

Special Issue Combining Safety
and Equity in the Post-Covid City:
New Trends between Local Policies
and Bottom-Up Practices

FUORI LUOGO

Journal of Sociology of Territory,
Tourism, Technology

Guest editors

Gabriele Manella
Madalena Corte-Real



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Editorial manager: Carmine Urciuoli

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The contents are published under a Creative Commons 4.0 license. What is a city? This is the question

Public Spaces Transformations in Latin America during Covid-19: Community Resilience and Tactical Urbanism in Bogota, Quito and Mexico City

Introduction: Tactical Urbanism in Latin America

The new conditions of unusual and prolonged uses of housing as a measure of protection and prevention of Covid-19, have motivated the need to explore the social and spatial dynamics that the current pandemic has generated in the world population (Gehl, 2020). Additionally, prolonged restriction of access to public space and natural areas can also generate public health problems and stress associated with a lack of physical activity, access to nature and lack of social interaction (Francis, Giles-Corti *et al.*, 2012). The impact of social distance and mobility restrictions caused by a pandemic could be seen just as one of the Anthropocene challenges to be faced (Vargas & Flores, 2022). Communities have valuable local knowledge of how they function and how to organize themselves to better withstand the restrictions such as those of the Covid-19 pandemic in their territories. Therefore, the urban collectives Urban Mapping Agency, Hablemos de Ciudad, Buro DAP and Universidad del Rosario developed an interdisciplinary project to collect the experiences and opinions of the community during the current pandemic. The project aimed to understand its impacts on habitat in the areas of housing and public space, and its transformations, especially Tactical Urbanism (TU) interventions initiated and deployed by different actors in urban spaces.

The results of the online survey taken during the longest period of lockdown due to Covid-19, from March 2021 up to December 2021 (Vargas, Marino & Cifuentes, 2020), showed that 80% of the surveyed population in the target cities of Bogota, Quito and Mexico City had some level of restriction between high and medium at the time of answering the questionnaire. In addition, almost the same percentage of people (72%) said they had been emotionally affected by the absence of social interaction in the public space. Among the most common emotional states presented by those who participated in the survey are anxiety, irritability and distress. In fact, during quarantine, the activities that people missed most in public spaces were interacting with friends or other people (36%), walking (20%) and sports (14%) ranking second and third in preference.

This paper also presents a perspective of the adaptation processes of three emblematic Latin American cities such as Bogotá, Quito and Mexico. These cities have been evaluated based on the research *Living under Quarantine conditions* (Vargas, Marino & Cifuentes, 2020), carried out between April and July 2020. This research summarized the results of emerging actions related to physical distancing and confinement restrictions, which affected the daily life of people and their relationship with the community and the use of public space. The research was of a mixed type based on documentary analysis, georeferenced analysis and online surveys (n=650), including aspects such as urban proximity, public health and vulnerability.

In Latin America, we have seen the proliferation of smaller-scale community initiatives that (sometimes) take place outside the official capacity of the city. The TU is based on such activity and has therefore become a popular movement for communities who want to change and configure their city and do so without government involvement. One of the main challenges

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is the definition of tactical or temporal urbanism. Stevens & Dovey wrote about this and interviewed practitioners involved in the design and elaboration processes of TU in Australia, who expressed that there is no single definition of this type of intervention, as their typologies, scales and methods are very different, depending on the context and the actors involved in the process (Stevens & Dovey, 2022).

TU Urbanism in Latin America has been widely implemented in urban areas, as a response to the urban problems related to lack/decay of public space, security, pedestrian safety and slow responses from the local or metropolitan governments (Ibid, 2022). The development of TU projects has been evaluated in several articles and books on these projects in Latin America (Alarcon *et al.*, 2022); however, there is still more knowledge on the processes and impact of these projects on urban areas and communities. Therefore, local governments or communities engaged in TU initiatives should evaluate the results/delivery of similar strategies in different contexts, to provide a better chance of success to the urban interventions, and promote the recovery and re-appropriation of neglected or unsecured spaces in our cities.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1 Tactics and Strategies Concept and Government Responses: Disrupting the Status Quo

