Democratic Possibilities of Contested Urban Space

A Case Study of Participatory Urban Planning on Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin

Maike Leonie Greb
Democratic Possibilities of Contested Urban Space
A case study of Participatory Urban Planning on Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin

Maike Leonie Greb

Nordic Urban Planning Studies
Supervisor: Defne Kadıoğlu
Summary

This thesis considers the possibilities of urban space for lived democratic practice. Taking up the debate on ‘the good way’ of involving citizens in urban planning, I employ theories of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism to examine participatory planning around the case of Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin, Germany. After its closure, the former airport Berlin Tempelhof turned into a public open space in 2010. Although there were plans of a partial development, an initiative-led bottom-up participation introduced a prohibition of permanent building development on Tempelhofer Feld in 2014. As one condition of the initiative, a combination of institutionalised and bottom-up participation has been established. The current conservative government of Berlin considers abolishing the prohibition of real-estate development. It thus disregards the importance of Tempelhofer Feld as a space for recreational and leisure activities, its importance for biodiversity and urban climate regulation and as a symbol of democratic achievements. Through a lens of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism, this thesis focuses on the participation process since the referendum in 2014, from the perspective of urban planners, activists and those in-between. The two guiding research questions are: Which aspects of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism can be found in statements by relevant actors during the participation process on Tempelhofer Feld since the referendum in 2014? How does the Senate’s plan to adjust the Tempelhofer Feld law affect the current participation in light of these theories?

In line with the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism, I developed four themes that can be divided into a deliberative or agonistic understanding of participatory planning: “role of the planning administration”, “understanding of conflict”, “goals in dealing with conflict”, and “understanding of participation”. To investigate the different actors’ perspectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key actors, in addition to a document analysis, and participant observation. The main findings hold that the current Senate department for urban planning does not allow for productive conflict by shifting the understanding of conflict in a way that denies its own biased role. Additionally, I consider the current bottom-up participation model as an agonistic alternative to participatory planning introduced by the Senate department. Due to its abundance of different participation approaches, Tempelhofer Feld can be considered a significant case for urban planning scholars interested in participatory planning, also beyond Germany and Berlin.

Keywords: Participatory Urban Planning; Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin; Deliberative Democracy; Agonistic Pluralism
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor. I am extremely grateful for your guidance and enthusiasm for my research, interesting discussions, patience and valuable feedback. Our regular meetings always helped me to find motivation and new ideas for this study.

Many thanks also to the informants of my study for their time and their insights on participation processes. Their different experiences and perspectives on Tempelhofer Feld form the essence of my study.

Further, I am thankful for my friends and family for their support. I’d like to especially thank those who encouraged me in the writing process through thorough proof-reading, feedback and suggestions. Lastly, I would like to thank Klara, Tillie and Lina, who motivated and inspired me through their support and company during the whole process.
# Contents

SUMMARY ................................................................................................................................. I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................................... II

CONTENTS .................................................................................................................................. III

LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................................................... V

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................... V

ABBREVIATIONS ........................................................................................................................ V

1. INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1

   1.1 BACKGROUND ...................................................................................................................... 1

   THE URBAN AS AN ARENA FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY ............................................................ 1

   TEMPELHOFER FELD IN BERLIN, GERMANY ........................................................................ 2

   1.2 PROBLEM DEFINITION AND RESEARCH QUESTION ......................................................... 3

   1.3 AIM AND CONTRIBUTION .................................................................................................. 3

   1.4 DELIMITATIONS .................................................................................................................. 4

   1.5 DISPOSITION ....................................................................................................................... 5

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................................ 6

   2.1 PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR DEMOCRATIC PLANNING ............ 6

   2.2 CONTEXT BERLIN – BETWEEN NEOLIBERALISATION AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT ............ 7

   2.3 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON TEMPELHOFER FELD – A CASE OF DEMOCRATIC RECLAIMING ...... 8

3. THEORETICAL APPROACH ...................................................................................................... 12

   3.1 DELIBERATION AND CONSENSUS-SEEKING PLANNING ................................................. 12

   3.2 AGONISTIC PLURALISM AND CONFLICT-ORIENTED PLANNING .................................... 13

   3.3 OPERATIONALISATION ........................................................................................................ 15

   ROLE OF THE URBAN PLANNING ADMINISTRATION ............................................................. 16
List of Figures

Figure 1 - Timeline Tempelhofer Feld (own illustration) ................................................................. 19
Figure 2 - Scope of Tempelhofer Feld law (2014) and permanent buildings ........................................ 22
Figure 3 - Participation model (source: SenMKVU, n.d.-a) ................................................................. 23

List of Tables

Table 1 - Visualisation of themes .............................................................................................................. 17
Table 2 - Direct Participation in Berlin ..................................................................................................... 21
Table 3 - Actors around Tempelhofer Feld ............................................................................................... 26
Table 4 - Interviewees ............................................................................................................................... 29
Table 5 - Documents ................................................................................................................................. 30
Table 6 - Visualisation of Inductive-Deductive Codes ........................................................................... 32

Abbreviations

SenMVKU Senatsverwaltung für Mobilität, Verkehr, Klimaschutz und Umwelt
(engl.: Senate Department for Urban Mobility, Transport, Climate Action and the Environment)

SenStadt Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen (engl.: Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing)

EPP Entwicklungs- und Pflegeplan (engl.: Development and maintenance plan)

ThF law Tempelhofer Feld Gesetz (engl.: Tempelhofer Feld law)
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Urban as an Arena for Direct Democracy

Democracies constantly struggle for broad and inclusive political participation. The fact that the most recent study on attitudes towards extreme right and anti-democratic positions in Germany ("Mitte Studie") has found that less and less citizens consider the German democracy to be well-functioning (Küpper et al., 2023, p. 104), calls for the need of democratic practices that citizens can actively participate in. Democratic participation on the federal level in Germany is limited to representative democracy\(^1\). On the individual state level, in contrast, referendums can have legislative power (Schmidt, 2019, p. 358). This also affects urban planning practice: from the possibility to include citizen into the planning process to the obligations towards bottom-up citizen movements that make a previously planned project come to a halt. The state level urban planning seems to be an area for citizens to experience democratic practice, possibly in a more tangible way than elsewhere. Indeed, the urban has always – from the Greek polis on – been an arena for direct democracy (Silver et al., 2010, p. 456).

Democratic participation has also become a more prominent topic in urban planning literature. Overcoming the tradition of technocratic modernist urban planning, more recent urban planning theory and practice has acknowledged the necessity of citizen involvement in dealing with competing interests (Amin, 2016; Campbell et al., 2016; Kühn, 2021; Silver et al., 2010). From a formerly rational balancing of different interests by the planner as an expert, recent theories are more inclusive of the needs and wants of citizens and reconstitute the role of the planner as a mediator between different perspectives (Amin, 2016, p. 163 f.; Hesse & Kühn, 2023, p. 423). While different authors have varying approaches to reaching this goal, there is a general tendency towards determining ‘the good way’ of integrating citizens in planning to counteract planning for a particular group or market interests. In line with the need for local democracy and the prominence of participation in planning literature, my thesis will explore the potential of participatory urban planning as a lived democratic practice.

---

\(^1\) The reason for the hesitation to implement direct democracy was the caution towards the implementation of a democratic order that would in any way resemble Max Weber’s plebiscitarian leader democracy that had led to Hitler’s seizure of power. While it was found that other aspects were much more relevant in that respect, especially weakening the power of the president in favour of the head of government, direct democratic actions were restricted to the individual state level (Schmidt, 2019, p. 357).
The current debate in participatory planning literature mainly revolves around two approaches to participatory planning: deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism. The concept of deliberation with its focus on consensus seeking, reasoning and partnership is considered the hegemonial practice among planners with a focus on citizen involvement (Hesse & Kühn, 2023, p. 427). There is a more recent focus in planning theory on the concept of agonistic pluralism, that focuses on the value of productive conflict. The latter approach criticises the prominence of deliberation in planning theory and practice for its perception as a universal remedy in planning practice with often no concrete justification for its use (Hesse & Kühn, 2023, p. 429). These two approaches to participatory planning will provide the leading theoretical framework of the thesis.

**Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin, Germany**

Tempelhofer Feld, a more than 300-hectare open space on the grounds of the former airport Berlin Tempelhof in central Berlin, is a case of recurring democratic practice in urban planning, from grassroots movements to institutionalised participation and top-down approaches. Tempelhofer Feld operated as an airport until its closure in 2008. Roughly ten years before its closure, plans for the subsequent use of the airport space were made without an involvement of the public; later, between 2007 and 2011, a participation process was initiated. The airport was made publicly accessible in 2010 but there were also concrete plans to develop spaces for residential and commercial use. Although participation was considered extensive by the government, the majority of Berlin citizen understood the pre-2014 citizen involvement around Tempelhofer Feld merely as a manufacturing of consent (Dannenberg & Follmann, 2015, p. 99). The plan to develop residential and commercial real estate was thus counteracted by a grassroots citizen initiative (*100% Tempelhofer Feld*) founded in 2011 that turned into a public referendum on the future of the former airport site (Thierfelder & Kabisch, 2016, p. 122). In May 2014, 739,124 Berlin citizens voted in favour of the referendum and thereby reached the quorum to pass the Tempelhofer Feld law, that prohibits housing development on Tempelhofer Feld (Michaelis-Merzbach & Rockmann, 2014, p. 4). After long years of post-reunion privatisation in Berlin, the outcome was a big success for the local initiatives (Lebuhn, 2017, p. 148). Following the referendum in 2014, a combination of institutionalised and bottom-up participation was established, including a committee consisting of citizen representatives and representatives of the responsible Senate department.
1.2 Problem Definition and Research Question

Tempelhofer Feld has, since its opening to the public, been used by many visitors for leisure activities, including sports (cycling, running, skating), barbecuing and picnicking as well as for projects such as urban gardening and bike repair (Grün Berlin GmbH, 2024; Thierfelder & Kabisch, 2016, p. 122). Due to its size and the location close to the city centre of a capital city, it is an exceptional example of a green open space in Europe (Koçak, 2020, p. 91; Thierfelder & Kabisch, 2016, p. 121). The current change in the government of Berlin towards a more conservative coalition once again opens the debate about a possible real-estate development on the edges of Tempelhofer Feld (CDU & SPD, 2023). This would limit the possibilities of the space’s current use. One major argument of the government is that parts of the area should be developed to provide affordable housing. But how does this align with the former and current participation around Tempelhofer Feld? The purpose of the study is to examine the participatory planning process since 2014 with a focus on the current debate and contextualise the participation processes and the positions of the different actors in prevalent discussions of deliberative and agonistic participatory planning theory. The following research questions will guide this study:

- Which aspects of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism can be found in statements by relevant actors during the participation process on Tempelhofer Feld since the referendum in 2014?
- How does the Senate’s plan to adjust the Tempelhofer Feld law affect the current participation in light of these theories?

1.3 Aim and Contribution

By answering the research questions, the aim of the thesis is twofold. It investigates how actors in the participation around the subsequent use of Tempelhofer Feld since 2014 understand democracy through the perspective of the two prominent perceptions of democracy in planning literature. It further contributes to the current discourse on participation in urban planning through an implementation of the prominent debate around deliberation and agonism in a case study. The framework of deliberation and agonism also shows the complexity of citizen participation and leads to an understanding that democratic negotiations are continuously open and remain incomplete.

In the context of Scandinavian participatory planning research, the case of Tempelhofer Feld is specifically relevant as it shows an alternative approach to dealing with conflict in participation.
In the Scandinavian system, as Pløger (2023) argues, conflicts are “a matter of political decision” (Pløger, 2023, p. 451) and are made between “powerful political, economic and local interests […] out of the sight of the public” (ibid.). The German planning system, in contrast to other European but especially Scandinavian ones, is a more “decentralized and multilevel system, in which the federal, the Länder, the regional and the municipal level are closely related” (Kühn, 2021, p. 144). The possibility of a citizen-initiated referendum is more Berlin-specific but shows the opportunities in a decentralised system. Accordingly, this study is expected to be relevant for both Scandinavian as well as German scholars and planners.

