Interweaving participation formats to strengthen representation and deliberation in urban mobility transformations.

Lessons from designing Kiezblocks in Berlin

How can cities engage diverse residents in urban mobility transformations? Drawing on a multi-format participation process for two Berlin Kiezblocks, this paper shows that combining participation formats with different recruitment methods, interaction types, and levels of public influence on planning decisions can strengthen representation and constructive deliberation.

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Abstract
Engaging residents in urban mobility transformations can support implementation by mitigating polarization and strengthening governance, yet designing inclusive participation processes remains challenging. We present a multi-format participation process for two Kiezblocks in Berlin-Mitte, developed with municipal planners, to engage diverse residents in constructive deliberation (external inclusion), make their perspectives heard (internal inclusion), and enable different levels of public influence on planning decisions. Drawing on field notes and structured reflections within the transdisciplinary consortium, we describe the participation formats including their recruitment methods, interaction types, and main strengths and weaknesses. Although suitable format combinations depend on goals, target groups, and local contexts, experiences suggest that interweaving stakeholder meetings, targeted outreach formats, and formats based on random selection can strengthen inclusion while providing different levels of public influence on planning decisions. Targeted outreach formats were particularly valuable for engaging groups underrepresented in participation processes, including children and residents with migration background, while formats with random selection helped counter misleading perceptions of polarization. In contrast, formats based on self-selection, including online participation and town hall meetings, appeared more susceptible to domination by louder voices and less conducive to constructive deliberation, with implications for designing participation processes for sustainability transformations.

Keywords
deliberation, Kiezblock, low-traffic neighborhoods, mobility transformation, public participation, Superblock, sustainability transition, urban governance

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Across the world, cities are prototyping urban transformation concepts, including 15-minute cities (Moreno 2024), low-traffic neighborhoods (Aldred et al. 2024), Superblocks (Bauer et al. 2024), and Kiezblocks, the Berlin variant of Superblocks. These concepts seek to redistribute street space toward sustainable mobility, social use, and urban greening, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, they increasingly encounter intense public debate ranging from unfounded conspiracy claims to evidence-based criticism, which can slow or hinder implementation (Marquet et al. 2025).

Participation processes can help foster trust between residents and municipal administrations, mitigate polarization, and support effective governance (Alhassan 2025). In urban transformation processes, however, participation practice often faces three key shortcomings. First, groups most burdened by the status quo of car-dominated streets, including children, older adults, and residents with migration background, are frequently underrepresented in processes shaping the built environment, risking the reinforcement of existing inequalities (Rammert and Hausigke 2026). Second, participation processes risk mirroring rather than moderating polarized public debates (Zografos et al. 2020). Third, the level of influence afforded to participants may not be adequately matched to the purpose and context of participation (IAP2 2024).

In collaboration with municipal planners, we thus designed, implemented, and reflected on interwoven participation formats for two Kiezblocks in Berlin to engage diverse residents in constructive deliberation, make their perspectives heard, and enable different levels of public influence on planning decisions. In this article, each format is described in detail including recruitment method, interaction type, and main strengths and weaknesses to enable readers to assess feasibility within their own contexts and adapt formats accordingly.

Localizing the Superblock concept in Berlin

Superblocks aim to reduce motorized through-traffic in residential neighborhoods by routing traffic along major roads while encouraging active mobility and public transport use (De Boeck et al. 2026 b, Bauer et al. 2024, Tiran et al. 2025, Nieuwenhuijsen et al. 2024). This frees urban space for community use and blue-green infrastructure, supporting social cohesion, physical activity, urban cooling, and water management. The growing popularity of the concept is linked to its relatively low implementation costs, adaptability to existing built environments and local contexts, and potential for scaling.

