

HOW-TO SUPER BLOCKS

*CHANGING
CITIES*

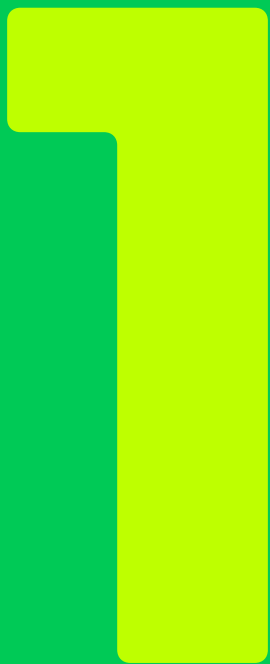


GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

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1. Introduction

Your neighbourhood is your home. This is where your children have space to play, where you and your friends meet for a neighbourly coffee shaded by trees. This is where your grandparents take a relaxing stroll down the street. You can cycle here without a care in the world. You feel comfortable here even in the summer heat.

Really?

The reality is different: through traffic hurtling along, never-ending tarmac. Exhaust fumes pollute the air we breathe and constant noise pollution makes us ill. Tarmac, walls and cars absorb heat in the increasingly hot summers and rob us of sleep. People hardly ever meet because there is no room to linger on the street.

We can change that with superblocks. This how-to is for anyone who wants to take the future of their city into their own hands.

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2. Superblocks bottom-up

In many cities, citizens are coming together to campaign for superblocks. The past few years have seen a growing superblock movement in Europe. For example, in Germany, there are now citizens' initiatives in around 30 cities. In Berlin alone, 70 different initiatives are demanding the transformation of their neighbourhood into a superblock. In Switzerland and Austria, too, people are setting up grassroots initiatives to fight for superblocks.

With the formation of the International Superblock Meeting, the TuneOurBlock project aimed to bring all of those actors together so that different initiatives could network with and learn from each other. We now want to share the experiences and lessons learned with the international superblocks community. We disseminate this how-to as part of the TuneOurBlock project which has brought us together with superblock actors from other European cities.

This brochure is a compilation of our knowledge, which we want to share with you. Because we have a common goal: to make our cities open, safe and healthy for everyone. The journey to achieve this goal can be as varied as the individual places and initiatives. The steps in this how-to are not in any particular order. It is a living document and will continue to grow with your and our experiences.

So, when will your neighbourhood become a superblock?

Superblocks Conference 2023:
superblocks activists from all
over Germany get together.





Celle

Frankfurt a.M.

Dortmund

Hamburg

Deine Stadt

Dein Kaff

Dein Dorf

Dresden

ep
cks

IE STRASSE
AS DRAUS

changingcity

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3. Superblock – what, why and how exactly?

A superblock is an urban neighbourhood with a high standard of living, good climate resilience, safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and no through traffic. What does that mean in concrete terms? On the streets of a superblock, you can walk, cycle, push a pushchair or use a wheelchair in a relaxed and safe manner. It is possible to drive into the neighbourhood by car. However, it is no longer possible to take a shortcut through the neighbourhood. Efficient measures, such as bollards or one-way streets, ensure this. All buildings, of course, remain accessible for emergency vehicles, refuse collection and deliveries.



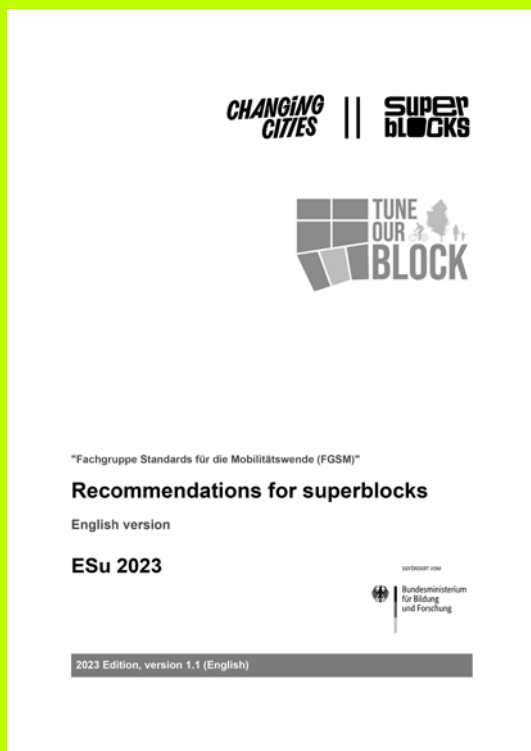
Public space can be used differently again. New areas for playing, seating and green spaces are created. In short: streets are opened up for people and thus revitalised. It is particularly important for children and the elderly to be able to move around safely right outside their front door. Where routes become safer and shorter compared to car journeys, people will switch to other means of transport. Running errands in one's own neighbourhood again also becomes more appealing. The superblock model comprehensively reduces car traffic. This phenomenon is known as 'traffic evaporation' and has been analysed throughout Europe (see Chapter 5: Fact check). Superblocks make an important contribution to health preservation. They help in protecting against and adapting to climate change. With less and quieter traffic, there is also less creation of harmful noise and air pollution. Children, the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions, as well as pregnant women, benefit particularly from this.

