



MCube Innovation Recommendation 02

Public Spaces and Social Participation

The WHAT and HOW of public participation in the redesign of urban neighbourhoods

For sustainable and socially inclusive mobility, we need responsible political decisions. The Munich Cluster for the Future of Mobility (MCube) uses applied and transdisciplinary research to provide a basis for decision-making on the mobility of the future. With the MCube Innovation Recommendations series, we communicate research results and recommendations for action to policy-makers and all interested.

The Goal

Understanding citizens' needs and finding transformative measures to promote sustainable mobility & strengthen participation

What does sustainable mobility look like? And how do we ensure that the concerns of all residents in a neighbourhood are equally considered? These are key questions that need to be answered to drive mobility transitions in cities forward. In order to understand how neighbourhoods can be adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups, the 'Mobilityjustice in Urban Areas (MGeM)' project facilitates the redesign of an urban area in Munich - the Piusplatz in the district of 'Berg am Laim'. The primary goal was to understand which mobility issues concern residents and how they affect the quality of life in the neighbourhood. Based on the residents' needs, the project aims to accompany transformative measures from the initial idea to the final implementation.

Project focus

People and the usability of public space

Mobility is complex topic which requires the interaction of many different disciplines – from traditional transport planning, new vehicles, and software technologies to behavioural research. Our understanding of mobility is characterised by the guidelines for sustainable urban development oriented towards the common good (see The New Leipzig-Charter 2020).

Promoting sustainable mobility is an important tool to enable social participation and make public spaces as accessible and usable as possible for people.

Walking, outdoor sports, cycling or even the daily walk to the next public transport stop is only attractive if the physical space is appealing. The project therefore focuses on the improvement of public spaces as a key element to promote walking.

“Diving” into the Neighbourhood – A Participatory Approach

A special feature of the project is the focus on target groups that are often overlooked during ‘innovative’, mostly technology-oriented product and service developments. During the first project phase, the needs and perspectives of vulnerable groups such as children, older adults, people with limited mobility, and people without German citizenship were therefore taken into account. The first exploratory phase focussed on understanding everyday mobility challenges faced by residents. Direct exchange with the residents quickly showed that the focus of the project should be shifted from mobility solutions to the usability of public space, in particular to strengthen social participation in the neighbourhood and enhance the neighbourhood’s spaces.

Discussions and interviews were held with various stakeholders, multipliers, and initiatives from the neighbourhood, such as the ‘Nachbarschaftstreff’ (en.: neighbourhood meet), ‘München Aktiv für Gesundheit e.V.’ (en.: Munich active for health club) and the ‘Bildungslokal’ (en.: education center). This helped to gain a holistic picture of the general conditions in the neighbourhood and the needs of the various resident groups. The

numerous discussions with multipliers served to a) utilise local knowledge, b) collect and deepen further perspectives, and c) discuss implementation options. The involvement of the city administration and local politicians such as the district committee was another central component of the project from the beginning. It enabled us to share gathered impressions with the city's political decision-makers and ensured inclusive planning and the future implementation of the measures. The project development phase concluded with walk-alongs with various resident groups, during which we explored the proposed measures jointly in greater detail and discussed specific locations for the implementation.



Which issues concern the residents of Piusplatz when it comes to space and mobility?

The lives of many residents on Piusplatz are characterised by a number of challenges. Flats in the area are generally very small and some are in dire need of renovation. Crime and security, anonymity in the neighbourhood, and social isolation are issues that were frequently mentioned in surveys.