1.4 Delimitations

The thesis has a clear normative framework. It advocates for comprehensive and direct citizen participation in order to address social justice (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 24). In that sense, I follow the understanding of planning research that Fainstein and DeFilippis (2016) take in their compilation of readings in planning theory:

We see that central question as the following: What role can planning play in developing the good city and region within the constraints of a capitalist political economy and varying political systems? Thus we are explicit in our normative goal of thinking that theory should inform and improve practice in ways that meaningfully improve cities and regions and the lives of the people that live and work within them now and in the future. Addressing this question requires examining what planning currently accomplishes, the constraints upon it, and the potential for changing it. Thus, planning theory must be both explanatory and normative. (p. 2)

This means that the literature that informed this thesis’ literature review and theoretical framework mainly includes previous research and theoretical developments with a strong focus on ‘the good’ planning, which is inherently related to ‘the good’ way of citizen participation.
1.5 Disposition

Chapter 1 (Introduction): This chapter aims to explain the context and relevance of the topic, as well as it introduces the reader to the problem statement and research questions of the study. The study’s aim is finally outlined to position the research in the relevant context.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review): The second chapter reviews relevant literature to bring the study into context of existing research on participatory planning and citizen engagement around Tempelhof Feld. It aims to show the relevance of the chosen theoretical concepts and the scope of the study.

Chapter 3 (Theoretical Approach): Informed by the literature review, the theoretical chapter looks further into the theory on deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism and presents the theoretical concepts that will be used in the analysis.

Chapter 4 (Case): This chapter gives a detailed introduction to the case, including relevant participation processes prior to 2014 and an overview of the relevant processes and actors after 2014.

Chapter 5 (Research Design and Methods): This chapter presents the research design of the study and outlines the methods for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 6 (Analysis): This chapter analyses the collected data with help of the theoretical concepts that were developed in the theoretical framework.

Chapter 7 (Conclusion): This final chapter concludes the findings and answers the research questions. It positions the findings in the context of previous literature and closes with an outlook on future research.
2. Literature Review

The literature review is structured in three parts: The first part reviews the relevance and democratic potential of deliberative and agonistic approaches to participatory planning, the second part considers the context of Berlin regarding neoliberalisation and citizen engagement and the third part looks more closely into the case, giving an overview of previous research on participation around the subsequent use of Tempelhofer Feld.

2.1 Participatory Planning and its Relevance for Democratic Planning

The international literature review on urban planning approaches to dealing with conflict by Hesse and Kühn (2023) points towards the hegemonic practice of collaborative planning (or deliberation in planning) as well as the more recent call of scholars for the agonistic approach with its focus on conflict. Van Wymeersch et al. (2019) indicate the empirical reality of the two paradigms that are often accommodated simultaneously in participatory planning processes (p. 359). Silver et al. (2010) also show that aspects of the opposing concepts are used in different phases of participation in practice. The need for agonism in politics and urban planning is often called for, like in Andersen and Pløger (2007). They link agonistic democracy to the acceptance of “social difference and diversity” (Andersen & Pløger, 2007, p. 1365) in the Danish context.

Running parallelly to the debate about deliberation and agonism, planning literature has acknowledged the threat of neoliberal planning to participatory planning and its connection to the “postpolitical condition” (Swyngedouw, 2009). Neoliberalisation is here understood as the “dominant, yet contradictory, practice of market-based regulatory restructuring that began in the 1970s in different political, economic, social and cultural contexts, and across various geographical scales” (Kadi et al., 2021, p. 356). This is a relevant context for a study focusing on participatory planning, since neoliberal influences on planning have led to the risk of either understanding participation mainly through market consumption (Campbell et al., 2016) or using it as a buzzword to “[secure] legitimacy for and cooperation with policies already adopted that favour capitalist growth” (Silver et al., 2010, p. 454). On the same lines, some participation processes have been criticised as forms of urban governance that repress grassroots citizen movements. In contrast to some original motives of citizen participation then, neoliberal governance is concerned with the output and efficiency of a planning process rather than actually including citizens’ interests (Silver et al., 2010, p. 461). The concept of post-political urbanism takes up these observations and formulates a general tendency: post-politics is defined
as a condition that “annuls the properly political moment” (Swyngedouw, 2009, p. 604), and is strongly related to the implementation of a “neoliberal governmentality” (Swyngedouw, 2009, p. 604). Critics of deliberation have connected some of these aspects to the focus on consensus in deliberative participatory planning (Silver et al., 2010, p. 454). This tendency to undermine the democratic potential of participation in deliberative participatory planning should be kept in mind when analysing the case of Tempelhofer Feld. Due to this study’s focus on ‘the good’ participation, I understand participation as a possible cure to counteract neoliberal logics in planning and re-democratise aspects of a post-political condition.

Studies on participation should consider the efforts of planning theory and practice in relation to citizen involvement originating in the global south. In his article on informal urbanism in the global south, Inam (2022), for example, points towards the possibilities of co-designing as informal citizen participation in several cities across the global south. The reproduction of public spaces through co-designing, in his view, means “rapidly [moving] towards a far more just, equitable and radically democratic city for all, especially for those who are marginalised” (p. 667). Even in “current spatial political-economies of corporatism and neoliberalism” (p. 667) movements of informal urbanism exist. The debate between deliberation and agonism is taken up in Frediani and Cociña (2019), as informal urbanism can be understood as an alternative to other progressive participation forms like agonistic planning. They suggest considering participation as planning rather than conceptually detaching participation from planning. This also relates to “do first talk later” (Appadurai, 2001, p. 33) practices identified across the global south, which can lead to changes of the original plan through citizen practice. Understanding participation not merely as defined by the urban planner can help withdrawing from different unjust tendencies, like neoliberalisation in planning (Frediani & Cociña, 2019, p. 157). In the context of Tempelhofer Feld, some parallels to examples of participation in cities of the global south include the constant reproduction of public space, the understanding of planning through participation and practices of envisioning an alternative form of development.

2.2 Context Berlin – Between Neoliberalisation and Citizen Engagement

Berlin after the fall of the wall and in the continuing years has often been considered in the context of neoliberal urban development. This is related to the local government’s turn towards commodification, in regards to the housing market (decrease in municipal and social housing) as well as open spaces (privatisation of public land) (Beveridge & Richter, 2020, p. 67; Kadi et
These post-reunification “neoliberal […] ways of governing” (Kadi et al., 2021, p. 367), have also led to an exclusion of citizens from significant decision making. Other participation developments in Berlin have been described to follow the logic of governance through community that mainly serves to legitimise neoliberal policies (Blokland et al., 2015, p. 663). However, in the decentralised German planning system, citizens of Berlin have the possibility to achieve legislative power if they undergo a three-step referendum process. This possibility has previously led to a counteracting of neoliberal policies: water provision in Berlin was partially privatized in 1999 but a citizen referendum in 2008 and the pressure of citizen initiatives led to the re-municipalisation of the Berlin water company (BWB) in 2012 (Beveridge et al., 2014, p. 66).

Generally, Berlin is known for its politically active citizens. Previous initiatives like “Mediaspree versenken!” (Sink Mediaspree!), between 2006 and 2009, successfully brought attention to investments next to the river Spree that were part of developing the area as a hub for media groups (Lebuhn, 2017, p. 148). As Hilbrandt (2017) states, “this engagement only achieved minor changes in the foreseen developments, [but] Berliners have learned to position themselves against urban politics and press the city to justify its planning projects” (p. 544). This seems to be a common understanding among most Berlin citizen, as was pointed out by Pamela Schobeß, a Berlin club owner, in the five-part documentary on Berlin’s history since the fall of the wall in 1989: "I don't think what will happen is that at some point Berliners will sit back and say 'just do it, you people up there'. I don't think that will happen" (ARTE, 2023 minute 53:52). Neoliberal development on the one hand and the engagement of active citizens on the other hand are an important context for understanding the participation around Tempelhofer Feld, especially in relation to the 2014 referendum and current political changes.

2.3 Previous Studies on Tempelhofer Feld – a Case of Democratic Reclaiming

The final subsection of the literature review encompasses previous studies on the participation processes on Tempelhofer Feld. Most of the previous research is centred around the referendum in 2014. The first years after the referendum are also those when studies on Tempelhofer Feld peaked. Some of the previous contributions take the perspective of the planning institutions as a starting point, considering participation as a necessary tool to increase acceptance of plans (cf. Heppner, 2015; Klein, 2019). Others understand the participation around Tempelhofer Feld as a counter-narrative of participation, as a democratic reclaiming in an era of neoliberal
governance. The theories of deliberation and agonism have been used to analyse the bottom-up participation in 2014 through the context of the previous Senate-initiated participation processes.

Mackrodt (2015) investigated the interim use by different citizen projects (e.g., urban gardening) on the edges of Tempelhofer Feld as a way of institutionalised pioneer use of a space. She considered this use a novelty: pioneer uses gave citizens the opportunity to shape public space in the process instead of only discussing possible developments or outcomes. The pioneer use was claimed to serve the purpose of integrating civil actors in urban planning, but Mackrodt (2015) finds that there were also economic reasons: establishing the image of a participatory city that may make Berlin more attractive to visitors and the future housing development in the area (Mackrodt, 2015, pp. 301-302). The interim uses were located on the space on Tempelhofer Feld that the city planned to build on. As will be taken up later, this played an important role in driving the activism against the real-estate development. Interestingly, the participants in the pioneer use were responsible for the areas allocated to them but did not have the possibility to participate in any other shaping process of the subsequent use of Tempelhofer Feld (Mackrodt, 2015, p. 303). While I will not consider the interim use that took place before 2014, this context illuminates the Senate administration’s role between providing the possibility of processual participation and the pre-decided plan to eventually use these spaces for housing and commercial development.

Rossini and Bianchi (2020) argue in their comparative work of space (re)appropriation practices in Berlin, Rome, and Barcelona that the practice of bottom-up, informal participation has been incorporated into the planning debate and strategies, while the neoliberal logics are still prevalent in the “urban agenda and planning culture” (p. 118). The reappropriating process through the referendum on Tempelhofer Feld is considered a practice of counteracting neoliberal planning. However, in line with Mackrodt (2015), they refer to the interim use of the outer circle before 2014 as an “inclusion of the bottom-up claims into dominant strategies” (Rossini & Bianchi, 2020, p. 117). They argue that this participation practice reveals neoliberal logics. In reference to the post-political condition, they consider an overcoming of the “consensus rhetoric” (p. 118) as a possibility to re-politicise planning culture. Tempelhofer Feld is an example of “competing interests [that] trigger a continuous negotiation without any definite and final solution and this ‘sustained instability’ looks to be essential to democracy” (Rossini & Bianchi, 2020, p. 118). Besides the re-politicising of the participation, Tempelhofer Feld can be classified as an “urban void”; it does not have an exchange value but rather a use
value and is thus a counter hegemonic and re-politicised space (Roskamm, 2014, p. 76; Rossini & Bianchi, 2020). I consider this relevant for this thesis, since it shows how the case must be understood in relation to debates around the post-political, neoliberal condition.

The significance of the citizen activism is pointed out by Lebuhn (2017), as he describes the “massive counter-campaign run by private interest groups, much of the media, and the Berlin government itself” (p. 151) that activist groups and neighbours had to face. He strongly connects the referendum as a positive example of urban activism to the citizens’ ability to bundle interests and translate them into an administratively understandable context (in the form of the law) (Lebuhn, 2017, p. 152). He calls for further researching the interrelated dynamics between government participation processes and protest as in the example of the referendum in 2014.

Hilbrandt (2017) continues with exploring this relation in taking up the concept of consensus (deliberative) and agonistic planning for researching the case. She argues that formal urban planning strategies as they were implemented before 2014 have resembled the depoliticising tendencies of planning; however, they also led to the bottom-up engagement of citizen and “foster[ed] moments of conflict” (p. 538). Hilbrandt (2017) does not deny the general tendencies of post-politics but she criticizes extending the theory to any political engagement in urban planning. The notion of insurgent participation has a different starting point than post-political theories: it argues that state-initiated forms of participation that are meant to lead to consensus can create moments of resistance. She thus takes this starting point to “develop a better understanding of the conditions necessary to foster or prevent contention” (p. 542). Her theoretical framework does not aim to capture fundamental challenges of hegemonic practices but minor acts within hegemonic practice, or as she puts it: “possibilities to act upon the cracks inherent in dominant planning regimes” (p. 550). In the case of Tempelhofer Feld participation processes before 2014, Hilbrandt finds that many aspects confirm a post-politics narrative (one of them that crucial decisions were made before the involvement of the public); however, she also sheds light to the practices beyond the consensus seeking and co-optation of citizen. Through the institutionalized participatory planning processes the development towards the referendum was facilitated, because of the common disappointment of the participation processes and the possibility for different initiatives to connect and rally against the original plan in the provided participation arenas. The interim citizen projects served as a visual idea of future use of an undeveloped Tempelhofer Feld and thus contributed to the momentum of insurgent participation as well (p. 547-550). Hilbrandt’s final remarks, however, also call for a
critical perspective of insurgent participation. While it does argue for the possibility of contestation even in consensus seeking participation processes, it does not necessarily lead to a more democratic, redistributive, or just process or outcome. Power relations were also present in insurgent participation. Those who shifted the dialogue were experienced with political protest. I consider this to reinforce the argument of the complexity of democratic participation and its need for continuous re-evaluation.