One superblock is a traffic revolution on a small scale – but many superblocks change the whole city.





For all those who want to know more: a team of experts from Changing Cities has drawn up the document 'Recommendations for Superblocks' ('Empfehlungen für Superblocks' / ESu). This publication sets out standards for the establishment of superblocks: Minimum Standard, Regular Standard and Gold Standard. The ESu is a guide for initiatives as well as for administration and politics. Would you like to get involved in the ESu expert group? Then get in touch at superblocks@changing-cities.org.



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4. Turn your neighbourhood into a superblock!

Step 1: Form your group

→ Find fellow campaigners

Want to get started right away? **In order to start a new initiative, you need, above all, fellow campaigners.** Citizens' initiatives are not bound to a specific organisational form and there is **no** requirement for an **association** to be formed. The initiative can come from a single person or a small group of people who call for a meeting. It is good to start with a core group of at least three people. The more people take part in your initiative, the more likely it is that the public and politicians will take notice. It is particularly helpful if people of different professions, ages, genders, political orientations, etc., belong to your group.

The most effective way is to approach your neighbours personally.

Many initiatives and parties use door-to-door canvassing to find fellow campaigners and supporters. These kinds of mobilising conversations can be structured based on the 'anger – hope – action' concept. This means that you first address the problems you see in your neighbourhood, then suggest solutions, such as transforming the neighbourhood into a superblock, and then ask whether the person you are talking to would like to help initiate the necessary changes.

In personal conversations, you can find out directly what is of concern to your neighbours. They may already have similar views to yours, but they may also notice other problems. You can also make an assessment based on these conversations: how much can and will a person contribute to the initiative? Do they already have important contacts in the neighbourhood?



→ *Superblock in your neighbourhood or even for the whole city?*

There are two ways to campaign for superblocks: either you set up a **superblock initiative for a selected neighbourhood** or you call for **superblocks for the whole city**. Both methods have their pros and cons: if you get involved locally, you can develop specific visions for a neighbourhood. It is important that you yourself (or a large part of your group) live in this neighbourhood. That way you have a direct connection with the neighbourhood, know the pitfalls of individual street sections, can make very specific demands, etc. This is particularly helpful in larger cities. If you organise on a city-wide basis, it may be easier to build up a larger group of fellow campaigners. Then politicians and the press might listen to you more, and you can call for superblocks in several neighbourhoods.



Remember: superblocks are most effective when they are introduced **on a large scale**. Therefore, always emphasise that a pilot project is an important first step that must be followed by further superblocks.

- ♥ In Cologne, Berlin, Hamburg, Freiburg, Munich and Vienna individual initiatives are organised in each district.
- ♥ In Nuremberg, Darmstadt and Karlsruhe, initiatives are campaigning for superblocks throughout the city.

→ Organise meetings

You will soon have mobilised some fellow campaigners. **The best way to get your initiative off the ground is to organise a launch meeting.** These meetings can take the form of an open meeting, for example. You can get your neighbours excited about your ideas and develop new visions together.

If you decide to hold an open meeting, you should define the content of the meeting you are inviting people to in advance. What exactly do you want to talk about? Also, try to find out what issues are on people's minds in the neighbourhood. You can talk to neighbours or do a survey on an online neighbourhood platform (e.g. nebenan.de in Germany). For example, ask the question: 'What are two issues that particularly bother you?' or 'What is an issue that is important for the future of our neighbourhood?'

You can **find out how to publicise the open meeting** in Step 5: "Attract public attention". It is best to invite important stakeholders personally. These include community centres, Neighbourhood Management and other initiatives.

List of materials:

- ♥ Loudspeaker system, if necessary
- ♥ Clipboards, paper, pens
- ♥ Table with e-mail list
- ♥ Seating, if necessary

Tasks & roles:

- ♥ Two moderators
- ♥ Minute taker
- ♥ Contact person for passers-by
- ♥ Some helping hands for setting up and wrapping up

The **procedure** can look like this, for example:

- An **introduction round** enables networking and the development of a group feeling.
- The moderators explain the **rules** at the beginning (e.g. that people should raise their hand before saying anything).
- As regards content, you can start by **compiling a list of topics** that interest your neighbours. The main question could be: what should our neighbourhood look like in a few years?
- The visions and topics mentioned are then discussed in **small groups**. This way, everyone gets a chance to have their say. The results of the discussions are then brought back to the larger group.
- In order that you know what you want to achieve, it is worth setting **long-term common goals**.
- Talk about how you can implement the plans you have discussed in concrete terms. Once you have decided what you want to do, **specific tasks** can be defined and assigned so that participants ideally feel needed but not overburdened.
- At the end, it is important to get feedback **from the participants**.