The current research is inspired conceptually by multidisciplinary approaches that integrate the social dimension into the notion of place (Lefebvre, 1974). Lefebvre introduces the concept of "social space" which incorporates both physical space and the social relationships that unfold within it. He explores how space is produced in different ways, perceived, and performed in society. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre argues that space is not just a physical entity or a backdrop for human activities, but rather, a social product that is shaped by social relations, power structures, and everyday practices. Following this notion, thirty years later David Harvey remarks in *The Condition of Postmodernity* two factors in common with Lefebvre's approach, far beyond the criticism of capitalism and their Marxist perspective. The first is the Production of Space (both scholars emphasize that space is not just a physical entity but a social product that is produced, contested, and transformed through social relations and power dynamics). The second is Social Justice (they advocate for the right to the city, equity, and more inclusive and democratic urban spaces that prioritize the needs and well-being of all citizens). Therefore, they argue that space is a key site where social struggles and political conflicts play out: «The revolution of public space is not a physical one, but a revolution led by citizens, and it is expressed in the streets» (Harvey, 2012, p. 80)

Therefore, understanding how the public space evolves in rapidly growing cities such as those in Latin America is a critical part of the decision-making process regarding the public space agenda in global south cities. Also, it is important to understand that city-making in most Latin American cities has been a mixed process between formal and informal growth, and the communities that self-built their houses and neighborhoods have a social construction of their habitat (Muñera & Sanchéz, 2012), and, consequently, adapt themselves more quickly to changing urban and economic conditions. Besides, the exhibition curated by MoMA during 2014 - 2015 titled *Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities* remarks the mandatory compromise that architects should have for involving themselves both at the "top down" and "bottom up" levels of urbanism by becoming both parts of collaborative teams embedded in the early stages of policy-making at one end, and through acupuncture interventions applied to the intuitive, informal growth of cities at the other» (MoMA, 2014)

Considering the social approach to the notion of space, the concepts of tactics and strategy in the urban field defined by sociologists such as De Certeau (1990) and Bourdieu (2008) are

fundamental, especially in understanding the interactions between urban space, government and community. De Certeau defines as “strategies” the hidden media in which institutions and structures of power, or “producers”, circumscribe a place as their own and generate relations that target individuals, or “consumers”, who consequently enact “tactics” to destabilize or diverge from the prescribed conventions of such environments. Also, Bourdieu, in his field theory, examines how individuals construct social fields, and how they are affected by such fields. Social fields are environments in which competition between individuals and between groups takes place, such as markets, academic disciplines, and also public spaces, naming incumbent the dominant actors in the field, and insurgents the ones that try to alter the field. Insurgent urbanism therefore aims to change this paradigm in cities, and promotes bottom-up initiatives (with a wide range of typologies), as a way to claim back problematic/unused/ or contested urban spaces, and overcome the rigid/ineffective traditional top-down approach to solve public space problems in cities.

Tactical actions and their execution are intimately related to the construction of collective identities in social movements (Castells, 2006; Jacobs, 1961). The study of collective identity has helped scholars understand why people participate in collective action, but the variety of tactics that constitute those actions has not been fully explored (De Certeau, 1990). An emerging interest in culture and strategy that places social movement actors on a field of contention with opponents, allies, and spectator audiences raises questions about the tactics being used and the construction of collective identity, which is formed in interaction with others. Strategies and tactics reflect collective identities, but they also provide opportunities to assert or challenge them. Innovative methods can create tension as activists/communities work to define the most adequate scope/tool for its environments.

The tactical spectrum looking at Tactics and Tactician’s stakeholders, from a sanctioned and unsanctioned perspective, shows how sometimes tactics move from unsanctioned to sanctioned as they are tested and measured for their efficiency in providing better urban spaces and creating a collaborative framework for change (see Image 1).



Image 1: Tactical spectrum of tactical urbanism (adapted from Planetizen)

As Nabeel Hamdi described in his research on participatory practices, the spirit of planners should focus on permanent innovation by production of space in a practical manner to face urgent problems consistently, whilst at the same time triggering opportunities for change to deal with their primary causes: inequity, violation of rights, risk and vulnerability (Hamdi, 2014). In this way, our research explored these innovative solutions and opportunities for change in selected cities in Latin America and collected information about participatory practices to engage communities in TU interventions.