To conclude the literature review, the theories of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism were contextualised in the debate on their democratic potential. It was shown that the case’s location in Berlin should consider the city’s history of neoliberalisation and active citizen engagement. Tempelhofer Feld has thus far been understood as a counter-narrative to the post-political condition and bottom-up citizen engagement as well as a case where institutionalised practices have led to a re-politicisation of urban planning.
3. Theoretical Approach

It was shown that the current discourse in participatory planning theory and practice revolves around the two concepts of deliberative and agonistic planning. In accordance with this, the theory chapter will give a comprehensive presentation of both theories and will show that they can in practice be found in a combined way. Finally, I will introduce an operationalisation of the theories for further analysis. The aim is not to position the two theories as opposites but to present a range of different understandings of certain aspects. Thus, I first present the theory of deliberative democracy and the corresponding participatory planning tradition of collaboration and consensus-seeking and then the theory of agonistic pluralism with authors that follow an agonistic participatory planning tradition. Both theories have in common that they focus on citizen participation in planning. Derived from political theory, both understandings are embedded in the context of direct democracy and democracy that emphasises participation and input on the political process (Schmidt, 2019, pp. 227-229). It considers citizens to generally be able to participate in a democratic discussion or be enabled to do so through the process (Schmidt, 2019, p. 233).

3.1 Deliberation and Consensus-Seeking Planning

Deliberative democracy was developed by Jürgen Habermas in a drastic break with previous democratic traditions. Deliberation understands the issue of democratic representation to lay in the detachment of decisions made by the representatives from the actual will of the majority of people affected. It considers the process of rational arguing in the form of a public consultation as having a value in itself but also leading to a consensus that balances interests of those affected. Habermas’ concept of deliberation is the public collective consultation in an inclusive group without any constraints and with no exploitation of power, towards a solution that is in accordance with the common good (Schmidt, 2019, pp. 233-234). In the urban planning literature, deliberation stands for consensus as a central goal of the communicative process, reasoning of the argument and partnership between different actors. Urban planning scholars like Patsy Healy have developed the approach of collaborative planning as a counter-practice to rational planning. She advocated a comprehensive, socioeconomical and non-technical understanding of planning that is institutionalised (Hesse & Kühn, 2023, p. 428). Collaborative planning started to include actors that were not formally responsible, it focused more on diversity and inclusion in the planning process as well as transparency about information and interaction, which was ground-breaking at the time.
In Habermas’ theoretical understanding of deliberation, consultation is considered to function only with a set of concrete rules: it should be open and inclusive, comprehensible and truthful, there should not be a pursuit to reach power and it functions best if there are several obligations for the members and relevant outcomes. The rational outcome is achieved through the assumption of the superiority of the best argument that is reached in an argumentative exchange of information and reason. Deliberative democracy is usually limited to smaller groups (Habermas, 2005, p. 384). It is formulating a political theory that is both democratic in its communication - since the people are sovereign in their decisions - and it possibly leads to a democratic outcome since the ideal speech situation is supposed to give the arena for finding the common good (Mouffe, 1999, p. 746).

Habermas’ deliberation was criticised by Michel Foucault for leaving out the aspect of power relations that are present in public consultation and diminish an equal assertiveness in and access to the discussion (Silver et al., 2010, p. 458). Another critique on deliberative democracy theories is that they are highly normatively driven and empirically often not efficient and predictable. They are criticized for overestimating the possibilities of language to find consensus, as well as the assumed rationality of citizen even in the ideal situation of communication. However, Habermas and political theorists that follow his thoughts have considered the issue of practicality of the approach (Mouffe, 1999, p. 748): as Reuter (2023) explains, the ideal speech situation is only to be understood as a guiding principle that in practice is never to be achieved and also not considered achievable (p. 462).

In participation in urban planning, the post-political condition often is related to achieving a consensus in discussion while avoiding dissent (Hilbrandt, 2017, p. 540; Kühn, 2021, pp. 144, 151). This consensus, as Holm and Lebuhn (2013) argue, has similarities to a technocratic management that depoliticises public discussions (p. 197). Participation leading to consensus is then criticized as pseudo-democratic citizen engagement. What is decided through a consensus is mainly driven by expert opinions and not by democratic means. Agonistic or conflict-oriented planning is considered to potentially lead to a more democratic form of participation (e.g., Hesse & Kühn, 2023, p. 431; Pløger, 2023, p. 451).

3.2 Agonistic Pluralism and Conflict-Oriented Planning

The alternative approach to deliberative planning understands democracy as “contestation, inevitable inequalities, clashes of interest and bargaining to reach compromises” (Silver et al.,
2010, p. 457). It is connected to the work of Michel Foucault on power inequalities and conflict. Foucault, in contrast to Habermas, understands any speech situation to generate power relations resulting in democratic conflict; the process of the conflict, then, has the possibility to empower (Silver et al., 2010, pp. 257-258).

On the same line as Foucault, the political theorist Chantal Mouffe further criticised the deliberative approach for its focus on creating consensus since it excludes the voices that do not allow for consensus. These exclusionary tendencies possibly take place in the formation of the ideal speech situation (composition of participants) but also within a deliberative discussion: who can be most convincing depends on who defines the (underlying) rules of the speech situation, which often excludes “the usual styles of expression of women, minorities and the working class or poor” (Silver et al., 2010, p. 460) She formulated the participation ideal as “bottom-up agonistic processes” (Van Wymeersch et al., 2019, p. 360), since democracy for her is conflict and dissent (Mouffe, 2000, p. 105). In her work, Mouffe refers to the concept of a post-political society. She connects the existing depoliticised society to the focus on consensus: “We have to accept that every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power, and that it always entails some form of exclusion” (Mouffe, 2000, p. 104). The focus on consensus “together with aversion towards confrontations” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7), then, is counterproductive for political participation.

Mouffe claimed in 1999 that democracies have weakened due to a tendency in political theory that is “dominated […] by an individualistic, universalistic, and rationalistic framework” (p. 745). One of her arguments is that the deliberative democratic tradition is mainly replacing the economic logic with a moral one, while the expected rationality of a political decision remains. The political, in her view, is then missing. The alternative to that is Mouffe’s concept of agonistic pluralism. It is mainly characterised by the emphasis on the conflict; this conflict, however, is not supposed to “take the form of an ‘antagonism’ (struggle between enemies), but the form of an ‘agonism’ (struggle between adversaries)” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7). Conflicting parties should not consider each other as enemies but as equals. Since a mere conflict is not productive, Mouffe also explains the relation between the conflict and consensus. She does not deny the necessity of a consensus; reaching a consensus without playing into post-political logics, must be a “conflictual consensus” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 8).

Previous researchers have found it difficult to use the concept of agonism in planning practice (Kühn, 2021). This is partly related to the issue that planning decisions can be rather concrete which means that a single rule is needed. The idea to integrate what Mouffe calls “conflictual
consensus” into planning practice is to “re-open consensus-suppressed conflict” (Pløger, 2023, p. 450), as the Norwegian planning scholar John Pløger explains. This is connected to Mouffe’s perception of consensus as a result of hegemonial power. Pløger argues that participatory governance should be evaluated in relation to its possible risk of excluding marginal voices. Pløger further considers a productive conflict in planning to:

„[…] stress openness, temporality (temporary solutions), respect for difference (in Young’s [1995] sense of the concept), and the need to live with inconsistencies and contingency […] This requires among other things open-ended processes, a politically autonomous but responsible institutional design, a plurality of discourses at play, and a form of ongoing, never-ending, critical and mutual inspiring dialogues between politicians, planning authorities and citizens.“ (Pløger, 2004, p. 87)

To make participatory planning an arena for agonistic pluralism, it is necessary to make space for dissent and allow decisions to be temporary and contestable.

3.3 Operationalisation

The previously described ontological differences between consensus-seeking deliberation and conflict-oriented agonistic participation can often be overcome in the analysis of empirical studies (Silver et al., 2010; Van Wymeersch et al., 2019). In practice, participatory processes are ambivalent. The same actors might be influenced by different theoretical ideas in different phases of the participation process (Silver et al., 2010). Likewise, different actors in the same stage of the process might draw from different theoretical perspectives (Van Wymeersch et al., 2019). Although operationalisations of the planning theories have previously been considered challenging, the four following themes have reoccurred in the literature on deliberation and agonism in planning. They are derived from the work of Kühn (2021) and Kühn and Sommer (2023) who are working on a research approach which they currently revise with empirical studies in a research design of grounded theory².

---

² Kühn (2021) and Kühn and Sommer (2023) also include the “comprehensive-rational” (or also referred to as technocratic) perspective in their research approach. I decided to not include this planning perspective because of this thesis’ focus on the democratic potential of participatory urban planning. I therefore only include approaches of deliberative and agonistic planning. Kühn (2021) and Kühn and Sommer (2023) compare how different planning approaches deal with conflicting interests; including those that do not involve citizen participation (aside from representative democratic participation) (Kühn and Sommer, 2023, p. 5).
Role of the Urban Planning Administration

The role of the urban planning administration is complex but in the context of deliberative and agonistic participation, it can be characterised by either leaning towards a consensus-seeking role or a conflict-oriented role. In a context of deliberative planning, the planning administration is understood to mediate different interests that emerge in planning. This might include the continuation of antagonistic conflicts. In a context of agonism the planning administration is rather conflict-oriented and turns antagonistic conflicts into agonistic conflicts that can be approached (Kühn & Sommer, 2023, p. 18). The only exception to this is, as Kühn (2021) argues, if the planning administration is confronted with anti-democratic positions: “This may imply a need to return from agonistic to antagonistic conflict” (Kühn, 2021, p. 153).

Understanding of Conflict

The understanding of conflict is of great importance in the context of deliberation and agonism. Conflict in deliberation is seen as an occasion for participation that is initiated by the planning administration. Although different forms of participation are possible in deliberative planning, conflicting interests are often approached through a method that resembles the ideal speech situation as formulated by Habermas. Conflict in agonistic planning is much rather understood as a catalyst for change (Hesse & Kühn, 2023, p. 18). Thus, it also often takes the perspective of bottom-up participation.

The understanding of conflict in this thesis is on a rather broad level. It is not about the understanding of conflict in a particular situation or discussion between different interests in a committee. It is much rather the broad understanding of conflict in a political system and the urban planning process.

Goals in Dealing with Conflict

While the understanding of conflict and the goals in dealing with conflict are somewhat connected, the outcome of conflicting interests is worth emphasising. Through a deliberation perspective, the goal in dealing with conflict is to find a consensual solution. As Kühn (2021) points out, this consensual solution often “has the implicit goal of increasing acceptance of a plan or a decision” (p. 150). A more agonistic perspective considers goals in dealing with conflict rather as an acceptance of dissent between conflicting interests. It is of importance that this dissent is not antagonistic. More concretely, an agonistic perspective stresses the aspect of temporality and contestability of the decision made (Pløger, 2004, p. 87).
Like the understanding of conflict, goals in dealing with conflict are also considered on a rather general level and not in a concrete situation of discussion.

**Understanding of Participation**

The final theme is the understanding of participation in a context of deliberation and agonism. A participation in the deliberative approach is understood as limited to concrete timeframes, certain topics, or specific areas. Citizens have a right to participate but the final decisions are negotiated through the planning department. An agonistic understanding of participation emphasises the citizens’ possibility to co-decide. Alternatives are openly discussed, and the final decisions are made by or with the citizen.

The four themes and the deliberative and agonistic understanding of them are illustrated in Table 1. While the theories should not be considered as clearly distinguishable in practice, the detailed descriptions function as a holistic tool in the analysis to contextualise statements by different actors in light of the two theories.

**Table 1 - Visualisation of themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Deliberative Democracy</th>
<th>Agonistic Pluralism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of urban planning administration</td>
<td>Consensus-seeking: The planning administration is mediating different interests, antagonistic conflicts remain</td>
<td>Conflict-oriented: The planning administration turns antagonistic conflicts into agonistic ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of conflict</td>
<td>Deliberative: Conflict as an occasion for participation</td>
<td>Agonistic: Conflict as a catalyser for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals in dealing with conflict</td>
<td>Solution and acceptance: Consensual solution, acceptance of projects</td>
<td>Conflicltual consensus: Acceptance of dissent, temporality, and contestability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation understanding</td>
<td>Participate: Limited to certain topics, timeframes or areas, final decisions are clearly made by the planning department</td>
<td>Co-decide: Open discussion of alternatives, final decisions are made by or with the citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Case

Tempelhofer Feld is a 303 ha open space on the area of the former airport Berlin Tempelhof (SenStadtUm, 2016, p. 6). The former airport building that is at the edge of the space is the largest European building under monumental protection. Due to its size, Tempelhofer Feld is directly adjacent to several boroughs of Berlin. To the east and next to most citizen projects on Tempelhofer Feld lays the borough Neukölln. Large parts of Tempelhofer Feld are part of the borough Tempelhof-Schöneberg that continues to the south-west but is detached from Tempelhofer Feld by a large high-speed road (Hilbrandt, 2017, p. 543). To the north lays the borough Kreuzberg that is separated from Tempelhofer Feld by another park, graveyards, and the former airport building. The city of Berlin is the owner of Tempelhofer Feld.

