

Healthy Cities, Healthy Bodies

An Equity Analysis of Tactical Urbanism Through a Health-Oriented Approach

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## Abstract

Numerous cities around the globe have adopted *tactical urbanism* interventions within their planning departments. Tactical urbanism is attractive due to its low-risk, short-term, and low-cost urban design interventions of a community's built and natural environments. Planning departments are often the catalysts of tactical urbanism. For example, the City of Seattle has recently started a tactical urbanism program, with 24 projects completed or planned. As the movement gains momentum, the role of participatory planning is questioned: should city officials be solely responsible for urban design or should communities also have an active role? This paper explores the relationship between tactical urbanism and social capital from a health-oriented perspective and critically analyzes it as a contributor to urban hegemony. Tactical urbanism's manipulation of a community's microenvironment has physical, mental, and social health implications; social health will be the focus of this analysis as it is rooted in equity. Case studies from various cities are analyzed to identify effective methods in building social capital, while simultaneously having positive effects on the built environment. Literature is reviewed to criticize the current state of tactical urbanism to promote a more equitable, community-based approach through the "Right to the City" theory. While some cases of independent community-based tactical urbanism can improve community health and build social capital, its lack of consent from government officials can weaken community-government relationships by creating a sense of mistrust and perpetuate authoritative planning. Successful, equitable tactical urbanism is difficult, though the "Right to the City" can provide a framework for future equitable planning.

# Introduction

## Project Statement

Urban planning as we know it is not an exact science; there is no perfect formula to determine the outcome of a planned community. Contemporary planning practices have shifted from traditional large-scale efforts (neighborhood master plans, for example) to focusing on “medium-scale” or small-scale projects (such as building blocks). Tactical urbanism has become a popular contemporary planning practice over the course of the last few years due to its bottom-up approach it utilizes in promoting livability within communities.<sup>1</sup> Cities across the globe have experienced “do-it-yourself” urbanism in the form of yarn-bombing, pop-up bike lanes, mural installations, and more. Even here in Seattle, the Seattle Department of Transportation has created a team dedicated to issue street permits that can promote tactical urbanism inspired interventions throughout the city.<sup>2</sup>

As these interventions gain popularity, I inquire if tactical urbanism in its current iteration is an equitable approach to planning and design. How is it practiced? Does it differ from its theory and foundation? If so, what needs to change? To answer these questions, theoretical frameworks are established through conducting multiple literature reviews. The frameworks will build upon previous theory and literature to evaluate tactical urbanism through a health and social equity perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> Lydon, Mike, Anthony Garcia, and Andres Duany. *Tactical urbanism: short-term action for long-term change*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> City of Seattle. "Frequently Asked Question." SDOT Public Space Management Program. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/publicspacemanagement.htm>.

### *What is Tactical Urbanism?*

Tactical urbanism (TU) is an urban design and planning method that promotes livability and space activation through short-term, low-cost, and scalable neighborhood interventions. To be *tactical* means to relate to small-scale interventions/actions that serve a larger purpose.<sup>3</sup> TU is an urban design *response* rather than a *solution*; its temporary nature allows for an iterative experimentation process that can be implemented to maximize its efficacy in longer-term, more permanent iterations.

The movement is often used synonymously with DIY urbanism,<sup>4</sup> though Lydon argues that TU and DIY urbanism are similar, but not the same. DIY urbanism is a more straightforward term that can be marginally better understood by the general public. DIY connotes a less formal course of action, similar to TU. However, Lydon states “[not] all DIY urbanism efforts are tactical, and not all Tactical Urbanism initiatives are DIY.”<sup>5</sup> Tactical urbanism in theory has the benefit of the bottom-up approach, where action is started from individuals or community groups that work their way up towards municipal departments. DIY urbanism, on the other hand, does not necessarily operate in a bottom-up approach; rather, it is a bottom-only approach, as it is usually the expression of the individual with little upward mobility.

The aspect of upward mobility expressed through bottom-up planning is the critical aspect of tactical urbanism. Bottom-up tactical urbanism - in the ideal transition

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<sup>3</sup> Lydon, Mike, Anthony Garcia, and Andres Duany. *Tactical urbanism: short-term action for long-term change*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

from theory to practice - is how all tactical urbanism interventions should be implemented.

Navigating through the tactical spectrum is a daunting task. New interventions created by creative urbanists are being implemented at any given time. If unsanctioned by municipal governments, the interventions can be potentially removed from the public eye before any noticeable impact can be assessed.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the scoping of this project will focus on interventions that are established in the Tactical Urbanism texts, in addition to an analysis of the work being done in Seattle, WA.

## Project Scope

Though tactical urbanism was not coined until 2010 by Mike Lydon of the New York City-based *Street Plans Collaborative*,<sup>7</sup> its origins date back to various “unsanctioned” or “unplanned” design practices dating to the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Seattle was one of the first cities around the world to use *tactics* as a planning strategy.<sup>9</sup> Seattle practiced a tactic called *open streets* in which roads are closed to

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<sup>6</sup> Burbach, Christopher. "Group glues 120 toilet plungers onto Omaha street to show what a protected bike lane could do." Omaha.com. May 18, 2017. Accessed May 18, 2017. [http://www.omaha.com/livewellnebraska/group-glues-toilet-plungers-onto-omaha-street-to-show-what/article\\_7e9cff18-8aa4-5884-a6f3-d038a6e5a9c9.html](http://www.omaha.com/livewellnebraska/group-glues-toilet-plungers-onto-omaha-street-to-show-what/article_7e9cff18-8aa4-5884-a6f3-d038a6e5a9c9.html).

<sup>7</sup> Lydon, Mike, Anthony Garcia, and Andres Duany. *Tactical urbanism: short-term action for long-term change*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015. xvii.

<sup>8</sup> Groth, Jacqueline, and Eric Corijn. "Reclaiming Urbanity: Indeterminate Spaces, Informal Actors and Urban Agenda Setting." *Urban Studies* 42, no. 3 (March 1, 2005): 503–26. doi:[10.1080/00420980500035436](https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980500035436).

<sup>9</sup> Lydon, Mike, Anthony Garcia, and Andres Duany. *Tactical urbanism 2: short-term action for long-term change*. Washington, DC: The Congress for New Urbanism, 2012. 4.

cars for pedestrian and cyclist use. This was exercised through the *Bicycle Sundays* initiative, which is still active today.<sup>10</sup>

Tactical urbanism within Seattle has expanded beyond Bicycle Sundays and is manifested through a variety of programs. The major tactical urbanism programs in Seattle have predominantly been initiated by the Seattle Department of Transportation's (SDOT) Street Use division. The Street Use Division encompasses tactical urbanism under the Adaptive Streets Program.

The Adaptive Streets Program demonstrates an institutionalized effort to implement quick and economical treatments that enhance the function of streets. Institutionalized in this context means that it comes from within an institution, such as city departments, law enforcement, state and federal governments. Seattle's approach is characterized by four features:

- **Short-term** – Construct projects quickly and allow community stakeholders to provide feedback before permanent improvements are made
- **Low-cost** – Use simple, temporary materials to reduce design and labor costs and to expand the reach of the program
- **Adaptable** – Design improvements to be scalable and temporary so that changes can be made based on performance evaluations and community feedback

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<sup>10</sup> Fucoloro, Tom. "Lake Washington Blvd goes car-free 12 times in 2017, Bicycle Sunday starts today." Seattle Bike Blog. May 21, 2017. Accessed May 25, 2017. <https://www.seattlebikeblog.com/2017/05/21/lake-washington-blvd-goes-car-free-12-times-in-2017-bicycle-sunday-starts-today/>.



