

Finding Biketopia

From Pop-up to Permanent: a case study on Berlin



Research question:

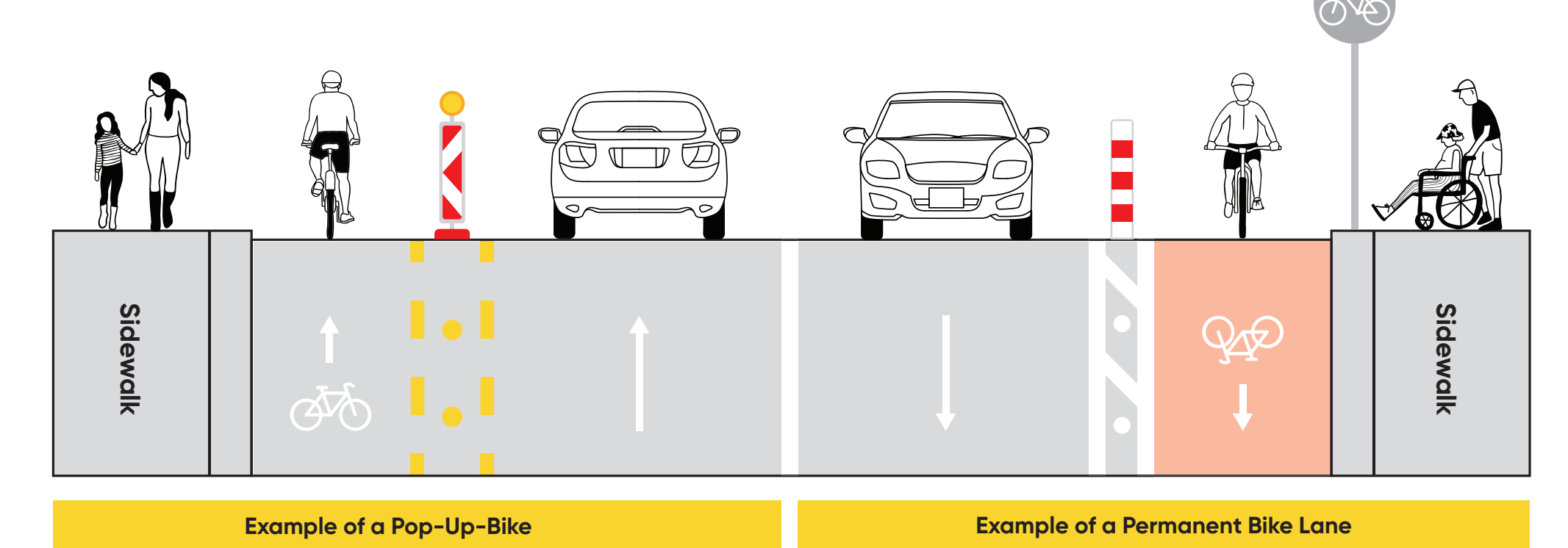
“What are barriers and drivers for the implementation of PUBLs and on which legal basis is it possible to steady this healthy and climate friendly mobility solution in post-COVID-19 times?”

What are PUBLs?

Pop-up bike lanes (PUBLs) are temporary installed bike lanes that were created in the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg in Berlin during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