Besides its current unique character as an open space, Tempelhofer Feld also has a long and diverse history with different functions for the city. After its use as a military site and the beginnings of Berlin’s central airport in the early 20th century, it entered its darkest chapter starting from 1933. During the Nazi rule, it functioned as a concentration camp with forced labour. Most of the airport building was constructed during this time (Huber, 2021, p. 297). After WWII it became internationally known due to its special importance for the population of West-Berlin that was cut-off from western Germany. Surrounded by zones of Soviet occupation, the airport served as the only way to provide the population with goods for daily life from June 1948 to October 1949 (‘Berlin Airlift’). From then on, it operated as an international airport until 2008. The development of the space from the airport Berlin-Tempelhof to the contested urban space of Tempelhofer Feld is illustrated in the timeline (Figure 1).
4.1 From Airport to a Contested Urban Space

Figure 1 - Timeline Tempelhofer Feld (own illustration)
In order to centralise the different Berlin airports into one, the closure of the airport Berlin-Tempelhof was decided in 1996 but the 1994 land-use plan already shows the airport area as possible building land (Hilbrandt, 2017, p. 543). The development of this land-use plan was only aided with minimal, legally required, citizen participation that included exhibiting land-use plans to the public (Hilbrandt, 2017, p. 544). A mix of different participation methods were implemented between 2007 and 2011 – including a comprehensive online-dialogue, a representative written survey of citizens in adjacent neighbourhoods as well as on-site visits and focus-group interviews (SenStadtUm, 2012, p. 38; Zebarlog, n.d.). During these participation processes, citizens were asked to discuss different plans for the development.

Parallel to state-organised participation, several initiatives were active between the end of operations on the airport Berlin Tempelhof and the early opening of the space. In 2008, the initiative “Pro-Tempelhof” missed the quorum to initiate a referendum against the closure of the airport (Hilbrandt, 2017, p. 545). Nine months after the airport’s closure and due to missing information by the Senate department on the future of the space, the initiative Squat Tempelhof tried to enter the airport area in 2009 but was held back by large police presence (Mackrodt, 2015, p. 290). Although the initiative was not successful, the public pressure was eventually yielded to, and the city of Berlin opened Tempelhofer Feld to the public in May 2010 (Mackrodt, 2015, p. 290). Some of the outer parts of the area were made available for interim uses by the public. These so-called pioneer projects started with three-year contracts with the option of expansion if they progressed successfully. The pioneer-projects were located on the parts of Tempelhofer Feld that were allocated to future real-estate development.

Following the Senate department-initiated citizen discussions on the future of Tempelhofer Feld, an international competition for development suggestions was advertised. The citizens’ contribution was one foundation of the decision by the expert commission (SenStadtUm, 2012, p. 44). There was a public information and dialogue workshop on the different proposals in 2010 and finally an exhibition and panel discussion of the final chosen proposal in 2011 (SenStadtUm, 2016, pp. 45, 53). The winning suggestion considered a processual development of four urban quarters on the edges of Tempelhofer Feld with a large park in the middle of the residential areas (SenStadtUm, 2012, p. 12).

Referendum 2014

Germany is a representative democracy that only allows referendums on the individual state level. The 16 German states and city-states have different legal frameworks for participation. Since 1997, citizen in Berlin can initiate a Volksentscheid (referendum) which gives them
legislative power. To initiate a referendum, a two-step petition for a referendum (Volksbegehren) must be passed. The Volksinitiative (popular initiative) is not obligatory for Volksbegehren and Volksentscheid and the referendum 2014 did not include a popular initiative. Nevertheless, all three possibilities of direct participation are illustrated in Table 2 to give an overview:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volksinitiative – popular initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within six months, the initiative needs a minimum of 20,000 signatures of German citizen older than 16 with their first place of residence in Berlin. A successful initiative obliges the Berlin parliament to deal with a certain subject that concerns Berlin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volksbegehren – two-step petition for a referendum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the first step, the carrier (Trägerin) can suggest a new formulation, alteration, or repeal to a law(^3) that Berlin has legislative competence over or formulate any other resolution that concerns Berlin. 20,000 signatures of citizen entitled to vote the Berlin parliament must be gathered to support the petition. The parliament then decides within four months whether it accepts or rejects the suggestion without changes. If it rejects, the carrier (Trägerin) can demand the petition for a referendum, which the Senate is responsible for. 7% of all voters of the Berlin parliament must sign the petition. A successful petition then obliges the Senate to organise a referendum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volksentscheid – referendum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A maximum of four months after the successful petition, the referendum must take place. The Senate is responsible for the referendum. For the law to be passed, at least 25% (roughly, 610,000 citizen) must vote with yes while it also has to be the majority of the votes. The parliament can formulate an alternative suggestion to the law that can be voted for in the same referendum. All eligible voters are informed about the referendum by the Senate beforehand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the Tempelhofer Feld law (Thf law) was not accepted by the parliament in the first step of the petition for a referendum (Volksbegehren), the second step was demanded. The petition was successful and in May 2014, 738 124 citizen of Berlin, or 29,7% of the Berlin electorate, voted for the ThF law in the referendum (Michaelis-Merzbach & Rockmann, 2014, p. 4). The parliament formulated an alternative suggestion to the law that included a partial development for housing and commercial use on Tempelhofer Feld. This was dismissed in the referendum (Michaelis-Merzbach & Rockmann, 2014). All boroughs in Berlin voted in favour of the ThF law (Michaelis-Merzbach & Rockmann, 2014, p. 5). Figure 2 shows the scope of Tempelhofer Feld as defined in the ThF law.

\(^3\) It can also suggest the early termination of the election term. In that case, other regulations apply.
Formulation of the Development- and Maintenance Plan (EPP), 2014-2016, and Alteration of the Law in 2016

The law passed through the referendum required the Berlin Senate to establish a development and maintenance plan (EPP) of Tempelhofer Feld with active citizen participation and within the legal boundaries of the law ("Gesetz zum Erhalt des Tempelhofer Feldes (ThF-Gesetz)," 2014, p. 12). This took place between 2014 and 2016. The development of the plan was structured in several phases that were coordinated by a neutral process coordinator after the referendum in 2014 (SenStadtUm, 2016, Beteiligungsmodell Tempelhofer Feld). It first determined interests, needs, and conflicts, talked to relevant actors and interested citizen; then clustered the ideas and created topic-specific public workshops. Citizen without initial interest were encouraged to take part in a third phase in a so-called “outreach participation” (Aufsuchende Beteiligung) phase. A constant evaluation of the process and outcomes took place throughout the entire process (SenStadtUm, 2016, Beteiligungsmodell Tempelhofer Feld).

In 2016, the ThF law was temporally altered due to an urgent need for refugee accommodation. The adjustment made approx. 120qm of the sealed surface available for temporary housing containers (SenStadtUm, 2016, p. 8). This adjustment was made use of between the end of 2017 and mid-2019 and due to the recurring shortage, the accommodation was reopened in 2022.
(Bezirksamt Tempelhof-Schöneberg, 03.02.2022). To continue using the area for refugee accommodation and expand it to a second area, the parliament again decided a change of the law in April 2024. This possibility of usage is in effect until 2028 (dpa, 18.04.2024).

**Participation model since 2016**

The current participation is structured as shown in Figure 2: the public *Feldforum*, the *Feldkoordination* (committee) and the information and working meetings.

![Participation model](source: SenMKVU, n.d.-a)

The *Feldforum* is a panel open to the public that meets at least once a year. SenMKVU and GRÜN Berlin are responsible for informing the *Feldforum* about current topics and other relevant subjects can be brought up by all participants. All topics are discussed in a consensus-oriented process (SenStadtUm, 2016, Charta der Beteiligung). The *Feldforum* also coordinates the thematic workshops and elects seven citizen representatives in the *Feldkoordination*. Additionally, it gives recommendations to SenMKVU and GRÜN Berlin.
The Feldkoordination is a committee that is made up of seven citizen representatives (as elected through the Feldforum), two representatives of SenMKVU and two representatives of GRÜN Berlin. The committee meets weekly. It organises the Feldforum together with the thematic workshops and aims to assure the quality, inclusiveness and transparency of the collaboration between citizens, politics and administration (SenStadtUm, 2016, p. 48). It does not take any decisions in terms of content but mainly coordinates and organizes the agreed upon participation processes on certain issues. Its formal role is thus the one of a process coordinator.

The participation model offers different kinds of information and working meetings: for example, the thematic workshops take place at least once a year with a focus on more specific topics and the open office (Offenes Büro) is open to everyone every second week and organised by the administration office (Geschäftsstelle).

The administration office (Geschäftsstelle) is a neutral instance based at SenMKVU. It is responsible for the organisation of Feldforum and Feldkoordination meetings as well as the upload of important documents to the websites; thus, their role is administrative with a focus on organisation and transparency ("Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Feldkoordination Tempelhofer Feld," n.d.).

Online participation is integrated in the model through Berlin’s online participation platform (mein.berlin.de), that initiated online participation and information events, especially in 2021 (possibly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic) (SenMKVU, n.d.-a), and the Tempelhofer Feld specific online platform, that provides information on Feldforum and Feldkoordination meeting dates and the participation model. Applications for citizen projects (Projekte bürgerschaftlichen Engagements) on Tempelhofer Feld are also submitted online (SenMKVU, n.d.-b). They are a continuation of the so-called pioneer projects and include urban gardening, bike repairing and culture or sport associations.

**Possible change of ThF law**

The coalition between the conservative party (CDU) and the social democrats (SPD) that governs Berlin since 2023 decided in their coalition agreement that the debate about a development of Tempelhofer Feld should be opened up again, including an international competition on possibilities of the development (CDU & SPD, 2023, p. 53). A press release by SenStadt on 5.12.2023 informed that the Senator’s plan for the urban competition and connected participation process was approved by the Senate. Central questions that will be addressed in
the new debate are the current needs of Berlin amid an increase in housing shortage and the possibilities of the space to cover these needs (SenStadt, 5.12.2023).

**Planned Dialogue Process**

SenStadt currently plans a citizen participation in form of a dialogue process (as of May 2024). An external company was commissioned to select 250 citizens of Berlin from a sample of 20.000 Berlin citizen randomly chosen from the population register (SenStadt, n.d.). The 250 citizens are supposed to represent Berlin’s population in regard to age and gender. Information about origin and highest educational qualification are also provided by the participants. The dialogue workshops are supposed to be attended by different actors that have professional expertise, may it be about issues of urban planning or citizen participation on Tempelhofer Feld. The main questions that will be addressed in the dialogue workshop are the demand of affordable housing across the city, new neighbourhoods’ possibilities to address challenges such as climate change and the transport transition, and the possible contribution of Tempelhofer Feld to solve these challenges, e.g., in the form of a “careful peripheral development” (SenStadt, n.d.). The outcome of the dialogue workshop will be visualised by urban planners, architects and landscape architects that will develop competing suggestions for Tempelhofer Feld. In a final dialogue workshop, the results will be discussed and a recommendation for the House of Representatives will be elaborated (SenStadt, n.d.).
### 4.2 Actors

**Table 3** - *Actors around Tempelhofer Feld*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Relation to Tempelhofer Feld</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Initiative</td>
<td>The initiative 100% <em>Tempelhofer Feld</em> has been a key actor in the participation process as the carrier (<em>Trägerin</em>) of the petition for a referendum (<em>Volksbegehren</em>) that led to the referendum in 2014. It remains important as an active actor in the participation, through information events and a current campaign against the announced possibility of a change of the ThF law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SenStadt</td>
<td>The Senate department for urban development, building and housing (short: SenStadt) is one of the two relevant departments for the case. In the federal structure of the German state, the Senate of Berlin is its city-state (<em>Stadistaat</em>) government, with executive power. The Senate consists of maximum ten Senators that are responsible for different Senate departments. Before 2016 one combined department was responsible for urban planning; in 2016 the departments were separated into SenStadt and SenMVKU. SenStadt is a relevant actor in this case since the ThF law limits its possibilities in urban development. It has recently gained more attention especially due to the Senator’s suggested international competition and participation around the possible change of ThF law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SenMVKU</td>
<td>The Senate department for urban mobility, transport, climate action and the environment (short: SenMVKU) is the second relevant Senate department. It is responsible for green spaces in Berlin and thus Tempelhofer Feld falls within its remit. It is co-responsible for the participation process that is active since 2016, initiated by the ThF law, and specified in the Development and Maintenance Plan (EPP). The department’s subsidiary is GRÜN Berlin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRÜN Berlin</td>
<td>GRÜN Berlin GmbH is the subsidiary of SenMVKU and responsible for the implementation of political decisions in relation to public infrastructure, parks, and public spaces. In regard to Tempelhofer Feld, it is responsible for the development and maintenance of Tempelhofer Feld since 2010 and since 2014 actively involved in the participation model. It is the administrator of Tempelhofer Feld (SenStadtUm, 2016, p. 17).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Coordinator EPP (BUND)</td>
<td>The environmental non-governmental organisation BUND (<em>Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland</em>) supported the referendum in 2014, especially for ecological reasons. It has a special importance in relation to participation due to the role of one of its employees as the project coordinator for the participation process after the referendum, the development of the EPP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved Citizen</td>
<td>The public is considered relevant in all phases of the participation. Citizen that were involved in the development of the EPP or are part of the current participation model have a special relevance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

4 The federal structure of Germany consists of thirteen states and three city-states, of which one is Berlin. The mayor of Berlin is head of the government of the federal state Berlin as well as the head of the municipality.
5. Research Design and Methods

This chapter gives an overview of and justifies the choice of the research design, including the methods chosen for data gathering and data analysis. Further, this chapter includes my positioning as researcher and the ethical considerations of the research.