- **Community-oriented** – Ensure that projects address community needs and are universally-accessible, regardless of age or ability<sup>11</sup>

Currently, there are 20 projects in Seattle that fall under SDOT's Adaptive Streets Program. These projects are divided into two categories: Pavements to Parks and Tactical Urbanism. The Tactical Urbanism differ from the Pavements to Parks in that TU projects "primarily focus on improving safety and mobility in the public right of way, rather than providing placemaking opportunities."<sup>12</sup> The Pike People Street Project will provide the main case study in Seattle for this paper.

Additionally, this paper will explore several tactical urbanism interventions as mentioned in Lydon's *Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action for Long-term*. The interventions that will be discussed – like most urban planning interventions, regardless of scale – have health implications that can be both explicitly or implicitly seen. Thus, a health-oriented approach will be utilized.

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<sup>11</sup> City of Seattle. "Adaptive Streets Program." SDOT Public Space Management Program. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/publicspacemanagement.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> City of Seattle. "Tactical Urbanism." SDOT Public Space Management Program. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/TacticalUrbanism.htm>.

## Preface

### Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze tactical urbanism as an urban design practice that can either enhance or inhibit community health and social capital creation. Urban design both as a process and as an experience leaves something to be desired from the perspective of community members as it is largely in the control of planning departments. Tactical urbanism can be one of the easiest methods to get communities involved in urban design due its quick, cheap, and temporary nature. From my research, I analyzed the state of tactical urbanism in its current form and sought to explore the its influences on community health. This project builds upon literature to form conceptual frameworks to analyze tactical urbanism. Those frameworks are then used as justification to radically shift tactical urbanism towards a socially-equitable method of urban design.

### Motivation

*Healthy Cities, Healthy Bodies* was inspired by my personal passion for public health and a number of urban planning projects that have been implemented or planned all throughout the Seattle-greater area. Tactical urbanism is a rising trend in urban design practices, but the first tangible impression it had on me was during a community meeting hosted by Design in Public. Design in Public is a community-oriented design initiative started by the Seattle chapter of the American Institute of Architects that hosts the annual Seattle Design Festival. At the meeting, community members were invited to discuss the different activities that would be occurring during the Seattle Design Festival. I had volunteered to assist with PARK(ing) Day, a day in which on-street parking stalls were converted into mini-parks to showcase

the potential of reclaimed public space. Installations were managed by the Seattle Department of Transportation, which provided an easy permit application process for community members to participate in the festival. The process was expedited to encourage more community participation in the festival. However, from the perspective of a volunteer, I felt as if my role was somewhat lacking; I did not find many opportunities to get involved in design projects. However, I still loved the idea of community-oriented design, thus I wanted to explore other urbanism projects within the city.

Through a professional planning symposium I had hosted for an internship, I became exposed to the work of the Public Space Management Team with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). The team led an effort to pedestrianize the Pike/Pine corridor, a major thoroughfare in one of Seattle's densest neighborhoods. The efforts included temporary closures of the streets to allow for greater pedestrian use and to improve safety of the area. SDOT collaborated with a variety of local businesses and community organizations to host events to encourage the activation of the space. After reading the report, it was found that the business owners wanted a larger role in the street closures to promote economic vitality; however, I asked myself, could it go beyond local businesses? How can these tactical urbanism-inspired programs be reevaluated to promote community? Why is community even important in planning and design? These experiences I had helped lead me to my research.

This project builds upon theory that I have established through a health-oriented approach. A health-oriented approach was used due to the historical connection between planning and public health that I was first exposed to in public health

courses. Planning and public health share common histories, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century in London where John Snow, a physician, used mapping techniques to determine the site of a massive cholera outbreak.<sup>13</sup> This mapping technique was my first exposure to viewing cities from a health perspective.

The relationship between health and the built environment is expansive in foci, but has not been fully established as an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary urban planning.<sup>14</sup> Urban planning and public health often exist in vacuums that rarely overlap in ways that address the built environment as a complex underlying social determinant of health. With the recent paradigm shift towards a holistic view of health, I wanted to explore how health can be reoriented to evaluate contemporary planning, and vice versa. With tactical urbanism becoming such a trend, I found that it would be the perfect urban design method to evaluate.

## Audience

This paper is aimed to inform current and future tactical urbanists about the underlying complexities of tactical urbanism as a practice. Tactical urbanists come in various forms; they can be professional urban planners, local organizations, or community members who are interested in pursuing civic action regarding their built environments. These groups are often interacting with one another to form

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<sup>13</sup> Kochtitzky, Chris S., H. Frumkin, R. Rodriguez, A. L. Dannenberg, J. Rayman, K. Rose, R. Gillig, T. Kanter, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Urban Planning and Public Health at CDC." *MMWR Supplements* 55, no. 2 (December 22, 2006): 34–38.

<sup>14</sup> Corburn, Jason. "Reconnecting with Our Roots: American Urban Planning and Public Health in the Twenty-First Century." *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 5 (May 1, 2007): 688–713. doi:[10.1177/1078087406296390](https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087406296390).

complex relationships; thus, this paper can be read and understood by these varying groups.

## Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate various pieces of literature regarding health and the built environment, equity and social capital creation, and governance structures in within cities and urban planning. Through conducting these literature reviews, theories and frameworks will be established the justify the inquiry this paper presents: In practice, does tactical urbanism promote equity through community health? Is tactical urbanism in its current iteration equitable?

The first section, *The Relationship Between the Built Environment and Community Health*, is aimed to provide foundational context for the connection between tactical urbanism, healthy, and equity. A health-oriented approach is adopted from global and public health, where social equity is one of the key components.<sup>15</sup> Establishing this relationship will help form an argument for the need to analyze tactical urbanism.

The next section *Governance and Participation Models* builds off the envirobiosocial model that is established in the previous section. It utilizes the envirobiosocial model as a foundation to critically analyze the implications tactical urbanism can have on health. A brief history will reveal the rise of movements within governance that allow tactical urbanism to emerge. Additionally, tactical urbanism will be analyzed as an institutional instigator of participation models of urban governance.

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<sup>15</sup> Koplan, Jeffrey P, T Christopher Bond, Michael H Merson, K Srinath Reddy, Mario Henry Rodriguez, Nelson K Sewankambo, and Judith N Wasserheit. "Towards a Common Definition of Global Health." *The Lancet* 373, no. 9679 (June 12, 2009): 1993–95. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60332-9.

