Evict Google".

This could even happen in Berlin, especially in Kreuzberg, where the locals are mainly young creatives, locals who prefer the dodgy, mysterious and still a bit punk way of living of the neighbourhood, so bringing Google within this vibrant reality *is like taking a fascist, homophobic guy inside the Kit Kat Club*.

Some people are happy to welcome the company in the city, as an opportunity to empower the economy and the industry, but the percentage of locals unhappy is higher. The streets of Kreuzberg have been lined with posters against the giant since the announcement. And even a local anarchist bookshop, **Kalabal! K**, is hosting a bi-monthly Anti-Google Cafe, and writing a newspaper entitled "Shitstorm: Against Google, displacement and tech dominance…" is being printed and circulated around the neighbourhood.

> *Berlin's brand new and wonderfully named newspaper, "Against Google, displacement and tech dominance…" #shitstorm pic.twitter.com/qa5cHKzSN3*
>
> *— Natalie H (@planetnatty) April 24, 2017*

So what will happen when Google, along with Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, will spread in every neighbourhood and city of the world, changing the way locals live and interact with technology and creativity? What will happen to Kreuzberg if the Campus will be made and startups will start working with Google? It’s not a future that people don’t want to make it happen, so it’s up to the people to make a change. **Take Action!**

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