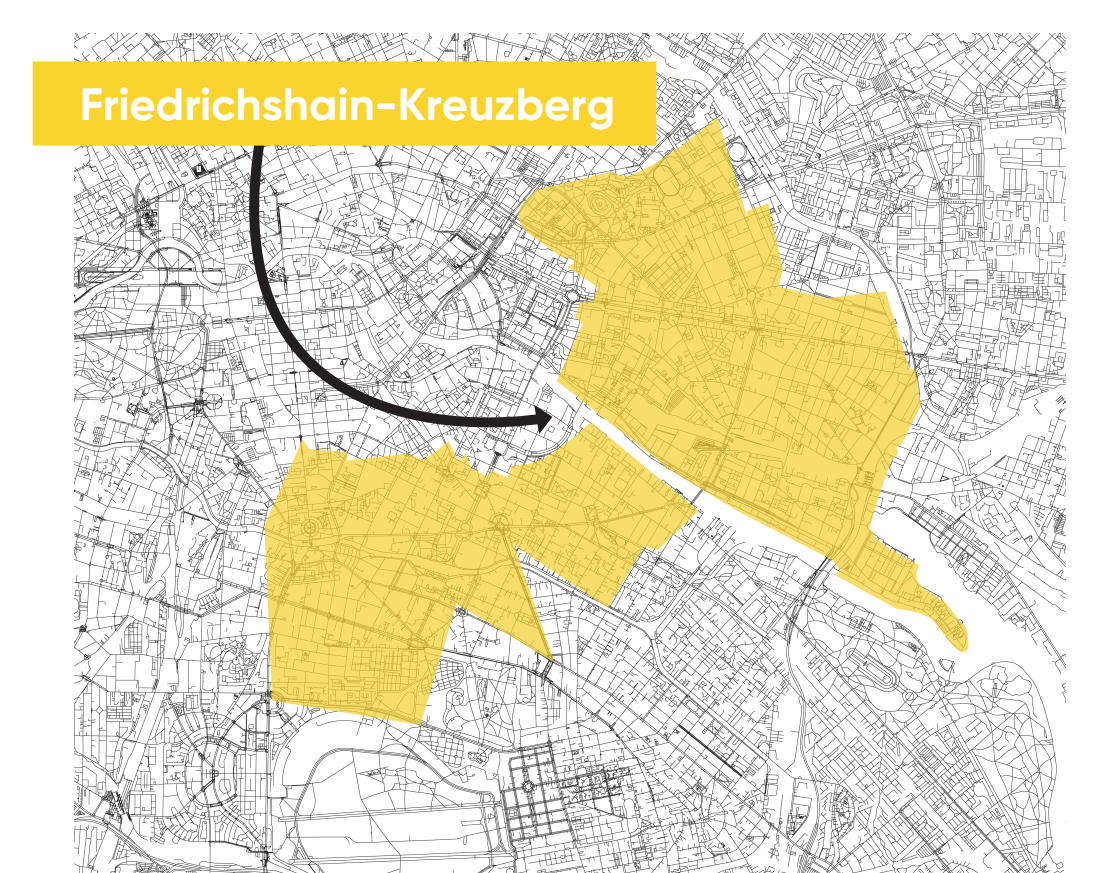
PUBLs are characterized by their fast and pragmatic implementation with temporary elements (among other things: yellow adhesive markings, spatial demarcation by delineators). In 2022, nearly all PUBLs in this district were converted into permanent bike lanes.

Road transition: from PUBLs to permanent



Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Berlin

The district is one of twelve districts in Berlin and was the first to implement this temporary solution, which quickly attracted national press attention.



20.4 km²
289,000 inhabitants
38 average age
> 25 km PUBLs steaded

From COVID to bike lanes

How did we get here?

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes in people's travelling patterns. Berlin's public transport company lost a third of its passengers during the winter of 2020/2021.¹ This decrease was prompted by a mixture of remote work/education and fear of infection. In 2020, one in seven people in Germany didn't travel at all for work or education, and 18% declined to use public transport.² Since the 1.5-metre minimum

distance could not always be guaranteed in public transport, many people shifted to cycling and walking.³ This in turn resulted in a "bike boom" in Germany in Summer 2020.⁴ The combination of an explosive increase in cycling due to COVID-19⁵ and a weakened public transport system⁶ provided an impetus for action⁷ and drove public administration to act more quickly than it otherwise might.⁸

Why pop-ups?

Start simple and move fast

Cycling is key to achieving healthy, climate-friendly mobility in cities. Although they have not yet had a major effect, PUBLs (pop-up bike lanes) have been shown to contribute to this vision. After PUBLs and the accompanying infrastructure were installed in Berlin, there was indeed an uptick in the use of bicycles.⁹ But why start with pop-ups and not go straight for permanent bike lanes? Well, the pop-up approach allows a

quick start in terms of the planning and deployment of bike lanes. It's a much faster process than setting up permanent bike lanes. Furthermore, PUBLs are relatively cheaper, making them even more attractive. For comparison, the installation costs for PUBLs in Berlin were approximately 10,000 euros per kilometre,¹⁰ while planning costs alone for one kilometre of permanent bicycle lane in Berlin are usually around 40,000 euros¹¹.



Ready, set, go!

