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by

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**Tactical Urbanism:
From Civil Disobedience to Civic Improvement**

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by

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Professional Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2013

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my readers Barbara Brown Wilson and Terry Kahn for their invaluable support and guidance through this process.

Abstract

Tactical Urbanism: From Civil Disobedience to Civic Improvement

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

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For the first time in the history of the Architecture Biennale the American Pavilion earned special recognition in 2012 for *Spontaneous Interventions*. The exhibition portrays an emerging phenomenon where citizen-led movements address urban problems with small-scale, low cost interventions. Sometimes sanctioned, sometimes not, the concept behind this movement has become known as tactical urbanism. This report examines the rise of tactical urbanism as an opportunity for the field of urban planning and describes how tactics can fit into the formal planning process. Currently, there exists a lack of understanding and research on the concept. This report contributes to the limited research by analyzing existing theory which discusses and supports the concept of tactical urbanism. After providing a theoretical foundation, four interventions displayed at the Biennale are reviewed to demonstrate the potential of this emerging approach. By evaluating the theoretical support behind tactical urbanism, the lacunae in planning literature, and the potential of this emerging approach as demonstrated by the four case studies, this report attempts to legitimize the discussion on

tactical urbanism and identify how this emerging approach can fit into the formal planning process.

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PART I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

Tactical urbanism represents an emerging phenomenon in the United States. Less than a decade old, it has grown from unsanctioned projects at the street scale to international recognition at the 13th Venice Biennale. The surge of interest in urbanism across the country has communities rethinking urban infrastructure and public space (Klayko, 2012). Through a series of innovative, small-scale initiatives arising around the country, tactical urbanism has caught the attention of an array of actors from city governments to developers. The movement has gained considerable momentum in the fields of architecture and design, most notably comprising the theme for the American Pavilion at the most recent Venice Biennale in 2012. This exhibition, which earned the U.S. its first honorary recognition at an Architecture Biennale, is the single-most comprehensive collection of tactical urbanism projects (Tomasulo, 2013). As the exhibit tours museums around the United States more viewers will be exposed to the ideas and opportunities of tactical interventions (Tomasulo, 2013). Yet, the debate on tactical urbanism has been led by the fields of architecture and design, with urban planning largely ignoring the rise of this urban trend (Bishop, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to facilitate discussion on tactical urbanism from an urban planning perspective and explore how it fits into the formal planning process. While informal, tactical urban interventions have occurred throughout history, recent changes in economic, cultural and technological trends have presented new possibilities for this unlikely approach. The fields of architecture, design and art have embraced tactical urbanism and successfully promote the new trend through projects of varying scales and exposure. Yet the true nature and impact of tactical urbanism draws from the field of urban planning. One of the most remarkable aspects of the honorary exhibition at the American Pavilion is how little the exhibition had to do with the traditional representation of architecture. The vast majority of the projects and symposiums

proved much more planning oriented. Still, the field of urban planning has yet to contribute significant discussion and research on the concept of tactical urbanism.

This report aims to contribute to the limited research and understanding on tactical urbanism. Thus far the leading proponents of this emerging approach are affiliated with their own projects. For example, two of the most vocal and cited proponents of tactical urbanism are Andrew Howard and Jason Roberts, who have spoken at Congress of the New Urbanism (CNU) events, TEDx and are cited by countless sources including Planetizen, the Atlantic Cities, the American Society of Landscape Architects and NPR. While they contribute to discussion on tactical urbanism they do so as it relates to their project, Better Block. Howard and Roberts, whose original project is discussed further in Part IV, operate a for-profit consultancy firm to assist with planning and implementation of Better Block projects. This type of project-based advocacy for tactical urbanism embodies the scope and tone of the discussion from a planning perspective. Mike Lydon, another leading advocate of tactical urbanism and Principal Planner of the Street Plans Collaborative, states “people are looking into individual tactics but not the overall use of tactical urbanism” (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013).

Despite the lack of planning literature on tactical urbanism there do exist theories that support the concept. This report contributes to the field of urban planning by delving into existing theories in the Literature Review section. A search within the realm of scholarly urban planning literature on tactical urbanism, or a related term, will not produce many relevant results. However, contemporary literature, like Atlantic Cities and Planetizen, provide countless examples of tactical interventions. The lack of scholarly research, understanding and adherence to rules inhibits traditional planners and academics from paying attention to this emerging trend (Tomasulo, 2013). Informal tactics will need formal guidance to fit into masterplanning because the formal planning process requires rules and guidelines (Tomasulo, 2013). In order for the field of urban planning to consider a tactical approach there must be a tested and respectable framework for guidance. The goal of this Professional Report is to activate discussion on tactical urbanism as a legitimate approach to urban planning.

The four projects highlighted from the Biennale in the case studies section demonstrate the potential of this emerging approach. Out of the 124 projects showcased in Venice this report highlights three tactical interventions and one tactical publication. The interventions demonstrate the potential of tactical urbanism in planning practice, transcending legal boundaries and evolving from civil disobedience to civic improvement. The publication exemplifies the potential of the concept of tactical urbanism and serves as a resource for tactical interventions, illustrating how tactics can evolve into strategies. These four cases represent planning vanguards by directly addressing the changing needs of communities and inadequacies of the current methods in the formal planning process. They are unique – and heavily cited – examples of tactical urbanism because of their exceptional success in garnering attention from citizens to municipalities to international institutions. The exhibition embraced a diverse range of projects and goals but these four projects embody the notion of short-term action for long-term change.

Spontaneous Interventions

For over a century, the Venice Biennale has been one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world. Established in 1895, it has been at the forefront in the research and promotion of new artistic trends (la Biennale di Venezia, 2013). The Biennale originated as an International Art Exhibition and has since grown to include festivals of Music, Cinema, Theatre and Architecture. The inclusion of national pavilions refers to the world's fairs, which were popular in the 19th century when the Biennale was first established (Kendzulak, 2013). Dozens of nations from around the globe curate their own pavilions to showcase their best work and compete for the prestigious Golden Lion Award, which is given to the best of show. The first International Architecture Exhibition took place in 1980 and represents the most prestigious architecture event in the world. The most recent Architecture Biennale took place in the fall of 2012. With over 178,000 visitors and the participation of 55 countries, it represents the most successful Architecture Exhibition yet (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013).

British architect David Chipperfield directed the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2012 under the theme of *Common Ground*. Recognizing the elitism within the field of architecture, Chipperfield chose this theme to encourage his colleagues to react against the emphasis of individual and isolated actions and elucidate the commonalities of architectural culture (Andrew, 2012). As Chipperfield stated, “The more [architecture] becomes a special thing, the less chance we have to deal with it on a day-to-day basis. What architecture is and how it fits into the community is a story I want to tell in this” (Andrew, 2012). As usual, the interpretations of the theme varied greatly from country to country. The Chilean Pavilion, which was given the Quechaun title of *Cancha*, explored the common ground of the Andes mountain range as a resource for exploring and connecting a diverse heritage. The Chinese Pavilion *Originaire* showcased the work of five architects and designers who explored different interpretations of mental images and memory. The American Pavilion adopted a unique and very inclusive perspective under Chipperfield’s theme.

Recognizing the nascent movement of citizens acting on their own initiative to solve urban problems, the chosen theme of the U.S. Pavilion was *Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good* (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). The exhibition featured 124 projects, most of which were informal, improvised design work constructed for the public interest. Gordon Douglas, member of the curatorial team of *Spontaneous Interventions* describes the body of work as “bold contributions to the very fabric of the city and quintessential elements of the phenomenon of spontaneous interventions that we are celebrating at the U.S. Pavilion” (Douglas, 2013). These projects aimed to assert the importance of equity, creativity and the power of local initiative by addressing areas that the “system” has failed to represent (Sorkin, 2012). Most of the work displayed comprised of “actionable strategies” rather than something structural. They demonstrate a rising trend to venture outside conventional practice and to deploy tactics to address current urban problems and inequities (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013).

Each of the 124 projects was displayed on a banner suspended from a cable for visitors to pull down for closer inspection (DB, 2012). As depicted in Figure 1, the front of the banner described a given project and the back of the banner displayed a graphic system of colors

resembling a bar code (DB, 2012). Six colors represented different categories, including information (dark lavender), accessibility (orange), community (pink), economy (lime), sustainability (green) and pleasure (celeste) and the width of each color represented the prevalence of each category in relation to the represented project (DB, 2012). This color coding scheme reflected which of these possible six improvements the intervention addressed (Ulam, 2013). When the visitor pulled on the banner a black square counterweight on the opposite end of the cable revealed a solution to the urban problem identified in the project.



Figure 1 – Spontaneous Interventions banners, front and back

The exhibition displayed the maximum amount of projects that would fit in the 4,000 square-foot pavilion (DB, 2012). According to curator Cathy Lang Ho, the criteria for what qualified as a “spontaneous intervention” was broad and they included “projects that encroach on the territory of art and graffiti, well aware that some acts are more about self-expression than tactics for long-term change” (DB, 2012). Lang Ho remarks they’re “goal was to find a diversity of original projects...that would add up to a useful archive of actionable strategies that could be replicated in other cities facing similar problems” (DB, 2012). Many of the interventions exemplified public art projects such as Yarn Bombing, the adorning of public property like

signposts with knitted items (Ulam, 2013). Others involved more flagrant law breaking like the Department of DIY's guerrilla bike lanes.

Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good earned a Special Mention from the Golden Lion jury, the first time the United States has been honored in the history of the Venice Architecture Biennale (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). This represents a milestone achievement for American architecture. Yet considering the nature and scope of the exhibition, it represents an incredible opportunity for the field of urban planning. The Architecture Biennale explores rising trends from around the world. The theme of the American Pavilion indicates how the trend of spontaneous interventions embodies an emerging phenomenon in the U.S. In awarding a Special Mention to the United States for *Spontaneous Interventions* the Jury of the Biennale recognized the progress of the guerilla urbanism movement (Andrew, 2012). The exhibition's success in Venice resonated back in the United States, with the debut of *Spontaneous Interventions* on May 24, 2013 at the Chicago Cultural Center. It will run until September 1, after which the exhibit will continue to tour art museums around the country.

It is encouraging that a growing number of citizens are asserting their rights to remake the city and that activists are able to showcase their work at official venues (Ulam, 2013). Every banner showcases an urban intervention which was realized by the public on either a paid or volunteer basis (DB, 2012). In researching projects for the exhibition Cathy Lang Ho and her curatorial team found hundreds of examples even before they issued an open call, which itself yielded over 450 compelling self-initiated improvements (DB, 2012). The *Spontaneous Interventions* exhibit celebrates this citizen activism and the growing awareness of the desire and push for modifications of urban space. It presents actionable ideas from all over the country about how to solve problems in urban space. Yet the real solutions need to come from the local policy and planning agencies. These entities hold the power to effect long-term change through policy and planning reform. A few of the projects were able to effect such reform, influencing city policy from the bottom up. These extraordinary cases exemplify the power and utility of spontaneous interventions.

Tactical Urbanism | Defining the Term, Understanding the Concept

Sometimes sanctioned, sometimes not, these actions are commonly referred to as ‘guerrilla urbanism,’ ‘pop-up urbanism,’ ‘city repair,’ or ‘D.I.Y. urbanism.’