Further tips for organising the meeting:

- **Reliable scheduling** (starting on time and avoiding meetings that go on for hours) keeps participants motivated.
- **Visuals** (e.g. of the planned/proposed process), an **agenda** and **minutes of the meeting** allow people to follow what has been said and to look it up again later.
- A good **atmosphere in the group** is important for successful teamwork. Listen to everyone with an open mind and tolerate differing opinions.
- **Comprehensible language** enables everyone to follow the event – it is advisable to avoid technical jargon.



Was wünschst
du dir?

Hier ist es schön. ● 😊
Hier fühle ich mich wohl.
Hier soll es bleiben
wie es ist.

Hier ist es hässlich. ● ☹️
Hier fühle ich mich
unsicher, unwohl.
Hier soll sich etwas
ändern.

→ *Communication within the group*

A WhatsApp group or the classic mailing list? It is best to decide on the means of communication after a brief survey within your team. A **messenger group** for the core team and a **mailing list** for the wider circle of supporters can be useful. In addition to a messenger service, a platform for shared file storage is also important.

WeChange provides cloud and messenger solutions specifically for socio-ecological projects.

→ **Funding**

If you require funding for your project, there are various options. Some grants require the status of a registered non-profit organisation. Founding your own organisation requires a lot of resources. Instead, ask around to see if you can slip under the umbrella of an existing organisation.

- Many cities have funds that can be used by committed citizens. Depending on the city, the grants may for instance be called *district funds*, *neighbourhood funding* or *volunteer work allowance*. The application process is often very simple. Find out about the options in your city.
- Many companies offer financial support, e.g. [Lush](#) and [Patagonia](#).
- There may be political foundations or similar actors in your country that offer grants to civil-society groups.
- Of course, the good old-fashioned donation box should not be forgotten – at information stands or street festivals, for example.



Step 2: Explore your neighbourhood

In order for the initiative to have a strong presence, it is important to know your neighbourhood and its problem areas well. It is best to print out a large map of your neighbourhood. Then start marking important routes and areas.

- ➔ The first step is to determine **which area belongs to your planned superblock neighbourhood**. Which major roads/ railway lines/rivers border your block?
- ➔ Then identify the streets through which **most through traffic** flows. Which streets are most frequently used as shortcuts?
- ➔ Then mark **other relevant points**: where are safe pedestrian crossings missing? Which street is completely grey and urgently needs green areas? Where are facilities such as schools, child daycare centres and retirement homes where road safety is particularly important? Where is there a lack of accessibility? Where is there critical infrastructure, such as hospitals and fire stations, where accessibility must be guaranteed at all times?



Now you have an overview of the status quo and are ready for step 2:

What could your neighbourhood look like as a superblock?

You can get an overview of the possible construction measures in the Recommendations for Superblocks.

You can consider: where should bollards be placed? Where should there be a one-way street? Where could a square with trees and benches be created? You can run through various options on your map and test again and again how the traffic would now flow. You can then visualise your final result digitally.

Remember: as a civic initiative, you are not responsible for drawing up a flawless traffic plan. That is still the task of the authorities. But entering into discussions with constructive proposals is helpful and creates self-confidence. This is how you show that you really mean business!

Traffic management game
(only in German language)



A digitally processed map shows which traffic measures could be implemented. →



Feldstr

Karlstr

Hansbergstr

Parkstr

Kronenburgallee

Rheinlanddamm

Wenkerstr

Kronenstr

Friedenstr

L672

iliger Weg

Olgastr

Markische Str

Isuariallee

Stadewaldchen

Bonifatiusstr

Saandstr

Landgrabenstr

Hainallee

Wallrabestr

Eintrachtstr

Am Knippenberg

Meißener Str

Ruhrallee

Ruhrallee

Dresdenener Str

Saandstr

Döbener Str

Plauener Str

wartsstr

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Step 3: Find allies

→ Networking

In order to gain more attention and support for your initiative, you can join forces **with other stakeholders**. There are often existing civic groups whose issues and interests overlap with yours. Get in touch and present your initiative. At the same time, you will find out what other groups in the neighbourhood have already done, what may have been particularly successful and what is planned for the near future. This dialogue will help you avoid working at cross purposes. Instead, you can **join forces and support each other**.

Possible allies: local environmental and climate justice movement groups, cyclists' associations and other groups working for a transition towards sustainable transport, committed parents from schools or daycare centres, groups for urban greening.

However, you can also network with parties who are not obvious or immediate allies. By **attending events such as lectures, demos or panel discussions and showing your presence there**, you can draw attention to your organisation and start a conversation.