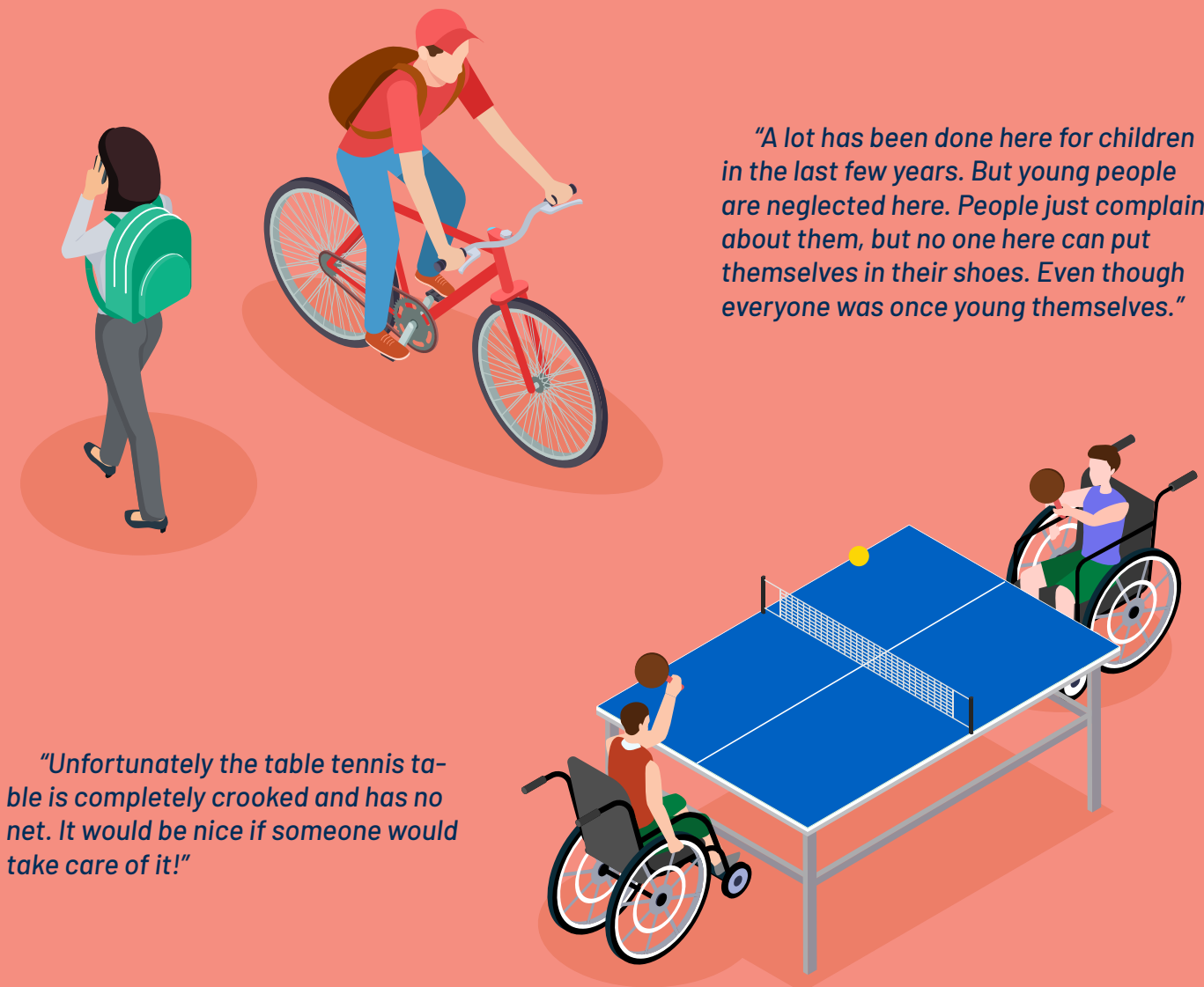
„It would be practical to have a toilet block at the playground. Especially for mums with children. And you often see men just disappearing behind a tree. That’s not nice to see.“

„My mum hasn’t been to the side of the Erdinger Anger for years, there are no benches for regular breaks - yet she loves sitting near the children playing.“



It quickly became apparent that the residents rate their neighbourhood as easily accessible, but that there is a great need for improving the usability and appropriation of public space. It should be safe and barrier-free, enable social interaction, contribute to the local identity, and facilitate mobility on foot and by bike.

"A lot has been done here for children in the last few years. But young people are neglected here. People just complain about them, but no one here can put themselves in their shoes. Even though everyone was once young themselves."



"Unfortunately the table tennis table is completely crooked and has no net. It would be nice if someone would take care of it!"