5.1 Research Design

This research is designed as a case study of participation processes around the subsequent use of Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin. The literature review (Chapter 2) presented the democratic potential of the participatory planning approaches of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism, the context of Berlin and gave an overview of the previous research on participation around the former airport Tempelhof. The research gap is considered to be the participation processes that took place after the referendum in 2014. Additionally, the case is considered suitable to analyse different understandings of democracy in participatory planning since its different phases of participation with successful bottom-up participation as well as top-down and institutionalised approaches can be considered an “extreme case” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230) of participatory urban planning. It is extreme in the way that it shows aspects of participation that are rather exceptional in an international context: a successful bottom-up referendum and a co-formulation of further institutionalised participation with the help of citizens. On the other hand, in the setting of Berlin it shows parallels to many other urban participation processes (see Chapter 2.2). Thus, in the context of Berlin the case of Tempelhofer Feld participation can almost be understood as an “exemplifying case” (Bryman, 2012, p. 70), since it shows parallels to the neoliberal planning context of Berlin as well as active citizen engagement.

Important actors were determined through the previous literature on citizen involvement on Tempelhofer Feld as well as newspaper articles. Cross-references in documents were considered and all interviewees were additionally asked for other relevant actors to further triangulate the choice of perspectives. There is a focus on those actors that have been involved in different phases of participation between 2014 and 2024. Six relevant groups or individuals of actors were ascertained. They include the Senate departments SenStadt and SenMKVU, SenMKVU’s subsidiary GRÜN Berlin, the citizen initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld, the process coordinator of the EPP and individuals that played major roles in the participation.
5.2 Methods

To investigate the understandings of democracy of different actors in the participation process around Tempelhofer Feld since 2014, I conducted in-depth interviews with five different informants and a document analysis. As a complement to one of the interviews, I did a participant observation. This qualitative approach was chosen to understand strategies, relations, challenges, and motivations of the different actors involved in participatory processes. I chose two main methods, in which the document analysis is a necessary complementation of the interviews to reach a deeper understanding of the statements made by the informants as well as a data triangulation (Flick, 2018, p. 191). Further data triangulation was reached through the secondary method, observation. This section will present and discuss the chosen methods.

5.2.1 Qualitative, Semi-Structured Interviews

As one main method, in-depth interviews were conducted with key actors. Different actors were selected according to their role in the participation process. The interview suits the purpose of understanding the actors’ view since it is meant to comprehend peoples’ interpretations of their surroundings and receive information on past events that cannot be relived (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 108). The chosen informants are understood to represent the institutions they belong to and the interviews can thus be considered expert interviews (Flick, 2018, p. 236). In line with Flick (2018), I chose expert interviews to gather process knowledge (“Where did the initiative meet during that time?” “What happened after the referendum?”) and context knowledge (“Who is mainly responsible for the Feldkoordination?”) that contributed to understanding the actors’ views on participation. Some questions were explicitly formulated in a normative way (“What is good participation in urban planning?”).

The respondents were chosen through purposive sampling (I approached all relevant actors via email) as well as snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012, pp. 418, 424). Since I understand the interviewees to represent the institutions they belong to, snowball sampling was only applied when a relevant actor was not reached or declined the interview request. Thus, I only found one interviewee through snowball sampling.

The interviews were semi-structured, so I was able to guide the narrative of the interviewee in accordance with the aim of the research by using preformulated questions, but I could also use probes during the interview to receive illustration or further explanation of the interviewees’ answers (Flick, 2018, p. 217). Although this thesis has a focus on the theoretical background on participation in planning, the interview questions were rather focused on “aquir[ing] the
interviewee’s concrete descriptions rather than abstract reflections or theorizations” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 580), though with a few exceptions. While the interview questions of the first part were more descriptive, the second part was more normative and prescriptive. The descriptive interview questions were adjusted according to the interviewee. Since not all interviewees were equally involved in all parts of the participation and had different roles during the participation, I adapted the descriptive and prescriptive questions to their knowledge and position. The normative questions, in contrast, were not adjusted. The contacted actors and interviewees are listed in Table 4.

Table 4 - Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 1 (I1)</td>
<td>Interviewee 1 is a representative of the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld, who was involved in activism during the referendum process between 2011 and 2014 and has recently become active in the initiative again. The interview was conducted in person. No information about the interview questions was given beforehand apart from general information about the thesis topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2 (I2)</td>
<td>Interviewee 2 works for SenStadt. The interview was conducted in person. No information about the interview questions was given beforehand apart from general information about the thesis topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 3 (I3)</td>
<td>Interviewee 3 was the project coordinator of the EPP and works for BUND. The interview was conducted in person. No information about the interview questions was given beforehand apart from general information about the thesis topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 4 (I4)</td>
<td>Interviewee 4 is a citizen representative in the Feldkoordination. The interview was conducted in person. No information about the interview questions was given beforehand apart from general information about the thesis topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee 5 (I5)</td>
<td>The interviewee works for GRÜN Berlin and is responsible for the management of actors in the participation since 2016. They are an active part of the Feldforum, Feldkoordination and the thematic workshops. The interviewee asked for and received the interview questions beforehand. The interview was conducted through a remote video-call.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined interviews</td>
<td>An interview request was also sent to SenMKVU but was denied due to personnel shortage. The initiative “Deutsche Wohnen und Co. enteignen” (Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen und Co.) forwarded my request to the borough groups which did not reach out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.2 Document Analysis

Relevant documents were searched for after all relevant actors in the participation were determined. If interviewees mentioned documents that were of specific relevance, they were considered after the interviews. The analysis of documents serves the purpose of understanding “specific version[s] of realities” (Flick, 2018, p. 380) of the participation around the subsequent use of Tempelhofer Feld since 2014. Further, the contents of the documents imply certain ideas of participation that are held by the respective actors. The information from the documents and interviews thus complement each other. Documents used for the analysis are listed in Table 5.

Table 5 - Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Author and year</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parklandschaft Tempelhof. Wettbewerbsdokumentation</td>
<td>2012, SenStadtUm</td>
<td>Documentation of the international competition to develop Tempelhofer Feld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Tempelhof Competition Documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesetz zum Erhalt des Tempelhofer Felds (ThF-Gesetz) / Law for the preservation of Tempelhofer Feld (ThF law)</td>
<td>2014, Citizen Initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld</td>
<td>Citizen referendum law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entwicklungs- und Pflegeplan / Development and maintenance plan (EPP)</td>
<td>2016, Cooperation between citizen of Berlin, SenStadtUm, GRÜN Berlin, edited by the process coordinator</td>
<td>Aim and task of the EPP is to make the ThF law operable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitlinien für Beteiligung von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern an Projekten und Prozessen der räumlichen Stadtentwicklung / Guidelines for Citizen Participation in Urban Spatial Development Projects and Processes</td>
<td>2019, SenStadt</td>
<td>Guidelines for informal participation that is not legally regulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesellschaftliche Wertigkeit des Tempelhofer Felds/ Social Value of Tempelhofer Feld</td>
<td>2021, Brenck et al. (Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung – UFZ) for SenUVK (now: SenMVKU)</td>
<td>A study on the social, ecological and urban value of Tempelhofer Feld, commissioned by SenUVK (now: SenMVKU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zukunft des Tempelhofer Feldes/ Future of Tempelhofer Feld</td>
<td>2023, SenStadt</td>
<td>Press release that sets the framework conditions for the planned participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogprozess Tempelholfer Feld / Dialogue process Tempelhofer Feld</td>
<td>2024, SenStadt</td>
<td>Website describing the planned dialogue process, its purpose and procedure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the documents, the website of the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld and minutes of the latest meetings of the Feldkoordination and Feldforum were considered.
5.2.3 Participant Observation

Interviewee 1 served as a gatekeeper to the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld and I could do a spontaneous participant observation at a weekly open meeting of the initiative. Participant observation serves the purpose to further understand how a group works from the perspective of a member (Flick, 2018, p. 329). In this case the observation additionally served as a triangulation of the answers received by the member of the initiative. Since no other participant observations were conducted, the observation does not play a major role in the data analysis; it rather complements the information received by the interview.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the interviews and the observation, oral consent was obtained from all the participants. The interviewees understood that the participation is voluntary, and I informed them that they can withdraw from the interview at any time during the research process. Further, I stated the purpose of the research, as well as the procedure and duration of the project, how and how long records will be stored and who is able to access them. Finally, I gave all interviewees an explanation of confidentiality and relevant contact information to state a possible withdrawal from the study (Kawulich & Ogletree, 2012, p. 69). After the data collection, I anonymised names of the participants and replaced them with randomized codes. The participants were given the opportunity to review the English translation of the quotes that I used for the analysis and they could give feedback or raise possible concerns.

5.4 Positioning as Researcher

In the context of a research case in Berlin, it is important to mention that although I am German and grew up in Germany, my education in urban planning is rather related to the Scandinavian and international context. The case is thus examined from the perspective of the literature used in Scandinavian planning education, although it was complemented by German literature on the theory and case. The analysed documents are all written in German, the meeting of the initiative that I observed was held in German and I conducted the interviews in German. As a native German speaker, the case in Berlin was chosen considering the broader possibilities in communicating in my own and the interviewees native tongue rather than using mutual translations. In a case on participatory planning, nuances in meaning are especially important that I understand much better in German.
As was mentioned in the introduction, this research has a focus on social justice in urban planning. It aims to analyse current planning and point out possibilities to improve urban life for its current and future citizens (Fainstein & DeFilippis, 2016, p. 2). This focus has influenced my choice of literature and the case as well as the interpretation of the material.

5.5 Methods for Data Analysis

After the data collection, the interviews were transcribed with the help of online tools, including the transcribing software Trint (https://trint.com) and the dictation function in Microsoft Word. The observation notes were converted to digital form. The transcript, notes and documents were organised and prepared for coding. I translated relevant quotes from the different data sources into English. The coding approach of the data was deductive-inductive (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). That means that some codes were predefined by the theory, while others were identified as recurring themes in the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 196). The predefined codes are related to the theoretical framework that was introduced in chapter 3 and are understood to be relevant to contextualise statements of different actors in theories of deliberation and agonism. For each of the four themes, deductive codes were predefined through the theory. During the review of the data, the predefined codes for two of the four themes were complemented by inductive codes. All codes are displayed in Table 6:

Table 6 - Visualisation of Inductive-Deductive Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and Concepts</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of urban planning administration: Consensus-seeking (deliberation)</td>
<td>Mediating different interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antagonistic conflict remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of urban planning administration: conflict-oriented (agonism)</td>
<td>Turns antagonistic conflicts into agonistic ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of urban planning administration: Added codes</td>
<td>Political neutrality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mistrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of conflict: deliberative (deliberation)</td>
<td>Conflict as an occasion for participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of conflict: agonistic (agonism)</td>
<td>Conflict as a catalyst for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of conflict: added codes</td>
<td>Impacts on urban planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic relevance of Tempelhofer Feld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals in dealing with conflict: solution and acceptance (deliberation)</td>
<td>Consensual solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance of projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals in dealing with conflict: conflictual consensus (agonism)</td>
<td>Acceptance of dissent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporality and contestability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation understanding: participate (deliberation)</td>
<td>Limited to certain topics, timeframes or areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final decisions are clearly made by the planning department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation understanding: co-decide (agonism)</td>
<td>Open discussion of alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final decisions are made by or with the citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The predefined codes for the “role of the urban planning administration” were complemented by the codes “political neutrality” and “mistrust”. Predefined codes for the “understanding of conflict” were complemented by the codes “impacts on urban planning” and “democratic relevance of Tempelhofer Feld”. The last two themes “goals in dealing with conflict” and “participation understanding” were analysed through the predefined codes by the theory.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The method of semi-structured interviews has its limitations. Although the chosen interviewees are highly relevant in the groups they represent, their personal influence in the narrative should not be undermined. As Brinkmann (2018) suggests, even the interviewee’s own narratives should not be understood as unambiguous but often rather “polyvocal” (p. 581). This limitation is partly overcome by the triangulation with the document analysis, that positions the informant’s statements in the context of the groups they are part of and in the context of other actors.