1.2 Tactical Urbanism in Global South Cities: Cases and Examples in Latin American Cities

Citizen-led urbanism such as TU initiatives have gained momentum in Latin America, since communities reclaim public spaces as a means to promote social inclusion, and address urban challenges. In this sense, the interventions in Latin American cities have contributed to empowering social movements aligned to the right to the city. These movements, mostly grassroots, often involve residents, activists, local artists and organizations coming together to implement small-scale, temporary interventions that have a big impact on the urban environment. Here are some examples of emergent initiatives that contribute to the knowledge of the actions of tactical urbanism performed in Latin America:

- Street rebellious art in Bogotá. Bogotá has a vibrant street art scene that reflects the city's history, culture, and social movements. Street artists and activists use public spaces as platforms for political expression, social commentary, and community engagement, contributing to the visibility and vitality of urban life in the city. Moreover, street art, muralism and graffiti as branches of urban arts have become iconic interventions, easily visible, improving the built environment of stigmatized or socially depressed neighborhoods.
- Bicycle Activism in Mexico City. In the last years Mexico City has raised a series of citizen-led initiatives to promote active mobility, like cycling and urban walkability for sustainable and equitable development. These initiatives imply more social and pedagogical approaches, rather than a physical intervention. One example is the initiative *Peatonito*, which is a masked pedestrian advocate who uses humor and creativity to raise awareness about pedestrian rights and safety in the city. In the case of cycling movements, there are increasing social and even political activist groups like Bicitekas and Muévete en Bici who have organized bike rides, workshops, and advocacy campaigns to promote bike-friendly infrastructure and policies in the city.
- The Frida Project in Quito. There is a relevant project and something of an exception in the capital of Ecuador. Only 26 percent of residents use private cars as their primary mode of transport. This fact makes the Frida Project work by activating the city's streets, reimagining them as a set of collective public spaces for people, not cars. In this sense, "Frida" is designed in the rough shape of a car, but transforms parking spots into human-centered public spaces, a sort of mobile parklet. This car model at a human scale is built with recycled materials and unskilled labor. Accordingly, "Frida" radically plays a pedagogical role by teaching citizens about the concept of what a vehicle is by substituting chairs and a communal table for an isolated transport experience.
- Similar to Quito urban initiative, we can find the Park(ing) Day in São Paulo. This is an annual event where citizens, artists, and activists transform parking spaces into temporary public parks to raise awareness about the need for greening cities, especially encouraging the recovery of public spaces. São Paulo has been a hub for Park(ing) Day activities, highlighting the potential for tactical urbanism interventions and initiatives to create more livable and sustainable urban environments.
- Community Gardens in Buenos Aires. Urban agriculture projects and community gardens have flourished in Buenos Aires, with residents reclaiming vacant lots and abandoned spaces to grow food, build community, and promote environmental sustainability. These grassroots

initiatives showcase how tactical urbanism can address food insecurity and foster social cohesion. All these examples show the ways in which citizen-led urbanism and TU initiatives are reshaping some of the most important Latin American cities, promoting community empowerment, creativity, and social innovation and change. In this context, the grassroots movements contribute to a more inclusive, democratic, and sustainable urban development by engaging as active participants in the transformation of their urban environment.

2. Research Presentation

2.1 Questioning Public Space Use and Tactical Urbanism Responses in Times of Covid: Bogotá, Mexico City and Quito

During the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, several cities/communities decided to implement TU actions as part of a strategy to maintain physical distance as a measure to minimize its spread while mitigating the deficit of public spaces for interaction. Amid this context, determined by the impacts of the pandemic, successes and failures were evident in the implementation of these tactical actions to recover public space under proximity approaches. These situations were observed in three Latin American cities with geographical, social and political similarities. Mexico City, Bogotá, and Quito, were part of a case study framed in the research *Impacts of Covid-19 Lockdown Restrictions on Housing and Public Space Use and Adaptation: Urban Proximity, Public Health, and Vulnerability in Three Latin American Cities* (Vargas, Marino et al., 2022) (see Image 2).