Drivers for the implementation of PUBLs

The global COVID-19 pandemic created a window of opportunity for the establishment of PUBLs.¹² However, the administrative orders establishing PUBLs remained legally subject to German federal traffic law which is strictly road safety-oriented. Only traffic-related legal considerations and not the pandemic were taken into account as valid arguments by courts.¹³ Instead of being a formal justification, the pandemic rather simply provided a catalyst for the establishment of PUBLs. The case of PUBLs in Berlin also shows that close cooperation between different levels of public administrations, partly thanks to established connections between important decision-makers,

was crucial for success – a good example is the cooperation between the Department of Traffic Management and the Department for streets and green spaces in the District Office of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg.¹⁴ Other notable drivers included the perseverance of the relevant administration as well as the personal commitment of individuals in management positions. This is even more effective when bicycle infrastructure is embedded in an overall bicycle planning concept.¹⁵ Add strategies such as a bold interpretation of the applicable legal framework and doing the most with the resources at hand, and PUBLs can play a major role in bringing the mobility transition to life.

Here to stay!

Steadying temporary solutions

Making PUBLs permanent means expanding this solution that is originally designed to be temporary with permanent fixed infrastructure – for instance, changing the temporary spatial demarcation by delineators to a permanent spatial demarcation by bollards. In Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, for instance nearly all PUBLs have been thus changed to permanent bike lanes.¹⁶ In general, a three-step approach seems to prove successful and was thus presented as a possible future standard procedure: 1) temporary arrangement, 2) accompanying evaluation and 3) permanent structural implementation.¹⁷ Such a course could be followed by other cities in Germany and elsewhere, building

on the notion that showcasing best practices can be a great way to ensure that PUBLs are made permanent.

The formal evaluation between temporary and permanent makes it possible to refine planning guidelines based on identified improvement needs, thus shortening planning procedures considerably.¹⁸ Experts opinions regarding the ratio of the effort to implement a PUBL and make it a permanent solution afterwards ranges between 80% (temporary) / 20% (steading)¹⁹ to 50% / 50%.²⁰ This reduces planning costs and financial barriers when implementing biking infrastructure.

Finding Biketopia

How do we get there?

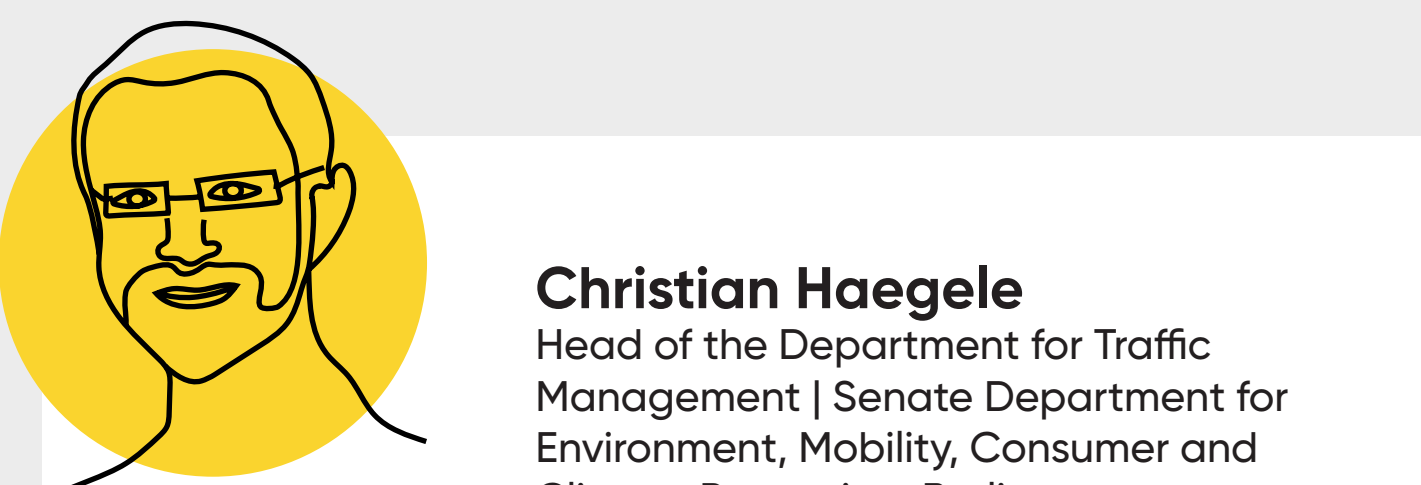
PUBLs prove that fast, efficient and legally sound action that can boost cycling mobility and provide climate-friendly solutions is possible. So what's next? Germany's federal and state governments can give municipalities greater scope for action, especially with regard to road traffic laws) and regulations, as well as provide them with more resources.²¹ Most importantly, there must be a paradigm shift especially on a federal level from car-centred planning to prioritising sustainable mobility.²² It is crucial that car traffic not remain the sole reference for transport legislation and regulations. Other aspects of

a vital society and efficient mobility, such as human health, environmental and climate policy, and human-centred urban planning, should be integrated into relevant transport legislation, especially into the Road Transport Act (StVG) and Road Traffic Regulation (StVO).²³ In the long term, a shift like the mobility transition requires adequate legislative measures to ensure the right legal framework. This framework will in turn require suitable administrative procedures to ensure a more bike-friendly society.