There are two other considerable limitation in regard to the selected material and informants. The study’s aim is to contribute to the current urban planning discussion on ‘the good’ participatory planning as well as the potential of participation in urban planning for lived democracy. All informants, however, are white and most of them male. While further personal data was not conducted, the study’s focus on the narrative of people that are rather privileged in the German society (and beyond) can clearly be understood as a limitation. This limitation should be considered in regard to this study’s aim to contribute to discourse on ‘the good’ participatory planning rather than in regard to relevant actors (“experts”) in the case of Tempelhofer Feld. The other limitation in the informant selection was the lack of a political representative. Political decisions play a significant role on the future of Tempelhofer Feld. The framework for participation determined by political decisions have been illustrated with help of the coalition agreement and the press release by the Senator. Further interviews with representatives of the political parties were not conducted since they are not directly related to the specific participation process. However, their decisions influence the possibilities of participation and I thus suggest considering them in future studies of the case.
6. Analysis

The analysis is structured in the four main themes that I developed in the theoretical framework: role of the planning administration, understanding of conflict, goals in dealing with conflict and participation understanding. Within these themes, I determined certain sub-themes in the data. They are related to a deliberative and agonistic understanding of democracy.

6.1 Role of the planning administration and the denial of the antagonistic conflict

In line with the theoretical framework, the role of the urban planning administration is crucial to analyse the understandings of democracy that play a role in the participation around Tempelhofer Feld. The planning administration has a special significance since it has the legal responsibility of including citizen. As the responsible department for urban planning their role is to provide the organizational circumstances for participation. Two recurring themes of the interviews are the emphasis on political neutrality of the Senate department and the department’s subsidiary and the mistrust between citizen and Senate department. The themes’ relation to the role of the planning administration is the issue of the contradiction of political neutrality and the simultaneous denial of clearly visible mistrust.

The official self-understanding of the Senate department (SenStadt) is recorded in the Guidelines for Citizen Participation in Urban Planning (2019). These guidelines are the general framework for informal citizen participation that is not regulated through the German building code (SenStadt, 2019, p. 18). They are not legally binding but show the Senate department’s understanding of participation; I2, who works for SenStadt, directly referred to them. The guidelines led to the introduction of a contact point for participation at the Senate department and it understands this contact point as a space in which conflicts can be discussed (SenStadt, 2019, p. 24). Although the guidelines are on a rather abstract and general level, they nevertheless depict the administration’s self-understanding as a space for different interests to come together and discuss their conflicts and be supported by conflict mediators that might make conflicts less antagonistic. Their approach can thus be considered to make room for productive conflict.

While initially the role of the Senate administration was considered to be constructive, the citizen initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld now mostly understands the role of the planning department as favouring particular interests. I1, a member of the initiative, described the productive relationship between the initiative and the Senate and its departments before the
referendum. The state election office supported the initiative in formulating the law and looked over it and improved it. I1 considered the work as “very pleasant” (I1). In its organisational role, the state provides initiatives with assistance that support them in formal questions and feasibility. Besides that, I1 also remembers a panel discussion on TV about Tempelhofer Feld, in which they defended the role of the Senate administration: “[…] it turned out that our arguments were presented from the audience. And that the Senate administration was being criticised. So I always had to say: The Senate administration doesn't do **everything** wrong” (I1). The relation between different departments of the Senate and its administrations seemed professional during this time. When the initiative received approval by a larger part of the population, communication between citizens and the Senate department became more challenging, as the process coordinator of the EPP, I3, remembers. I3 would have welcomed conversations between the two parties but it was rejected by the then Senator:

> We actually pushed for talks between [the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld] and the Senate, but this was more or less rejected by the then Senator for Urban Development, Michael Müller. So there was no willingness on the part of the Senate to say, okay, we'll sit down together, analyse it and see where we might find a compromise solution. In other words, the Senate had a very rigid adherence to these four building plots, and for Tempelhof 100 correspondingly it was 100% Tempelhofer Feld.

The initiative’s holding on to the idea of a completely undeveloped space, in I3’s memory, was also the result of the Senate’s refusal of talking to the initiative. As a rather external actor, who is neither involved in the work of the initiative nor in work of the Senate departments and affiliates, I3 had the role of a mediator during the popular referendum process. I3 remembers that the Senate department then made statements about the ThF law that were incorrect: “Also with regard to the communication on the draft law where I also explained to them that certain things that you claim are not true […] for example, that no new toilets may be built, 100% stagnation was their argument” (I3). These statements can be understood to have further polarised the conversation about the referendum.

The dissent seems to have intensified when the referendum turned out in favour of the initiative. I1 understands the referendum’s outcome as a big success after months of hard work formulating the law, issues of small funding resources, confrontation with legal formulations and group dynamics of activists that work on the referendum in their leisure time. The reaction of the Senate department, I1 remembers, was surprising to them.

> I think the first thing that struck me after the successful referendum was that the Senate administration reacted as if they were very insulted. They could have said, well, someone made a
proposal, it didn't go through, and it's great that it's like this now. No-one from the Senate administration contacted us to ask how we managed it and how we now imagine it going forward.

I1 considers this as “the first rupture” in the relation towards the Senate department and remembers the image that the initiative had of the Senate department: “We had the impression that the Senate department wanted to say, ‘We'll show you, we're not finished with you yet’’. This relation of mistrust towards the Senate department and the understanding that alternatives to the initial plan for Tempelhofer Feld cannot be discussed with the Senate department leads to an antagonistic atmosphere. The narrative of the initiative in this regard is unambiguous: “And from the reaction of the Senate administration after the referendum it was also clear to us that they would not take a step back and that they were hoping for revenge” (I1).

This antagonistic atmosphere was carried forward to the following participation processes. In the process of developing the EPP between 2014 and 2016, an external planning office was commissioned, that took part in a space utilisation workshop. I3 noticed “that some of the people who were intensively involved in the process didn't find it so easy to hand [the responsibility] over again, with trust” (I3). Even in the current participation model, the activist of 100% Tempelhofer Feld considers the work of the Senate department’s subsidiary GRÜN Berlin in its role in the Feldkoordination as implementing as little as possible on Tempelhofer Feld. This view is connected to the belief that the Senate department holds on to the idea of real-estate development on the space. The new coalition agreement and the announcement of an international competition on the future of Tempelhofer Feld is a reassurance of the assumption that the space is eventually supposed to be developed. In the weekly meeting of the initiative in March 2024, it could be observed that most participants have recently become “active again” or have “recently started to be active”, because the “threat [of real-estate development] is back”.

In relation to the announced participation process as part of the international competition, I3 explains that the Senate department did not clearly point out the aim of the participation process. Although I3 then corrects that and refers to the last Feldkoordination meeting, in which the department explained that the process should be open in regards to the outcome (Feldkoordination, 6.3.2024, p. 4), I3 is sceptical about the possibility of alternatives in the citizen dialogue:

[…] That's why the legitimacy of the whole procedure will always be questioned by the opponents of a development. And quite rightly so, because something was not done, namely, to clarify: what is
the aim of the procedure? Okay, that comes a bit after what was explained in the last Feldkoordination. Yes, it [the outcome] should actually be open… we will see.

I2, who works for the Senate department, has a similarly critical attitude towards the citizen initiatives and the outcome of the referendum in 2014. The reason for the currently announced participation, in I2’s view, is to bring “all social, private and personal diversities together” (I2) that are currently not represented on Tempelhofer Feld. Referring to previous studies on Tempelhofer Feld, I2 states that it is mostly used by “young, active, athletic men and also [by] Germans [without an immigrant background]” (I2). SenMVKU’s study on the social value of Tempelhofer Feld, however, explicitly states its inclusiveness, specifically because Tempelhofer Feld is a space with exceptionally low economic barriers and a space for different subgroups to coexist and pursue leisure activities (Brenck et al., 2021, pp. 24, 57). Another statement of I2 reinforces the argument of an antagonistic relationship between the planning administration and some citizen interest groups. I2 brings up the issue of a referendum that is considered to represent the citizen opinion although the voter turnouts were only 50 to 60 per cent of Berlin citizen. While at a later point I2 accuses citizen initiatives of losing respect for “constitutionally protected procedures” (I2) without further explaining the context of this assumption, I2 also questions whether the constitutionally protected procedure of a popular referendum is an actual depiction of the population’s will. It shows I2’s doubt towards this bottom-up form of participation.

I2 emphasizes the Senate departments’ political neutrality and their function as executing the decisions made in the parliament. The further mistrust that the announced participation process and international competition is leading towards, is not much considered by the administration. It rather sees itself as a mediator between the 250 invited citizen and their opinion. The citizen representatives of the Feldkoordination were officially invited by SenStadt to participate in the dialogue process which shows a consideration of established participation (Feldkoordination, 6.3.2024, pp. 4-7). However, the citizen representatives active in the Feldkoordination do not consider this invitation as genuine; they rather think it is leading to “nothing” and it is thus an unnecessary use of resources or leading to “the desired aim” by SenStadt (Feldkoordination, 6.3.2024, pp. 7-8). At the current point (mid-May 2024) the citizen representatives are working on a statement to explain their rejection of the invitation by SenStadt (Feldkoordination, 17.4.2024, p. 10).
In the role as administrator, the Senate department’s main reference point is the law. As I2 states, when asked about the effect of a possible change of the ThF law on currently involved citizen in the participation around Tempelhofer Feld:

 […] the question of urban planning and urban development has nothing to do with how one deals with such a referendum law. […] whether a new law is made that addresses this subject of participation in some way, […] is not a responsibility of the urban development sector.

I5, who works for GRÜN Berlin, also states their obligation to political neutrality. This apolitical self-understanding should be understood in the actors’ organisational and administrational role, but it also means that the self-understanding is limited to a mediation of different interests. Referring back to SenStadt’s Guidelines for Citizen Participation (2019), the second principle is to empower citizens in participation processes. By denying the political aspect of the announced participation, the position of the Senate administrations in participation since the referendum is denied. Moreover, by denying the work of the current participation, previous empowerment is suppressed.

Concluding this section, it was found that the initiative’s understanding of the administration and its subsidiaries is deeply antagonistic. Statements by the process coordinator of the EPP and the citizen representatives of the Feldkoordination are not antagonistic to that extent; a mistrust about the announced participation process can, however, be seen in I3’s statements and the Feldkoordination’s rejection of the invitation by SenStadt as well. The planning administration and GRÜN Berlin understand themselves as apolitical actors that merely execute the Senate’s political decisions. Although the Guidelines for Citizen Participation also consider the importance of citizen empowerment and the role of providing citizens with an arena for discussion, the announced participation is highly influenced by the idea of SenStadt as a neutral entity. In the announced participation process, SenStadt takes the role of a mediator. This role does, however, deny the clearly antagonistic conflicts between different interests and actors, including the Senate department itself. The antagonistic conflict, even though the conflicting positions are democratic, seems to remain and through its alleged political neutrality, the Senate department denies the different actors an arena that would turn this conflict into a more productive or agonistic one.

6.2 Understanding of conflict and the differing definition of what the conflict is

To analyse the understanding of conflict, the existing conflict needs to be outlined. The different interests around the subsequent use of Tempelhofer Feld that are considered here are user
conflicts. These conflicts can either be seen as an occasion for participation as in the deliberative planning approach; or conflict is considered as a catalyst for change, as in an agonistic planning approach.