Regardless of whether you are talking to groups or individuals and regardless of how close or distant the relevant parties are to you, it always helps to **find and emphasise common ground**.

Networking can also be approached strategically: think about what resources your group is still lacking. For example, do you lack **public attention and reach**? Then it may be worth asking other local groups about journalist contacts or the possibility of joint campaigns. If you need a **space** for meetings, it is best to get in touch with community centres, cultural centres or similar local institutions. One thing always applies: we are stronger together than we are alone.

→ *Conversation & mobilisation*

In 'Step 1: Form your group', you have already been encouraged to approach your neighbours personally. This applies not only during the founding phase, but on an ongoing basis. No matter whether you are setting up a superbloc information stand, collecting signatures for a petition or proposal or want to canvass door-to-door, **face-to-face conversations have great potential to mobilise people.**

It's not just about informing people about your initiative, but, above all, about listening. This allows you to get to know the other person's perspective. **Ask what problems the person sees in the neighbourhood and whether they have any ideas on how these could be solved.** You can then draw a connection to your project and briefly explain why a superbloc could solve many problems. Then listen and clarify any questions or misunderstandings.

If you are broadly in agreement about the problem and the solution, mobilisation is required. People see many problems but often lack the sense of political self-efficacy they need to believe that they can realistically change something. **You can therefore point out, in concrete terms, what the people you are talking to can do, what you are already doing and what impact this is having.** If your initiative is still in its infancy, you can also talk about what other initiatives have already been able to achieve. It is often motivating and gives hope to hear that there is already a movement that is campaigning for something. If the person you are talking to has shown interest, don't forget to **exchange contact details** and actively **invite them to the next meeting.**

Also enter into dialogue where there could be opposition later on. Think about who might feel affected or restricted by your plan. In particular, try to talk to older people, families and business people – together you can find solutions or at least create understanding. This is very helpful for avoiding hardened fronts later on!

- ♥ Events in public spaces are also particularly suitable for networking, information and mobilisation. You can find campaign ideas in the chapter 'On the road, get set, go!'

Step 4: Exert pressure

→ Reaching the goal using direct democracy

There are various direct democratic means of initiating the establishment of a superblock. In Germany, a low-threshold and, at the same time, very efficient instrument is the so-called **residents' petition**, a local referendum.

With a residents' petition (also known as a “citizens' petition” in some German federal states), citizens can oblige the local council to deal with a specific matter at a public meeting. To do so, they must collect a certain number of signatures in their municipality.

The good thing about this is that those making a proposal are usually given the opportunity to present their concerns at the local council meeting. Furthermore, in some federal states, the local council not only has to take a position but also make a decision on the matter.

There may be similar or other means of direct democracy in your country.



In Berlin, 29 Kiezblocks have already been successfully approved as a result of residents' petitions (as of June 2024).

[Example of a residents' petition from Berlin](#)



→ *Collecting signatures*

Signatures need to be collected as part of many instruments of direct democracy. Here are the most important tips and tricks:

- **Collecting drives:** alone or in a group, find places and times when you want to collect signatures. For example, you could stand outside the supermarket on a Saturday morning.
- **Place signature lists in important places:** all shops are suitable, from snack bars to toy shops, from cafés to supermarkets. Cinemas or cultural centres are also suitable. Before you display anything, you must ask the owners for permission.
- **Individual and decentralised collection:** you provide the signature lists and people distribute them individually (child daycare centres, schools, groups of friends, offices). It is best to print a drop-off point on the petition.

Material for collecting signatures:

- ♥ **Printed signature lists** (remember to print on both sides!)
- ♥ **Flyers/sheets with your contact details** for tradespeople
- ♥ **Clipboards** for collecting signatures
- ♥ **A list of places where you have put out signature lists** in order to be able to collect them again.



→ *Online petition*

In addition to official instruments of direct democracy, there are now numerous online petition platforms. Online petitions are usually less localised. People from all over can sign. **If you are making demands that affect the whole city** (e. g. superblocs for the whole of Frankfurt), it can be useful to solicit online signatures throughout the city. These signatures can be a good way of adding emphasis to your initiative. For this to work, it is important to **use the signatures for effective publicity** (e. g. staging the handing-over in a media-effective way). However, direct democratic means such as residents' petitions create far more political impact.

→ *Lobbying for a good cause – dialogue with public administrators and policy-makers*

In addition to collecting signatures, it is important to find **contacts in politics and public administration** who share your goals. These direct contacts will help you to understand current processes, assess the feasibility of your plans and find allies who will support you at the political or administrative level.

In order to find the right contacts, you can find out who is **talking about transport issues in the local news or at events**. Suitable contacts can also be found in the **organisational charts** of authorities and institutions or by taking a look at the **city council committees**. It is also possible to **enquire about contacts by calling authorities or political parties**. Depending on the city, different administrative bodies are responsible for the issues concerning a superbloc – the only thing that helps here is to ask around.