## The Relationship Between the Built Environment and Community Health

### *Planning and Public Health: An Overlapping History*

The literature surrounding health and the environment has long focused on the natural environment, (i.e. parks, gardens, etc.,)<sup>16</sup> or large-scale built interventions (i.e. reevaluating neighborhood and city design<sup>17</sup>); however, the literature is being expanded to include the small-scale built environments and the roles they play in mental and physical well-being. Additionally, there has been a paradigmatic shift in the role of the built environment on health. During the beginnings of urbanization in nineteenth century America, urban neighborhoods were perceived as the site of *urban pathologies*.<sup>18</sup> Urban pathologies were both physical and social. Physical urban pathologies were attributed to *miasma* i.e. the environmental “pollutants” (namely, the smell of the city that lingered due to open sewage) that were thought to cause disease. Mental urban pathologies were attributed to crime and violence which was often found in the overcrowding and derelict building conditions at the time.<sup>19</sup> This theory of *pathogenic cities*<sup>19</sup> evolved over time (urban pathologies were not shown to improve after the reduction of miasma) and permeated into the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> However, as both fields of urban planning and global health continue to develop, the relationship between the two disciplines shifts towards a

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<sup>16</sup> South, E. C., Kondo, M. C., Cheney, R. A., & Branas, C. C. (2015). Neighborhood Blight, Stress, and Health: A Walking Trial of Urban Greening and Ambulatory Heart Rate. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(5), 909–913. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302526>

<sup>17</sup> Semenza, J. C., & Krishnasamy, P. V. (2007). Design of a Health-Promoting Neighborhood Intervention. *Health Promotion Practice*, 8(3), 243–256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839906289585>

<sup>18</sup> Corburn, Jason. “Reconnecting with Our Roots: American Urban Planning and Public Health in the Twenty-First Century.” *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 5 (May 1, 2007): 688–713. doi:[10.1177/1078087406296390](https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087406296390).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 690.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 695.

positive relationship. Urban planning interventions – whether through land use, zoning, traffic regulations, etc. - have the potential to benefit community health.<sup>21</sup>

### *Connections to the Biopsychosocial Model*

The biopsychosocial model is a multidisciplinary approach to health that utilizes systems thinking to understand the complexities that can determine health outcomes. The major parts of the model consist of a biomedical approach, a psychological approach, and social/psychosocial approach. It is a holistic analysis of health that uses a quasi-bottom-up approach by utilizing subjectivity towards the determinants of health.<sup>22</sup> An abstraction of this model creates a framework in which a variety of disciplines can be analyzed; urban planning – and its contemporary trends – are not exempt from this possibility.

One of the most common urban health interventions is the promotion of walkable communities. Soni & Soni, an urban planner and civil engineering consultant respectively, discuss the widespread benefits of pedestrianizing streets through road diets and road narrowing.<sup>23</sup> Their research discusses five areas in which the pedestrianization efforts have affected public health: reduction in air pollution, influences on behavioral geography in relation to exercise, improvements in metabolism, psychological health, and cardiovascular & pulmonary fitness. Walking as a mode of active transportation has even been recognized by the Centers for

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<sup>21</sup> Corburn, Jason. "Reconnecting with Our Roots", 2007. 695-99.

<sup>22</sup> Epstein, Ronald M. "Realizing Engel's Biopsychosocial Vision: Resilience, Compassion, and Quality of Care." *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 47, no. 4 (May 1, 2014): 275–87. doi:[10.2190/PM.47.4.b](https://doi.org/10.2190/PM.47.4.b).

<sup>23</sup> Soni, N., & Soni, N. (2016). Benefits of pedestrianization and warrants to pedestrianize an area. *Land Use Policy*, 57, 139–150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2016.05.009>



Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>24</sup> Promoting physical health through walkability interventions is a common goal within tactical urbanism.

Additionally, landscape architecture is an interdisciplinary field that utilizes aspects of environmental health, mental health, planning, and design.<sup>25</sup> The design field utilizes aspects of both the built and natural environments to affect the aforementioned aspects. Through intentional and smart design, the built and natural environment can influence stress levels and improve attention restoration, which lead to an overall healthier mental state.<sup>26</sup>

Social health is the last aspect of the biopsychosocial approach. Social health is measured through social capital, which is the complex interconnecting relationships you have within a community. These relationships form support networks that allow for a variety of uses. Fostering a sense of community through social capital building can help improve relationships with your neighbors, encourage collective civic action, promote a sense of public space ownership, reduce crimes, and more.<sup>27</sup> This concept will be discussed further in the *Governance and Participation Models* section.

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<sup>24</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011, November 4). CDC Transportation Recommendations. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/transportation/recommendation.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Kaplan, Rachel, and Stephen Kaplan. 1989. *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective*. New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

<sup>26</sup> Kaplan, Stephen. 1995. "The Restorative Benefits of Nature: Toward an Integrative Framework." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 15 (3): 169-182.

<sup>27</sup> McMillan, David W., and David M. Chavis. "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory." *Journal of Community Psychology* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 1986): 6-23. doi:[10.1002/1520-6629\(198601\)14:1<6::AID-JCOP2290140103>3.0.CO;2-I](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6629(198601)14:1<6::AID-JCOP2290140103>3.0.CO;2-I).

### *Equity: From Public Health to Planning*

Each of the components of the biopsychosocial approach operate to promote equity. Equity in health is “the absence of systematic disparities in health (or in the major social determinants of health) between groups with different levels of underlying social advantage/disadvantage—that is, wealth, power, or prestige.”<sup>28</sup>

Public and global health was one of the pioneers in evaluating equity based on the social determinants of health. The same systems thinking approach can be applied to urban planning/tactical urbanism.

The research presented in *Environmental Health Disparities: A Framework Integrating Psychosocial and Environmental Concepts*<sup>29</sup> provides a framework for the potential role urban planners and tactical urbanists can utilize to address health disparities. The paper discusses the psychosocial and physical health disparities by race. The researchers state “[structural] factors that may be especially pertinent to environmental health disparities include the local and national economy, neighborhood physical conditions, land use patterns, and health infrastructure.”<sup>30</sup> This approach is similar to the biopsychosocial model of health and vulnerability outcomes, where contextual factors – such as the built and natural environments, personal choices, social environments, etc. – interact with health conditions to create vulnerability and exacerbate disability.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Braveman, P., and S. Gruskin. “Defining Equity in Health.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (1979-) 57, no. 4 (2003): 254–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25569979>.

<sup>29</sup> Gee, G. C., & Payne-Sturges, D. C. (2004). Environmental health disparities: a framework integrating psychosocial and environmental concepts. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 112(17), 1645–1653.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1647.

<sup>31</sup> Henriques, Gregg (2015, 30 October). *The Biopsychosocial Model and its Limitations*. Psychology Today. Retrieved January 28, 2017. From <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/theory-knowledge/201510/the-biopsychosocial-model-and-its-limitations>

These frameworks justify the implicit relationship between the built environment and health. As populations continue to urbanize, this relationship must be studied further to ensure the promotion of healthy living in healthy cities. This relationship is the basis of this toolkit. Healthy cities are created through the promotion of health and well-being, which can start in the microenvironments surrounding specific populations. When reworking the abstracted components of the biopsychosocial model and applying them to the built environment, a new model can be formed: the envirobiosocial.

### *Envirobiosocial Model*

The envirobiosocial model is created to analyze the unique aspects that are engrained within tactical urbanism. The biopsychosocial model can be applied to various disciplines within and outside of planning; however, the envirobiosocial model stresses the importance of *microenvironments* and social capital, which are two key components of tactical urbanism. The figure below is a visualization that shows the interconnecting areas of the model.