Felix Weisbrich
 Head of the Department for Streets and Green spaces | District office Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Berlin

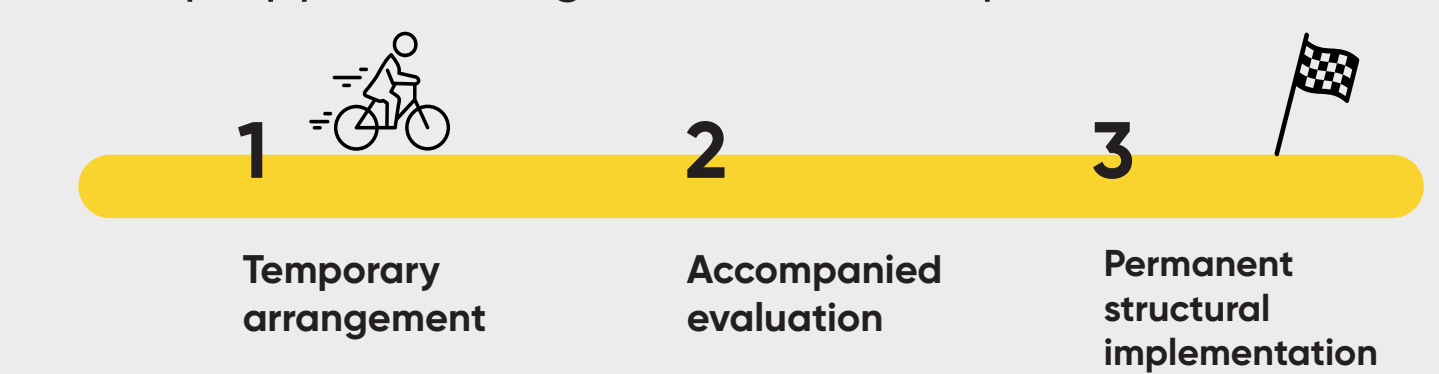
“Pop-up bike lanes are 'living labs' that demonstrate the importance of conflict negotiation in the planning process. They show the benefits of prioritizing quick administrative decisions over detailed technical planning.”



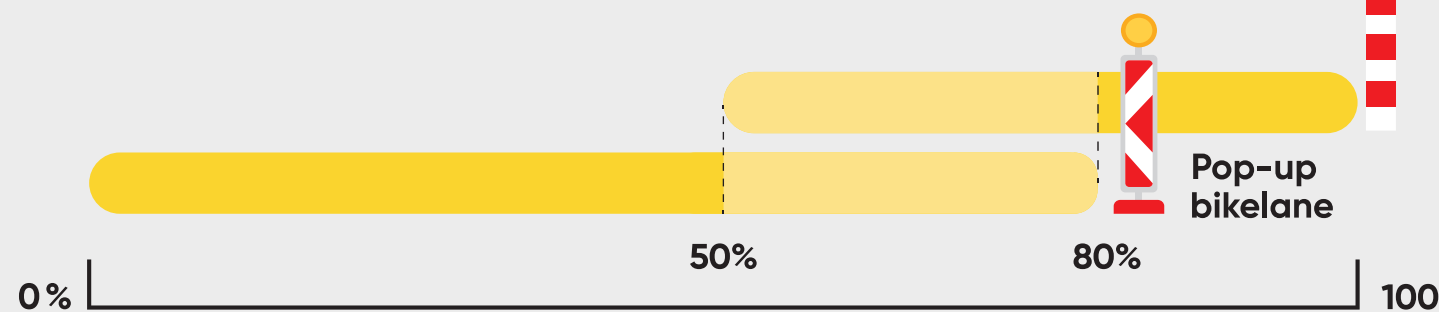
Christian Haegel
 Head of the Department for Traffic Management | Senate Department for Environment, Mobility, Consumer and Climate Protection, Berlin

“A pop-up bike lane is an example of a small step with a big impact. Pop-up bike lanes can't transform the entire transport system on their own, but they can play a valuable role in transition strategies in certain areas.”