In Berlin, the concept emerged as the *Kiezblock,* adopting the local term *Kiez* for residential neighborhood (Jarass and von Schneidemesser 2021). Unlike the initial top-down implementation of Superblocks in Barcelona (Zografos et al. 2020), Kiezblocks in Berlin originated from civil society initiatives. These initiatives secured district-level political support for low-cost measures such as modal filters, school zones, bicycle streets, new plazas, and urban greening to reduce through-traffic and improve traffic safety and equitable street space distribution. Kiezblocks are now institutionally co-produced across Berlin through collaborations between civil society and local administrations (Rammert and Hausigke 2026), with varying ambitions and implementation outcomes (Marken et al. 2026). A detailed comparison with related measures is presented by Rammert and Hausigke (2026).

Designing inclusive participation processes for Kiezblocks

Kiezblocks and related concepts are contested policies embedded in broader struggles over power and political authority, particularly regarding who has the legitimacy to shape visions of the future city (De Boeck et al. 2026 a, Zografos et al. 2020). When groups affected by planning decisions are not adequately represented in participation processes, social inequalities may be reinforced and processes such as gentrification intensified (Anguelovski et al. 2023, Rammert and Hausigke 2026). Such dynamics can contribute to opposition and polarization, as observed during early Superblock implementations in Barcelona, which some residents perceived as an illegitimate top-down intervention (Zografos et al. 2020).

Increased participation in planning processes is used not only to increase democratic legitimacy but also to improve democratic governance (Falanga 2020). Although participation has been integrated into Kiezblock planning from the outset, recent experiences suggest that vulnerable groups remain underrepresented in many participation processes (Rammert and Hausigke 2026, Marken et al. 2026). Groups identified as both particularly affected by car-dominated streets and least likely to be reached include children, older adults, and residents with migration background (Barbarino and Seydel 2025, Klaever et al. 2025).

Constructive participation therefore depends on who is included and how participation is organized. The literature distinguishes between external and internal inclusion (von Schneidemesser et al. 2023, Young 2002). External inclusion concerns who is able to participate. Self-selection formats, for example, tend to overrepresent participants with stronger or more extreme views and those who are "wealthier, better educated or otherwise advantaged" (Fung 2006, p. 72). Recruitment through sortition can help counterbalance these tendencies by reducing the dominance of loud or extreme minorities (Landemore 2012). We therefore combined participation formats using different recruitment methods. However, broad participation alone does not guarantee meaningful inclusion. Established privileges and power asymmetries can still shape whose perspectives are heard (Mendelberg et al. 2014, Veloso et al. 2026).

Internal inclusion therefore refers to the extent to which participants can contribute substantively and are heard within the process (Schmidt 2024, Young 2002). To strengthen internal inclusion, we combined formats with different interaction types, including online and in-person settings, which shape the condi-

tions for deliberation (Friess and Eilders 2015). Deliberative democratic innovations aim to strengthen this inclusivity through expert facilitation and rules of deliberation encompassing listening, respect, reflection, and openness to persuasion (Dryzek et al. 2019). Given that Kiezblocks intersect with questions of social equity and representation, we aimed to design participation processes actively addressing vulnerabilities such as language barriers, cultural contexts, and accessibility in order to better include those most burdened by the status quo.

Beyond external and internal inclusion, participation formats differ in the level of influence they provide participants over decision-making. The International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) *Spectrum of Public Participation* distinguishes informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering as progressively greater levels of public influence on decisions (IAP2 2024). Inclusive participation therefore concerns both whose perspectives are represented and heard and how strongly they shape decisions.

Case study and methodology

The *KlimaKieze* project (2023 to 2026), funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, was carried out by public health researchers and social scientists at Heidelberg University and the Research Institute for Sustainability together with municipal planners from the Streets and Parks Department Berlin-Mitte. Activities focused on two markedly different neighborhoods. Compared to Nördliche Luisenstadt (hereafter, N. Luisenstadt), Antonkiez is more densely populated, has a higher proportion of residents with migration background, and experiences greater noise and air pollution burdens.