Together with residents, the following measures were ultimately defined:

- Improving the street lighting
- reactivating a drinking water fountain,
- improving the services for street cleaning and winter maintenance
- setting up an information pillar, possibly jointly designed as an information and exchange platform in the neighbourhood
- installing a toilet
- setting up seating possibilities especially for older people who need to rest during walks
- constructing or renovating existing play and sports elements such as a football goal, a basketball hoop, calisthenics park & table tennis
- renovating an existing shelter




"A soccer goal would be great, then we don't have to use our jackets anymore."




"A calisthenics park would be like winning the lottery for young people."

Other conflict issues were also identified, such as:

- Conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians
- the use of a large meadow for dogs
- and lack of facilities for young people (exercise area and sheltered meeting places)



"If you, as an old person, slip in the fall or winter because people aren't clearing the area and you can't be seen because of the poor lighting, then it becomes dangerous!"



"Then we no longer have to climb over the fence of the sports field to play basketball."

The Next Steps:

From What to How

The goal of the project was not only to develop measures at a conceptual level (WHAT), but also to initiate and support the actual realisation (HOW). Once the measures have been agreed upon with the local political authorities, the next step is to implement them in the neighbourhood. A key step in the process is to link the proposals with existing city policies and guidelines. Important questions are: What has already been proposed and discussed? What has already been rejected in the past and why? What were the relevant obstacles to implementation? Which alternative paths to realisation could be initiated utilizing MCube's network and resources? The next step in the project is to develop an on-site inspection with the stakeholders already involved in the neighbourhood, political actors, and the relevant city departments. Afterwards, it will be determined how MGeM can best support the realisation of the measures.

Learnings & Recommendations

1. Focus on the People
2. Integrative Project Development
3. Local Participation
4. Participation Format
5. An Honest Promise of Realisation
6. Involvement of City Administration and Politicians

1. Focus on the People

Piusplatz as a model for a transition with real added value

The development of the proposed measures was based on an intensive dialogue with residents and an examination of their needs. The open approach led to a shift away from the original project focus, which was the accessibility of the neighbourhood and mobility technologies. Over the course of the project, the importance of public spaces as a key element of mobility justice became increasingly apparent instead. The shift in the important fields of action in the neighbourhood and the following adjustment of the project focus show how important it is to **plan resources for an extensive explorative phase in order to generate real added value for the neighbourhood.**

2. Integrative Project Development

Promoting sustainable mobility in the neighbourhood means improving the quality of life in public spaces and pedestrian mobility first

The project has clearly demonstrated: Mobility is more than just getting from A to B. Promoting alternative mobility options is also an approach to create **more space for people**. Mobility projects should **focus more on public areas** and promote the usability of outdoor spaces. Pedestrian mobility is the starting point of all mobility. Every journey begins on your own doorstep. Going for a walk or a stroll, exercising or seeking relaxation outside your own four walls are important elements of a healthy lifestyle. At the district level, spaces must be designed in such a way that getting around on foot is feasible, safe, and pleasant for all age groups, regardless of gender and physical abilities. The advancement of sustainable mobility and the transformation of public spaces are therefore closely linked and should be taken into account together.

This makes **mobility a transdisciplinary issue** which also consequently affects many departments in the city administration. Projects should therefore connect with the

relevant city administration departments (e.g., urban development, urban planning, mobility & transport, culture & social affairs). Instead of considering the different aspects of mobility issues separately, integrative planning is important to keep the needs of pedestrians and all other users of public spaces in mind.



3. Local Participation

Meeting local Stakeholders and target groups

A major challenge in the project was the **difficulty of reaching individual target groups**. Due to lack of time and negative experiences from the past we often experienced 'participation fatigue'. The lack of interest was often fuelled because citizens did not believe that they could make an impact. Statements such as "Another survey? And then what?", "What's the point of taking part in this?", or "This won't change anything anyway" show how careful respondents in the neighbourhood need to be approached. The benefits for those affected must be clear – what can they personally gain from participating? Is there an actual political mandate to implement measures? If no direct incentives are issued to reward the time spent (e.g., shopping vouchers), it **should be clear what happens with the results and how they can benefit the lives of the participants**.