- Mike Lydon

The curators of *Spontaneous Interventions* use the terms “improvisational, guerrilla, unsolicited, tactical, temporary, informal, DIY, unplanned, participatory, open source” interchangeably to describe the theme of the exhibition. Cathy Lang Ho describes the goal of the exhibition as a means to understand “a larger movement, in which citizens all over the world are devising and implementing clever, low-barrier urban interventions” (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). The movement that inspired the internationally-recognized exhibition has many names but embodies the same concept. Whether referred to as DIY urbanism, guerrilla urbanism or tactical urbanism all those similar terms represent the same concept. As Lang Ho described, it spurs citizen involvement through the identification of an urban problem followed by a quick and simple solution, often unofficial and unsanctioned. Mike Lydon, Principal Planner at the Street Plans Collaborative, offers this definition:

Tactical Urbanism is an approach that features the following five characteristics:

- A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change;
- The offering of local solutions for local planning challenges;
- Short-term commitment and realistic expectations;
- Low-risks, with a possibly a high reward; and
- The development of social capital between citizens and the building of organizational capacity between public-private institutions, non-profits, and their constituents. (Lydon, 2011, p. 1-2)

While the concept of tactical urbanism in various manifestations has been around for centuries a new wave of activism has evolved over the past couple decades. It is the result and reaction to current economic, cultural and technological changes. This challenge to the planning status quo represents a turning point in urban planning and development. As Andrew Howard of Better Block states a “new approach will emphasize small scale, incremental interventions as a

way to make ongoing improvements in the city’s financial, social and cultural resiliency... where small-scale successes can be built upon while small-scale failures are simply a low cost chance to learn” (Howard, 2013). Due to the lack of research and review of this emerging technique the definition and criteria of tactical urbanism remain blurry. Whereas *Spontaneous Interventions* offers a broad, encompassing interpretation of tactical interventions Mike Lydon attempts to organize these interventions. The Tactical Continuum in Figure 2 places tactical interventions along a spectrum ranging from unsanctioned to sanctioned efforts and also provides a spectrum of informal to formal actors. This illustration, featured in the second volume of Lydon’s *Tactical Urbanism* handbook, stands out as an effort to categorize and understand the emergence of tactical urbanism.



Figure 2 – Tactical Continuum

PART II. METHODS

The Methods section describes the system of analysis employed to conduct research for this report. The research here examines how the field of urban planning addresses the emerging approach of tactical urbanism and how this new approach can fit into traditional masterplanning. In order to evaluate the current understanding of tactical urbanism from an urban planning perspective this report makes use of the content analysis method. This method promotes the utilization of a variety of texts, and in this case *texts* include an art exhibition, literature – both peer-reviewed and non-scholarly or “grey literature” – videos, two in-person interviews and two open-ended surveys. Another contribution to the system of analysis came from Robert E. Stake’s case study methodology. In reviewing four projects from the Biennale this report adopts two of the three case study methods outlined by Stake. The combination of content analysis and case study methods create a legitimate framework for this research on tactical urbanism from an urban planning perspective.

Content Analysis

The first portion of this report relies on the content analysis research technique. The term *content analysis* is about 60 years old, though its meaning and application continue to change. Generally speaking, content analysis “is used to develop objective inferences about a subject of interest in any type of communication” (Kondracki, 2002, p. 224). There are many variations of definitions for content analysis. Klaus Krippendorff’s definition from the Third Edition of his book, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, describes content analysis as a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 24). Here, the phrase “or other meaningful matter” indicates a loose definition of *texts*. An investigative tool for researchers, content analysis has evolved over time into a repertoire of methods of research that permit inferences from a variety of data including verbal, pictorial, symbolic and communication (Krippendorff, 2013). As Krippendorff explains, contemporary content analysis transcends

traditional notions of symbols, contents and intents, largely in part because of the evolution of the concept of communication (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 2).

Many interpretations divide content analysis into a qualitative and quantitative research method. Nancy Kondracki *et al.* (2002) believe that content analysis lies at the crossroads of these two methods, allowing a quantitative analysis of seemingly qualitative data. While Krippendorff does not validate the distinction between qualitative and quantitative content analysis he does state that “ultimately, all reading of texts is qualitative” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 22). He adds that qualitative approaches to content analysis “have their roots in literary theory, the social sciences, and critical scholarship” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 23). These “interpretive” approaches share three main characteristics: they require a close examination of relatively small amounts of content; they involve the re-articulation of given texts; and, the analysts recognize their own bias (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 23).

Content analysis begins with coding raw messages, or *texts*, according to a classification scheme (Kondracki, 2002). Here, the initial coding process involves understanding the meaning of *tactic*. Throughout this report the utilization of the word *tactic* refers to de Certeau’s definition describing an action which arises out of informal space and power. The words *informal* and *unsanctioned* refer to an action or an actor that behaves outside of the legal, *formal*, or *sanctioned* process. This does not inherently make the action or actor illegal but rather denotes that it lies outside of a recognized process. The definition and scope of tactical urbanism remains unclear and broad. As illustrated in Figure 2, tactical interventions can fall along a wide spectrum, ranging from city-sanctioned projects initiated by formal agencies like Pavement to Plazas to unsanctioned projects initiated by informal citizen groups such as Chair Bombing. This report examines tactical interventions that moved along the continuum in a particular order. These projects began as unsanctioned, informally-led movements and evolved into sanctioned, formally-adopted programs. As Kondracki *et al.* articulate, the “coding process is essentially one of organizing communication content in a manner that allows for easy identification, indexing, or retrieval of content relevant to research questions” (Kondracki, 2002, p. 224).

This codification supports the research questions on whether informal interventions can serve as a tool for the formal planning process. How relevant is tactical urbanism to the field of urban planning? How can municipalities incorporate tactics into formal planning? What are the benefits of incorporating tactics into masterplanning? Is the field of urban planning paying enough attention to this emerging phenomenon? The *Spontaneous Interventions* exhibition served as both as a backdrop and a framework for these research questions. The honorary exhibition is currently on display at the Chicago Cultural Center until September 1, 2013, and it will tour art museums around the country afterwards. The exhibition helps to validate tactical urbanism as an emerging phenomenon. It serves as a common thread throughout the report, introducing tactical urbanism as a rising trend and tying together the four case studies.

Research Design

Employing the content analysis method, this report creates a classification of tactical urbanism and a relevant context revolving around the research questions. In order to analyze how the field of urban planning is dealing with tactical urbanism the main focus of investigation lies within urban planning literature. Scholarly and contemporary planning resources are examined, comprising the literature review chapter. In addition to a literature review valuable insight was provided from four primary sources, including two in-person interviews and two open-ended surveys, to better understand the current relationship between planning and tactical urbanism. In reviewing academic literature, current practice and obtaining primary source information this report followed a qualitative content analysis method.

This report examines a variety of texts including scholarly urban planning journals and contemporary planning journals and newspapers. In order to avoid straying away from planning-related literature some interesting though tangential topics had to be omitted, which is discussed further in the limitations section. The peer-reviewed literature analysis focused on coverage within eight major urban planning journals: Journal of the American Planning Association, Urban Studies and Planning, Journal of Planning Literature, Urban Studies, Journal of Planning

Education and Research, Urban Affairs Review, Journal of Urban Design, Landscape Journal. A search on the following terms failed to produce relevant results:

- tactical urbanism
- spontaneous interventions
- tactical interventions
- pop-up urbanism
- guerrilla urbanism
- DIY urbanism
- urban prototyping

This points to a significant gap in current planning literature and theory. However, the concept and terminology remain very new; these terms are less than a decade old. The majority of the non-academic literature cited throughout this paper is less than five years old. While a robust body of literature discussing tactical urbanism has not yet developed there are theories supporting the concept. The theories identified and discussed help validate the concept of tactical urbanism and legitimize this emerging approach to citymaking. The examination of the theoretical literature supporting tactical urbanism can be found in Part II, the literature review section.

For contemporary planning resources, this report focused on five planning-related resources and four news sources: Planetizen, Atlantic Cities, Architect Magazine, Congress for New Urbanism, Streetsblog, Huffington Post, New York Times, BBC and TED Talks. The numbers below correspond with the number of articles that came up under the search “tactical urbanism.” It should be noted that because these sites are constantly updating their content the number of hits for a given search can change from day to day.

- Planetizen: 48
- The Atlantic Cities: 19
- Architect Magazine: 1,218
- CNU: 27
- Streetsblog: 9

- Huffington Post: 2
- New York Times: 3
- BBC: 0 (the Walk Raleigh video did not appear with this search)
- TED Talks: 1 (though Jason Robert's presentation did not appear with this search)

These sources produced ample results on tactical urbanism, most of which discussed the general concept and emergence of tactical urbanism or specific cases. There are many interesting examples of tactical urbanism all over the Western Hemisphere but this report focuses on the United States to provide case studies relevant to the American political and social context. Whereas the peer reviewed journals provided content for the literature review these contemporary planning and news resources served as the main guidance for the four case studies. These sources also provided all the information on the *Spontaneous Interventions* exhibition.

Gathering and analyzing scholarly and contemporary literature proved a significant source of data. The interviews and open-ended survey questions also provided important data. I interviewed Meredith Powell from Austin Arts Alliance on June 19, 2013 in Austin, TX. Three projects out of Austin were showcased at the 2012 Venice Biennale. Meredith served on a panel discussion and workshop titled *Tactical Urbanism in Austin, TX*, in which a multi-disciplined panel discussed “how fostering tactical urbanism and nurturing the creative sector can be integrated into a city’s overall strategy for economic growth” (Art Alliance Austin , 2013). The interview with Meredith provided great insight on the Architecture Biennale, the *Spontaneous Interventions* exhibition and the emergence of tactical urbanism within the urban, arts and economics environments. The other in-person interview was with Mike Lydon of the Street Plans Collaborative and took place on July 22, 2013 in Brooklyn, NY. This interview was particularly useful because Mike’s two handbooks on tactical urbanism, one of which was displayed at the Venice Biennale, served as one of the four case studies. Mike Lydon has been credited as one of the leading voices for tactical urbanism by the CNU, Planetizen, Atlantic Cities and Streetsblog.

Two open-ended surveys contributed to the primary data collection. The questionnaires were aimed at gaining insight into the case studies. They consisted of five open-ended questions and were tailored to each case study. Two of the five people emailed responded. Andrew Howard

from the Better Block project and Matt Tomasulo from Walk Raleigh responded to the open-ended survey questions. Howard and Tomasulo's answers provided a better understanding of their respective projects, the significance of *Spontaneous Interventions* and provided opinions of how the field of urban planning is handling the rise of tactical urbanism. The two answered questionnaires are included in the Appendices.

Case Studies

After reviewing the theoretical framework this report examines four examples of tactical urbanism in practice. The purpose of the case study section is to observe how tactical urbanism has been used to improve city planning processes. These examples are pulled from the *Spontaneous Interventions* exhibition because of their unique contributions to the understanding and impact of tactical urbanism. Out of the 124 projects showcased in Venice these four studies present unique scenarios that help support the hypothesis that tactical urbanism should be recognized as a legitimate tool for the formal planning process. The majority of projects fell on either side of the Tactical Continuum and remained there. Projects like Yarn Bombing, Chair-bombing, Bench Press, 596 Acres, City Sensing: Signal Spaces and Ghost Bikes began and remain in the lower left corner of the spectrum as unsanctioned, citizen-led interventions. The majority of the projects were created via organizations like non-profits or private architecture or design firms. These kinds of projects – AirCasting, Aquaponics Container System, Bubbleware, Faubourg St. Roch Project, Greenaid Seedbomb Vending Machine, to name a few – remain in the middle left of the continuum.