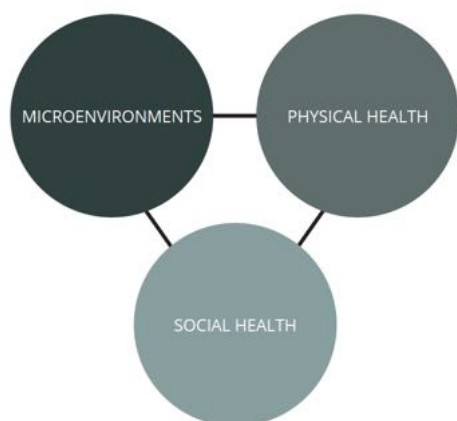


Figure 1. The Envirobiosocial Model<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Vann, Allan. 2017. "The Envirobiosocial Model."

## Governance and Participation Models

### *The Rise and Promotion of Shared Governance*

Shared governance through active collaboration amongst community members, organizations, and planning departments is needed to create successful tactical urbanism interventions.

Shared urban governance has been a result of neoliberal economic policies that have emerged in the US government.<sup>33</sup> The rise of neoliberalism in the middle of the twentieth century shifted funding models that focused on retrenchment and austerity measures.<sup>34</sup> Neoliberalism restructured taxing models and reduced social and environmental welfare spending. The reduction of public funds resulted in the withering away of public infrastructure and public space, while simultaneously creating a call for community members to take public welfare control into their own hands. This institutional shift somewhat decentralized government control over green space and public infrastructure as communities rallied together to spread the burden. This new omnipotent statehood governance was entrenched in economic restructuring, forcing many western cities to shift towards a shared governance model.<sup>35</sup> Local people – whether community members or local organizations – now have a shared responsibility to promote urban design, whether that is together as a community or in conjunction with municipalities.

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<sup>33</sup> Perkins, Harold A. 2010. "Green Spaces of Self-Interest Within Shared Urban Governance." *Geography Compass* 4 (3): 255–68. doi:[10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00308.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00308.x).

<sup>34</sup> Peck, Jamie. "Austerity Urbanism." *City* 16, no. 6 (December 1, 2012): 626–55. doi:10.1080/13604813.2012.734071.

<sup>35</sup> Gough, Jamie. "Neoliberalism and Socialisation in the Contemporary City: Opposites, Complements and Instabilities." In *Spaces of Neoliberalism*, edited by Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, 58–78. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2002. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444397499.ch3/summary>.

Collaborative planning through the necessity of shared governance can ideally be executed through the theoretical approach of tactical urbanism interventions that shifts power to community members. However, shared governance has its issues which can perpetuate institutional vulnerability and culturally-incompetent planning.

### *Urban Hegemony*

As mentioned previously, the inherently experimental, temporary, and iterative process of TU can allow for the greatest amount of social capital accumulation. Active collaboration can be divided into two concepts: community engagement and community participation. Community engagement is a top-down, hierarchical approach to collaboration. It is the formation of an intentional dialogue amongst public officials and community members initiated by government organizations.

Citizen and community engagement does not require those in the position of power – in this case, city planners - to follow the will of the people at all costs; it creates a dialogue to increase transparency and legitimacy in planning policy. The distinction between creating a dialogue and governing on citizen rule is important to make. These transparent and legitimate conversations relay community necessities to the public officials that can potentially enact them. Community participation, on the other hand, is both a bottom-up and horizontal approach that is initiated by community members that allow for a shared urban governance to take place.<sup>36</sup> The bottom-up and horizontal approach to planning and participation

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<sup>36</sup> Head, Brian W. "Community Engagement: Participation on Whose Terms?" *Australian Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 441–54. doi:[10.1080/10361140701513570](https://doi.org/10.1080/10361140701513570).

is crucial to the improvement of community health as defined within the enviobiosocial model. Shared governance has implicit connections to environmental, biological, and social well-being; as expressed through the enviobiosocial model, the complex relationship they form is interconnected.

Perkins<sup>37</sup> describes a phenomenon in which shared governance has been driven by local entrepreneurialism instead of through grassroots, community participation. Entrepreneurialism has its roots in neoliberal capitalism that strives to find market solutions to social and environmental problems. Local elites – largely influenced by capitalistic gains – are then the main dictators of public planning movements, leaving behind community members and further establishing the role of emerging urban growth coalitions. As the names suggest, these growth coalitions are focused on growth and expansion, which can have effects on gentrification. This introduces a framework called **urban hegemony**. This framework is based off the sociopolitical concept of hegemony. Hegemony is the institutional control of one group over another. It can be political, cultural, or economic.<sup>38</sup> Hegemony is cyclical; those in power do their best to maintain their power over the subordinate group. As power is maintained within the *hegemon*, upward mobility from the subordinate group is institutionally inhibited.

Though urban hegemony shifts the planning power from omnipotent statehoods to small organizations – i.e. from municipalities to entrepreneurial groups - the elite

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<sup>37</sup> Perkins, "Green Spaces of Self-Interest", pp. 255-65

<sup>38</sup> "Hegemony." Wikipedia. March 02, 2016. Accessed October 13, 2016.  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegemony>.

entrepreneurs redistribute and centralize power amongst the privileged.<sup>39</sup> This cyclical process is key to maintaining institutional urban hegemony. As power is maintained within the *hegemon*, upward mobility from the subordinate group is institutionally inhibited. This potentially perpetuates institutional vulnerabilities regarding health as discussed in the envirobiosocial model. Being vulnerable Equitable access to governance within and across various urban populations can be easily extrapolated to promoting community health.

Tactical urbanism in theory has the potential to combat the cycle of urban hegemony through the recentralization of power from the hegemon to citizens.

#### *Participation Models Within Theoretical Tactical Urbanism*

Tactical urbanism stresses the importance of public engagement and participation in urban planning and design; it aims to decentralize urban design from planning institutions by putting the control back into communities.<sup>40</sup> Community-based tactical urbanism is rooted in the concept of transforming *space* into *place*. This concept known as placemaking can play a major role in addressing the vulnerabilities as discussed in the previous section. The Project for Public Spaces defines placemaking as the following:

*Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Put simply, it involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space, to*

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<sup>39</sup> Harvey, David. "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism." *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 71, no. 1 (1989): 3–17. doi:[10.2307/490503](https://doi.org/10.2307/490503).

<sup>40</sup> Lydon, *Tactical urbanism*, 12.

*discover their needs and aspirations. [...] Placemaking can be used to improve all of the spaces that comprise the gathering places within a community – its streets, sidewalks, parks, buildings, and other public spaces – so they invite greater interaction between people and foster healthier, more social, and economically viable communities.*<sup>41</sup>

This definition of placemaking implicitly stresses the importance of community involvement. Successful placemaking, whether through tactical urbanism or not, must fully engage community members to ensure that the work is fair, equitable, and meets the community's needs.

Large-scale planning projects involve expensive, time-consuming, and oftentimes-permanent infrastructure to be built in areas in ways that might not be fully equitable based on community input and design. Urban planning is not a precise science with proven theorems and set guidelines to follow; it is contextual by nature. A scientific experiment analogy can be applied; tactical urbanism provides a temporary *hypothesis* and *procedure* that allows communities and organizations to evaluate the results and revise the hypothesis and procedures as necessary. This active participation model reaffirms a sense of public space ownership and shared urban governance within communities through an iterative process of community-oriented design.