Grounded in the transdisciplinary research paradigm (Lang et al. 2012) and drawing on the framework of external and internal inclusion (von Schneidemesser et al. 2023) as well as the *Spectrum of Public Participation* (IAP2 2024), we applied an iterative three-phase approach to 1. design, 2. implement, and 3. reflect on a participation process consisting of multiple formats. Although presented consecutively here for clarity, the phases were partly implemented in parallel to enable rapid learning cycles and adaptation to changing local circumstances and needs. Project consortium members, including municipal planners, assumed shifting roles as process designers, facilitators, and self-reflexive experts throughout the project (Wittmayer and Schäpke 2014).

To inform the process design phase, we drew on prior scientific and practical experience in facilitation and urban transformation, including earlier efforts to prototype the Kiezblock concept in Berlin with civil society organizations (Jarass and von Schneidemesser 2021) and exchanges with municipal experts implementing Superblocks and other proximity-based urban planning concepts in Europe (Bauer et al. 2024). Prior to the project, the district parliament had already decided on Kiezblocks in both neighborhoods following citizen-led initiatives. The scope of the participation process was thus *how* (rather than *whether*) to implement Kiezblocks. Early discussions with municipal planners highlighted limited financial and personnel resources. We therefore designed the process so that each participation format could function either as a stand-alone module or in combination with others, depending on local capacities and needs.

In the implementation phase, members of the project consortium conducted the participation formats (table 1) with the exception of the neighborhood assemblies, which were co-designed and facilitated by a trained facilitator. Municipal planners acted as co-facilitators or observers, except during floating contact points and targeted stakeholder encounters. All formats were >

TABLE 1: Characteristics of participation formats used in the Kiezblocks project. Levels of participation are based on the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) *Spectrum of Public Participation* (IAP2 2024).

PARTICIPATION FORMAT	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	RECRUITMENT METHOD	INTERACTION TYPE
stakeholder meetings	inform, involve	10 per neighborhood	targeted stakeholder mapping	small group, in-person
floating contact points	inform, consult	Antonkiez: 70, N. Luisenstadt: 50	active outreach in public spaces	individual, in-person
online participation	inform, consult	Antonkiez: 19, N. Luisenstadt: 136	self-selection based on open call	individual, anonymous, asynchronous
targeted stakeholder encounters	inform, consult	Antonkiez: 23, N. Luisenstadt: 15	direct outreach to businesses	individual, in-person
household survey	inform, consult	687 respondents	random sample from citizens' register	individual, written
neighborhood assemblies	involve, collaborate	Antonkiez: 8, N. Luisenstadt: 20	random sample from citizens' register	small group, deliberative, in-person
town hall meetings	inform	Antonkiez: 20, N. Luisenstadt: 200	self-selection based on open call	collective, one-to-many, in-person

implemented in both neighborhoods with minor adaptations to local contexts, enabling comparisons across neighborhoods and formats.

During the reflection phase, consortium members continuously evaluated and adapted the participation process in response to emerging lessons and changing external conditions. By closely linking reflection and implementation, we created structured opportunities for collective learning within the consortium. To assess external inclusion, we primarily analyzed participant composition, including participant numbers, and self-reported prior participation experiences. Internal inclusion was assessed using a pre-designed template for field notes, focusing particularly on interactions, including the tone of exchanges, distribution of speaking time, and quality of deliberation. Levels of public influence on planning decisions were characterized according to IAP2's (2024) *Spectrum of Public Participation*.



FIGURE 1: Floating contact point. A banner reading "Traffic in the Kiez: What's going well? What are the problems?" (translation: authors) together with active outreach by research team members invited residents to share experiences related to mobility and public space.

Interwoven formats of the participation process

The following sections describe the participation formats (table 1) in chronological order, documenting their aims and implementation.

Stakeholder meetings

The stakeholder meetings aimed to establish personal contact with local actors, inform them about the project, answer questions, and foster a shared understanding of its goals. Moderated by consortium members, the meetings helped build a stakeholder network that supported subsequent participation formats by disseminating information about the Kiezblocks and gathering input from local communities. Bi-monthly follow-up meetings of approximately 1.5 hours at community locations within the neighborhoods facilitated sustained engagement, ongoing information sharing, and ad-hoc exchange. Participants were recruited based on stakeholder mappings and included representatives of (pre-)schools, neighborhood organizations, local Kiezblock initiatives, and neighborhood-based social workers, thereby strengthening external inclusion in subsequent participation formats. The format aimed to *inform* and *involve* stakeholders in the participatory process, with some initiatives, neighborhood organizations, and social workers subsequently *collaborating* with us in the neighborhood assemblies.