3-Step approach to go from PUBLs to permanence



Start with PUBLs and your halfway there!
 Approximation of workload ratio

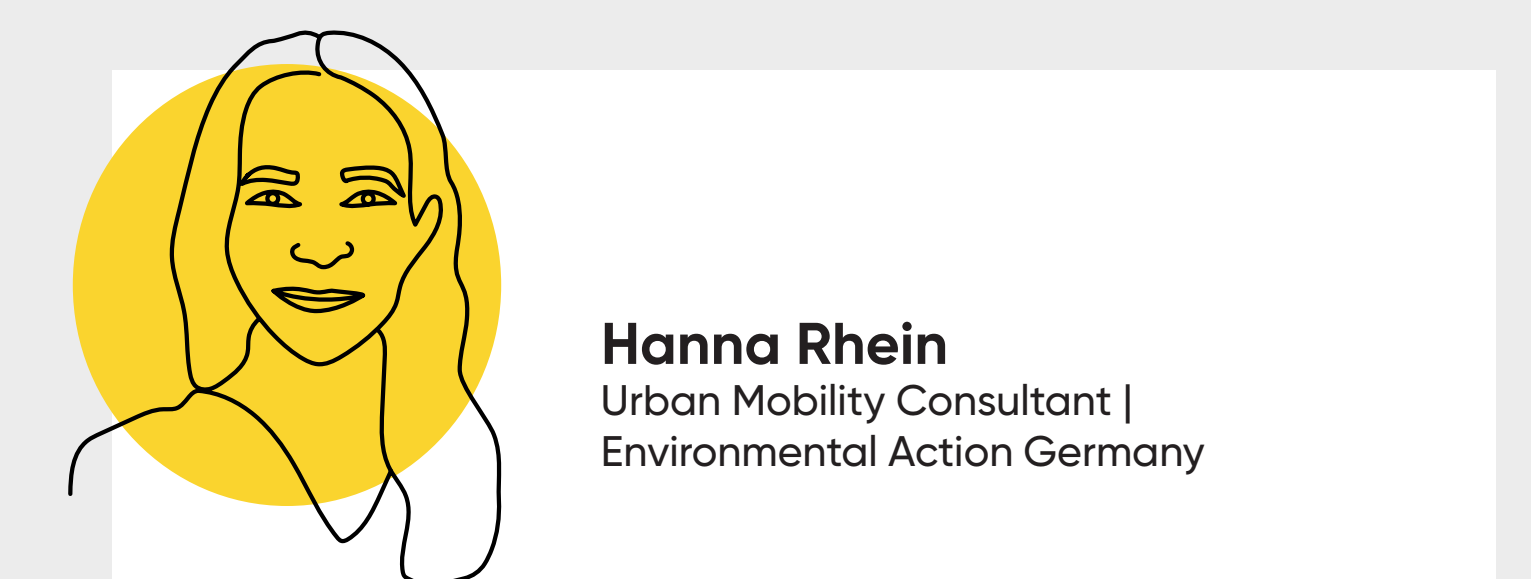


Avoiding the pitfalls

Barriers to the implementation of PUBLs

Obstacles to the deployment of PUBLs mainly mirror the above stated drivers. These solutions are mainly held back by a lack of personal commitment in public administration. This inactivity²⁴ can be attributed to political attitudes, differing priorities or a lack of courage or knowledge in interpreting legal frameworks.²⁵ In some situations, when one or more of these barriers have been present at the same time within a given administration, it has been impossible to implement these temporary solutions. Other obstacles spring from outdated administrative structures and principles of traffic planning, such

as a – perhaps typically German – excessive administrative meticulousness, as well as the unexamined but pervasive idea that nothing must get in the way of smoothly flowing car traffic.²⁶ Other possible issues include a lack of participation by citizens and inadequate transparency on the part of the administration, which may lead to dissatisfaction and rejection among important stakeholders.²⁷ Finally, interviews have shown that a lack of resources – whether in terms of personnel, finances, or time – has been one of the main obstacles to the expansion of PUBLs.²⁸



Hanna Rhein
 Urban Mobility Consultant | Environmental Action Germany

“It can take a long time to revise major regulations. Short-term solutions like pop-up bike lanes allow us to act now – which is why it's so important to implement them in as many places as possible.”