### *Tactical Urbanism in Practice: A Contributor to Urban Hegemony*

Mike Lydon describes tactical urbanism as a practice in three key ways:

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<sup>41</sup> Project for Public Spaces, & Metropolitan Planning Council (2008). A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking in Chicago. Project for Public Spaces, Inc.



1. *Initiated by citizens to bypass the conventional project delivery process and cut through municipal bureaucracy by protesting, prototyping, or visually demonstrating the possibility of change. This activity represents the citizens exercising their “right to the city.”*
2. *As a tool for city government, developers or nonprofits to more broadly engage the public during project planning, delivery, and development processes.*
3. *As a “phase 0” early implementation tool used by cities or developers to test projects before a long-term investment is made.<sup>42</sup>*

When applying the concept of urban hegemony to these three forms of practice, it is revealed that tactical urbanism can potentially be a method of design that perpetuates institutional inequity in terms of shared governance. Evaluating the practice of tactical urbanism reveals that methods 2 and 3 from the above list can be perceived as *pseudo-tactical urbanism* as the role of individuals and community members are not prioritized in those participation models. While tactical urbanism as a theory allows for the reappropriation of space away from the hegemon, laws and regulations can actively retract any given effort.<sup>43</sup> Pseudo-tactical urbanism undermines the importance of community participation by allowing city governments and developers to remain as the omnipotent hegemon with the authority to design, implement, and remove tactical urbanism interventions.

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<sup>42</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. *Critique of Everyday Life the one-volume edition*. London: Verso, 2014.

Pseudo-tactical urbanism has traditionally been a concept implemented by city officials; *true* tactical urbanism must be completed by “concerned citizens and creative thinkers” to “reclaim built environments, encourage pedestrian traffic and street life, and promote economic investment without being bogged down in big politics and strangled budgets.”<sup>44</sup> Various barriers to reclaiming the built environment exist. True barriers – i.e urban hegemony and institutional bureaucracy – and perceived barriers – i.e. feelings of low social capital and democracy – inhibit the amount of progressive, true tactical urbanism that can occur. For example, Seattle is famous for its extensive bureaucratic process,<sup>45</sup> which contributes to the perception of pseudo-tactical urbanism by dissuading the public to be actively engaged in interventions, leaving the work to city officials.

Equitable access to governance must be stressed to combat the ills of failed urban renewal initiatives that were conducted by omnipotent, hegemonic planning departments and organizations. By practicing true tactical urbanism, we can reevaluate the current iterations of pseudo-tactical urbanism that are plaguing cities around the nation. General participation models can be applied to *practiced* tactical urbanism in order to shift it towards the more healthy and equitable *theory* of tactical urbanism. A paradigmatic shift within governance structures needs to occur to promote the highest level of community health.

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<sup>44</sup> O’connell, K. A. (2013). Newest Urbanism. *Architect*, 102(7), 38–40. Retrieved from <http://offcampus.lib.washington.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aft&AN=89584734&site=ehost-live>

<sup>45</sup> *Seattle Process*. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 11, 2016 from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle\\_process](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_process)

## Methodology

### Applying the Enviobiosocial Approach and Urban Hegemony

Through the literature review, two foundational theories of the motivation behind tactical urbanism were formed. The enviobiosocial approach utilizes the relationship between health and the built environment as a method of critically analyzing the implications tactical urbanism can have on communities. Urban hegemony provides institutional frameworks in which urbanism in general oftentimes operates within. Case studies must be identified and analyzed o critically apply these theories to *practiced* tactical urbanism to allow for a comparison to the ideals brought forth in *theoretical* tactical urbanism. These case studies will focus on interventions from around the nation, in addition to the work in Seattle as conducted by the Seattle Department of Transportation. This allows for the framework to not only be applied to legitimate, existing projects but also to be localized in a city that can be considered a pioneer in tactical urbanism interventions.<sup>46</sup>

#### *Identifying Case Studies*

Several organizations and project sites will act as case studies for this research. Non-profit organizations, as well as governmental departments, have implemented projects in thousands of communities across the globe. This sheer scale of information allows for a massive opportunity for analysis. To minimize the scope of the project, two case studies presented in Lydon and Garcia's *Tactical Urbanism* will be evaluated.<sup>47</sup> The two case studies – intersection repair and pavement to plazas –

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<sup>46</sup> Lydon, Mike, Anthony Garcia, and Andres Duany. *Tactical urbanism 2: short-term action for long-term change*. Washington, DC: The Congress for New Urbanism, 2012. 4

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

were selected due to their similarity to projects that are occurring in Seattle. Guerilla wayfinding was potentially a third option for a case study as there was also a similar project hosted at the University of Washington. However, it was ultimately not selected due to its minimal use of design and social capital building, whether it was community-oriented or not. Using Seattle-specific case studies was not the preferred alternative due to SDOT acting as the main regulator and instigator for tactical urbanism interventions within the city. Providing examples from outside Seattle can show the growth of tactical urbanism that has already been achieved, while also looking at the growth that can potentially occur in the future.

To further localize tactical urbanism to the scope of the project, another case study that will be evaluated is the Pike Street Pedestrian Pilots and Pike People Street in Seattle. These pilot projects were the main influence of the research. The projects were short-term programs that were implemented in Capitol Hill. Each iteration compiled both qualitative and quantitative reports at the end of their run. The reports include qualitative data indicating the efficacy of street activation (i.e. through a series of pedestrian counts) from the perspective of all surveyed community members, while also quantifying the more subjective notions of the program, such as numerically measuring community need or level of satisfaction of the programs.

All the case studies are completed projects with evaluative reports or history available for analysis. As the data from these case studies have already been compiled to analyze the need or efficacy, the research has guided a secondary analysis of the equity in participation amongst the various case studies.

### *Secondary Analyses*

A secondary analysis is the analysis of data that is currently available. Data from post-project reports in several cases studies acted as a foundation for the grading criteria. Tactical urbanism pilot programs that are initiated by government departments, like the Pike People Street, often provide these reports on account of transparency and accountability.

### *Limitations*

Secondary analyses can fall short. As the data was collected by individuals with a set objective in mind, it can be difficult to extract useful data if there is a discrepancy between the research question and the goals the initial researchers had. This data cannot be ethically manipulated to fit the criteria of a project; therefore, this is a great flaw of secondary analyses.

## Case Studies

Each case study discussion will begin with a brief overview of the project, including what it was, why it was implemented, by whom it was implemented by, and the results that the researchers found. From there, a secondary analysis will be applied using the frameworks that were established in the literature review. Analyzing the case studies will help answer the question whether tactical urban in its current iteration is equitable. Equity will be guided by the envirobiosocial model in which physical and social health are centric.

## Intersection Repair<sup>48</sup>



Figure 2. Intersection Repair Examples – The City Repair Project<sup>49</sup>

### *Project Context*

In 1997, a volunteer organization in Portland, OR by the name of City Repair was formed to encourage the use of public art as motivators for civic participation. One of their greatest and longest-lasting efforts was through the creation of murals in neighborhood intersections to promote it as a community space for increased safety and health. The murals “repaired” the intersections by helping transform the pavement into community-driven art. City Repair has always utilized a bottom-up approach to planning. Volunteers and organizers have provided the technical assistance for community members to develop their own projects in their neighborhoods. City Repair worked to facilitate community design; they did not want to go to communities and design for them.

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<sup>48</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 92-9.