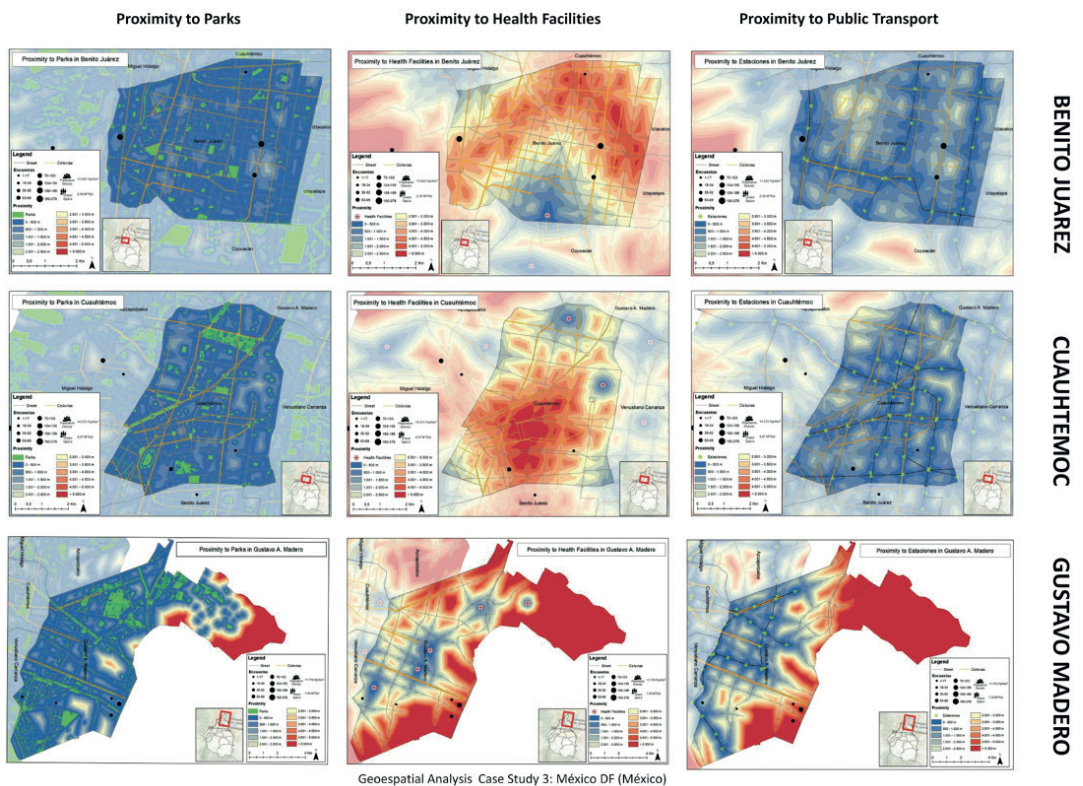


Image 2: Geospatial analysis of POI (Points of Interest) and Covid19 cases in Mexico DF (Authors)

Our mapping of the three selected cities used GIS proximity and cluster analysis to show the areas with most Covid-19 cases and their proximity to our Points of Interest; Parks, Health Facilities and Public Transport. The case study carried out in these three cities explored the range of responses that were implemented to mitigate the impacts of the low use of public space due to mobility restrictions and the need for physical distancing. Faced with this reality, and in the need to act quickly to mitigate social and environmental impacts, solutions inspired by the concepts of “urban acupuncture” and TU urbanism emerged (Lerner, 2007) as a key for the identification of “strategic” sites that result in short, medium and long-term transformations of their environments (see Image 3). This concept became the strategy to intervene with rapid actions and simultaneously highlight sectors of the city with quantitative and qualitative deficits of public space, and problems of mobility, accessibility and road safety.



Image 3: Parque Tunal II, UT and AU Bogotá, Photo credit: Raúl Marino

One of the patterns that we found as a result of the analysis carried out in the three cities, on tactical urban interventions, refers to the absence of follow-up and feedback on the results of these actions, once implemented on the urban space at a neighborhood scale. This situation has become very recurrent in this sort of strategic urban interventions characterized by very quick conceptualization and execution processes. The other pattern is closely connected with the one just described before and refers to a lack of sense of belonging about the interventions, projects, or improvements built on the public scale at the neighborhood scale. Both negatively determine the chances of success. Specifically, the pattern connected with the concept of “sense of belonging” is a key element to guarantee that any sort of tactical and “surgical” physical actions and interventions, on a certain place with functional deficits, have long-term sustainability and their results may impact positively on other future interventions through learned lessons.

In this sense, the analysis made possible to find out that the processes of planning, management and co-design solutions on deteriorated or underutilized public space do not attach importance to co-create solutions or mechanisms to encourage the engagement of local communities, direct beneficiaries, in caring and maintenance of these improvements on the urban public space. It seems that all the efforts and expectations of the TU are focused almost fully on the planning co-design and the implementation process; oppositely, there is not much effort put into the follow-up, evaluation, and feedback of the interventions on urban space, and even less if previously, during the codesign process, there was not a proper and inclusive participatory stage with a map of key stakeholders (public, private and ONGs, civil organizations) plus a diverse and wide local community representation.

Given what has been observed and said, the quickness of urban interventions on deteriorated or useless areas, strategically located, does not circumscribe “per se” a positive impact and sustainability in the long term. The success of these urban interventions, beyond the physical improvement of any place in a short time, should be determined by the increasing and

strengthening of social cohesion. Therefore, the concept of “tactical” would also imply the innovation in participatory approaches able to involve the diverse groups of people, by interest, age and expectations, normally part of any local community. An intervention with positive impacts in the long term can also be considered as tactical, and they might be clearly and effectively social, as they can bring an increasing sense of belonging as an important element of the placemaking process (Ehret & Hollet, 2016).