Yet the four projects examined in the case study section moved along the continuum and influenced urban planning practice. The featured interventions in this report are:

- Parklets
- Better Block
- Walk Raleigh: Guerrilla Wayfinding

- Tactical Urbanism Handbook

The first three of the cases represent “actionable strategies” that migrated from the lower left corner to the upper right corner, transcending legal boundaries and evolving into city-sanctioned projects and changing local policy. While a handful of projects did move along the spectrum in various ways these three projects remain unique in moving across the full continuum. For example, Depave started as a citizen-led project which evolved into a non-profit and influenced the City of Portland’s impermeable surface stipulations. However, this project never truly embodied an unsanctioned effort because the group obtained permits before acting. The impressive transformation of these three selected cases provides a powerful argument for the utility and demonstrated benefits of a tactical approach. In terms of methodology, the first three cases follow what Robert E. Stake calls an *instrumental case study*. Stake, a leader in development of program evaluation methods developed this definition for an instrumental case:

[when] a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else...its contexts [still] scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest. (Stake, 2005, p. 445)

This method of case study analysis lends itself to focusing on a study for a greater meaning than the case itself. For the purposes of this report, the first three cases play a significant role in illustrating examples of tactical urbanism but also help support the greater message of the report that tactical urbanism offers a useful approach and should be considered as a legitimate approach within the field of urban planning. This *instrumental* approach allows the opportunity to advance several interests, particular and general, simultaneously (Stake, 2005).

The fourth case proves unique both within the Biennale exhibition and juxtaposed with the three other case studies examined. The *Tactical Urbanism* handbook earned a spot at the international architecture exhibition because of its unprecedented documentation of examples of tactical interventions. Mike Lydon and his colleagues at the Street Plans Collaborative saw small-scale, short-term projects happening all over the country and created the first resource examining these happenings for free online (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). By circumventing the formal publication process and providing their handbook at no cost to whomever interested Street Plans

followed the ideology of short-term action for long-term change. Similar to the three featured projects the *Tactical Urbanism* handbook moved along the continuum from an unsanctioned *tactic* promulgated by an organization to city-sanctioned *strategy*. The dozen interventions evaluated in the premier *Tactical Urbanism* handbook created rudimentary guidelines to the novel approach which impacted the planning practice at Street Plans. Hence, the Tactical Urbanism Handbook project ultimately influenced urban planning practice. Yet this case was chosen not because of its similarities to the other three cases but rather for its intrinsic value.

The last case study was undertaken to gain a better understanding of the content of *Tactical Urbanism*. Stake describes this type of study as *intrinsic*, when the case is reviewed because one wants better understanding of this particular study not “primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but instead because, in all its particularity *and* ordinariness, the case itself is of interest” (Stake, 2005, p. 455). The purpose of this type of review is not to attempt to understand an abstract construct or phenomenon, nor is the purpose to build upon theory. The study is undertaken because of an intrinsic interest in the case itself. Though this project is certainly a *text*, like those examined in the literature review, it is most appropriately reviewed as a case study. Not only is the endeavor of the handbook unprecedented but the Street Plans Collaborative were keen to follow a tactical approach to publishing the resource. Instead of going through traditional publishing processes they open sourced the handbook and posted it as a free download on their website. It represents an important project from the *Spontaneous Interventions* exhibition and serves as a unique case with an intrinsic value. Together, with the three other cases explored in Part IV, these four projects represent some of the most widely recognized and cited examples of tactical urbanism.

Limitations

While tactical urbanism, under various names and manifestations, has been occurring for centuries, the modern interpretation of tactical urbanism represents an emerging practice. Since tactical urbanism in the United States is less than a decade old there is very little data or analysis

on the matter. The majority of theory and practice in the literature review came from Western Europe. The closest parallel to tactical urbanism came from the practice of temporary use, which emerged in the 1980s in Western Europe. The contemporary nature of tactical urbanism limited the research capabilities of this report, especially for an American context. However, the novelty of an emerging phenomenon also provided an opportunity to observe how the field of urban planning is reacting to this particular rise in urban issues. The timing of this research presents an opportunity to examine and critique how the planning field is embracing a phenomenon that is most closely related to urban planning and development.

The breadth of consideration in the discussion on theory was tailored to support the concept of tactical urbanism. The literature review identifies three core theories; Lefebvre's theory on the production of space, Habermas' communicative rationality theory and de Certeau's differentiation between tactics and strategies. However, I would have liked to have further discussed Lefebvre's theory on urban space, Heidegger and Wittgenstein's studies on language theory, Foucault's notion of power and the theories that came out of the Frankfurt School. These ideas influenced many of the works described in this report but they do not themselves add to the discussion on tactical urbanism. Another tangential discussion omitted to stay on topic was the history of tactical interventions. Tactical "urban allotment" gardening has its roots in the medieval European city (Spirn, 1988). However, the myriad versions of citizen-led urban interventions of the past are not truly relevant to the emergence of the contemporary movement. This report also dismissed any analysis on "free zones" (Groth, 2005) or Temporary Autonomous Zones because of their purely European context. A similar concept that has taken off in San Francisco in 2012 is called Civic Innovation Zones. However, given the extreme novelty of this concept this report does not cover it.

One of the catalysts for tactical urbanism is the rise of Do-It-Yourself or DIY culture. Initially, I planned to discuss this and the role the internet and social media plays in tactical urbanism. Contemporary planning journals and news resources have covered these topics and the many events that celebrate them. The Urban Prototyping festival in San Francisco is a great example of the celebration and intersection of DIY culture, technology and urban planning. This

festival, co-sponsored by the San Francisco Planning Department, encourages citizens to participate in what is essentially a competition of tactical interventions. Whether in the form of a physical event like Urban Prototyping or internet correspondence like open-sourced ideas, contemporary tactical urbanism has spawned from the rise of this DIY, social media-savvy culture. While the connection of DIY culture to tactical urbanism is very interesting this report did not accommodate a discussion on the topic. The aim of the research is not to document the history or evaluate the catalysts for tactical urbanism, but rather to review how the field of urban planning is facilitating the rise of tactical urbanism and to advocate tactical urbanism as a tool for the formal planning process.

PART III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term tactical urbanism remains largely absent from urban planning literature. Only within the past several years has this term, or one of its pseudonyms, been discussed by urban planners. The discussion on tactical urbanism has been predominantly led by one person, Mike Lydon. Lydon is the Principal Planner at The Street Plans Collaborative and his two handbooks, *Tactical Urbanism Vol. I* and *II*, were featured in the 2012 Venice Biennale. Since they comprise one of my case studies I will not include them in the literature review that follows. Instead, I will review theory that supports the concept of tactical urbanism and urban planning approaches that emulate similar ideas and goals of tactical urbanism. The recent emergence of tactical urbanism is due to a variety of conditions and drivers. The theory and practice that supports tactical urbanism arose following the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The civil rights movement of the mid 1960s spurred a debate within the social sciences regarding the use and concept of public space. The fields of urban planning, urban design and landscape architecture began to take a more critical look at how people interact with space and the impact of urban form on behavior. Works by Kevin Lynch (1960), Jane Jacobs (1961) and Anne Whiston Spirn (1988) challenged the traditional conceptions of their time by exploring how the form of the city influences our behavior, habits and disposition (Schmidt, 2010). This mindfulness of the role of culture in the built environment and the desire to embrace social and structural heterogeneity in cities greatly impacted traditional planning discourse. The traditional exclusionary process of appropriating space was challenged, and from these challenges new theories and planning approaches were born.

One of the most influential works on this debate is Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. Published in French in 1974, the English version did not appear until 1991. The book introduces several theories in an attempt to understand and explain the product and production of space. In the first two chapters Lefebvre discusses space as more than just a physical place, but also as a production of society. He rejects the two traditional "conceptions" of space because of their narrow interpretations of space (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre argues that the philosophical conception only focuses on "mental" space and the dominant scientific conception disregards such

abstract space to describe a concrete reality, relying on more tangible evidence. This dichotomy in the understanding of space presents mental and practical barriers which Lefebvre seeks to alleviate with a “unitary theory,” connecting the ideas of abstract and material space (Lefebvre, 1991). Yet rather than attempt to produce a dominant discourse on space, Lefebvre seeks to “expose the actual production of space by bringing the various kinds of space and the modalities of their genesis together within a single theory” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 16). By focusing on the production he relinquishes the finite, end-goal outlook of urban space for a theory that incorporates elements of culture and social existence. This new theory enhanced the debate on how space is produced and experienced, a question that would become ubiquitous in planning communities around the U.S. (Schmidt, 2010, p. 453).

Another theory that has proven instrumental in the debate on public space is Jurgen Habermas’ theory of “communicative rationality.” Habermas described this theory in Volume I of his 1986 publication *The Theory of Communicative Action*, which is regarded as one of the most important works in sociology of the 20th century. Habermas provides an account for communicative rationality which he contrasts with “instrumental rationality”, the theory that Lefebvre described as the dominant scientific conception (Roderick, 1986). Instrumental rationality represented the governing theory at the time and advocated a more technocratic, top-down theory focusing on public space as a means to an end. His “critical theory” aims to overcome the systematic distortions of thought, speech and action that inhibit social understanding and support a power hierarchy (Roderick, 1986, p. 152). He does not reject instrumental rationality but, like Lefebvre, builds upon it by including normative questions in the information-gathering process and advocating that a more inclusive process leads to a better product. In this sense Habermas was unique, “unlike some other critical theorists, [Habermas] argues that there is a role for instrumental rationality and scientific method...[and] he focuses his attention on the development of critical or emancipatory ways of knowing that are designed to get past the embedded power relations in a society” (Innes, 1995, p. 186).

By advocating a more inclusive, discussion-oriented approach Habermas changes the focus of the traditional perspective from product to process, emphasizing the phases of

information gathering and consensus building. Habermas describes three types of “knowledge interests” in his communicative approach. Judith Innes (1998, p. 59) describes how the three knowledge interests fit into the planning process:

- 1) We have an interest in knowledge for instrumental or technical purposes, to predict and to choose strategies likely to produce particular outcomes. This interest is served by empirically based, scientifically grounded knowledge.
- 2) We also have a practical and interpretive interest. We want to be able to make sense of the context, the problem, and the other participants’ situations. This practical interest is served by knowledge grounded in experience, and by the stories and input from participants.
- 3) Finally, we have a critical, or emancipatory, interest. We want knowledge to help us break out of assumptions, rules, and expectations that make us lose touch with some deeper reality and that prevent innovation. To advance this interest, intuitive interest is crucial.

By providing an encompassing approach to information gathering, Habermas’ theory earned the respect from quantitative based instrumental rationalists and qualitative, social learning theorists alike. His social learning approach influenced the dominant thought by expanding upon it to include both quantitative and qualitative information. This approach made Habermas’ theory more approachable to those adhering to the traditional concept of planning.

By the mid-1980s the concept of public space as a process involving many actors had become widespread in the social sciences. Anne Whiston Spirn (1988) wrote about the value of culture and inclusive design from a landscape architect’s perspective. Her piece, *The Poetics of City and Nature: Towards a New Aesthetic for Urban Design* discusses the challenge of designing the built environment for a constantly changing society and culture. She argues that the city is more than an artistic expression or artifact, it is a place where people dwell and its form should reflect the many different narratives of human society (Spirn, 1988). In arguing for more culturally informed design, Spirn utilizes Heidegger’s analysis of the meaning of “dwell,” whose socio-linguistic theory serves as one of the pillars of Habermas’ *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Reminiscent of Lefebvre and Habermas, Spirn concludes that in order to create successful, dynamic and adaptive urban places the “solution lies in an understanding of the processes...[and] calls for a more inclusive dialogue about values and visions” (Spirn, 1988, p. 124).