Possible contacts:

- ♥ Members of transport and mobility committees, party transport policy spokespersons
- ♥ Roads and green spaces department, civil engineering department
- ♥ Mobility or transport department
- ♥ People responsible for citizen participation
- ♥ Neighbourhood management, city or district structures

Tips for contact with policy-makers and public administrators:

- ➔ The same applies here: understand the concerns and difficulties of your counterparts, and then you will find common ground! **Considering the goals of people you talk to** will help you to win them over. Cities often have specified development or framework plans (e. g. local transport plan, pedestrian mobility plan, climate adaptation). For example, several cities have set themselves the target of climate neutrality as part of the Fridays for Future movement. Make it clear: superblocks are a step towards climate-neutral cities.
- ➔ Refer to **scientific findings**, e. g. in newspaper articles or studies (see [Chapter 5: Fact check](#) and the **Recommendations for Superblocks**).
- ➔ Mention existing **support from well-known people**; from local politicians, for example.
- ➔ Refer to **comparable projects in other cities**.

- Make **specific demands** and use the **Recommendations for Superblocks** to do so. It can easily be the case that politicians and public administrations have a different concept of superblocks. That's why we have set out the minimum requirements that a superblock must fulfil in the Recommendations for Superblocks.
- Offer **your support**. Public administration is also made up of people who often work on many projects at the same time. Ask if you can help with specific issues. You are a valuable link to civil society.
- Invite people from politics, public administration and other initiatives for a **walk through the city**. This is the best way to visualise the challenges and develop plans for further action.
- **In the discussions, try to find out what else is planned in the neighbourhood** and whether plans of other initiatives or public administration complement or run counter to the superblock idea.

→ **Data, data, data**

... will help you make a strong case – when talking to politicians, administrators and the press.

→ **Count cars:** Changing Cities has developed its own app that you can use to count through traffic in your neighbourhood.

→ **Telraam devices** measure the share of different modes of transport. Using Telraam devices costs money. You can try to set up a co-operation with universities/colleges as part of a research project.

→ **Document accidents and dangerous spots**, and take photos of conflicts.

→ Collect your own **data on air quality and noise**.
[Assembly instructions for sensor kits](#)¹



[Click here for the app](#) (only in German language).

1 sensor.community/de/sensors

Step 5: Attract public attention

Who do you want to reach? Superblocks are a very local topic. Especially if your project relates to a selected neighbourhood, the most important target group is your neighbourhood. This includes local residents, cafés, shops and churches. People in schools, child daycare centres and retirement homes in particular can be allies since they benefit the most from a superblock.

The right language is key. Think carefully: who do we want to reach with our public relations work and what is the right way to express ourselves? Avoid complicated technical terms. If there are many people in your neighbourhood who speak other languages, it makes sense to translate flyers etc.

For example, the Superblocks Leipzig initiative invited people to a large participation event in German, Arabic, Turkish, Russian and English.

What story or stories do we want to tell? Superblocks can act as an abstract traffic concept or they can inspire people to dream: what could your city of tomorrow look like? With regard to your public image, focus on tangible things that many people can relate to: a safe cycle path for your children, your mental and physical health, more shade on your way to work.

Who are the protagonists of your story? Give your stories a face. Public relations are successful when people can identify with you and your visions. The regional press is particularly interested in stories with 'real people' behind them.

Portray the people from your neighbourhood. In the form of a video or photos, let them talk about the problems they face in everyday life in a car-friendly city and how a superblock would change their lives.

Is it all just a utopian dream? Examples from other cities help to make it clear: cities worth living in have long been a reality! But beware, the comparison with Barcelona's Superilles or London's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods can also have the opposite effect: 'We're not in a metropolis like Barcelona!'

Pictures help bring your stories to life. Before and after pictures that turn the vision of a superblock into reality create a great wow effect.

Where can I find pictures?

- ♥ [Free Street Manifesto](#)²
- ♥ [URB-I Gallery](#)
- ♥ [Dutch Cycling Lifestyle](#)³
- ♥ [Infothek für Realutopien](#) (Real-World Utopias Information Centre) (in German language only)⁴
- ♥ [Visualisierungen aus Berlin-Pankow](#) (Visualisations from Berlin-Pankow) (in German language only)⁵

- 2 strassen-befreien.de/en/requests
- 3 dutchcyclinglifestyle.com/imagine
- 4 realutopien.info/visuals
- 5 stadtraum2030.de/gutachten-2

→ ***Classic press relations and contact with journalists***

Try to get local journalists interested in your issue. The cross-regional or even national press is not the primary contact for your local issue. Local newspapers in particular are often happy to receive input for their reporting. Note that journalists often work under time pressure. The better you prepare your information and the more current the topic is, the greater the chance of coverage. **Press releases that you embellish with quotes from yourselves are an important tool for this.** Important: a press release should always be linked to a current event. If necessary, you can create an occasion, organise an event or tie in with existing conflicts (e.g. What have journalists reported on before?)