2.2 Tactical Urbanism Responses: Community Integration and Public Health

With the Covid-19, many of the shortcomings already existing in cities in terms of policies for the implementation of public space became evident, especially in Latin American cities, where the motor vehicle prevails over the pedestrian. Car-dependent and low-walkable cities tend to have higher rates of diseases related to inactivity such as diabetes, obesity, and heart problems, among others which coincide with the diseases linked with a higher health risk when exposed to Covid-2019, as the comorbidities associated with the pandemic (WHO, 2020). Also, our survey into public space use in Latin American cities showed that community lead initiatives to respond to the sanitary crisis were very valuable for vulnerable communities to cope (Vargas, Marino & Cifuentes, 2020).

The Park(ing) Day started in 2005 in the United States, with the collective of architects and artists Rebar Group converting a parking space in downtown San Francisco into a mini-park. Today it is an event celebrated every year worldwide in which ordinary people come together to temporarily transform a place used as a parking lot into a temporary public space for a single day. The need for quality public space has become more urgent during the last years in Latin American cities. Studies show that restricting access to public space and green areas can generate public health problems and stress associated with a lack of physical activity, a lack of enjoyment of nature, and a lack of social interaction (Braubach *et al.*, 2017). Likewise, air quality is also a key factor, since during confinement improvements could be seen in reducing carbon emissions, and this could allow rethinking the ways we design cities, creating spaces designed for pedestrians, and reclaiming the streets. In this sense, TU projects are produced as a response to processes of appropriation and improvement of public space from communities, providing new amenities, services and infrastructure that together generate health and environmental benefits by promoting non-motorized means of transportation, such as biking and walking within cities, and safer streets (Stevens, Awepuga & Dovey, 2021).

It is important to highlight that our cities face different circumstances, as their population has experienced and will continue to experience a significant increase if compared to other ones in the world. The process of urban expansion in cities like Bogotá, driven by the migration of rural to urban populations, mainly as a consequence of violence in the last five decades, has increased the adverse externalities inherent to urban concentrations. In this context, some challenges transcend the mere lack of infrastructure and the absence of public spaces, such as the illegal occupation of public space, social segregation, urban violence, the inefficiency of public transportation, air pollution and the degradation of water sources.

In recent decades, TU has evolved into a means of expressing social issues in urban space, either collectively or individually, to stimulate initiatives that contribute to the improvement of living conditions in cities by creating spaces for social construction through collective agreements by strengthening the social fabric of cities in the global south where those manifestations that are part of citizen participation are evident.

The urban crisis generated by the pandemic, because of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, revealed that public spaces were insufficient in meeting the demands of a health situation of this type, resulting in a significant limitation of their effective use. This situation brought to light a lack of

understanding of the real perceptions and needs of the population, especially at a time when social distancing was essential to preserve human life. Studies have shown that restricting access to public space and green areas can generate public health problems and stress associated with a lack of physical activity, a lack of enjoyment of nature, and a lack of social interaction (Braubach *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, air quality has become a key factor, not only as an indicator of public health but as an indicator of carbon emissions reduction; this could allow us to rethink the ways we design cities, creating spaces designed for pedestrians and claiming back streets.

All this added to the pre-existing problems at the level of public space in the cities mentioned above. It is relevant to highlight that highly symbolic urban interventions have also been carried out, to enrich public spaces and give them a new significance. In this sense, the concept of TU becomes much more relevant as it provides communities with tools to design their urban spaces and finally, have safe and active urban spaces, providing new amenities, services and infrastructure through temporary actions on the space. Public, fast-paced, low-cost actions, with a high impact on communities (Lobo, 2021) and that together generate health and environmental benefits by promoting non-motorized means of transportation, cycling and walking within cities (Stevens, Awepuga & Dovey, 2021). Additionally, the survey results on the use of public space in Latin American cities highlighted the significant contribution of community initiatives in response to the health crisis. These actions proved to be of great value to the most vulnerable communities, as observed in the global study about the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on housing and public space use (Vargas, Marino & Cifuentes, 2020).