Another important success factor was the **close cooperation with local stakeholders**, such as the neighbourhood community centre. The initiatives usually have been active in the neighbourhood for a long time and are familiar with its concerns and its history. They maintain contact with many other initiatives and can therefore provide

knowledge and contacts, as well as act as a door opener to activate certain target groups through a person of trust.

In order to capture a variety of perspectives, the different groups must be specifically targeted and separately addressed. **Each group has its own needs.** Senior citizens require seating to rest, young people lack opportunities for social interaction or to exercise and women complain about a lack of toilets. The organization of individual walk-alongs for each target group has proven to be very effective to foster an open dialogue about the respective needs of each group.

The MCube project team consists exclusively of academics. It is therefore important to work with local multipliers who know the lives of those affected and speak their language. Everyone involved in the project should be able to distance themselves from their own “bubble” and be approachable and empathetic towards the participants in order to ensure a dialogue at eye level.

4. Participation Format

On the street with an eye-catcher

A major challenge during the first project phase was getting in contact with certain target groups. Flyers or posters were not considered very promising. Instead, being present during existing happenings in the neighbourhood and carrying out pop-up campaigns with a specially designed 'Bike Kiosk' proved to be a successful approach to get into conversations with residents. The kiosk's design and visibility, as well as the distribution of drinks, attracted curious neighbours who were willing to talk to us about challenges and needs in the district. **Locations of pop-up campaigns** were deliberately changed to appeal to different target groups (e.g., near the food bank, next to a playground, at the neighbourhood's community centre).



5. An Honest Promise of Realisation

Do not underestimate time & resources for participation

Through MCube's support framework we were able to plan a comprehensive participation process. Unfortunately, this is not a common standard for municipal consultation projects. Project developers should therefore be aware **how time consuming and resource intensive genuine citizen participation is** and budget their resources accordingly. MGeM has shown how valuable and effective extended exploratory phases are.



6. Involvement of City Administration and Politicians

Being Aware of unforeseen obstacles

City administration and policymakers are key players in the initiation of transformative measures and the implementation of proposed recommendations. Municipal stakeholders are therefore key partners for any urban transformation project and should be involved from the beginning. Depending on the type of transformation, different authorities must be consulted. In addition, existing urban strategies and concept papers should not be omitted when analysing the status quo. What has already been recommended in the past and what has already been realised? What guidelines do the developed measures contribute to? Linking the transformation plans with the city's development goals can strengthen the argumentation basis to promote the implementation of the transformative measures.

Ultimately, administrative and political decisions often follow their own rules and logic of action. This can lead to disillusionment, if even small measures fail to be implemented – often because laws or official requirements stand in the way or the realisation requires disproportionate effort. For example, in a discussion with the district committee it was reported that the construction of a table tennis table in a public space can cost

up to €20,000. Time, changing responsibilities, or other obstacles can further hinder transformative measures. Obstacles to implementation are manifold and must be kept in mind through the entire process. Therefore, it is all the more important to scrutinise the reasons behind a failed transformation measure and to develop methods that help to overcome the obstacles wherever possible.



We are currently still working on the project and are preparing the realisation of transformative measures in coordination with the city administration and the district committee. Further on-site appointments are on the agenda to review the suggested measures. A fixed milestone in the summer is an event with fun and games around mobility at Piusplatz on July 19, 2024. Everyone who is interested, whether or not they live in the neighbourhood, are invited to join the event. We look forward to discussing the project and the results!



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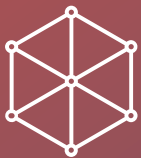
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Mobility in Metropolitan Regions



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The results and recommendations for action presented here are taken from the Mobility (In)Justice Atlas developed by the MCube innovation project „Mobility Justice in Metropolitan Regions (MGeM)“. These results are published for a wide audience in collaboration with the MCube integration project „Responsible Mobility Innovation & Governance (ReMGo)“.

MCube – the Munich Cluster for the Future of Mobility in Metropolitan Regions – utilises the unique agglomeration of players in the field of mobility innovation to make Munich a pioneer for sustainable and transformative mobility innovations. The aim of the cluster is to test and research leap innovations in the mobility sector and to develop scalable solutions with a model character for Germany and worldwide.