

KIEZBLOCKS

CONCEPT ENGLISH

#KIEZ
BLOCKS

Cities should first and foremost be built for people. For decades, however, the design of our cities has been moving further and further away from people's needs. There is a lack of space, the streets are unsafe, and we often do not feel comfortable. Public space has become a mere place of transit, to be moved through as fast as possible. With kiezblocks we want to reopen the streets for everyone. They should become places of encounter, like extensions of our living rooms. Kiezblocks are not only an important part of the transport transition, they improve quality of life for everyone. A city full of kiezblocks is a people-friendly, climate-friendly and just city.

What is a Kiez?

A Kiez is a Berlin word to describe part of a district, a small quarter, that has its own character.

And what is a Kiezblock?

A Kiezblock is a term we chose to describe a residential area with no through traffic. This will be achieved by using measures such as traffic barriers, one-way streets, and speed limits to prevent motorists from using neighbourhoods as shortcuts. Similar schemes are called Superblocks in Barcelona and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in London.

One type of barrier is the diagonal barrier. It consists of 5–6 bollards (or similar barriers) placed diagonally at an intersection, so that motorised traffic can only turn left or right, but can't pass through. These measures can be supplemented by traffic-calming elements such as large plant pots, trees or street furniture such as benches and climbing frames.

Pedestrians and cyclists can continue to circulate in all directions. Car through-traffic is kept on the main roads, as it should in all good city planning. People can still drive into the Kiezblock to access all homes and businesses, and the Kiezblock is of course still fully accessible for emergency vehicles, garbage disposal, and delivery vehicles. This makes walking and cycling within the neighbourhood safer and more pleasant. The number of cars in the kiez falls and the space that is freed up can be used by everyone and for all sorts of things: recreation areas, seating, sports and playgrounds, green areas or pedestrian zones and cycle streets. Reduced car traffic in the residential areas also means reductions in both air and noise pollution.

The main streets around a Kiezblock must also be made safer for pedestrians and cyclists, and residents must be protected from traffic noise and air pollution. This can be achieved through 30 kmh speed limits, safe cycle lanes and pedestrian crossings.

Changing Cities is behind the #Kiezblocks campaign. The association successfully initiated Berlin's cycling referendum in 2015, and has been fighting for improved quality of life in cities since then.

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Our demands

01 / Two new Kiezblocks per district per year

- › Every year at least two new Kiezblocks per Berlin district must be constructed, initially with temporary measures if necessary (“Pop-Up Kiezblocks”).

02 / Two new Kiezblock employees in every district

- › To implement the Kiezblocks, two additional positions will be created in each district administration.
- › A total of EUR 17 million per year to be made available throughout Berlin for the construction of the Kiezblocks.

03 / Creation of a Kiezblock guide

- › The Senate is to draw up guidelines for the construction of Kiezblocks in Berlin.
- › The measures (such as no through access for cars) are to be set out in a manner that is both easy to understand and binding for citizens and the city administration alike.

04 / Recognition of Kiezblocks as a target for sustainable urban development

- › With the model of the Kiezblock, the residents in the districts are helping to make Berlin more livable overall.
- › In addition, protected cycle paths and footpaths as well as a city-wide speed limit of 30 kmh must be introduced on main roads in order to promote safety, and quality of life.

Is my kiez already on board?

Some groups campaigning for Kiezblocks have already been started and several more are about to launch and will be presented on our website: kiezblocks.de/kiezblocks. Check whether there is already a Kiezblock group in your neighbourhood and get in touch. Berlin’s neighbourhoods are very diverse, and this is why your voice is important. We’d love to have you on board!

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I want a Kiezblock too!

If there is no initiative in your neighbourhood yet, then get together with a few neighbours and we'll help you organise one. Just write to kiezblocks@changing-cities.org and tell us who you are and where you'd like to campaign for one to be introduced.

Most of the initiatives use the political instrument of the Einwohner*innenantrag, a type of resident proposition in Berlin. For these to work, at least 1000 signatures from people registered in the local district (Bezirk) must be collected, after which the district parliament can act on the matter.

The Einwohner*innenantrag for the active signature collections can be downloaded here. This way, everyone can support the collection themselves and hand in the completed lists at the offices mentioned in the document. Every signature helps! To sign, you must be at least 16 years old and a resident of the respective district (Bezirk).

All those interested are warmly invited to the office hours of "Dr. Kiezblock". Dr. Kiezblock is there for you to answer all your questions and is available for you every other Tuesday at 7 pm.

Kiezblock-Runde is the monthly meeting from the community for the community. Here we discuss, exchange, get to know each other and learn about a different topic from our special guest every month.

To participate at Dr. Kiezblock or Kiezblock-Runde, get in touch: kiezblocks@changing-cities.org. If you would like to attend one of the meetings, but do not speak enough German, please let us know in advance and we will try to make it possible for you to attend in English.

And don't forget to follow us on twitter: twitter.com/kiezblocks

Do you have questions or do you need further information?

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