One of the most influential works in urban planning that describes the transition from systematic thinking to social learning is John Forester's (1989) *Planning in the Face of Power*. It provides a thorough overview of how planners use information in the planning process and is framed and informed by Habermas' communicative rationality theory (Innes, p. 184). Judith E. Innes, another principal theorist on communicative theory in planning (Fainstein, 2000), called this theoretical transition an "emerging paradigm for planning theory" (Innes, 1995, p. 183). She held that the transition from "armchair theorizing" to "seeing planning as an interactive, communicative activity" proved more than just an incremental adaptation of familiar methods and theories; it represented a new paradigm (Innes, 1995, p. 183). The theory emphasizes the process, specifically discussion and consensus-building amongst participants, therefore it encourages practitioners to actively engage with the theory, instead of pontificating about what planning could or should be (Innes, 1995). As a result, the role of the planner becomes very important. Indeed, Forester and Innes describe at length the implications of this theory on the role of the planner as a negotiator and consensus builder.

Patsy Healey (1997) described this consensus building process as "collaborative planning." Collaborative planning refers to the process by which participants arrive at an agreement or solution that expresses their mutual interests (Fainstein, 2000, p. 457). A term coined in the late 1990s, it refers to a form of planning based on the communicative rationality theory. Like Forester and Innes, Healey pulls from Habermas' "knowledge interests" to describe how the collaborative process values input from all participants.

Technical analysis is replaced by a 'feeling towards' what meaning could be. The epistemology of positivism and deductive/inductive logic of the natural sciences and of economics is put in context and combined with other ways of knowing and valuing through a hermeneutic attitude, which aims to explore how people's interests and claims for policy attention are both actively constituted and framed by socio-cultural systems of meaning and acting. Such strategy-making activities involve active discursive work by the parties involved. (Healey, 1997, p. 282)

The collaborative approach represents a watershed transition towards inclusionary processes within the field of urban planning. Drawing upon the work of Habermas, Lefebvre and other theorists, collaborative planning seeks to break down the infamous power hierarchy that has

historically plagued the planning process. By encouraging discussion from all participants and cultivating different ways to understand space, the collaborative process has garnered much respect amongst modern planning theorists. One of the few critics, Susan S. Fainstein, agrees that the communicative approach has effectively and laudably widened the discussion from the elite to all involved but criticizes the process for not transferring consensus reached into practice.

Susan S. Fainstein (2000) expands upon the concept of collaborative planning by emphasizing the importance of mobilizing the consensus. Fainstein says that adopting new forms of knowledge can alter discussion, giving rise to social movements that in turn change consciousness, but it is the intervening stage of mobilization that ultimately results in the adoption of new public policy (Fainstein, 2000, p. 458). The result of people reasoning together is not enough to create real change; these ideas require leadership and mobilization of power (Fainstein, 2000). Fainstein maintains that “the power of words depends on the power of the speakers” (Fainstein, 2000, p. 458). This is where Fainstein becomes critical about the “new paradigm” in planning. Whereas Innes believes the rise in communicative action within planning helped close the gap between theory and practice Fainstein writes that “the theoretical lacunae of communicative theory reveal themselves in practice” (Fainstein, 2000, p. 458). The idea and emphasis of basing planning on dialogue presents a serious gap between communicative theory and implementation (Fainstein, 2000). Even though inclusive dialogue represents a successful step in the planning process, the goal of inclusive design is not reached unless that dialogue can effect real change.

This gap between theory and practice has been called weak planning (Urban Catalyst , 2007). Weak planning can be characterized by its “lack of coordination, strategic guidelines, clear objectives and control by any higher authority (Andres, 2012, p. 763). While Fainstein attributes it to the lack of leadership produced by the collaborative planning process other planning theorists attribute weak planning to the absence of collaborative planning. Groth and Corijn (2005, p. 504) attribute the onset of weak planning to the challenging transition from the industrial Fordist growth model:

For the past two to three decades, cities in the Western world have been subject to major economic, social and cultural transformations, which are gradually affecting changes in urban politics and development...At the same time, urban politics and city planning have to respond to the parallel processes of cultural and social change. They are confronted with an urban realm which is no longer marked by more or less homogeneous life patterns and spatial practices, but by a pronounced plurality and fragmentation...

Lauren Andres (2012) argues that weak planning manifests in the absence of master planning, and could be considered a planning sub-system based on its temporary status (Andres, 2012, p. 763). She believes that weak planning occurs “when a neglected space for which the change of uses (through the adoption of a new plan) is not possible due to a set of deadlocks,” including a weak property market, a lack of public resources and a lack of political consensus (Andres, 2012, p. 763).

The political negligence of urban space has turned weak planning into a nesting ground for the appropriation of differential space (Andres, 2012). In the last two chapters of *The Production of Space* (1991) Lefebvre discusses one of his most well-known theories revolving around the contradictions of space. In describing the contradictory nature of abstract space Lefebvre proposes the potential for the emergence of “differential space,” which is opposed to an orderly vision of the city and thrives on spontaneity and heterogeneity (Lefebvre, 1991). Remaining largely unspecified as to its economic viability, such space is capable of integrating a high degree of diversity of use and capability of change (Groth, 2005). Such differential space gives rise to “counter projects” and “counter spaces,” challenging the designated purposes of space and those who control them (Lefebvre, 1991). These projects focus on the quality and relevance of urban space in terms of day to day life, supporting a bottom-up approach to accommodate the needs of the local community. They are spaces created and dominated by their users from the basis of their neglected conditions (Groth, 2005).

Michel de Certeau (1980) describes how power relationships between those who own space and those who inhabit space can create what Lefebvre calls differential space. In his most well-known publication, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau develops his concept on strategies and tactics in everyday life. He begins his distinction between strategies and tactics as such (de Certeau, 2011, pp. 35-36):

I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats...can be managed.

Strategies represent the typical attitude of city politics and the values and desires of those in power. Andres argues that strategies are synonymous with “conformity, rationality interventionism” (Andres, 2012, p. 764). By contrast with a strategy, de Certeau describes a tactic as:

...a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. >> (de Certeau, 2011, pp. 36-37)

For de Certeau, strategies are developed within a process of calculation of power relationships (Andres, 2012, p. 764), whereas tactics comprise of negotiations of space developed by the strategies of the powerful (Round, 2008, p. 174). De Certeau focuses on the different perspectives and practices of power between strategies and tactics. A tactic is employed in the absence of power and a strategy is the employed by the people in power. As Andres describes, strategies have an explicit aim in the production of space whereby they take a vision with a specific set of objectives and create an action plan for transformation (Andres, 2012, p. 764). This way of appropriating and developing urban space is similar to the discussion on the production of space developed by Henri Lefebvre. What de Certeau calls strategy Lefebvre calls the dominant scientific conception, focused on the production of space as a means to an end rather than approaching space with a more in depth evaluation of the users and uses of that space. The theories set forth by Lefebvre and de Certeau provide a theoretical foundation for the understanding of formal and informal planning.

John Round et al. (2008) utilize de Certeau’s concept on the delineation between strategies and tactics in their research on the role of informal economies in post-Soviet Ukraine (Round, 2008). They find that due to inadequate state regulations, or strategies, local communities have responded with tactical solutions. They began to notice that the tactics implemented by

community members were much more structured and coherent, resembling the calculation of a strategy more than the isolated action of a tactic. They observed the “blurring of the tactic-strategy boundaries” and emergence of a power hierarchy within the informal tactics being implemented by the local communities. They found that:

[t]he exploration of strategies and tactics also reveals the power relations that exist within formal and informal economies, demonstrating that power operates at many different scales and that sometimes those undertaking informal tactics employ strategies of their own to protect the spaces that they operate in. Therefore there is use in furthering de Certeau’s delineation by suggesting that strategies can be both defensive and offensive. (Round, 2008, p. 182)

Drawing on the work of John Allen (2004), Round et al. claim that users of space can operate both a range of tactics and strategies simultaneously (Round, 2008). There is a difference, however, between the type of strategy de Certeau described and the new adaptation of strategy adopted by Round et al. This “defensive” strategy is employed to ensure that tactics can be maintained whereas de Certeau’s “offensive” strategy aims to expand the control of economic spaces (Round, 2008, p. 175). This observation on how strategies and tactics work supports the idea that formal and informal approaches are not in separate spheres. The way in which power is formulated (Allen, 2004) and space is appropriated proves similar in both approaches.

Lefebvre’s concept on differential space and de Certeau’s concept on strategies versus tactics serve as the governing theories on temporary use. Temporary use refers to the temporary kindling of vacant or underused space that holds no immediate development demand (Lehtovuori, 2012). While the concept of temporary use is broad and can refer to grand productions like the Olympic Games or the counterculture activism of Temporary Autonomous Zones (Bishop, 2012), the type of temporary use referred to in this discussion is that associated with the contradictions of urban space on a day to day life. It is an outward manifestation of differential space and is constructed by tactics and defensive strategies. This type of temporary activity is a response to a variety of factors influencing urban space and represents a growing trend in post-industrial cities in Western Europe and North America. It While the concept of temporary use is not new itself, what is significant is the increase in current interest towards temporary uses as a means for urban change (Lehtovuori, 2012, p. 30).

Research on temporary use is in its nascent phase with the majority of it coming from Western Europe. An important initiator was Berlin's Urban Catalyst project (2001-2003), an interdisciplinary team who conducted research, funded by the European Commission, with 11 partners in six countries (Bishop, 2012). Their first publication, *Urban Catalysts: Strategies for Temporary Uses – Potential for Development of Urban Residual Areas in European Metropolises* (2003), describes the motivations and typologies of temporary use. Their definition of temporary uses, how they emerge and how they operate, can be summarized with six conclusions:

- a) Citizens become temporary users in order to follow different aims
- b) Specific vacant sites attract specific temporary uses
- c) Temporary uses flourish with a minimum of investment
- d) Temporary uses are mostly organized in networks and use clusters
- e) Temporary uses are initiated through agents (a liaison between users and the owners of the space)
- f) Temporary uses are a laboratory for new cultures and economies (Urban Catalyst, 2003, pp. 5-6)

Bishop and Williams (2012) explore the conditions and drivers for the emergence of temporary uses in their book *The Temporary City*. The rise in temporary uses has to be observed “within the context of myriad economic, social and technological changes” (Bishop, 2012, p. 34). They explain how the obsolescence of post-industrial sites and the impact of the economic crisis on private and public investment have produced an abundance of vacant property. The availability of urban vacancies proves significant in allowing temporary activities to unfold (Bishop, 2012, p. 25). Hence, the two main conditions for instigating temporary use are economic decline and urban vacant properties. Changes in working practices, new technology, increasingly mobile lifestyles and intensified use of public space are all drivers identified by Bishop and Williams (Bishop, 2012, p. 29).

Temporary use provides many benefits ranging from local artisanal expression to boosting the local economy. Lehtovuori and Ruoppila (2012) describe several public and private benefits provided by temporary use. The three main public benefits are:

- 1) Temporary uses are a good tool in place-making, i.e. creating attractive, lucrative and active urban spaces, recognised by wider public.
- 2) Affordable office or working space for new creative businesses and arts, which indirectly may support innovation activity.
- 3) Temporary uses are a concrete tool to nourish the bottom-up approaches in exploring the potentials of spaces; they are eventually people-created places, which may use and develop collaborative practices (Lehtovuori, 2012, p. 35).