3. Research Methodology

This article summarized the results and reflections of two recent research projects. The first was carried out during the lockdown caused by Covid-19 and focused on the impacts of the pandemic on the habitability of housing and urban space; and the second research was named *Recreating Cultures: Heritage, memory and place as a base to strengthen social fabric in Tunal, Bogota*. The latter was addressed to improve the social fabric and public spaces using heritage, memory and local art initiatives. Both studies intended to understand the adaptations/transformations of public spaces to the Covid-19, access to public spaces, streets, parks and other urban spaces, and the importance of tactics such as tactical urbanism to revalue public spaces in health crises. The article was written methodologically following the same steps of the undertaken research process. It began with an extensive literature review from recent cutting-edge articles about Tactical Urbanism cases implemented along global southern cities, with special focus in Latin American cities.

Then, according to inputs, findings and data sources from the two research, there were selected three Latin American cities: Mexico City, Bogotá and Quito. These cities were the ones with the most data collected and people surveyed. Consequently, we did a comparative analysis, feasible in terms of validation and data representation. The comparison of the three case study cities was conceived under the analysis of variables as accessibility, functionality, feasibility, comfort and others in terms of sustainability, sense of belonging and follow-up to guarantee the use and caring of TU interventions, especially those that are physically implemented either to be temporal or permanent.

The comparative analysis of the three cities was supported by GIS tools, information collected by the research survey, and datasets available from the official institutions in charge of urban planning, design and management.

As part of the analysis proposed for the research, some examples of tactical urban planning interventions in Mexico City and Quito were reviewed, observing their process and results. Below are some specific examples of urban interventions carried out during the pandemic:

1. México City: The Pedestrian Zócalo Project aims to mitigate the disruptive effects caused by the pandemic. Its main focus lies in the creation of open, safe and free spaces in Mexico City. Through these initiatives, we seek to promote the reintegration of those who experienced prolonged confinement. The central premise is to selectively transform areas into pedestrian zones, evoking the image of rugs that take inspiration from the designs present in the Oaxacan huipils (see Image 5)



Image 5: Intervention of Public Space Design with Graphene Painting Mexico City-Mexico. Photograph. Gov. Ciudad de México Secretariat of Works and Services. Left Image 6: UT Zócalo Furniture. Photograph. Gov. Ciudad de México Secretariat of Works and Services.

2. Patio Cactus: The city of Ciudad Juárez, located on Mexico's northern border with the United States, quickly faced the urban, economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic after the virus arrived in Mexico. After the first confirmed local case in March 2020, measures such as lockdown, social distancing and mobility restrictions were implemented, following WHO (2020) recommendations to contain the spread of the virus. In Ciudad Juárez, a "placemaking" intervention was proposed to improve public spaces and turn them into allies for recovery after the pandemic. In the historic center of the city, an activation strategy was designed for an under-used public space. This strategy promotes the responsible use of space by delimiting areas on the floor to maintain social distancing. In addition, urban furniture suitable for the post-pandemic and elements that reflect the local sociocultural identity are incorporated. This intervention becomes a point of resilience and a gradual space for the reactivation of the city (see Image 6)



Image 6 - Left: Nueva Normalidad, right: Public space.
Photo credit: Nómada Urban Laboratory in Ciudad Juárez

3. Quito: In a pandemic, the city of Quito proposes the creation of decentralized urban workshops. *Soychimbacalle* was a cross-cutting project to recover and improve public space

by rehabilitating abandoned landscapes with safety problems. The project takes advantage of public space to generate business fairs and artistic and cultural activities. This workshop was led by Habitar Collective, a local NGO that empowers communities about the historical and cultural processes of the neighborhood, promoting the appropriation and enjoyment of public space, reactivating local commerce to repair the ravages of the pandemic, building an Agenda of Citizen Action (see Image 7).



Right Image 7: Render of La Calle Chimba. Photograph. www.quito.gob.ec.

Left Image 7: The Stairs of La Calle Chimba in Quito, Ecuador. Photograph. www.quito.gob.ec.

4. Discussion. Monitoring, Follow-Up and Sense of Belonging in Tactical Urbanism Projects: Effectiveness in Temporary or Permanent Interventions

The comparative analysis of TU projects in these cities was observed under the variables identified in terms of sustainability as monitoring, functionality, feasibility, follow-up, and sense of belonging for caring and maintenance.

In this sense, the analysis results allow us to highlight firstly the importance of monitoring TU interventions to guarantee their use, “appropriation” and maintenance by local communities and citizens. Therefore, it is important to understand the most relevant elements for monitoring these projects and their current and future perspectives. TU initiatives have been developed in favor of an inclusive use of public space, reducing spaces for vehicular traffic. In this way, it reflects the will to put people at the center of the transformations of urban spaces as we can observe in interventions returning parking spaces to public space (Parklets) and rethinking the functionality of the street (Open Street) or a single section (Pavement to squares). TU empowers pedestrians, who temporarily appropriate a space traditionally dominated by motorized transport.