Due to the Senate department’s plan of peripheral development that was counteracted by the 2014 referendum, the Senate’s recurring adjustments of the law for temporary refugee accommodation, and the current plan of a reassessment of the area as stated in the coalition agreement, the assumption is likely that the Senate, including its responsible Senate department, have a certain interest in peripheral real-estate development. Other actors, including the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld and environmental NGOs, have the interest of an undeveloped Tempelhofer Feld. Some actors consider a complete development of Tempelhofer Feld appropriate. There are other user conflicts as well, including different sport and leisure usage of the space that are addressed in the current participation model (Feldkoordination, Feldforum, thematic workshops). Nevertheless, the conflict around the (extension of the) real-estate development is considered the main conflict. A second conflict is the differing understanding of Tempelhofer Feld as a progressive democratic space. The following will thus present the different actors’ understandings of these two broader conflicts and the role they ascribe to them in the urban planning process.

The real-estate development of parts of Tempelhofer Feld is a central point in the conflict between different actors. The new government's coalition agreement considers that due to the “acute housing shortage since the 2014 referendum, a new debate on the future of Tempelhofer Feld is needed” (CDU & SPD, 2023, p. 53). Next to the housing shortage, I2, who works for SenStadt, explains the difficulty and complexity of making planning decisions considering the impacts of population growth, economic challenges, and environmental changes. The main conflicting interests for the Senate and SenStadt are the need of affordable housing, also in relation to population growth and the economic and environmental development and the ThF law that prohibits the development of affordable housing on a central space in the city with the possibility of a continued existence of a large green space. This conflict is supposed to be dealt with in the announced participation process (SenStadt, n.d.). The Senate department thus understands conflict as an occasion for participation.

The initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld, environmental NGOs and the citizen representatives that are actively involved in the current participation consider a development on the edges of Tempelhofer Feld to destroy valuable aspects of it. I1 points out the radicality of openness and
The exceptionality of Tempelhofer Feld is, however, not only related to its openness. The study on the social value of Tempelhofer Feld, that was commissioned by SenMKVU in 2019, determines the space’s worth on different levels. Tempelhofer Feld has an important value as a space that enhances biodiversity and functions as a cold-air corridor in a highly developed area (Brenck et al., 2021, p. 47). Additionally, it has recreational qualities and leads to an urban experience of nature, also for children and youth. It is the largest central open space in proximity to the densely populated neighbourhoods in Neukölln and Kreuzberg but citizen from more distant districts can easily access it by public transport as well (Brenck et al., 2021, p. 6). The value for citizens also relates to the lesser degree of particulate matter and noise pollution on Tempelhofer Feld than in large parts of the rest of Berlin. The study does not predict impacts of a possible peripheral development, but it stresses the exceptionality of Tempelhofer Feld in its current form. Its main argument is that all qualities of Tempelhofer Feld combined create something more significant than they would separately and it is thus worth preserving (Brenck et al., 2021, pp. 10, 74).

A recurring underlying theme in the interviews and documents was the perception of a domination of monetary interests of private actors in urban planning decisions as well as the perception that the implementation of peripheral development would lead to more issues than were initially presented by the planning administration. The monetary interests are also understood as the opposite of citizen interests. This narrative is related to the privatization of previously state-owned land in Berlin. The current government is understood to follow the interests of real estate companies and “what yields the most money” (ThF100, 2024).

Affordable housing on Tempelhofer Feld is understood by the activists as an imaginary scenario that is impossible to implement. One argument is that the Senate’s understanding of Tempelhofer Feld is that of a “white area” (I3) without making the connection to the adjacent neighbourhoods. On one side of Tempelhofer Feld, Schillerkiez (Neukölln) and the neighbourhoods behind it would have another neighbourhood right in front of them, so they would lose the important proximity to a green space. On the other sides of Tempelhofer Feld, the connection to the adjacent neighbourhoods would be much more challenging because of the
high-speed roads that run to the south and west of Tempelhofer Feld, among other factors. Not connecting the new neighbourhoods to the existing ones, on the other hand, could lead to a larger area of real-estate development (I3). The idea of a development that goes beyond the outer edges of Tempelhofer Feld is present in the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld that already consider the 2016 change of the law for temporary refugee accommodation as eventually leading to a complete development of the space. As they state on their website: “Because this place has never really been about humane refugee accommodation, but only about ways to overturn the THF-G [ThF law], to take back the field piece by piece” (ThF100, 2024).

The view of the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld, environmental NGOs and the citizen representatives on the conflicting user interests on Tempelhofer Feld in 2014 could have been understood as a change of the narrative of the privatisation of public land in Berlin. This is threatened by the announced urban planning competition.

The second conflict present on Tempelhofer Feld is that of the varying understanding and importance given to participation and citizen empowerment. I2, who works for the Senate department, understands the referendum 2014 not as crucial for an empowerment of citizen participation in the city, but sees the general tendency of more citizen involvement. The Guidelines for Citizen Participation that were developed by SenStadt on request of the Senate in 2019 were in I2’s view the main driver of more citizen participation. Similarly, I5, who works for GRÜN Berlin, relates the general momentum of citizen participation to guidelines that are developed even in small municipalities now; the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld had adopted this momentum for the referendum. In contrast to that, the process coordinator of the EPP considers the referendum as having triggered another push towards more participation. I3 recognises that citizens of Berlin started to “want to be more seriously and better involved”.

Further, a citizen representative of the Feldkoordination, I4, puts the different interpretations of the referendum that way: “You can interpret it by saying that politicians have to catch the citizens again if they spread too far. Or you can say that this is the success of the citizens' initiatives” (I4). Although the referendum is a legal possibility of citizen participation, this statement can be interpreted in the way that the pressure from the citizens of Berlin on this issue was higher than in other cases.

The current participation around Tempelhofer Feld is considered a progressive way of citizen inclusion in urban planning and public space usage, even though slow processes have made implementations more difficult than active citizens would have wished for. I4, a Feldkoordination citizen representative, considers the current participation model a trial of ideal
citizen participation. Apart from this personal view, the study on the social value of Tempelhofer Feld also points out the democratic significance of the space. As “a place of democratic learning” (Brenck et al., 2021, p. 67), it shows the different possible ways of democratic engagement. This can have a positive influence on the public’s trust in democratic procedures. Tempelhofer Feld as a place of lived democracy is also highly characterised by the struggle for its existence, which also shows its symbolic character.

Tempelhofer Feld is a place where democracy has been experienced and lived. This at first includes the fact that both the opening of the field and the preservation from development were fought for democratically. […] It is an example in which the possibility of successful democratic participation became tangible. (Brenck et al., 2021, pp. 65, 66)

Apart from the user conflicts about Tempelhofer Feld, there is a prominent conflicting understanding of the relevance of the space for democratic and citizen engagement. The Senate department and GRÜN Berlin do not attribute a special value to the referendum and current participation as a form of citizen empowerment. In contrast, active citizens, the process coordinator of the EPP and the study on its social value understand Tempelhofer Feld as a symbol of democratic empowerment and a place of democratic learning.

To conclude, the conflict that is considered to be dealt with by the planning administration is the conflict between the law and the current need for affordable housing in Berlin. The conflicts that were pointed out by different actors, however, are the extent of the influence of capital and the issue of costs for the development that could not be aligned with affordable peripheral development. A second apparent conflict is that of a differing understanding of the value of Tempelhofer Feld as a place of democratic learning. In its announced participation process, the Senate department considers the conflict between an undeveloped Tempelhofer Feld and the shortage of affordable housing as an occasion for participation. It is apparent in statements from different active citizens as well as the coordinator of the EPP and the authors of the study on the social value of Tempelhofer Feld that the current condition of Tempelhofer Feld is considered as an exceptional example of valuing social and environmental needs over monetary interests as well as a case of exceptionally progressive democratic learning. The conflicting interests on these issues are considered by them as a catalyser for change.
6.3 Goals in dealing with conflict and the agonistic possibilities of the current participation

While the former section considered the understanding of conflict for a society and urban planning process, the following section regards the aims of dealing with conflict. I analyse whether the different actors rather focus on a consensual solution and acceptance of projects or whether the goal is to accept dissent as well as a temporality and contestability of solutions.

Although this process has happened before the referendum in 2014, the outcome of the participation process before 2014 should be considered when investigating the Senate department’s goals in dealing with conflict. Conflicting interests were dealt with in a jury-based decision process on different suggestions that were submitted in an international competition.

In the report on the competition and participation during 2007 and 2011, the influence on citizen suggestions was unclear; it is mentioned that citizens have expressed the wish to be more involved in future participation around the Tempelhofer Feld planning process and the concern that a peripheral development would take away the openness of the space (SenStadtUm, 2012, p. 45). Although the citizen participation was extensive, the influence of the citizens’ opinions on the outcome of the competition was not clear. Concerns about the peripheral development and the call for more citizen participation were apparently not considered. This could also be a reason for the citizens’ feeling of mere manufacturing of consent that was found in previous studies (Dannenberg & Follmann, 2015, p. 99).

The announced participation by SenStadt cannot be analysed in relation to the goals of dealing with conflict. It is surprising, however, that the structure of the current suggestion resembles the participation process before the referendum in 2014: the dialogue process will inform an international competition and the outcome of the competition will be discussed with citizen afterwards (SenStadt, n.d.). It differs from the participation prior to 2014 in its intention to include “a limited number of participants of the dialogue workshop in the jury” (SenStadt, n.d.).

As was pointed out earlier, the citizens have stated their understanding of the announced participation as a way to legitimise planning decisions. I4, the citizen representative in the Feldkoordination, considers the issue with the announced participation as obvious: “how stupid do you have to be to go against the population - to get a vote from the population so that you can push through your goals” (I4). I1, who is active in the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld, refers to a press conference in December 2023, from which several established German newspapers reported that the Senator for urban development announced that the planned
participation is not a question of discussing “whether”, but rather “how” a peripheral development could be realized (Böldt, 5.12.2023; Inforadio, 5.12.2023; Süßmann, 5.12.2023). Thus, I1’s understanding of the participation is also pessimistic:

No, they [the initiative] are not invited, only people who are in favour of the development are invited, people who are against the development will be bored, says the Senator - Gäbler. So, they will be bored, only people who are in favour and if they are not sufficiently in favour, then experts will also come in and give input again and these are then only - the results are also not binding, but they will then go on to an idea competition which will then be organised and the outcome is clear.

The statement that the dialogue process is only including those citizens that are in favour of the real-estate development has been withdrawn from by SenStadt. Nevertheless, it is still present in the perception of those active around Tempelhofer Feld, which must be understood in relation to the antagonistic relation that was developed in the first section.

A rather different understanding of participation is displayed in the Development and Maintenance plan (EPP) that was written collaboratively between citizen, activists, and city officials between 2014 and 2016. Prevalent in the whole participation model is the temporality of the process and acceptance of dissent. During the time of the development of the EPP, citizen with varying interests about the participation process and the future of Tempelhofer Feld came together. According to I3, what helped to deal with the different interests was the common understanding of the participation as an “extremely open process” (I3) throughout the whole development of the EPP. People’s working groups were not organized but certain workshops were offered and stayed public and open. Additionally, the temporality of the participation model that is established through the EPP can be seen in its emphasis on evaluations of the plan in regular intervals and the participatory manner that updates should be done in (SenStadtUm, 2016, p. 8). Although the EPP itself describes their working method as consensus-oriented, the approach of including conflicting interests but eventually coming to a consensus can be understood as a form of “conflictual consensus”.

In regard to the temporality of a solution, the understanding of the ThF law and its permanence should be considered. Although the ThF law is the fundamend of and entitlement to I5’s work, I5 (GRÜN Berlin) emphasises that a change of the ThF law is surely as likely as the change of any other law. This is much in line with the understanding of the Senate department that considers the law to have the same rank as any other law. Additionally, I2 (SenStadt) questions the predominant understanding of the law as a democratic achievement and also implies that other actors, like citizen activists, are aiming to question legal procedures when holding on to
the special meaning of the law. In contrast to this assumption, the process coordinator of the EPP and an active member of the citizen initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld emphasise that questioning a law, like the ThF law, is completely legitimate and that this was clear from the beginning of their work.

To conclude this section, The participation process by the Senate administration that was initiated prior to 2014 was clearly characterised by a deliberative democratic understanding. The goal in dealing with the existing conflict was to find a solution and receive acceptance for a project by the citizens. The current announced participation process noticeably resembles the one before 2014. It cannot be evaluated further in relation to the goal of dealing with conflict, but interpretations of active citizens consider the acceptance of the planned project as SenStadt’s underlying goal. An alternative to these forms of participation can be seen in the development and implementation of the currently running participation on Tempelhofer Feld. The joint and open development of the EPP and the following participation model accept dissent and stress the importance of temporality and contestability due to the EPP’s emphasis on continuous discussion and evaluation.