The main private benefit comes from place-making, which if successful can produce a number of benefits (Lehtovuori, 2012). Since there is very little risk and cost associated with temporary projects they have the potential to be an easy win for developers. Another advantage is that “temporary activities can provide a vehicle for local consultation and help to build a bridge between developer and community” (Lehtovuori, 2012, p. 35). By allowing temporary use to happen developers can engage with the community in a unique, authentic way. Where properties sit vacant or there exists little demand, temporary activity can provide rental income for the property owner (Lehtovuori, 2012). This can stimulate the local economy with the potential for long-term effects.

Temporary use provides many practical benefits to users and owners of urban space. However, temporary use remains largely excluded from the formal planning process. Since most municipalities do not accommodate temporary use many actors choose to circumnavigate the legal process. The debate on temporary use has taken place within the realm of architecture and design rather than being planning-led (Bishop, 2012). Bishop and Williams (2012) encourage urban planners to recognize temporary use as an emerging phenomenon within their field, one which represents the “spirit of our time” and offers much potential for collaborative planning. Urban planners are missing an opportunity to learn and grow from temporary use. They should be documenting these processes instead of allowing the lessons learned from such experiences to be lost (Bishop, 2012, p. 220). The need for more research on this topic has been noted for decades; in the 1960s Jane Jacobs observed that cities are laboratories of trial and error for architecture and planning (Bishop, 2012, p. 220).

Cities need to allow for the clustering of creative communities and consider the agendas emerging from such informal actors (Groth, 2005, p. 523). They need to present plans that

promote the iterative, focusing on the process, rather than an end-state approach to urban change (Bishop, 2012, p. 220). Urban planning should consider what Bishop and Williams (2012) call a “fourth dimension” of planning, whereby planners take into account and plan for the temporal as well as the physical. Temporary uses possess a “latent energy that can be tapped through a four-dimensional approach to urban planning and design” (Bishop, 2012, p. 220). The difficulty here is that policy-makers need to refrain from much intervention in the activities. The key to successful temporary use is inherent in its freedom to create and be creative. Policy intervention should be moderate because temporary uses are experiment-driven not planning-led (Lehtovuori, 2012). Such informal spaces primarily require cheap spaces and freedom from constraints (Lehtovuori, 2012, p. 49). Therefore, planning authorities need to adopt a sort of laissez-faire approach to planning, whereby they support temporary use through a blend of suitable regulation and freedom to create. By “leaving certain things undefined and open for the future, space is provided for the co-existence of multiple activities and encounters” (Groth, 2005, p. 522).

PART IV. CASE STUDIES

The case study section illustrates exceptional examples of tactical urbanism within the context of the *Spontaneous Interventions* exhibition. Comprising the most extensive collection of tactical or “spontaneous” interventions, the exhibition showcased 124 projects from around the U.S. Many of the projects followed legal procedures, earning sponsorship from institutions such as the Illinois Institute of Technology, a slew of design firms like the Museum of Contemporary Phenomena and nonprofits like OpenPlans. Many of the projects did not follow legal procedures and remain unsanctioned. The Yarnbombing project out of Houston, TX began as illegal street art and though celebrated in cities around the world the guerrilla knitting installations remain unsanctioned. The four cases reviewed here are unique because they blurred the lines between sanctioned and unsanctioned activism and migrated from one side of the Tactical Continuum to the other.

This chapter examines three strategic-projects from the Biennale – Parklets, Better Block, Walk Raleigh: Guerrilla Wayfinding – and one publication-project, Tactical Urbanism Handbook. While they are different in many ways all four studies address the conflict between current and emerging conceptions of space. The conception of urban space has evolved with recent cultural, economic and technological changes. This has led to an explosion of activity focused on developing expeditious, affordable, often temporary projects (Talen, 2013). Analogous to Lefebvre’s theory on the production of space, these cases delve into how space is produced and who uses it. In each project, a physical space is transformed into a charrette-like prototype demonstrating how that space could be used and perceived differently.

The first case, the Parklets Evolution, describes the first popularized example of tactical urbanism in the United States. The initial tactic, PARK(ing) Day, became an international sensation before it was integrated into the San Francisco Pavement to Parks Plan as a parklet. Since then parklets have been initiated all over the world. Similar to the evolution of the Parklet, the second case deals with a small-scale intervention that has grown to international proportions. Referred to as “urban defibrillators,” the Better Block project turns flat-lined streets into vibrant,

pedestrian-oriented places for 24 hours (Siegle, 2011). The third case, Walk Raleigh, involved guerrilla wayfinding signs aimed at confronting misconceptions of distance and modes of travel. The final case, the Tactical Urbanism Handbook, addresses the lack of understanding and documentation of an emerging concept. This publication represents the singular-most comprehensive overview of tactical urbanism.

These cases exemplify the benefits and potential of an emerging approach to citymaking. They represent extraordinary circumstances by succeeding in becoming part of urban planning practice. However successful they do not equate a new approach to urban planning. Tactical urbanism worked for these projects because of their ability to build consensus from the ground up and utilize tools such as social media to gain widespread support. Only under these extraordinary circumstances did municipalities respond by formalizing tactical interventions that had already been actualized. By examining these cases this report attempts to synthesize the characteristics of the interventions that helped serve the local governments. Understanding the pattern of success behind these interventions is the first task in order to create rules and guidelines for tactical urbanism.

Parklet Evolution

The primary goal of every PARK...must be to provide an honest, generous public service, a temporary generative territory for unscripted social interaction, where experimental forms of playful and creative human social behavior are cultivated and allowed to emerge, unmediated and unshackled by commercial imperatives

– The PARK(ing) Day Manifesto

PARK(ING) DAY

In 2005, the San Francisco-based design collective Rebar approached on-street parking in a revolutionary way. Interpreting the metered space as a “short-term lease” rather than a parking spot, John Bela and Matthew Passmore of Rebar used the 6’ x 20’ space as a small urban respite. They unrolled some sod, set down a potted plant, placed a couple benches around and fed the

meter for two hours (Passmore, 2006). They invited passerby's to enjoy the space and help feed the meter. Essentially, they installed a small, temporary public park and provided nature, seating and shade to a site in downtown San Francisco they had identified as being underserved by public space (Rebar). When the meter expired they “rolled up the sod, packed away the bench and the tree, and gave the block a good sweep, and left” (Rebar, About Park(ing) Day, 2013). With that simple action and reinterpretation of urban space the Rebar group created what would become a worldwide event they called PARK(ing) Day.

The design firm stated their goal “was to transform a parking spot into a PARK(ing) space, thereby temporarily expanding the public realm and improving the quality of urban human habitat, at least until the meter ran out” (Rebar). By reinterpreting a public space designed to accommodate an auto-centric community they challenged the city's priorities and empowered people to redefine space and community needs (Rebar, About Park(ing) Day, 2013). This statement struck a key with communities around the world. A single photo of the grassy, bench-laden parking spot became an internet sensation (Rebar, About Park(ing) Day, 2013). People around the world saw and read about PARK(ing) Day and applauded Bela and Passmore. They wanted Rebar to replicate the project in their cities. Yet rather than turn PARK(ing) Day into a profitable case Rebar open-sourced their project.



Figure 3 – The first PARK(ing) Day

By open-sourcing their tactic and creating a how-to manual, Rebar helped people all around the world re-envision the empty parking spot (Badger, 2012). PARK(ing) Day encouraged D.I.Y. activists to transform these spaces, temporarily for one day each fall, into parks or playgrounds—anything but a parking space (Badger, 2012). By 2011, more than 150 cities on six continents participated in PARK(ing) Day (Badger, *The Street Hacker, Officially Embraced*, 2012). While open-sourcing PARK(ing) Day did not bring Rebar any fortune it did bring them plenty of fame. As with a variety of projects, from albums to software, open-source technology proves effective at catching people’s attention and gaining support. In the words of the 2011 PARK(ing) Day Manifesto, “It was only through the replication of this tactic and its adoption by others that a new kind of urban space was measurably produced” (Rebar, *The PARK(ing) Day Manifesto*, 2011).

PAVEMENT TO PARKS

Indeed, even the City of San Francisco became a fan. Five years after Bela and Passmore’s first parking space makeover the San Francisco Planning Department, the Department of Public

Works, the Municipal Transportation Agency and the Mayor's Office joined forces to launch the Parklet Program. The City of San Francisco adopted Rebar's PARK(ing) Day concept, sanctioning the design as a "parklet." The City's description of parklets can be found in their 86 page *San Francisco Parklet Manual*:

A parklet repurposes part of the street into a public space for people. They are intended as aesthetic enhancements to the streetscape, providing an economical solution to the need for increased public open space. Parklets provide amenities like seating, planting, bike parking, and art. While parklets are funded and maintained by neighboring businesses, residents, and community organizations, they are publicly accessible and open to all. (Department of San Francisco Planning, 2013, p. 1)

As of February 2013, nearly 40 parklets have been installed throughout San Francisco (Department of San Francisco Planning, 2013). On March 22, 2012 Austin City Council authorized its first parklet (Hurwitz, 2012). Two downtown parking spots that previously hosted annual PARK(ing) Days were converted into a parklet (Hurwitz, 2012). Typically, business owners pay for the construction and maintenance of the parklet and the city gives up two to three metered parking revenues (Patton, 2012). For businesses, it's a way to beautify their block and attract more customers (Patton, 2012). They can stimulate economic activity by encouraging pedestrians to linger (Department of San Francisco Planning, 2013). For the community, they have many recognized benefits. Parallel to Rebar's *PARK(ing) Day Manifesto*, San Francisco's *Parklet Manual* extols parklets for "providing [public] spaces for neighbors to gather and get to know one another" (Department of San Francisco Planning, 2013, p. 1).



Figure 4 – An example of a parklet in Austin, TX

The Parklet Program initiated in 2010 in San Francisco was one part of the city's Pavement to Parks Program. The program is an effort to convert excess roadway into public space such as a plaza or small park. On the Pavement to Parks website, the City of San Francisco introduces the program with this information:

San Francisco's streets and public rights-of-way make up 25% of the city's land area, more space than all the park area combined. Many of our streets are excessively wide and contain large zones of underutilized space, especially at intersections. San Francisco's "Pavement to Parks" program seeks to temporarily reclaim these unused swathes of land and quickly and inexpensively turn them into new public spaces... Each Pavement to Parks project is intended to be a public laboratory for the City to work with local communities to temporarily test new ideas in the public realm. Materials and design interventions are meant to be temporary and easily removable should design changes be desired during the trial-run. After testing their performance, some spaces are reclaimed permanently as public open spaces. Seating, landscaping and paving treatment are common features of all projects. (City of San Francisco, 2013)

Just like Rebar's initial goal with PARK(ing) Day, this city sponsored program aims to reinvent public space to modify changing community desires. The evolution of PARK(ing) Day to parklets suggests that ephemeral urban interventions can lead to more permanent, city-sanctioned projects. The adoption and success of pilot programs demonstrate how prototyping projects with cheap, moveable materials can evolve and expand across neighborhoods, cities and countries.

Pavement to Parks encourages tactical design by supporting the temporary transformation of public space and creating a “public laboratory” for local communities to test new ideas (City of San Francisco, 2013). In line with tactical urbanism characteristics, these projects are small scale, inexpensive and designed to be easily removable should the project or motives change during the trial-run. However, if the project is successful it may become permanent, effectively transforming underused auto-centric areas into public open spaces.