UNSERE STADTT



Zeinab (2) und Aminata (2) fahren Bobbycar auf der Baarestraße, Christoph Bast und Dorte Huneke-Nollmann freuen sich über die Verteilung des öffentlichen Raums beim Straßenfest.

SYBILLA HANUSCH/PUNKT F

Autofreie Nachbarschaft im Westen

der Baarestraße wird für einen Tag der öffentliche Raum anders verteilt. Pkw bleiben d

n. Die Bewährungspro
Viertelstunde vor dem
Termin. Um 14 Uhr
straße für den Kfz-Ver
tabu sein, 15 Minuten
supt-Abholzeit für die
Gita „Villa Pfifikus“ -
Fuß unterwegs wie
Dann...

Parkplatz für unsere Besucher.
Dort könnte man auch parken.
Den Weg dahin haben die Kinder
vorab für die Eltern extra markiert.
Tapsen wie von Pfoten mit Sprüh-
kreide auf dem Weg zeigen die (fuß-
läufige) Verbindung. Tatsächlich ha-
ben die Nachbarschafts-Be-
ruhen Soer...

rekt vor dem Q1, der früheren Prie-
denskirche, der Gehweg immer
wieder für Mütter mit Kinderwagen
oder Seniorinnen mit Rollatoren
fast unpassierbar wird. Und was
nut der Zeit des...

Erklärungszettel an der
Aber das Ausschildern ha
bei offenbar auswärtigen
chern, nicht...

If you are in direct contact with journalists, e.g. during an interview, the most important rule is to think carefully about what you want to say beforehand. **Formulate three key messages.** Your aim in the interview is to get these key messages across, **no matter what questions you are asked.**

'There is far too much through traffic in our neighbourhood. We all suffer from it, especially children and older people. Lots of cars pollute the air and that's bad for our health. That's why we've come together as residents and are calling for a superbloc. The city must finally act.'

For a good media image, it can help to take **two or three allies** from other initiatives with you to an interview; this way, several perspectives can be presented and polarisation prevented.

Berlin: when the first bollards were installed in the Samariterkiez neighbourhood, there was a huge media response. Individual interviews with the Kiezblock Initiative were very critical, and one daily newspaper headline called it the 'Bollardisation' of the neighbourhood. This image was corrected by another interview (with the same author), in which three people from different initiatives took part, working together as part of the Samariter-SuperKiez movement for the positive development of the neighbourhood.

→ ***On site and approachable***

This is the most effective and important method of public relations work in order to reach the neighbourhood.

- Distribute **flyers and posters** at events, in shops, cafés, schools, child daycare centres, at markets, etc., or put them in letter-boxes.

- ♥ Canva is a simple and easy-to-use design tool for creating social media posts, flyers and posters.

- **Identify high-profile people and big players** (e.g. large shops, important associations, etc.) in your neighbourhood and win them over to the cause.

- ♥ The Berlin Kiezblock Monumentenzug has succeeded in winning over almost all the tradespeople on a street. The shops have put out their own signature lists.
- ♥ The Nürnberg autofrei (Nuremberg car-free) initiative has managed to get influential and long-established associations on board, the so-called Nuremberg citizens' associations.

- **Organise local events**, such as street festivals, demos and protest picnics.

- Invite **local politicians** to your events.

»...
sind für
Autos da.«

**super
blocks**

e
ertel -
oll das?!«

**super
blocks**

»Wer Ruhe
und frische
Luft haben will,
soll aufs Land
ziehen.«

**super
blocks**

e
our-
- what's
oint?«

**super
blocks**

»If you w
peace an
quiet a

**super
BLOCKS**

**»Kinder gehören
auf den Spiel-
platz, nicht auf
die Straße.«**

**super
BLOCKS**

**»Children belong
in the playground,
not on the street.«**

**vant
nd**

Superblocks flyers on an information table

→ *Corporate Design*

A corporate design helps you to be recognised. This includes a logo and uniform fonts and colours, for example. **The German organisation Changing Cities has designed a logo for the superbloc movement in Berlin and all over Germany.** It is available to all superbloc initiatives and individual city names can be added to it.

**Super
bLOCKS**

**Super
bL *Leipzig
Plagwitz* CK**

→ Website

A website is always an advantage as it can be referred to in case of enquiries and helps create a professional and organised impression. **In the initial phase, however, it is not absolutely necessary to have your own website.**

→ Social Media

Create accounts on social media platforms of your choice.