6.4 Participation understanding: participation or co-decision?

The understanding of participation as developed in the theoretical section relates to the extent of participation that is granted to citizens. This includes to what extent the participation is limited to certain topics, timeframes, and areas or whether there is an open discussion of alternatives. As in the previous section, this section will relate these aspects to the two prominent forms of citizen participation around Tempelhofer Feld; the participation model as established in the EPP and the announced dialogue process by SenStadt.

After the ThF law was approved through the citizen referendum in 2014, the proposed citizen involvement in the subsequent use of the former airport as an open space was implemented through the development and maintenance plan (EPP). In the whole process of designing the EPP and the subsequent participation model, the emphasis is on an open discussion of alternatives. The understanding of participation is clear and transparent: “all Berlin citizen, civil society actors, politicians and administrators can work together within the framework of the ThFG [ThF law]” (SenStadtUm, 2016 Appx. 2). Ideas, wishes and needs can be formulated in relation to the EPP and the participation model; suggestions can be co-designed through discussion and comments, and solutions are developed together.
The development of the participation model started with an analysis of the environment and stakeholders of the project to determine interests, needs, and conflicts. This also included talks with representatives of already active citizens, such as the citizen initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld, and the responsible Senate department. It was particularly important to acknowledge the initiative’s effort and knowledge that was not taken into consideration by the Senate department beforehand (see 6.1). Apart from the initial public meeting, a regular meeting point was appointed for citizen discussions. A model for the participation process with a focus on collaboration and dialogue was developed. Previous knowledge was distributed in public expert presentations. Hundreds of suggestions for Tempelhofer Feld were collected, also online. A collection of the ideas was presented publicly. The second phase started with a clustering of ideas that were collected in phase one and was constantly discussed in different public panels. The topic-specific workgroups started their work on the predetermined topics. The workshops were partly self-organised. Phase three was mainly dedicated to a reflection process that took place online, in the form of interviews with groups that were less involved in the previous process in the form of an “outreach participation” (“Aufsuchende Beteiligung”) and a public exhibition on the results so far. The final phase summarized and evaluated the participation and outcomes in different in-person and remote formats (SenStadtUm, 2016 Beteiligungsmodell Tempelhofer Feld).

The participation process that is currently planned by SenStadt is rather limited in its approach. A group of citizens, randomly selected and claimed to aim a near-representation of the society of Berlin, will meet on three weekends between September 2024 and July 2025 in a closed setting to discuss how a possible development of Tempelhofer Feld should look like (SenStadt, n.d.). The focus has been shifted from the earliest press conference by SenStadt (5.12.2023) where the Senator openly talked about the workshop’s focus on the “how” rather than the “whether” debate (Böldt, 5.12.2023; Inforadio, 5.12.2023; Süßmann, 5.12.2023), to a workshop in which everyone is welcome and that is independent from the broader debate around “whether” or “how” a development should take place. I2 explains, that “an open discussion is important to me from the outset”, but that some areas of urban planning are more suited for this open discussion, like the development of the land-use plan. The current participation, in I2’s view, is due to its timeliness “far beyond the extent that the constitution requires” (I2) and thus a good way of making participation possible. The outcome of the participation process is supposed to contribute to the political debate on how the future of Tempelhofer Feld looks like. Referring to the outcome, politicians can then decide:
[the possible planning order] could refer to it [the dialogue process] and say - okay, from a political point of view I would now weigh this and that differently and rate this and that higher [...] and now I either give a modified planning order or I give a planning order that directly reflects the result of the dialogue process (I2)

Although possibilities of influence through the participatory process exist, the extent of influence is not transparent. Citizen participation is limited to very concrete timeframes and outcomes are considered recommendations that can be regarded by the politicians and planners but that are in no form binding.

This is a general understanding in the Senate departments and its affiliates. GRÜN Berlin, the subsidiary of SenMKVU, emphasises the importance of citizen participation in its projects. In its role in the Feldkoordination, I5 sees an organisational discrepancy between the citizen representatives and the full-time employees: “The Senate administration and GRÜN Berlin [...] are paid for this job and the other part is civic engagement and of course we have to contribute a different part, on the other hand we also have the technical expertise” (I5). The technical expertise here refers to knowledge and availability of regulatory frameworks and realisability concerning the available budget. This technical expertise of the subsidiary of SenMKVU might also relate to their focus on “creating acceptance […], legitimacy [and] sustainability” of projects when giving citizen a chance to participate. Citizen participation in urban planning is limited to certain areas. I5 also emphasises that the outcome of discussions in the Feldforum, the main citizen committee in the current participation model, are only recommendations to the Senate and Senate department and “recommendations are not binding, they are recommendations” (I5). Although this perspective also shows the limitations of the current participation model, the possibilities of regular citizen evaluation and discussions in the weekly Feldkoordination and annual Feldforum meetings could still lead to an improvement of the model by the citizen. This is a quality that other citizen participation often lacks.

Summarising this section, the current participation model for Tempelhofer Feld can be further considered to be an agonistic planning approach. Alternative plans are openly discussed, and final decisions are made by or with the citizens, even if the role of the Senate department and its subsidiary has some deliberative tendencies. Already in the development process of the EPP, citizens could co-decide on the process. SenStadt’s view on citizen involvement is rather limited to specific topics (Can Tempelhofer Feld contribute to Berlin’s shortage of affordable housing?) and timeframes (three weekends) and thus approaches participation in a more deliberative manner. If the final decisions in the international competition on the development of
Tempelhofer Feld will be a form of participation or co-designing will only be known after the procedure.
7. Conclusion

Curiosity for this study was sparked through the initial contradiction of the current development on Tempelhofer Feld and the possibilities to contextualise the case within approaches of deliberation and agonism. Although Tempelhofer Feld is used by many visitors for different recreational and community activities and it is internationally known for its unique qualities, the current government of Berlin again opened up the debate around a real-estate development of Tempelhofer Feld that would diminish some of its main characteristics. Since Tempelhofer Feld is a case of different participatory urban planning processes, the prominent theoretical debate between deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism was considered as a suitable approach to look at these processes. Besides the aim to understand different actors’ statements through the theoretical framework, the second aim was to contribute to the current theoretical debate through an implementation of the theories for a case study.

The leading research questions for this thesis were:

- Which aspects of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism can be found in statements by relevant actors during the participation processes on Tempelhofer Feld since the referendum in 2014?
- How does the Senate’s current plan to adjust the Tempelhofer Feld law affect the current participation in light of these theories?

To answer the research question, I used a deductive-inductive approach in analysing the data of interviews, documents, and a participant observation. The approach is related to the four themes developed in the theoretical framework. My interpretation of the first theme “role of the planning administration” was thus to understand whether the planning administration has the approach of merely mediating conflicting interests, as in a deliberative democratic manner; or whether it turns antagonistic conflicts into agonistic ones, as suggested in agonistic pluralism. It was found that the planning administration rather enforced the antagonistic conflict since the referendum in 2014, partly because SenStadt itself is an actor in the conflict. The Senate department considers its role in the announced participation as a mediator between conflicting interests. My approach to the theme “understanding of conflict” shows that this form of dealing with different interests, however, does not make the conflict less antagonistic, because the Senate department’s understanding of the conflict highly differs from the actual present conflict. At the same time, the conflict regarded by the Senate department is considered as an occasion for participation, as is shown in the idea of the announced participation process. Civil actors
and those involved in the current participation process see a different conflict, related to privatisation of public land and loss of democratic achievements, and consider this conflict since the referendum in 2014 as a catalyst for change in the context of a neoliberalisation in Berlin. The first two themes showed the relation of the urban planning administration (SenStadt) to deliberative participatory planning and the civil actors’ agonistic approaches. The avoidance of the actual conflict by SenStadt relates to the critique of deliberative democracy in participatory planning. Although formal requirements for participation are fulfilled, the present debate among active citizens is not considered. This connects to the antagonistic relation between the initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld and SenStadt that should be addressed by SenStadt as the planning administration. While the initiative’s narrative is driven by antagonism towards SenStadt, this must be seen in relation to prior experiences with the department. The initiative’s critique does not show anti-democratic aspects and should thus be acknowledged. Due to SenStadt’s disregard of the antagonistic conflict the democratic possibilities are diminished.

The themes “goals in dealing with conflict” and “participation understanding” illustrated the current participation model on Tempelhofer Feld as a model with much potential as an agonistic alternative to participation introduced by SenStadt. Although it faces challenges of limited implementation of recommendations and slow procedures in its current form, it gives room for lived democratic practice and democratic negotiation processes. The participation as carried out before 2014 and announced by SenStadt in 2024 was found to show aspects of a deliberative participation approach. This is much more apparent in the pre-2014 participation process because it can be considered in relation to its outcome. Nevertheless, in the context of the previous participation approach, SenStadt’s announced participation should be seen critical as well. Especially considering the role of the pre-2014 pioneer projects on Tempelhofer Feld some parallels are noticeable. The pioneer projects were a possibility of processual participation on Tempelhofer Feld, but the plan to build the areas that the projects were located on was pre-decided. Although the current participation model was not initiated by SenStadt, it is co-organised by another senate department (SenMKVU). By omitting the relevance of the current participation model, another form of processual participation is not regarded while a plan for possible real-estate development is announced.

This study had a focus on ‘the good way’ of urban planning and citizen participation and the theories of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism should shortly be reflected on in this regard. The use of the theories has proven to be useful to show issues of the case’s participation
processes, especially in relation to the planning administration’s dealing with conflicting interests. It displayed the complexity of the conflict and the possibility of a co-existence of aspects of both deliberation and agonism in the same process or by the same actor. Yet, deliberation and agonism might lack the possibility to evaluate the outcome of participation approaches. While the current participation model can be considered a rather agonistic form of participation, as was pointed out by Hilbrandt (2017), it is not exempted from influences of power relations. Further research with this theoretical framework should take up this critique. Moreover, my approach to operationalising the theories was also limited. Agonistic planning approaches emphasise on improving the situation of marginalised groups. Although this aspect was a leading premise for my thesis, it was not considered as a single criterion in the analysis. I suggest that further research specifically considers the needs of marginalised groups in Berlin’s population, possibly by highlighting the lack of affordable housing in Berlin.

This thesis is a case study and thus is limited to the context that it is situated in. It does not claim that the conclusions are generalisable. Nevertheless, I finally want to emphasise its broader meaning for participatory urban planning. The German decentralised planning context was considered to contribute to the discourse on participatory planning practices, due to its possibility of direct democracy in individual states. This possibility and the context of politically active citizens in Berlin make the case study an “extreme case”. The referendum in 2014 opened the bottom-up possibility for agonistic citizen participation and was proven to have many positive effects, among them the strengthening of democratic agency (Brenck et al., 2021). It also led to the exceptional possibility of a committee consisting of citizens and city officials, that works with temporal decisions and openly discusses different alternatives to conflicts. This is in line with an understanding of democracy that goes beyond the post-political condition and neoliberalisation of Berlin. Even in the setting of this extreme case, however, deliberative approaches by the planning administration can be criticised. There is a discrepancy between the official possibilities of participation (also in relation to the principle of citizen empowerment as stated in SenStadt’s guidelines) and the practical realities of urban planners. This makes the case comparable to other urban planning participation and anticipates further questions in regard to the participatory planning reality. It could be argued that the announced planning competition and participation by SenStadt is as much driven by political decisions, “out of the sight of the public” (p.451) as Pløger (2023) argued is the case in Scandinavia. At the same time, this case study should not be understood as negating the possibility of agonism in participatory urban planning. The announced international competition and participation has just entered its first phase. Tempelhofer Feld has...
been an example of a democratic condition that is continuously negotiated. The announced participation process can be criticised but the “possibilities to act upon the cracks inherent in dominant planning regimes” (Hilbrandt, 2017, p. 550) should not be underestimated. It is once again a question of active citizens to act upon these possibilities. Whether they will be as prominent as in the pre-2014 participation or need to be achieved through different agonistic approaches will be seen. In any case, the current development of participation around the contested urban space of Tempelhofer Feld should be addressed in future research, considering the complexities of its previous and current participation processes and in relation to its further democratic possibilities.
References


Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Feldkoordination Tempelhofer Feld, (n.d.).

Gesetz zum Erhalt des Tempelhofer Feldes (ThF-Gesetz), (2014).


Tempelhof-Schöneberg, B. (03.02.2022). *Unterkunft für Geflüchtete auf dem Tempelhofer Feld geht wieder in Betrieb*

ThF100. (2024). *Hände weg von Feld!* https://www.thf100.de/index/articles/pressemitteilung-tempelhofer-feld-gesetz-auf-der-schlachtbank.html