NEW YORK CITY’S PLAZA PROGRAM

‘New York is the city that never seats’

– Janette Sadik-Khan, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation

San Francisco’s Pavement to Parks program was inspired by the NYC Plaza Program initiated in 2008. The NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) launched the program to transform underused streets into lively, social public plazas. In an effort to create more open space the DOT is reclaiming some of its 6,000 miles of streets and right-of-ways for use as plaza spaces (Cornog, 2010). The program is part of Mayor Bloomberg’s initiative to ensure that all New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of quality open space (York, 2013). Non-profit organizations can propose new plaza sites for their neighborhoods through a competitive application process (York, 2013). The DOT provides a comprehensive online and downloadable guide for potential applicants, including a list and description of the city’s priorities and the responsibilities the winning applicant must undertake.

The first round of the NYC Plaza Program drew 22 applications from the five boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island (Cornog, 2010). The program generated significant interest within and beyond the city, as demonstrated by the rise in the number of applicants the following year and similar programs later initiated in other cities. One of the first and most well-known projects is the Madison Square plaza transformation. In September 2008, the NYC DOT completed the pilot phase of the Madison Square public plaza transformation

(Cornog, 2010). Prior to improvements, the square consisted of an oddly shaped confluence of streets, presenting safety and operational challenges for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists alike (Cornog, 2010). The transformation mitigated the confusion and created a safer, more inviting place to relax and enjoy one of the most notable spots in Manhattan. Changes included “a simplified traffic pattern with lane reductions; a furnished and landscaped plaza space that echoes the shape of the Flatiron Building, a major tourist attraction located nearby; shortened pedestrian crossings; additional bicycle lanes; and more direct bus routing through the intersection” (Cornog, 2010). In total, the project transformed more than 16,000 square feet into public space (Cornog, 2010).



Figure 5 – Madison Square: Before and After

The evolution from PARK(ing) Day to city-sanctioned micro-parks demonstrates the power and potential of tactical urbanism. Parklet programs have grown and spread all over the country, with San Francisco issuing Parklet Permits to residents and businesses alike since 2011 (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). Considering the growth of parklets it is no surprise Rebar was invited to display their innovation at the American Pavilion. PARK(ing) Day helped popularize

the movement of tactical urbanism and its creators at Rebar remain heavily cited in discussions of this new approach to placemaking. Their interventions and the city programs they inspired exemplify how short-term action can have a long-term impact. As communities around the country opt for more space dedicated to people and less for parking tactical urbanism can serve as an effective tool for experimentation.

Better Block

In 2006, Jason Roberts and ten other inspired activists formed the non-profit organization, Oak Cliff Transit Authority (OCTA), to revive the Dallas streetcar. Living in the historic neighborhood of Oak Cliff, Roberts wanted to take a more active approach to revitalize the community. Exploring the history of the neighborhood, he came across the old streetcar map. Inspired by the vitality of this pre-Fordist city model Roberts was determined to bring back the streetcar. Being an old neighborhood Oak Cliff already had many of the key elements, like small block sizes and buildings designed for mixed use. Yet with the streetcar gone, accessibility and mobility declined. As an IT consultant, he used his skills to build the Oak Cliff Transit Authority website which portrayed a hypothetical plan to revive the streetcar. Inundated with support – and confusion – for the streetcar revival plan, Roberts turned the OCTA into a formal organization in order to manage outreach and advocacy. This began Robert’s career as a community activist. After creating the OCTA, Roberts spearheaded several other advocacy groups which aimed at facilitating vibrant, connected, pedestrian-oriented communities. From the restoration of the historic Texas Theatre to Bike Friendly Oak Cliff tours promoting bicycle awareness, Roberts adopted a grassroots approach to community revitalization.

In 2010 Roberts teamed up with transportation planner Andrew Howard for the Better Block project. They envisioned the transformation of a four-block radius in Oak Cliff (Livable Cities, 2012). The idea “was to take one of our many vacant and blighted commercial blocks and turn it into the ideal neighborhood block we wish we had” (Architizer, 2013). Using very little money, zero permanent infrastructure and a lot of community support they planned on

transforming a section of town for a 24-hour long event (Livable Cities, 2012). Their plan involved fixing up individual spaces, reusing abandoned portions of buildings and streets, and reaching out to local businesses to participate in this “manufactured” street life event (Vinnitskaya, 2012). The event was meant to demonstrate what the neighborhood could be, like a community-initiated charrette. By creating cultural and social events at a once abandoned space Roberts says you can “change the perception of a place” (Vinnitskaya, 2012).

Howard and Roberts gathered a group of friends and got to work. They reached out to property owners of vacant storefronts who let the group use the space. Utilizing the historic facades that were built for this kind of street life, the group tried to recreate everything they had observed in amazing blocks from around the world (Architizer, 2013). They found props like old historic lighting and built temporary awnings. The painted bike lanes, made medians out of potted plants and put out café seating. They recruited local artists and food vendors to sell their goods outside and inside the abandoned storefronts, creating temporary “pop-up” shops (Livable Cities, 2012). In Jason Robert’s TEDx talk he describes how the group coordinated with a local landscaping company to reroute dozens of potted plants and trees that were en route to a hotel. Less than \$1,000 later, the Better Block group invited community members to come out and enjoy the temporary new block.

In order to put on this event the Better Block group “broke as many laws as [they] could with it” (Livable Cities, 2012). It started when they learned the area was zoned for light industrial, not retail (Schmitt, 2013). “The original reason these buildings exist was no longer allowed,” said Roberts (Schmitt, 2013). That was the first problem. Then, it turned out in order to recreate streets lined with flower shops and bakeries and landscaping there were several prohibitive ordinances in place. These ordinances included a minimum of \$1,000 to put café seating out, a \$1,000 minimum for sandwich board or sidewalk flowers, a restriction on merchandise on the sidewalks and a law which prohibited crowds from gathering on the sidewalk. These laws had been on the books since 1941 (Schmitt, 2013). The Better Block group could not believe the legal and cost prohibitive measures that prohibited their community from adopting better streets. They felt that employing guerrilla tactics was the only way to make this event possible, and to “drive the point home, we

began printing off the city ordinances that we were breaking in order to make the kind of place we felt we deserved” (Architizer, 2013). After printing out the ordinances and zoning for the area they put them up in the pop-up window shops to show “these are all the things that aren’t allowed in our city” (Schmitt, 2013).



Figure 6 – Better Block in Oak Cliff, TX

The group had invited City Council members to enjoy the Better Block, hoping that their experience would influence regulatory changes. The city officials that showed up were “just as shocked as [Roberts] was to see those regulations in the guide book” (Vinnitskaya, 2012). The city staff and Council members later approached the Better Block group and admitted “we don’t know why we do these things with bad zoning” (Schmitt, 2013). As it turns out, this is a common problem in cities throughout the country. Antiquated zoning and cost prohibitive ordinances are preventing complete streets from happening without city officials knowing it. Only until Roberts and Howard created a highly publicized and successful community event did the City Council take note and start addressing their outdated Dallas Code Book. The City of Dallas soon

incorporated the Better Block group's tactics into their formal agenda. The pertinent ordinances were reformed, two of the guerrilla bike lanes were permanently striped and the Dallas City Council hired Howard and Robert's to design a walkable public plaza on what used to be traffic lanes (Siegle, 2011).

Representing the desires of a growing demographic in the U.S., Howard and Roberts bring a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented atmosphere to an underutilized, automobile-dominated part of town. Their *defensive strategy* is to change cities "in days, not years" through community led temporary installations (Team Better Block, 2013). They challenge traditional design and planning methods by communicating the potential for change in a new way – by building them and showing the community what could be changed through simple, temporary modifications (ASLA, 2011). Roberts critiques the common practice of producing fancy visualizations, referring to "rendering fatigue" as a motivator to follow through with his model (Vinnitskaya, 2012). In presenting an Honor Award to the Better Block Project in 2011, the American Society of Landscape Architects said this about the project:

The Better Block Project successfully bypassed the standard long-range visioning and rendering model most commonly used in city governance by creating a physical experience that illustrated how relatively small investments in urban spaces and streets can vitalize a community. This temporary installation provided clarity on what changes needed to be made in the neighborhood by testing them with the public. This process replaced years of visioning, planning, community meetings, and more. This is not public policy. It's guerilla urbanism that creates a new paradigm for urban planning communication and community involvement. (ASLA, 2011)

By initiating change through quick, inexpensive and community-activated tactics the Better Block group was able to make lasting impacts within months. Over the course of a weekend they were able to educate the community about how different urban design and planning strategies can impact how their blocks look and function. The project demonstrates how temporary, tactical interventions can fit into the planning process and possess long-term effects. After the event, city officials updated zoning codes and ordinances to accommodate the vision set forth by Better Block. Two of the guerrilla bike lanes were permanently striped and within a year two businesses permanently opened on that block (Siegle, 2011). The project has appeared in the

New York Times, the Washington Post, Dwell magazine, NPR's Marketplace and Jason Roberts hosted a TEDx talk. The Better Block project has now become a staple for communities seeking rapid urban revitalization and Howard and Roberts run a consulting company to help cities coordinate better blocks. Now being used in over forty cities and three countries, Better Block illustrates how tactical urbanism has the potential to powerfully impact economic, social and physical components within a community.

In the fall of 2012 the Better Block project was featured in the Architecture Biennale in Venice. In the eyes of the Better Block founders, the chosen theme of *Spontaneous Interventions* celebrates the movement for democratic change in American cities through community activism (Andrew, 2012). Roberts provided this introduction to the installation in Venice:

The hands-on movement seen unfolding around the world is a response to the pent-up demand of those who are tired of waiting for governments, consultants, or other so-called experts to create the kind of communities we crave. Better Blocks, PARK(ing) Days, yarnbombings, guerrilla gardening, pop-up businesses, and depaving efforts are byproducts of a more social and connected community that refuses to accept the idea that 'We can't be like Paris.' (Andrew, 2012)

While these unauthorized, highly local, largely anonymous actions seem insignificant when considered individually their collective voice has contributed greatly to a growing worldwide movement (Douglas, 2013). As Gordon Douglas, member of the curatorial team of *Spontaneous Interventions* writes, "they are bold contributions to the very fabric of the city and quintessential elements of the phenomenon of spontaneous interventions that we are celebrating at the U.S. Pavilion" (Douglas, 2013). These actions represent the manifestations of cultural change and are inspiring communities and municipalities around the world to consider incorporating this concept into their urban development.

Howard advocates the Better Block approach because the notion of *temporary* transformations encourages community members "to try new things like narrowing streets, adding public spaces and opening pop up shops" (Howard, 2013). Like other tactical urbanism proponents Howard maintains that the current public engagement process in city planning is insufficient and allowing residents to be active, co-participants in designing the future of the community is one of the strengths of a tactical approach (Howard, 2013). As the community

becomes a bigger part of the planning process the job of designers, engineers and planners becomes easier because “they can do their job without the fear of watering a plan down due to fear of reaction from a minority of the vocal public” (Howard, 2013). The tactical approach adopted by Better Block provides an effective method for engaging the public in community planning and redevelopment.

Walk Raleigh

The Walk Raleigh project began with an overnight installation of 27 unsanctioned wayfinding signs at three intersections in Raleigh, NC. Matt Tomasulo, a Master in Community and Regional Planning student at the University of North Carolina, and friends posted the signs on a January night in 2012 (Waggoner, 2012). The signs are basic, including an arrow, destination, color, QR code and a short description of long it takes to walk to the given destination (ASLA , 2012). One sign, depicted in purple to indicate commercial interests, read “It’s an 18 minute walk to Glenwood South” and another in green for public spaces read “It’s a 7 minute walk to Raleigh City Cemetery” (Waggoner, 2012). The signs were so well made many mistook them as a new city initiative (Waggoner, 2012).