Most superblock initiatives use Instagram and Mastodon. If you decide to work on social media, it is important to **use the accounts regularly**. Only then will your initiative come alive.

→ Mailing list

A very low-threshold means of communication is a mailing list or newsletter. You can use it as an easy way to invite people to events, draw attention to press articles or report on your latest negotiations with the city. At information stands and the like, you can simply invite people to join your mailing list if they are interested in staying up to date.

You can use [Rise-up](#) to create mailing lists free of charge.

Step 6: Make superblocks tangible – on the road, get set, go!

These are some of the most popular superblock campaign events:

Neighbourhood festival



Event in the Reichenberger neighbourhood, Berlin



Pop-up superblock

Pop-up superblock of the Superblocks Leipzig initiative

“Green Parade” – children’s demo for safe routes



Superblocks Leipzig
initiative Green Parade

Human bollards



Human bollard campaign, Berlin

Step 7: Keep at it!

One thing is clear: if you are committed to superblocks, you need a lot of patience. The wheels in politics and public administration are known to turn slowly. That's why superblock activists need to remain persistent!

- **Visit** councillors' or local politicians' **citizen consultation sessions**. Don't be afraid to visit particularly those who are politically distant from you.
- Submit a **residents' petition** to your local parliament.
- **Find out who the obstructionists are** and name them publicly (be careful with administrative staff, less so with politicians/institutions).
- **Praise the department/councillors and extend an invitation to them** when things are being implemented. Remember: we are not fighting against public administration; we are fighting for implementation. It's best to work together.
- Use the **Recommendations for Superblocks** to develop a vision: in the Recommendations for Superblocks, there are three levels for a superblock: **Minimum, Regular and Gold Standard**. If you receive the promise for the Minimum standard from your politicians, there are two more levels for you to achieve.

5

5. Superblocks – fact check

Not every superblock is perfect straight away. Along the way, a lot has to be discussed, tested, adapted and discussed again. This is an important democratic process. However, some objections are unfortunately based on assumptions that range from misplaced to downright wrong. Here are six of the most common objections that are repeatedly raised against superblocks – and ways to respond to them and allay concerns.

1) *Main roads and traffic evaporation*

‘Yeah great, and the residents living on the main roads will get even more traffic.’

You might think that if all the traffic is diverted out of the residential neighbourhoods onto the main roads, there will be even more traffic jams, longer waiting times for the bus, more noise and bad air quality.

The good news is that exactly the opposite is the case. Public infrastructure determines which mode of transport people choose. If more roads are built for cars, car traffic increases. If more infrastructure is built for sustainable mobility, this type of transport increases. This also reduces car traffic on main roads.

This correlation has been recognised in transport science for decades under the term ‘induced demand’.

Studies show that car traffic in superblocks decreases significantly (approx. 30%), while there is only a minimal increase on the surrounding main roads (approx. 1%). If implemented across the board, network effects can be expected that could even significantly reduce traffic on main roads by approx. 20%. This is because journeys will be shifted to other, now more attractive modes of transport, in particular walking and cycling, and more local services will be utilised.

The scientific buzzword for this effect is 'traffic evaporation'.

Of course, main roads should not be forgotten: in the course of setting up a superblock, protected cycle paths, safe crossings for pedestrians and 30 km/h speed limits should always be installed on the main roads.

More on traffic evaporation and scientific sources:

- ♥ [Bauer, Uta; Bettge, Sonja; Stein, Thomas: Verkehrsberuhigung statt Kollaps \(Traffic Calming Instead of Collapse\). Difu Policy Papers, Vol. 2, 2023⁶](#)
- ♥ in our '[Recommendations for Superblocks](#)' (ESu) document⁷

6 difu.de/publikationen/2023/verkehrsberuhigung-entlastung-statt-kollaps

7 tuneourblock.eu/results/#toolkit

2) Modal filters (or bollards)

‘How are these ugly things supposed to improve living standards?’

Colloquially, they are called bollards, flower tubs, trees, street furniture, etc. – traffic planners call them modal filters. But what do they do? Thanks to modal filters, through traffic consisting of lorries and cars is diverted away from the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, all places in the neighbourhood can still be reached by car. Of course, bollards or modal filters also allow pedestrians and people with pushchairs, walking frames, wheelchairs, bicycles, delivery bikes or scooters to pass through everywhere.

Bollards are a quick, simple and inexpensive measure to make a neighbourhood quieter, safer and more relaxed. Modal filters open up the streets for people who live or work in the neighbourhood as they provide more peace and quiet and create places where people like to spend time. However, they are only one part of a whole traffic concept that makes up a superblock: bollards ≠ superblock.

3) Cars and accessibility

‘So what are a nurse on the night shift or a wheelchair user supposed to do?’