Floating contact points

Floating contact points (FCP, figure 1) aimed to gather input from a broad range of residents, including groups often underrepresented in participation processes, such as older adults and residents with migration background. FCP consisted of temporary cargo bike stands with fold-out tables offering warm beverages at different neighborhood locations, including schools. By meeting residents in their everyday environments and requiring minimal time commitment, FCP lowered barriers to participation. Gentle multilingual prompts helped engage initially hesitant participants ("Ok, no problem! But where do you usually go? What is it like going there with your daughter?"), often resulting in rich input. Feedback was documented on templates, while stickers placed on maps linked comments to specific locations. The aim of the format was to *inform* and *consult* a broad range of residents whose opinions on the topic would otherwise likely not have been heard.

Overall, 70 residents in Antonkiez and 50 in N. Luisenstadt contributed input. Most participants (71 %) had never previously engaged in participation processes, indicating successful external inclusion. Participants ranged from schoolchildren to older adults using walkers. Multilingual facilitation in English, Kurdish, and Turkish further strengthened external inclusion by enabling participation among residents with limited German proficiency, and supported internal inclusion by fostering trust in the sincerity of the process. In Antonkiez, the Kurdish-speaking team member accounted for more than half of all interactions. One-on-one conversations also supported internal inclusion by limiting the dominance of more vocal participants. When several residents engaged simultaneously, facilitators used body language, positioning, and direct address to reduce unequal participation dynamics.

Online participation

Building on the FCP, the online participation aimed to gather additional input on experiences regarding mobility and public space from a self-selected audience. Input was collected through Berlin's central participation platform *mein.berlin.de*. Findings from the FCP were summarized, translated into English and Turkish, and presented on a digital map. Residents were invited to participate through municipal press releases, website announcements, and stakeholder networks established during the stakeholder meetings. Registered users could comment on existing input and link additional suggestions to specific locations. All

contributions and responses to proposed Kiezblock measures were publicly visible on the platform. The aim of this format was to *inform* residents about the upcoming neighborhood redesign and to *consult* the broader public.

Participation differed substantially between neighborhoods. In N. Luisenstadt, 136 users submitted 264 ideas and 269 comments, whereas only 19 users in Antonkiez contributed 24 ideas and 14 comments. This discrepancy may partly reflect differences in accessibility. Although the FCP findings had been translated into English and Turkish, the platform itself was only available in German and required high levels of civic and digital literacy, likely posing greater barriers in Antonkiez with a higher proportion of residents with migration background. In contrast, the high turnout in N. Luisenstadt was likely due to mobilization through a well-established local Kiezblock initiative and a letter from the board of a large housing cooperative encouraging its 5,000 members to engage critically with the plans. This may have reduced internal inclusion, as a small number of users frequently dominated discussions through the volume and tone of their comments. Internal inclusion was likely further constrained because discussions were neither moderated nor fact-checked, allowing misleading claims to circulate without contextualization. Examples included assertions that residents had not been sufficiently involved or the false claim that emergency service access would be restricted. Because participation was anonymous, external inclusion could not be assessed directly.

Targeted stakeholder encounters with local businesses

Targeted stakeholder encounters aimed to inform local businesses about the Kiezblock, answer questions, document concerns, and gather input on logistical needs for planners, particularly on streets most affected by the measures. Two researchers (IJ: male, planner; NK: female, participation expert) visited 38 businesses across both neighborhoods during opening hours. They distributed information leaflets outlining the measures, underlying motivations, and contact details before engaging in detailed exchanges with business representatives. A short survey collected additional input. This format *informed* businesses about the upcoming changes and *consulted* them on their mobility and delivery needs.