Tomasulo’s idea was simple: share how far it is to walk places by foot rather than drive (ASLA , 2012). He believes that the inclination to drive in downtown Raleigh results from more of perceived distance than reality – a tendency that holds true in many American cities (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). As an antidote to this misconception, he created the wayfinding signs to elucidate the possibility of walking (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). Tomasulo says the project is “just offering the idea that it’s ok to walk,” and that the aim of Walk Raleigh is simply to propose the choice of walking, not to impose it (Waggoner, 2012). People in Raleigh are accustomed to driving and parking, forgetting or simply never considering walking as an option. The signs include simple information that could influence people’s perception about distance and transportation options.



Figure 7 – Walk Raleigh: Guerrilla Wayfinding Signs

While the message was simple and inoffensive the guerrilla wayfinding signs did violate city laws. They did not last long before city officials removed the 27 signs. But the project attracted local, national and international attention, appearing in the Huffington Post, the Atlantic Cities and NPR. The BBC even ran a story called “How to Get America to Walk.” Tomasulo and friends created a digital petition to “Restore Walk Raleigh,” hoping to partner with the city in order to legally re-post the signs. Within three days they got 1,255 digital signatures from people all over the world (ASLA , 2012). The media attention and overwhelming support from the community led the City of Raleigh to reconsider. Mitch Silver, Planning Director for the City of Raleigh and President of the American Planning Association, was very vocal about his support of Tomasulo’s tactics. Though he personally removed some of the signs Silver said he would ask permission from the City Council to resurrect the wayfinding signs in the form of a 90-day city pilot project (Siceloff, 2012). He remarked on the signs, “it’s just a public awareness and public education campaign to promote walking” (Siceloff, 2012).

After about a month City of Raleigh officials came up with a plan to accommodate the Walk Raleigh signs. The city declared that Tomasulo’s intent was consistent with the goals of the Raleigh 2030 comprehensive plan to integrate travel modes, enhance bicycle and pedestrian

infrastructure and improve signage (Raleigh's Guerrilla Wayfinding Signs Deemed Illegal, 2012). Noting that governments can be innovative, too, Silver described how the city was able to think more creatively about how to reinstall the signs (Raleigh's Guerrilla Wayfinding Signs Deemed Illegal, 2012). Under the plan, Tomasulo donated the signs to the city as a gift, which would circumvent the permitting process and allow the city staff to post them immediately. This recommendation went before the City Council about a month later and earned unanimous approval. Silver said he has never seen this level of civic participation, and that while the standard process calls for a permit “we don’t want to discourage that level of creativity” (Raleigh's Guerrilla Wayfinding Signs Deemed Illegal, 2012).

The steps of Tomasulo’s unlikely process began with his intervention posting wayfinding signs in downtown Raleigh. The city then removed the signs and discussed the possibility of resurrecting the signs for almost two months. Tomasulo went before City Council, presenting the 1,255 signatures on his “Restore Walk Raleigh” petition, and on March 6 the City approved a three-month pilot program which would reintroduce the signs. During this pilot phase the City would post and maintain the signs within the public right-of-way. This may sound like a lot of work, but when Tomasulo was asked if the project would have been worth doing if he had pursued the legal, permitting process he responded “I think it would be entirely too much work” (Raleigh's Guerrilla Wayfinding Signs Deemed Illegal, 2012).

The City of Raleigh ultimately included Tomasulo’s idea in the City’s Pedestrian Plan, under *Chapter Five: Programs and Initiatives for Walkable Raleigh*. The plan describes programs and initiatives to create a better pedestrian network and encourage more people to walk. Tomasulo has continued to advocate the idea of using informative wayfinding signs to accomplish his mission to “get more feet on the street” (Walk [Your City], 2013). At the exhibition in Biennale he posted wayfinding signs around Venice, helping the thousands of visitors find different sites and exhibitions. The longevity of the Walk Raleigh proves that simple, short-term interventions can lead to long-term change. The project evolved into a part of the City’s Pedestrian Plan and has gained international attention as Walk [Your City] encourages cities around the world to become more walkable.

Tactical Urbanism Handbook

From 2006 to 2009 Mike Lydon worked for Smart Growth Vermont, the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition, Ann Arbor's GetDowntown Program and the Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) Company. At DPZ Lydon worked on Miami 21, the recipient of the American Planning Association's 2011 National Planning Excellence Award, amongst other planning initiatives. Lydon collaborated with Andres Duany and Jeff Speck in writing *The Smart Growth Manual*, published in 2009 and honored by Planetizen as one of the most important planning books of 2010. A founding member of the New England Chapter of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) and an active member of the Next Generation of New Urbanists, Lydon remains active in local, national and international discussions on smart growth planning and design issues. An accomplished planner practicing within the realm of traditional processes Lydon became the most vocal advocate for tactical urbanism. The light bulb went off when he helped to organize the first Open Streets in Miami, an event where cities close a downtown area to automobiles and host a variety of public events (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). An easy, inexpensive event to pull off it provided a one day glimpse of what the city could be (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013).

In 2009 Lydon launched the Street Plans Collaborative firm. Initiated in Miami and now based in Brooklyn, the firm specializes in five areas: active transportation and transit planning, urban planning and policy development, urban and architectural design, public outreach and web design, and research and advocacy planning. Projects include the Miami, FL Bicycle Master Plan 2030, a Transit Oriented Development Plan for El Paso, TX and a Town Resiliency Plan for the City of Jean Lafitte, LA. Since the beginning, the firm has undertaken many unfunded and unpaid projects to advocate more livable, walkable places. In 2010, Lydon took note of several small-scale projects that were popping up around the country. He realized that while these projects differed in obvious ways, ranging from urban gardens to painting bike lanes, they adhered to a similar approach to urban development. Lydon wanted to document these projects and describe the innovative tactics that made them successful.

He began to piece together their commonalities and produce what would be the first iteration of tactical urbanism publications. In the spring of 2011 *Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action, Long-term Change, Volume 1* was uploaded onto the Street Plans Collaborative website and Lydon’s Pattern Cities blog, available for free download. The purpose of the publication was to “place an umbrella over a growing number of short-term, often self-funded efforts that were leading to permanent change” (Lydon, 2012). Lydon used the term tactical urbanism to describe the emerging movement in his handbook. The term was inspired by a blog post on the pedestrianization of Times Square, in which the author describes the DOT’s efforts as “tactical interventions” (Lydon, 2012). Lydon recalls it was his first exposure to the term and it seemed to capture not just the DOT’s initiative “but a groundswell of other low-cost, un- semi- and fully-sanctioned interventions” (Lydon, 2012, p. v). In less than two months after publishing *Volume 1* the document was downloaded over 10,000 times, the maximum number allowed on the free SCRIBD account (Lydon, 2012, p. v).

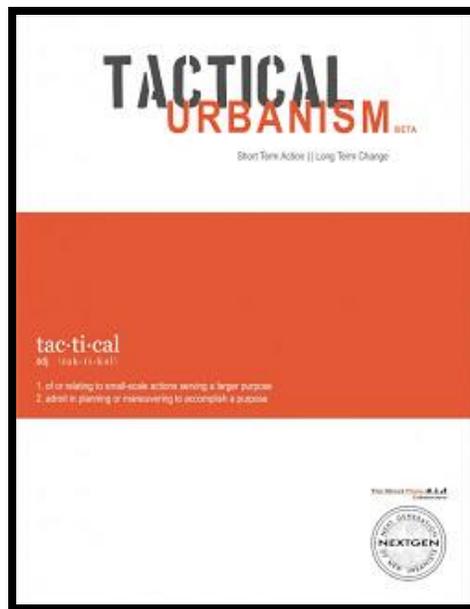


Figure 8 – Tactical Urbanism Handbook

Tactical Urbanism Volume 1, which was on display at the 2012 Architecture Biennale, describes twelve case studies exemplifying low-cost incremental improvements that highlight

specific problems and generated support for more substantial, long-term changes in the future (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). While large-scale planning schemes play an important role in urban development, Mike Lydon and his colleagues at the Street Plans Collaborative believe that the work of improving cities starts at the street-scale (Spontaneous Interventions, 2013). This kind of approach allows a host of local actors to test new ideas before making substantial investments. During a CityWorks presentation, Lydon stated that the tactical urbanism approach differs from other similar concepts, like DIY urbanism or temporary use, in five main ways:

- 1) Vision: a deliberate, iterative approach to instigating long-term change
- 2) Context: The offering of local ideas for local neighborhood issues
- 3) Agility: Short-term Commitment
- 4) Value: Low risk, high reward
- 5) Community: The development of social capital and the building of organizational capacity (CityWorks (X)po, 2012)

Though Lydon strives to differentiate between tactical urbanism and the more established theory and practice on temporary use, he acknowledges their similarities (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). The distinction remains blurry and he is currently working on a book which will attempt to clarify the distinction offer a more concrete definition of the concept (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). For now, the distinguishing factor is that the intent behind tactical urbanism is always long-term (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). Projects like Better Block and Walk Raleigh demonstrated such long-term intentions by connecting their initiatives to existing ordinances, plans and policies. By addressing the laws and visions in place these projects directly challenged local laws and goals, ultimately influencing their respective municipalities to update their plans.

Using a rudimentary framework for planning and action tactical urbanism creates a laboratory for urban experimentation (Lydon, 2011). Case studies from around the country reveal the benefits of incremental, small-scale actions to urban development and planning. The risks to these projects remain low. If the project is not a success it is easily removed and with minimal financial hardship. Indeed, the difference between a municipality spending \$30,000 on temporary

material changes instead of investing \$3,000,000 right away on a masterplanned project is substantial. If the small-scale change proves successful it can represent the first step in realizing permanent change (Lydon, 2011). In *Volume 1* Lydon states that “[t]hus, tactical urbanism is most effective when used in conjunction with long term planning efforts” (Lydon, 2011, p. 2).

In following with the iterative approach of tactical urbanism, *Tactical Urbanism Volume 2* represents Street Plan’s second iteration of publications. Maintaining the same format with two dozen additional case studies, the handbook presents updated information and new insights. It attributes the rise in tactical urbanism to three recent and overlapping trends: the Great Recession, Shifting Demographics and The Internet as a Tool for Building the Civic Economy (Lydon, 2012). Understanding these trends and how current processes remain bureaucratic and slow, San Francisco and New York City have been the leaders of implementing tactical urbanism. Their actions, and projects highlighted in *Tactical Urbanism Volume 1* and *Volume 2*, demonstrate how such tactics can be used to get benefits on the ground quickly (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). Mike Lydon and the Street Plans Collaborative are trying to get cities to pay attention to this, and recognize that “sometimes the only way to do it is to work from the outside in” – like Better Block or Walk Raleigh (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013).

The main reason for this tactical method is a lack of alternative. While the field of urban planning shows a lot of interest there remains confusion and a lack of understanding about how to actually integrate tactical urbanism into urban planning (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). So far people are looking into individual tactical projects but not the overall use of tactical urbanism (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). This is one of the main reasons why Street Plans published the handbooks and are working on a more comprehensive book at the moment. “We need to spend some time defining what it is and isn’t,” Lydon says, “and how cities can use it” (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). Street Plans has led the way for urban planning practice by incorporating their definition of tactical urbanism into their planning approach. Through small-scale iterations to planning and design the firm adheres to the idea that flexibility and permissibility to fail make masterplanning more successful. In one of their recent projects Street Plans included a section

within a masterplan on “How to Use Tactical Urbanism When Redesigning Your Streets” (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013).