<sup>49</sup> The City Repair Project. "Intersection Repair Examples." The City Repair Project. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.cityrepair.org/intersection-repair-examples/>.

In addition to the painted murals, the intersections were activated as public squares. In one neighborhood, community members created a 24-hour tea station near the intersection. In other neighborhoods, produce-sharing stations and community bulletin boards popped-up. New structures in the neighborhoods transformed the area into a creative placemaking effort that was manifested through shared community design.

### *Envirobiosocial Analysis*

The intervention was linked to a perceived increase in community health. Within the Sunnyside Plaza neighborhood where the murals were installed, “86 percent of respondents within two blocks of the repaired intersection reported excellent or very good general health, compared with 70 percent in the adjacent neighborhood.”<sup>50</sup> In this case, there was a substantial perceived physical health benefit that was a result of this intervention. Additionally, social health was improved. The space activation allowed for social capital to grow amongst community members, as the space was a shared design and effort.

### *Urban Hegemony Analysis*

The City of Portland currently does not act as a barrier in City Repair’s efforts to promote intersection repairs. In 2000, the city adopted an intersection repair ordinance which removed potential unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to community-driven design. Thus, the power that the city had in perpetuating urban hegemony was shifted to the community members to allow for a more equitable approach to design. The city simplified the process to repair intersections, which allowed neighborhoods all throughout Portland to participate in the program. City

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<sup>50</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 92.



Repair would remain as a facilitator for the process, while ensuring that the organization itself does not act as a hegemon in the neighborhoods it aims to assist.

### *Findings*

The intervention checked off all the major requirements for tactical urbanism; it was cheap, quick, easy, and temporary. The first intersection repairs in Portland were unsanctioned, like many TU interventions. The project was initially unsupported by the Portland Bureau of Transportation, as there wasn't a precedent for any program like this in existence. However, City Repair presented data to the city that showed there was a perceived health benefit that came with the intersection repair. Additionally, lack of funding for art and public spaces – which again was identified earlier as a major contributor to the rise of neoliberal urbanism and the need for shared governance – was threatening the envirobiosocial health of community members in Portland. However, through intentional community engagement and participation, City Repair was able to combat both the ailments of poor envirobiosocial health and urban hegemony.

### *Relevance to Seattle*

The history of street murals and intersection repair in Seattle is limited; however, from evaluating the permitting and outreach processes required by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), the program appears to have the same goals as the program in Portland. SDOT currently allows neighborhood intersections to be “repaired” by community members, much like the interventions in Portland. In Seattle, there is the Department of Neighborhoods which hosts a Neighborhood Matching Fund. If community members want to complete a project that enhances

the neighborhood, they can apply for funds through the department.<sup>51</sup> The Neighborhood Matching Fund shows an appreciation for neighborhood-level interventions from the city. To further foster the level of trust between the city and its residents, Seattle's street murals are described as "completely community-driven and community-designed projects."<sup>52</sup> The focus on community helps undermine urban hegemony. In order for a street mural to be approved, the organizer(s) must show proof of at least 60 percent approval from the residences surrounding the mural.<sup>53</sup> This allows for greater community involvement in design projects in their neighborhood, which can prevent a hegemonic authority from manifesting.

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<sup>51</sup> Seattle Department of Transportation. "Street Murals." SDOT Street Use. N.d. Accessed April 14, 2017. [https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/psmp\\_streetmurals.htm](https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/psmp_streetmurals.htm).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Seattle Department of Transportation. "Painting the Intersection in Your Neighborhood." SDOT Street Use. N.d. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/cams/CAM2506.pdf>

## Pavement to Plazas<sup>54</sup>



Figure 3. Times Square Plaza (Manhattan, New York)<sup>55 56</sup>

### *Project Context*

The Pavement to Plazas tactic transforms underused asphalt – whether it is the right-of-way, unused parking spaces, etc. – and transforms them into plazas for social gathering. The transformation into a plaza is not complex or expensive; with a few gallons of paint, a makeshift barrier, and some moveable furniture, any stretch of asphalt can be transformed for the public. Even areas with high usage

<sup>54</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 139-70.

<sup>55</sup> Wolf, Heidi. *Times Square Plaza*. N.d. New York Department of Transportation, New York City.

<sup>56</sup> Palleiro, Julio. *Untitled*. N.d.

from both pedestrians and cars can be transformed; in fact, the first iteration of Pavement to Plazas was in Times Square, NYC in 2009.<sup>57</sup>

### *Envirobiosocial Analysis*

The Pavements to Plazas intervention was found to have an effect on pedestrianization and safety. The New York Department of Transportation (NYDOT) found that the Pavement to Plaza intervention in Midtown not only reduced congestion, but it also reduced the number of injuries to motorists and passengers by 63 percent; pedestrian injuries dropped by 35 percent.<sup>58</sup> Foot traffic also increased in Times Square and in Herald Square by 11 and 6 percent respectively. Pedestrianization has been linked to improvements in crime rates due to increased levels of trust amongst crowds.<sup>59</sup> Thus, physical and social health can be improved.

### *Urban Hegemony Analysis*

The incubators for the Pavement to Parks program in New York was mainly the NYDOT working in conjunction with another organization. For example, the plaza in Times Square was a joint effort by the NYDOT and the Times Square Alliance. The Times Square Alliance was the catalyst for this movement, though NYDOT transformed the tactic into a more permanent installation and delineation of public space.<sup>60</sup> The history of Pavement to Plazas has a variety of partnerships with the NYDOT, but it lacks any established connections with community members. Tactical urbanism interventions in New York started gaining traction as early as the 1990s;

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<sup>57</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 150.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>59</sup> Wright, Lloyd, and Ricardo Montezuma. "Reclaiming Public Space: The Economic, Environmental, and Social Impacts of Bogotá's Transformation." Copenhagen, Denmark, 2004. <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/110/>.

<sup>60</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 156-163.

however, community members were still unaware of what was going on in their neighborhoods. Randy Wade, a planner for NYDOT, found that his fellow DOT staff was even unaware of the initial tactics that were being implemented.<sup>61</sup>

### *Findings*

Though the beginnings of Pavement to Parks was rough and disjointed even within the department that initiated it, there has been a clear shift towards municipal-advocacy partnerships – and even public-private partnerships - to promote this tactic within cities. From NYDOT working with business improvement districts to NYDOT partnering with JP Morgan Chase with an \$800,000 fund<sup>62</sup>, there lacks an opportunity for individuals to get involved in this tactic. The tactic itself inherently lacks the space to adequately allow community members to *participate* in the process; the program has traditionally focused on dealing directly with non-residential right-of-ways, which is beyond the scope of the everyday citizen to equitably manipulate.

### *Relevance to Seattle*

Pavement to Parks is the most popular tactical urbanism intervention in Seattle, with nine projects completed or planned.<sup>63</sup> Tactical urbanism and Pavement to Parks fall under the umbrella term “Adaptive Streets.” The city does not provide any context for the eleven tactical urbanism projects that are currently planned; however, the city does outline where the nine Pavement to Parks interventions will be located. There is a lack of information regarding the stakeholders that are

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<sup>61</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 159.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>63</sup> City of Seattle. "Adaptive Streets Program." SDOT Public Space Management Program. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/publicspacemanagement.htm>.

involved with each site. From the perspective of a researcher, it appears that there is no way for community members find information regarding interventions that are happening near them, let alone finding an opportunity to even suggest their own ideas towards creating a Pavement to Park. Again, while some aspects of Pavement to Park design are beyond the scope of everyday community members, the lack of information can create a sense of distrust between community members and the City of Seattle which can perpetuate urban hegemony.