The in-person encounters strengthened internal inclusion. This helped to reduce, though not eliminate, conflicts and fostered respectful and constructive engagement with competing interests, including among opponents of the Kiezblock. One illustrative encounter involved a shop owner who initially opposed Kiezblock measures because he believed delivery trucks would no longer be able to access his store. During the conversation, he learned that deliveries would remain possible. As he also lived in the neighborhood, he agreed that traffic problems, particularly nighttime noise, needed to be addressed, although he considered speed bumps more appropriate than modal filters. By the end of the exchange, he expressed appreciation for the conversation. External inclusion was strengthened by directly approaching the most affected businesses and gathering constructive input for planners, although not all businesses could be contacted. Some business owners also volunteered to inform neighboring businesses that the research team had missed, further broadening outreach.

Household survey

The household survey aimed to investigate public support for Kiezblock measures. A random sample of around 5,500 residents aged 18 years and older living in the two neighborhoods was drawn from the citizens' register and invited to participate in the cross-sectional survey (response rate: 12.5 %). Survey findings were presented at neighborhood assemblies to *inform* the planning of specific Kiezblock measures.

The survey offered evidence of popular support for Kiezblock measures, ranging from 61 to 88 % for each individual measure (Lünow et al. 2026), challenging widely held perceptions of a highly polarized public discourse. This in turn supported constructive dialog among participants of the neighborhood assemblies (see below). However, external inclusion remained limited due to the underrepresentation of residents with migration background and supporters of political parties opposing Kiezblock measures, although the sample closely matched official age and gender statistics (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2026). The survey *informed* participants about upcoming changes and *consulted* them about their opinions.

Neighborhood assemblies

Neighborhood assemblies aimed to co-create Kiezblock concepts with residents, municipal planners, and researchers in a deliberative setting. In each neighborhood, 300 residents randomly selected from the citizens' register, stratified by age and gender, were invited by postal mail in the four most widely spoken languages to participate. Due to low response rates, all respondents were invited instead of applying a planned two-step selection procedure, increasing participation but reducing representativeness.

Moderated by and co-designed with external facilitators, participants engaged in a multi-step process over three evenings and two weekends. First, participants were invited to develop worst-case neighborhood scenarios and identify user groups often neglected in public discourse to encourage consideration of collective interests beyond individual preferences. Second, results from previous formats, including FCP and the household survey, and proposals from prior local Kiezblock initiatives were presented. Municipal planners also introduced Kiezblock measures and explained their costs, implementation time, and functional characteristics using infographics to support informed deliberation. Third, residents developed Kiezblock concepts in small groups, which were subsequently assessed for technical and legal feasibility by the Streets and Parks Department Berlin-Mitte. Fourth, two months later, planners presented revised implementable concepts. Remaining disagreements were addressed through facilitated negotiations. Final decisions were made using systemic consensing, which prioritizes solutions with the lowest level of >

objection. The resulting plans were more ambitious than those originally proposed by the municipal administration and included, *inter alia*, two small plazas in Antonkiez and one in N. Luisenstadt on former street space. During these assemblies, participants were *involved* in the decision-making process by developing implementable concepts.

A second round of neighborhood assemblies was conducted seven months later, using project incubators as a method to develop projects through which residents could take ownership of the Kiezblock. We *collaborated* with local stakeholders to develop and pitch project ideas and co-facilitate the incubators.

External inclusion was limited by low response rates to the postal invitations. One possible reason is the time commitment required of participants for the assemblies. In the final assemblies, residents with higher education and those without a migration background were overrepresented. Internal inclusion was strengthened through external facilitation, which structured deliberation, maintained focus, and managed time.

Town hall meetings

Town hall meetings aimed to inform residents about the planned Kiezblocks. They were invited to these evening events through online announcements, media, and local multipliers. At the meetings, municipal planners and the responsible district councilor presented the motivation for implementing Kiezblocks, the specific measures, and the implementation timeline. During the subsequent discussions, members of the neighborhood assemblies also shared their experiences.