Lessons Learned

The four case studies demonstrate the potential of tactical urbanism as a tool for the urban planning process. The first three cases describe the extraordinary circumstances in which citizen-led *tactics* evolved into city-sanctioned *strategies*. These interventions exemplify how effective tactical urbanism can be in instigating short-term improvements that fit into a long-term vision. The fourth case provides a resource for citizens, organizations and municipalities interested in tactical urbanism. It describes how tactical urbanism can serve as a tool for the formal planning process by examining twelve successful examples from around the country. The handbook aggregates the common attributes between the successful interventions and creates a basic framework for the emerging trend of tactical urbanism, providing the first iteration of conceptual understanding and guidance. As Matt Tomasulo of Walk Raleigh says, one of the main takeaways for the planning field is to learn how to plan for the unplanned and “create nimble frameworks that are adaptive to [the] local context, but provide enough guidance to increase accessibility for a wider audience” (Tomasulo, 2013). The emergence of tactical urbanism presents an incredible opportunity for the field of urban planning to reconsider and reevaluate how to address problems in urban space.

PART V. CONCLUSION

Masterplanning, or comprehensive planning, embodies a broad vision for a large geographical area like a region or a city. This approach covers a wide range of topics and determines community goals and aspirations based on predictions of needs and resources for an estimated period of time (Harr, 1955, p. 361). Its three main concerns deal with comprehensiveness, projection and policy (Harr, 1955). Considering the history and present use of this approach it is clear that the task of masterplanning has never been concerned with solving street-scale community problems. As the public sector continues to suffer from loss of funding and political power and consensus, plan making and implementation for masterplanning has suffered as well. The lull in masterplanning has resulted in the negligence of many urban spaces. From this negligence an informal movement has emerged where citizens address community problems with short-term, tactical solutions. This approach, referred to throughout the report as tactical urbanism, presents an alternative method to urban problem solving.

Many proponents of alternative approaches, like Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams (temporary use) and Stephan Marshall (evolutionary planning), advocate a particular approach over comprehensive planning. They generally agree and maintain that the loss of faith in “big government” and the economic decline in the private and public sectors “amount to a ‘perfect storm’ in relation to the usefulness of many traditional masterplans” (Bishop, 2012, p. 179). However, this report advocates a combination of comprehensive planning and tactical urbanism. While many of the problems encountered by the tacticians in the case studies point to the inadequacies of masterplanning, the most effective solution is to incorporate short-term action into a broad, long-term vision. A tactical approach is appropriate where more local, street and block scale urban problem solving is necessary. Whereas comprehensive planning considers a region or city as a whole tactical urbanism can address problems as they arise at these hyper-local scales.

Tactical urbanism offers these seven benefits to masterplanning:

- Flexibility
- Low-cost

- Fast action
- Small-scale
- Grassroots public engagement
- Iterative, trial and error approach
- Easily replicable

One of the major assets of tactical urbanism is flexibility. The notion that masterplanning suffers from inflexible design has been discussed for decades (Taylor, 1998). As a result the real motives of a plan can be washed away through the various phases of plan making and implementation (Taylor, 1998). Tactical projects can be more effective at executing original ideas because of the flexible approach maintained throughout the planning, designing and implementation phases. Reflecting on de Certeau's original theory, *tactics* portrays inherent flexibility because of the absence of calculation and orderly management. Pulling from Lefebvre's production of space theory, tactics embody the flexibility that allows the community to focus on the production of a vision rather than creating idealized, finite end-goals.

The low-cost of tactical projects remains particularly useful given the current economic state. The discrepancy in cost between constructing a prototype and a permanent installation is non-trivial. Whereas tactical interventions cost thousands of dollars permanent investments cost millions of dollars. If the intervention does not work as planned entire budgets are not exhausted and political capital is not wasted (Talen, 2013, p. 151). The low-cost also helps get the project off the ground quickly. This fast action implementation of tactical projects is a major distinction between tactical urbanism and masterplanning. The traditional comprehensive approach requires years just to complete the planning process. The length of time associated with traditional plan making and implementation is an age-old problem – even Baron Haussmann admitted his plans for Paris were outdated before they were complete (Bishop, 2012, p. 182).

The small-scale of tactical projects make the low-cost, fast action and flexibility feasible. Comprehensive plans are too broad to detail the issues of every block and street. This necessary omission of small-scale urban issues presents a clear opportunity for tactical urbanism to contribute to masterplanning. Inherent in this process is a grassroots, bottom-up approach to urban

problem solving. Through the lens of the community problems are identified and innovative solutions are enacted like a citizen-led charrette. Enabling the community to physically participate in the improvement of a neighborhood creates a much more effective and engaging method of participatory planning.

Tactical interventions work in iterations, making adjustments to the process and design every time. Prototyping projects allows the final design to be informed by the successes and failures of each iteration (Interview with Mike Lydon, 2013). Since these iterations are inexpensive and temporary they remain low-risk. The Rebar design collective defines tactical urbanism as “the use of modest or temporary revisions to urban space to seed structural environmental change” (Bishop, 2012, p. 183). They have helped pioneer the iterative approach of tactical urbanism in the United States. True to the internet, open source, DIY culture that played a major role in the popularization of tactical urbanism, tacticians like Rebar believe that the purpose behind these creations is to create easily replicable projects for communities around the world to share (Rebar, 2013).

Through these seven benefits tactical urbanism can contribute to the traditional method of urban planning and development. Ultimately, the tactical and masterplanning approaches serve the same purpose of embodying the goals and values of communities. Yet an idea that has gone largely overlooked within the field of urban planning suggests that improving the livability of cities starts at the block or street scale (Lydon, 2012). While comprehensive planning is better suited to deal with planning issues such as water resource planning or understanding population projections, tactical urbanism presents a more effective approach at solving small-scale issues. By incorporating a tactical approach into masterplanning urban planners can utilize a different method to achieve the same vision. Through its potential for solving small-scale urban issues and the provided benefits lacking in traditional masterplanning tactical urbanism can serve as a tool for the formal planning process.

Appendices

Below are the questions and answers from the two surveys I received, one from Better Block member Andrew Howard and the other from Walk Raleigh leader Matt Tomasulo.

APPENDIX 1.0

Better Block Program Questionnaire

1. How significant do you think it is for the emergence of tactical urbanism that the theme of the American Pavilion at the 2012 Architecture Biennale was *Spontaneous Interventions*?

Revolutionary! For the first time in US history the American Pavilion was awarded a golden lion for their participation... and it wasn't an architectural theme. I put it on par with Americas invention of the national park and our exporting of the idea to the world during the Roosevelt administration.

2. Do you think the field of urban planning is paying enough attention to this emerging phenomenon?

Around the country planning departments are shrinking, university programs are having lower enrollments and the professional planner is losing footing in the struggle over who guides our city. Better Block and other tactical urbanism approaches are providing new life to a failing public planning process. Some were intimidated by it, but many more planners and leaders are embracing it. Heck it has only been around a few years and better block has been replicated over fifty times in the US and now has traveled to Australia, Canada and even Tehran Iraq! Id say it cant be ignored.

3. Do you think a tactical approach represents a solution for cities trying to accommodate growing and changing communities?

We need to develop an alternative to the traditional comprehensive planning / charette / project development process cities currently utilize. A new approach will emphasize small scale, incremental interventions as a way to make ongoing improvement in the city's financial, social and cultural resiliency.

Our approach re-establishes the positive feedback cycle inherent in the traditional approach to development, where small-scale successes can be built upon while small-scale failures are simply a low cost chance to learn.

4. In formalizing tactical interventions there is a risk of losing the creativity of a spontaneous space. What kind of process do you advocate to minimize this risk?

We keep it creative by not planning everything out. We develop a project framework and then work with the community and resources at hand to build a better block in realtime. This is where authenticity and community resourcefulness comes from. My last client said during the building portion of the better block, "you cant plan this kind of creativity."

Usually the planner or designer wants complete design control. Now as the better block concierge I am open to ideas from generalist that I could never have connive

5. Where do you think informal tactics could fit into master-planning?

Consistent with the rules of the new, hyper-connected economy, our approach seeks to invert the current public engagement process so that residents are active, co-participants in the future of the community. The role of government will also evolve away from one of inducing growth to one of supporting productive patterns of development. We advocate doing the better block approach early in the project. Because of the temporary nature people are more likely to try new things like narrowing streets, adding public spaces and opening pop up shops. Its only a weekend... then the job of designers, engineers and planners becomes easier. They can do their job without the fear of watering a plan down due to fear of reaction from a minority of the vocal public. They have the pictures, data and advocacy from the better block for support.

APPENDIX 2.0

Walk Raleigh Questionnaire

1. Congratulations on being showcased at the Architecture Biennale last year! How significant do you think it is for the emergence of tactical urbanism that the theme of the American Pavilion at the 2012 Architecture Biennale was Spontaneous Interventions?

Thank you!

The Biennale exhibition Spontaneous Interventions is significant for a number of reasons. The greatest significance of Spontaneous Interventions is the critical mass of projects and diverse exposure. Spontaneous Interventions is the single-most comprehensive collection of experimental and temporary citizen/community-initiated actions in the public realm that are also resonating with various interest groups and impacting communities. As the exhibit will continue to travel the country and more city planners, public officials, community members are exposed to these opportunities, its my belief that normal civic problem-solving will change.

2. Do you think the field of urban planning is paying enough attention to this emerging phenomenon?

I hear a lot of skepticism from traditional planners and academics in the field for many reasons: mainly due to lack of research, lack of understanding or lack of adherence to rules. Planning is in a period of transition right now. Funding will never be where it was for public municipalities and culture is shifting faster than ever before. As urban planning professionals become younger and these test-versus-study approaches start to provide quantified results for planning at fractions of the cost, I think that we will see a lot more attention paid to these temporary / trial efforts.

3. The City of Raleigh went from taking down the signs to putting them back up – what was the process of incorporating your tactics into the city's plan like?

Since the Raleigh community was in such an uproar about the signs being taken down, the planning staff asked the question: Why is this illegal? The staff got together and figured out how this could fit into the Raleigh 2030 Comprehensive

Plan. They told me they figured out how it fit into the Comp Plan and were going to present it to City Council. I told them I would do my part and quantify public support for the project by using signon.org to deliver a petition to "Restore WalkRaleigh". Over three days, with the help of Facebook sharing, I collected 1255 signatures to Restore WalkRaleigh and delivered a 128 page pdf to City Council the morning the planning office presented WalkRaleigh to be incorporated as a pilot education projects. The project was unanimously adopted so I had to donate the signs back to the city and they then reinstalled the campaign as we had originally designed it.

4. In formalizing tactical interventions there is a risk of losing the creativity of a spontaneous space. What kind of process do you advocate to minimize this risk?

Create nimble frameworks that are adaptive to local context, but provide enough guidance to increase accessibility for a wider audience (non-experts) to allow more people at the table.

As projects become more accessible, creativity will ultimately be constricted. The major risk I see (particularly through Walk [Your City], is the ability to guide and influence outside interests from manipulating the interventions for their own good versus building enough equity in the framework or platform so that outside interests show support versus manipulation.

5. Where do you think informal tactics could fit into master-planning?

Informal tactics will need formal guidance to fit into master-planning because rules are needed. These rules can lead to certain "stages" or "experiences" that can be woven into master-planning, allowing informal tactics to help communities, public leaders and planners recognize opportunity that otherwise might go overlooked.

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