## Pike People Street



Figure 4. Seth Geiser with SDOT surveys people walking through Pike People Street last year.<sup>64</sup>

### *Project Context*

In the summer of 2015, SDOT collaborated with community members to shut down three blocks in the Pike/Pine corridors to cars for pedestrian use. The pilot program, called the Pike Street Pedestrian Pilots, closed the three blocks between 8 PM to 2 AM on weekend night. Events - such as drag shows and yoga classes - were held in the area to activate the space to pedestrians and community members who would otherwise not be out on a weekend summer night. The program received

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<sup>64</sup> Macz, Brandon. *Pike People Street triples down*. 2015. Capitol Hill Times, Seattle. <http://capitolhilltimes.com/Content/Default/On-The-Town/Article/Pike-People-Street-triples-down/-3/554/4840>

praise from community members, with 70% of residents being in favor of the pilot program.<sup>65</sup>

At the end of the summer in 2016, SDOT decided to host the pilot program again, this time under the name “Pike People Street.” The Pike People Street tested a variety of street-closure/pedestrianization-intervention configurations over the course of three nights in fall 2016. The configurations were selected from a community workshop hosted early in the summer where community members could provide their input on street-closure configurations. After the configurations were selected, the streets were then closed to cars and pedestrians were able to make use of their new public space.<sup>66</sup>

### *Envirobiosocial Analysis*

Due to the infrequency of the street closures, physical health benefits cannot be extrapolated from the program. The most common negative response to the program was the infrequency of the closes.<sup>67</sup> However, qualitative data suggests that there is potential for improvements in social health to occur. The second highest positive response was that the closure promoted a sense of community and inclusivity. The fourth ranked favorable response was a feeling of increased safety, followed directly by the closure providing a space to hang out. Community

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<sup>65</sup> Geiser, Seth. "Opportunities with Pike People Street Project." Personal interview. 25 Oct. 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Seattle Department of Transportation. "PIKE PEOPLE STREET 2016 Report + 2017 Work Plan." SDOT Street Use. N.d. Accessed May 14, 2017.

[http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/PikePeopleStreet\\_2017.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/PikePeopleStreet_2017.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.



members have identified many of the key positive social implications that the street closure can have on their community.

### *Urban Hegemony Analysis*

These two programs in Seattle are just now starting to take off; there is no formula for SDOT to follow to ensure they get it right the first few times. The Pike Street Pedestrian Pilots began with full street closures and a large emphasis on programmatic efforts from local businesses and organizations.<sup>68</sup> The 2016 Pike People Street aimed to steer away from programmatic closures in an effort to decentralize the authority SDOT had on programming for the closures. They were attempting to generate community interest in hopes of communities taking control while SDOT provides the basic framework – i.e. the dates of closure, permitting, and the street furniture.<sup>69</sup> Due to weather and time constraints, the 2016 pilot did not result in high community-driven programs. However, the role of community members and businesses in the pilot program was made clear and useful goals were established for the future iteration of Pike People Street.

### *Findings*

Moving forward to the 2017 pilot, SDOT is looking into some methods that can “transition from pilot testing to a self-managing and sustainable program. This effort will require a high degree of balancing individual and community needs, but there is a clearly expressed interest in expansion of the pedestrian area of E Pike St. Further conversation is needed with community and business leadership in Capitol

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<sup>68</sup> Seattle Department of Transportation. “PIKE ST. PEDESTRIAN PILOTS DATA + RECOMMENDATION REPORT.” SDOT Street Use. April 2016. Accessed May 14, 2017. <http://cosssdotblog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PIKE-ST-PEDESTRIAN-PILOT-REPORT-04.16.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> Geiser, Seth. “Opportunities with Pike People Street Project.” Personal interview. 25 Oct. 2016.

Hill about what that long-term concept looks like and how it will be managed.”<sup>70</sup>

SDOT understands the importance of community members and businesses having a direct role in programming during the closures; the more control they have, the more decentralized the power is within SDOT, and then more organic, grassroots programming can occur. SDOT is looking to collaborate with community members to establish a “Friends of Pike People Street” group that can lead this effort in engaging community members and organizations.<sup>71</sup> SDOT is making strides to combat urban hegemony and put control back into communities.

## Case Study Results

The case studies that have been examined in this research show that there is a progressive shift towards creating efforts in decentralizing authority and power from the hegemon to community members. Intentional community participation is becoming a higher priority in design and planning departments in the US.

However, rules and regulations enacted by municipalities still act as barriers. While this is not inherently a bad thing – non-compliance to traffic regulations can potentially make areas more unsafe, whether it is through slippery road surfaces caused by paint or the obstruction of the right-of-way which can make maneuvering difficult – this extra step in the design process can hinder the ability for communities to seize the opportunity to create design.

Additionally, popular tactical urbanism efforts – such as the pedestrianizing efforts in Pavement to Plazas and the Pike People Street program – allow minimal space

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<sup>70</sup> “PIKE PEOPLE STREET 2016 Report + 2017 Work Plan.” 19.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 20.

for community members to give input in designing a space or implementing their own ideas on their own accord. The Pike People Street is in its infant stages; its past iterations have been vastly different from each other. However, this infantile stage of tactical urbanism provides an opportunity to experiment with the experimentation; a *meta-tactical* tactical urbanism intervention, in a sense. Seattle is making an intentional effort to get the pilot programs functioning to ensure equity within planning and design.

While Seattle is moving in the right direction to combat urban hegemony, what does it mean when other municipalities tend to perpetuate it? This issue, as identified previously, is an issue in *practice*. Moving forward, tactical urbanism needs a theoretical overhaul.

## Discussion: The “Right to the City” to Combat Urban Hegemony

The case studies have revealed that tactical urbanism in its current iteration is a much-needed improvement over the traditional planning process that perpetuates urban hegemony; however, it does not always provide the levels of bottom-up, community-oriented, healthy planning that is centric to its ideals.

Tactical urbanists – including Mike Lydon – understand the challenge of promoting true tactical urbanism. Lydon describes the traditional pathways for community-oriented design to be formal and linear.<sup>72</sup> This linear process did not allow for collaboration; instead, it perpetuates a hierarchical approach to planning.

*As people try to improve their community, they often first approach their city councilor, the local planning department, or even the mayor's office in an effort to bring an idea to fruition. Often, it doesn't take long for them to discover that the formal process that facilitates change is often out of date, cumbersome, and far too time-consuming to make it worth the effort. This results in frustration as people feel they have little to no ability to legally use the system, local or otherwise, to enact positive change in their neighborhoods or beyond.<sup>73</sup>*

The institutionalized barriers that arise from this method of planning – both perceived and real – perpetuate cycles of urban hegemony by inhibiting upward mobility from community members. The urban hegemony that inhibits community

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<sup>72</sup> Lydon, *Tactical Urbanism*, 79.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.

health and welfare is institutionalized. Engagement *through* participation has the potential to create a cycle of successful urban design and planning interventions as initiated by the community. Over time, urban hegemony can be dismantled and equity can become a reality. To completely overhaul the urban hegemonic authorities that are put into power by pseudo-tactical urbanism, tactical urbanism as a practice needs to be reframed through theory that is supported by the envirobiosocial model of health and equity promotion. Henri Lefebvre's "Right to the City" theory can form a foundation that undermines and decentralizes urban hegemonic authority and shifts the power towards the masses. It moves beyond a framework that emphasizes the role of municipal bodies in promoting equity; it is a fundamental shift within communities to allow for reappropriation of public space.