External inclusion was limited in both meetings, with families with children largely absent and men aged 35 years and older overrepresented. In Antonkiez, discussions remained relatively constructive and cordial. In contrast, the meeting in N. Luisenstadt was dominated by a small number of outspoken participants, including district-level opposition politicians, whose contributions ranged from constructive criticism to hostility and substantially limited internal inclusion. Deliberation improved only marginally after participants were divided into smaller discussion groups. As the town hall meetings primarily aimed to *inform* residents toward the end of the planning process, the limited scope for influencing decisions may also have contributed to these tensions.

Discussion

The participation formats demonstrated distinct strengths and weaknesses, alongside varying implications for external and internal inclusion (table 2).

Outreach-based participation formats that reduced self-selection through randomized or targeted recruitment, such as stakeholder meetings, FCP, or neighborhood assemblies, strengthened external inclusion by engaging groups often underrepresented in participation processes. These formats also supported internal inclusion by fostering less polarized exchanges. Compared with other formats, FCP appeared particularly effective in reaching children, residents with migration background, and individuals without prior participation experience. Translation support further improved external inclusion by enabling participation of residents with limited German proficiency, who were largely excluded from other formats.

By contrast, open participation formats based on self-selection, such as town hall meetings and online participation, were less successful in achieving external and internal inclusion.

Self-selection in open participation formats also appeared to reinforce impressions of polarization. Self-selected participants with more extreme positions tended to dominate these formats, making Kiezblocks appear more polarizing than indicated by the household survey. Media dynamics can further amplify this effect by creating "false balance," in which minority opinions appear more widespread than is the case (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004). Formats based on random outreach helped counter this impression. Correspondingly, the household survey, based on a random sample, indicated substantially lower polarization regarding the proposed Kiezblock measures than open formats. Other outreach-oriented formats such as FCP and neighborhood assemblies produced findings more consistent with the household survey than with the polarized portrayals found in media coverage (Heimerzheim 2025).

Most in-person formats strengthened internal inclusion, with the exception of town hall meetings. Participants generally interacted respectfully and constructively, even when expressing disagreement or frustration. These formats enabled participants not only to contribute their perspectives, but also to learn about the rationale behind Kiezblocks, exchange views with others, and discuss potential advantages and disadvantages of the proposed measures. Facilitated deliberation during the neighborhood assemblies ensured that all participants could make their voices heard and enabled constructive dialog. For example, facilitation enabled two older women who initially struggled to put their points across to introduce counterpoints to more dominant voices in the process. In this way, in-person and outreach-oriented formats can help "include rarely heard voices and address power dynamics" (Klaever et al. 2025, p. 568), thereby addressing persistent challenges in municipal participation processes and countering power imbalances at the micro level. At the macro level, outreach through FCP helped address broader inequalities in participation. Approximately 70 % of participants had never participated in such a process, and their input ultimately contributed to implemented changes.

Participation processes were also shaped by local contexts. For example, open and anonymous participation formats in Antonkiez remained largely constructive, whereas comparable formats in N. Luisenstadt were considerably more conflictual. This difference may partly reflect the stronger mobilization capacity of political actors in N. Luisenstadt. Following the launch of the online participation, mobilization by these actors reduced the quality of deliberation in the absence of procedural safeguards, mirroring polarized media debates.

TABLE 2: Strengths and weaknesses of the participation formats prototyped in the Kiezblocks project and their implications for external and internal inclusion.