TU seeks to have long-term impacts on pedestrian safety; in other words, impacts on public policies and, in general, on urban governance, the set of actors, norms and variables that influence the orientation of pedestrian safety (Lascoumes & Le Gales, 2014).

One of the crucial parts at the time to follow-up the TU interventions depends strongly on their functionality. The TU initiatives were physical, artistic, or pedagogical need to be engaged with local communities to provide them with facilities or plausible benefits. In this sense, the range of TU has been wider in terms of typologies and purposes. From the different manuals of tactical urbanism edited by Lydon & Garcia (2015) and Sansao Fortes *et al.* (2019) we can observe that the typology/scope of intervention is increasingly broad in the complex and dynamic Latin American cities. This means TU interventions have more categories, including new practices such as depavement (changing surfaces of underutilized pavement for green areas), mobile parks, parklets (see Image 8) or the intervention of road intersections and many others. The variables of the scheme that Lydon determines to establish the categories with which he organizes the cases as an example put street vendors on an equal footing with who does “bombing gardening”.

Moreover, the urban intervention calls for organizations that manage parklets to gain more space for pedestrians on the streets. Seen in this way, it would seem that TU requires a wide range of categories that support the reason why the spectrum has opened up so much and, at the same time, the need for this concept to cover them all at once.



Image 8 Left: La Calle Bonita, Calle 30 Centro de Bogotá-Colombia (Photo credit: Juan Amaru Rodríguez). Right: The city of Ibarra (Photo credit: Jorge Andrade Benítez)

Other aspects to guarantee the success and sustainability of TU interventions are related to its costs/budget as well as the maintenance in the long term. Consequently, a key element to take care of the projects is the sense of belonging. The local communities, properly engaged during all the phases of the project, from planning to implementation, have the potential to be protectors or guards of all types of soft infrastructure, either permanent or temporary. The sense of belonging installed and promoted in communities has demonstrated an important aspect of tactical urban projects, by creating iconic marks on urban public spaces as neighborhood identity. However, we cannot ignore the importance of local authorities supporting the sustainability of the projects after the implementation. In this way, the research shows us, along the three cities, a lack of local government commitment in this phase of the project. That explains also the bad conditions of many TU projects. To keep the dynamic, synergy and dialogue between all the stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of TU projects is determinant to follow-up on their results and performance.

We also observe a replicability of experiences in the world, such as parking day, one of the most shared and recognized initiatives worldwide, created in 2005 in San Francisco by the Rebar collective (2011), and implemented in 975 parks in more than 162 cities in 35 countries and 6 continents. These experiences invite us to reflect not only on the long-term effects due to the “temporary” or generally reversible and agile capability of these initiatives but also on our way of thinking about how cities are focused on improving the coexistence of the community and its participation. Several authors agreed that approaches on urban issues from a ‘tactical’ perspective are much more feasible than setting very long-term goals that depend, in most cases, on factors that escape the understanding of non-specialists. Lydon, in his publication *Tactical Urbanism Vol 2. Short-term Action Long-term Change* in 2011 mentions that «Many examples in this guide started as unauthorized grassroots interventions that were so successful that they soon became authorized or permanent [...] This is how short-term action creates long-term change» (Lydon, 2011, p.7).

5. Conclusions: Pushing the Tactical Urbanism Agenda

1) Local community and stakeholder engagement and commitment. During the Covid-19 pandemic we could see a re-thinking of public space, from the intervention of neglected/unused public spaces to the change or reclaim of public spaces formerly belonging to car or parking

spaces. Consequently, they were adapted to be used as community spaces, or in some cases, to extend the open-air area of cafes and restaurants, according to the regulations to reduce the number of people in enclosed spaces. These changes also strengthened the involvement of the community in the transformations of their territories. Thus, the policies followed by many cities were not based on studies or measurements of the relations between public space use, density and Covid-19 contagion. One of the main challenges is to open these processes to all the community members, not only the ones already active, reaching populations with special needs in public spaces (elderly population, children). It is quite important to re-think these processes of stakeholder engagement. In the frame of the RN37 Conference at Humboldt University in Berlin, the discussion promoted by some of the participants stressed the importance of connecting with the community in participatory processes. In this sense, the discussion session has called for looking at “resonance” (Hartmut, 2016), which means the capacity to reach the community and generate simultaneous benefits for them and the practitioners/local administration leading these public transformation processes.

