German Urban Fieldsite

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Location of the fieldsite

The urban neighbourhood is a large suburban district in northwestern Berlin and is home to ca. 250 000 people, of which 18% are migrants. The neighbourhood is a typical eastern German residential area with large complexes of apartment blocks including extensive infrastructure and a large surface area including administratively incorporated villages. This latter marginal area is older, larger and less populated than the relatively young, smaller and more populated estates.

Population

During the socialist period mostly young skilled labourers and their families were settled here. The population structure changed with unification, when the natural aging process of the first generation of residents coincided with the mass departure of many above all younger residents to new residences in search of education and employment. The demographic prognosis is that the population will decline by an additional 7% by 2020.

This district nevertheless has the highest rate of households with children in Berlin and statistically, the younger population is overrepresented. The population as a whole is at the moment the second youngest in all of Berlin. But the death rate has shifted marginally higher than the birth rate in recent years and it is expected that the percentage of residents over 65 years of age will increase rapidly in the near future.

A number of different milieus can be found in the central settlement and in the marginal villages, as is to be expected, the latter tending towards middle class milieus.

View from a 14th floor
(photo: Simone Streif)

Weekly Market
(photo: Simone Streif)

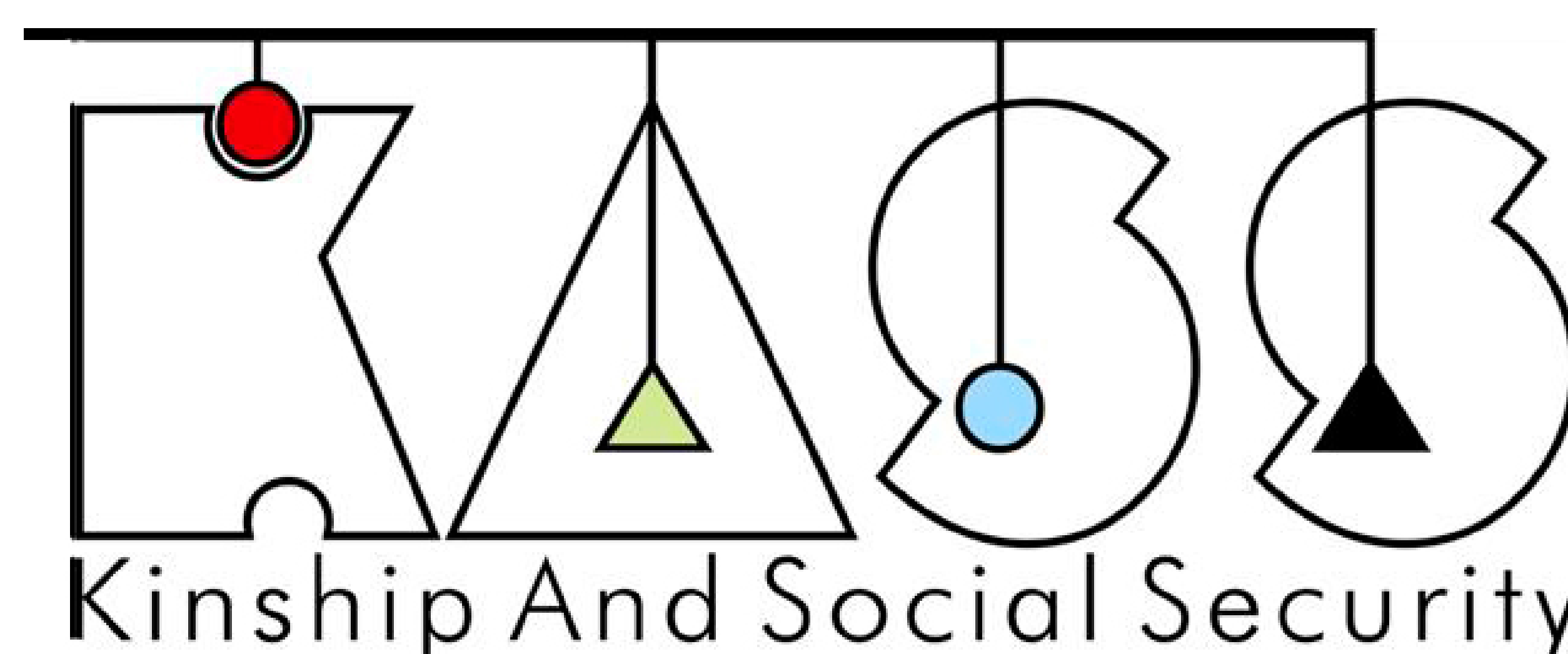Invention of tradition - Thanksgiving *(photos: Simone Streif)*

Economic development

According to the social index, the district is in no way remarkable, although it does exhibit a significant downward tendency. The percentage of residents with a middle school education, secondary education, tertiary education and those without any vocational training are all under the average for Berlin. The proportion of blue collar workers among the employed is higher and the proportion of white collar workers is marginally higher as well. The unemployment rate is lower than average as is the rate of welfare recipients.

12.2 percent of residents have an income below 500 EUR/month, and the mean income per person is 850 EUR/month which is lower than in all Berlin. However the mean household income is higher than average due to the two income structure, a heritage from socialist times.

Kinship and transfer/assistance

Inheritance does not play a role in intergenerational transfer as people only rarely own housing. Despite the still existing socialist pattern of two income households we witness a traditionalisation with respect to gender roles. Due to large mobility after unification family networks expand territorially.

Kinship And Social Security

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