PARTICIPATION FORMAT	EXTERNAL INCLUSION	INTERNAL INCLUSION	MAIN STRENGTHS	MAIN WEAKNESSES
stakeholder meetings	low, selected groups only	high, facilitated group discussion	network building, ongoing cooperation	limited to organized actors
floating contact points	high, active outreach to all passers-by	high, one-on-one, multilingual support	reach typically excluded groups (e.g., youth, migrants), low participation barriers, spatially specific input	limited depth of engagement, time-intensive when aiming for broad coverage
online participation	low, self-selection, digital and linguistic barriers	low, unmoderated, louder voices dominate	scalability, permanent records, spatially specific input	exclusion of less digitally literate individuals, risk of misinformation and polarized discourse
targeted stakeholder encounters	low, selected groups only	high, one-on-one, respectful dialog	address specific concerns, reducing misinformation, and building trust among affected stakeholders	limited to reachable businesses, conflicts may persist
household survey	moderate, randomly selected sample, but self-selection within sample	high, responses of all participants equally represented	quantitative results, challenges the impression of pronounced polarization	response bias (e.g., youth, migrants), lack of deliberation
neighborhood assemblies	moderate, random sample aimed for demographic representativity, but limited participation	high, professional facilitation, structured interaction	deep deliberation, mutual learning, consensus-building, development of detailed proposals	low response rate, need for specialized facilitation expertise
town hall meetings	low, self-selected attendance	low, partly hostile atmosphere, louder voices dominate	transparency, broad invitation	self-selection bias, risk of polarized, conflictual, and intimidating atmosphere

Interweaving complementary participation formats with different recruitment methods, interaction types, and levels of public influence on planning decisions helped maximize external and internal inclusion. Rather than merely combining formats side by side, results from one format were fed into others, enabling residents to influence planning in different ways at different stages of the process. Formats aimed primarily at *informing* or *consulting* could generate input that subsequently informed formats with greater opportunities for *involvement* or *collaboration*. Thus, the value of a participation format does not necessarily depend on its level of public influence, but on how its purpose and level of influence complement other formats within the overall process. For example, many residents may assume that support for less automobile-oriented planning is a minority position, a bias described as *motonormativity* (Walker and te Brömmelstroet 2025). Such perceptions may discourage residents from expressing support for Kiezblock measures. Presenting household survey findings during the neighborhood assemblies provided participants with a more accurate understanding of neighborhood preferences and may thereby have reduced the influence of motonormativity. Although the household survey was partly affected by response bias, recruitment based on a random sample nevertheless provided a more robust picture of neighborhood preferences than formats based entirely on self-selection. Random sampling thus reduced the influence of loud or extreme minority positions.

The development of *Maxstraßenplatz* (Antonkiez) illustrates how such interweaving can translate participation across formats and levels of public influence into changes in the built environment (figure 2, p. 268). Input initially gathered through outreach-oriented formats such as FCP was subsequently fed into formats offering greater opportunities for involvement and collaboration, such as neighborhood assemblies, ultimately informing the development of implementable measures.

Conclusion

While scholars recognize the value of linking participation formats, practice literature outpaces science on the specifics. Here we begin to develop a vocabulary and framework for combining formats to meet broader participation goals. Our experiences suggest considering three complementary dimensions encompassing recruitment methods, interaction types, and levels of public influence on planning de-

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FIGURE 2: Development of *Maxstraßenplatz* through a multi-stage participation process. Map source: OpenStreetMap.

cisions. Interweaving formats across these dimensions, particularly by feeding the results of one format into another, appeared promising for strengthening external and internal inclusion. Suitable combinations depend on target groups, local contexts, and available capacities.

Targeted outreach formats were particularly valuable for engaging groups often underrepresented in participation processes, while randomized formats helped counter misleading perceptions of extreme polarization. In contrast, open participation formats based on self-selection, including online participation and town hall meetings, appeared more susceptible to domination by louder voices and less conducive to constructive deliberation. Importantly, greater public influence is not necessarily preferable for every format; rather, formats offering different levels of public influence can serve complementary purposes when deliberately interwoven. These experiences guided the development of the participation chapter in the *ESu 26 (Empfehlungen für Superblocks)*, a guideline for practitioners planning and implementing Kiezblocks (FGSM 2026).

As Kiezblocks and related concepts continue to gain importance for implementing comprehensive urban mobility transformations, designing inclusive participation processes will remain essential. The participation formats prototyped in this project provide a modular starting point for researchers and municipal administrations developing similar processes. Future transdisciplinary research should examine how best to interweave formats across the three dimensions identified here.

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