Superblocks are not about removing all the parking spaces or closing roads to cars. People with reduced mobility and people who rely on their car will still be able to get everywhere, because all places within a superblock can still be reached by car. However, the majority of cars that currently use public space do not belong to people who are dependent on them but to people who have a choice. Thanks to superblocks, more space is being given to people who really need their own car.

On average, cars are parked at the side of the road for 96 percent of the day.

4) Delivery vehicles and retail

'Local businesses will go out of business if you can no longer park here!'

A superblock should always be designed in such a way that goods can still be delivered to all shops and businesses without any problems. Delivery zones are set up for this purpose. For most deliveries, arrival and departure as well as loading and unloading are even easier than in normal neighbourhoods because there is significantly less through traffic.

But what happens when people can no longer cross the neighbourhood by car? Won't retailers then lose their customers? In the vast majority of cases, people can, for example, still drive to the supermarket by car. The question is: do they want to? The new traffic routing means that many people will prefer to cycle or take a relaxing walk to the shops. People travelling on foot or by bike are more aware of their surroundings than car drivers and are more likely to stop at a small shop or a nice-looking café. In particular, classic neighbourhood businesses – local, owner-managed retail businesses with specialised product ranges – benefit from the increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

The city of Zurich⁸ has taken a closer look at the effects and has come to the conclusion that the elimination of motorised traffic almost always has a positive effect on sales. This is because when the quality of life increases, people feel more comfortable and prefer to be out and about, causing sales to increase.

For more in-depth knowledge:

- ♥ Alison Lee, Alan March: *Recognising the economic role of bikes: Sharing parking in Lygon Street*, Carlton Raleigh McCoy, Joseph A. Poirier, Karen Chapple: *Bikes or Bus? Analyzing the Impact of Bicycle Infrastructure on Business Performance in San Francisco*
- ♥ Dirk von Schneidemesser, Jody Betzien: *Local Business Perception vs. Mobility Behavior of Shoppers: A Survey from Berlin*. Findings, June, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.32866/001c.24497>
- ♥ City of Zurich: Bedeutung von Parkplätzen in Innenstädten (Importance of Car Parks in City Centres)²³

8 stadt-zuerich.ch/ted/de/index/taz/verkehr/webartikel/webartikel_pp_innenstadt.html

5) Gentrification

“If the neighbourhood becomes too nice, rents will rise.”

This fear is understandable and must be taken very seriously. However, gentrification and the car-friendly city are two different problems that must not be played off against each other, but must be tackled together. Everyone has the right to a neighbourhood worth living in, not just people with high incomes. The view that ‘everything has to stay bad so that rents don't rise’ would, conversely, mean that everything that lowers living standards must be promoted. In our opinion, this is not the right approach as it would lead to a worse life for everyone.

The positive effects of superblocks benefit all residents, but they are particularly beneficial for the less affluent. This is because they often live in places with a high traffic volume and lower quality of life and generally do not have a weekend home in the countryside. People with small flats and many children in particular need places in the neighbourhood where they can move around safely and relax. It is also easier for residents to socialise within the superblock. People in superblocks have more opportunities to get to know each other, network and take united action against rising rents, for example. Superblocks therefore ensure more social justice, not less.

After all, the aim is not just to turn one neighbourhood into a superblock, but, gradually, all residential areas. If a large part of the city is upgraded, then there will be no displacement from the nice neighbourhoods.

In the Berlin district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, so many kiezblock initiatives were founded that the district administration declared the kiezblock concept to be the goal for the entire district.

6) *Democracy and participation*

'Superblocks are undemocratic!'

Superblocks stand for the common good, not for individual interests. Everyone benefits from fewer cars, even motorists, because those who are actually dependent on their cars can then get around better. However, poorer people in particular benefit as they often live in places with a lot of noise and air pollution, have less living space available and are less likely to have a balcony or garden. Women* also benefit, as they are less likely to own a car than men on average, but are still more likely to look after children, the elderly and those in need of care. Their lives would be much easier if their children could walk or cycle to school on their own and the pavements were wide and clear enough for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Last but not least, older people, of whom there are more and more in our society, and residents with limited mobility will benefit.

Superblocks are also the result of democratic processes. In Berlin, for example, citizens' initiatives submit a residents' petition to the district council to demand the establishment of a *kiezblock* – a common means of direct democracy.

Our democracy needs an active civil society!

Kiezhaus



ETLING
KIEZ
BLOCK

Nachhaltiger Verkehr

Sichere Radwege

KIEZBLOCK
Antrag

Sichere Fußwege

Bürger*innen - Beteiligung

Unser Kiez für Menschen statt Durchgangsverkehr



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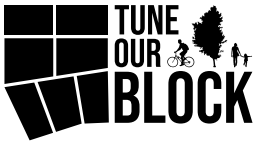
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**SUPER
BLOCKS** *CHANGING
CITIES*



When will your neighbourhood become a super-block?