On the other hand, there is a discussion that takes force in certain more critical sectors which questions the transcendence and impact of tactical urbanism interventions because they are considered to be “band-aid” solutions that do not solve the structural problems of a city in the face of the deficit of public space, security and mobility. On the contrary, it can become an attractive mechanism to generate political visibility by local administrations as evidence of participatory budgeting and community outreach.

2) Local authority’s role: sponsoring all the implementation phases, engagement, and follow-up. Another important topic is the responsibility of city planning in the improvement and maintenance of public space. In most of the TU cases, the maintenance is transferred to planning/architecture studios or community groups, sometimes without a clear brief on the methodology to design these interventions. Therefore, many interventions led by the local administrations are being opened for public bidding to design. Practitioners inside the local government, most of the time, do not have experience in TU interventions, community participatory process and codesign; as a consequence, the interventions take the risk of being inappropriate toward the community due to the lack of a clear strategy to generate transformative change. Additionally, the systematization of this kind of TU exercise, could risk losing its attractive bottom-up and emergent base, and become a kind of copy-paste intervention, ignoring the contexts and community culture and values. In his text *Austerity Urbanism and Makeshift City*, Tonkiss (2013) also expressed that TU is at risk of becoming a reinforcement of the same neoliberal order it is trying to overcome.

The success of TU interventions depends on an active and diverse participatory process not only during the planning and management of the projects but also during the follow-up after implementation. TU can improve social interaction in communities where public space has problems of abandonment or insecurity, as has been demonstrated in several urban experiences in Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico. However, it is not an infallible recipe to improve the conditions of the communities where it is carried out, since several failed cases of this tactic have been seen in many cities in Colombia and Latin America. These initiatives must be carried out with a broad participatory base, so that they can have the desired effect, regardless of whether the initiatives are initiated by local governments or by communities. In most cases what exists is a mix between these two levels of action, with tactics initiated by local administrations, and adopted or replicated by communities in need of solving urgent problems in their contexts.

The cases observed in Mexico City, Bogotá and Quito made us aware of the need to encourage innovation in a participatory process, in different ways: communicatively, pedagogically and politically. The latter, for instance, can be reinforced by affirmative actions reflected by physical space through codesigned urban interventions. The lack of a proper participatory approach reduces the success and positive impact of codesign solutions focused on improving or activating deteriorated or useless urban spaces. Consequently, the follow-up, evaluation and feedback, key

factors in the effectiveness of tactical urbanism interventions, are also reduced at a minimum level, along with their lifespan.

3) Innovation, communication for mainstreaming good practices, and the need for pedagogy. The innovation in communication strategies, as well as new pedagogical approaches, promotes a wide participatory call, involvement and engagement of local communities. One of these approaches is from a technology dimension, strongly influenced by permanent disruptions. The ability expected from the people responsible for leading these processes now consists of understanding the logic and strengths of the new communication interfaces for using their potential to facilitate dialogues inside the same communities as well as with other external stakeholders, but with incidence. The use of IC Technologies, social networks, gaming and digital transmedia resources is demonstrated to be effective in attracting and spontaneously involving people of different ages, expectations and interests in the implementation of workshops, forums, and other participatory scenarios.

4) The “sense of belonging” is a tool to keep local communities engaged and committed to the caring and maintenance of TU projects. One of the questioning aspects highlighted in this comparative research, shared by the three cities, points out as a determinant of the sense of belonging about the new tactical urban interventions. This guarantees caring, maintenance, and generally the sustainability, socially, economically and environmentally, of the project or urban improvement.

The question therefore is: How can a city become more tactical? Can a city behave more tactically? Myke Lydon in his conference on TU at Los Andes University proposed a Learn-Build-Measure cycle strategy to learn by building/facilitating TU projects, and measuring their impacts on cities and communities (Lydon, 2011). We argue that integrating such innovative ideas into the sometimes very rigid and conservative urban planning approaches in Latin American cities can be challenging, but the only way to start going into this direction is to disrupt such practices and be open to new ways to perform and deliver urban transformations in our cities.

Advantages and new approaches to public space planning and design through TU for promoting healthy urban environments. The Covid-19 pandemic has accentuated the need for public spaces for safe social interaction, as lockdowns have had a great psychological impact on communities, and access to public space and safe green areas takes on renewed importance. This new focus on the diversification of public space transformations through the TU, could help us to better understand that cities are constantly changing organisms, that must have the ability to adapt to different conditions and emergencies, especially those related to public health and also to climate change.

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