### The Right to the City

Henri Lefebvre's "Right to the City" (RTC) promotes collective urban space production and management that is critical to undermining urban hegemony and promoting tactical urbanism as a concept. It allows all citizens to participate in the use and production of urban space.<sup>74</sup> This control of space allows citizens to *reappropriate* public space *from* omnipotent hegemonic authority, thus aiding in the dismantling of institutional inequity. The relationship between municipalities and community members is no longer top-down; it is a true bottom-up approach that denies the existence of an institutional hierarchy. Community members should not be subject to omnipotent municipalities; they can overcome this institution by exercising the *right* to the city and urban space production.

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<sup>74</sup> Alisdairi, Lana K. "A Cry and a Demand: Tactical Urbanism and the Right to the City," 2014. <https://digital.lib.washington.edu:443/researchworks/handle/1773/26826>.

## Context

As mentioned earlier in the section *Urban Hegemony*, current models of urban governance have been greatly influenced by neoliberal economics. Neoliberal austerity measures defunded public space management, which shifted planning to a model of false shared governance within communities. This model is experienced in contemporary planning.

Additionally, neoliberalism shifted the focus of public space away from use-value into monetary value as local economic competition become more intense.<sup>75</sup> The rise of economic competition allowed public space – amongst many things – to be valued monetarily on the bottom line. A critical perspective of this monetary reframing of public space identifies it as a way that undermines the complexity of public space. Public space can affect physical, mental, and social well-being. The production of public space is controlled by the omnipotent hegemon, which inhibits civic engagement and societal production; capital-driven production of space inherently subjugates the envirobiosocial model of health and planning.

In another sense, this reframing of public space created the need for tactical urbanism. As municipalities' budgets were being stretched thin, there was a need for cheap interventions to act as placeholders until capital investment and funding could be secured. Tactical urbanism helped fill the void left by gutted budgets.

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<sup>75</sup> Purcell, Mark. "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant." *GeoJournal* 58, no. 2–3 (October 1, 2002): 99–108. doi:10.1023/B:GEJO.0000010829.62237.8f.

Lefebvre's Right to the City is a means to reevaluate space to promote use-value over monetary value,<sup>76</sup> directly contesting the capitalist and neoliberal paradigm that was promoted in the twentieth century.

### *Right to the City Defined*

Lefebvre views the city as an arena for contestation.<sup>77</sup> The concept of the Right to the City was often used as an umbrella term to capture the essence of the resistance within cities to combat neoliberalism. The contestation is both a cry and a demand; a cry from the oppressed and resource deprived, and a demand by them to instill institutional change. It calls for a "transformative political mobilization"<sup>78</sup> that restructures cities socially, economically, and politically.<sup>79</sup> The restructuring begins with a subjugation of urban hegemonic authority through a framework of urban space production. Traditional urban space production lies within decision-making done by hegemonic authority. The Right to the City reframes space production as a right for all inhabitants, as *space* moves beyond spatial geography; space is experienced through object perception, mental constructions, and the lived experiences of space. The experiential components of space are intrinsic in equitable production; therefore, the production of urban space is a right that should be exercised by inhabitants.<sup>80</sup> Purcell states:

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<sup>76</sup> Harvey, David. *Rebel Cities From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso Books, 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Kemp, Adriana, Henrik Lebuhn, and Galia Rattner. "Between Neoliberal Governance and the Right to the City: Participatory Politics in Berlin and Tel Aviv." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 4 (July 1, 2015): 704–25. doi:[10.1111/1468-2427.12262](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12262).

<sup>78</sup> Alisdairi, Lana K. "A Cry and a Demand", 9.

<sup>79</sup> Purcell, Mark. "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant." *GeoJournal* 58, no. 2–3 (October 1, 2002): 99–108.

doi:[10.1023/B:GEJO.0000010829.62237.8f](https://doi.org/10.1023/B:GEJO.0000010829.62237.8f).

<sup>80</sup> Purcell, Mark. "Excavating Lefebvre", 102.

This stress on the production of urban space separates the right to the city clearly from present forms of enfranchisement in liberal democracies. Present forms of enfranchisement revolve predominantly around the structures, policies, and decisions of the formal state. Liberal- democratic citizens (whose formal citizenship status is based on their nationality) have an institutionalized voice in the decisions of the state, and they therefore have some indirect control over any social process the state can influence. By contrast, the right to the city enfranchises people with respect to all decisions that produce urban space. That simple change radically expands the scope of enfranchisement beyond the state structure.<sup>81</sup>

This expansion of scope amongst inhabitants can undermine urban hegemonic authority. This undermining can be achieved through tactical urbanism.

### *Right to the City Applied to Tactical Urbanism*

The Right to the City has been established as the right to the production of urban space. There are two ways this right can be exercised by inhabitants: through participation and by appropriation. Appropriation is best understood with the concept of autogestion. Autogestion is the seizing of the means of production to encourage self-management.<sup>82</sup> Lefebvre expands the concept of autogestion to the state. This means “people managing collective decisions themselves rather than surrendering those decisions to a cadre of state officials.”<sup>83</sup> Autogestion is a process that occurs over time, yet, it can result in a truly revolutionary paradigm shift within

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<sup>81</sup> Purcell, Mark. “Excavating Lefebvre”, 102.

<sup>82</sup> Purcell, Mark. “Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City.” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no. 1 (February 1, 2014): 141–54. doi:[10.1111/juaf.12034](https://doi.org/10.1111/juaf.12034).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



traditional urban governance structures. As it is practiced amongst individuals, collective community power is realized, thus strengthening social capital and allowing for effective revolutionary discourse and action to occur.

Tactical urbanism is one such incremental method of undermining urban hegemony. As individuals begin implementing their own tactics in their neighborhoods, there is the potential for social capital to be fostered. This is, of course, dependent on the efficacy of the interventions. When looking at the *Intersection Repair* case study above, there was a contestation of space. Community members wanted to keep the intersection mural in place, but the local government did not have any regulations that allowed it. However, as the local government realized that there was a high use-value to monetary funds ratio, the project became a sanctioned program. This tactic was adopted by various cities across the nations; by practicing autogestion, communities across borders were able to implement this tactic to reclaim and reappropriate their public space.

The intersection repair example is just one way in which autogestion and prioritizing the Right to the City can instigate change; as more tactics are implemented around the world, there is an opportunity for a revolution to occur.

## Conclusion

Tactical urbanism is a rising trend within cities around the world. It is often perceived as a method of planning that promotes creativity and public space reclamation. The culture surrounding DIY urbanism has engaged creative placemakers to seek partnerships with community members, municipalities, or private organizations to start the process of implementing creative tactics. Tactical urbanism guidebooks, action plans, and toolkits all promote a bottom-up approach to planning that aims to undermine the traditional top-down approach that municipalities often implement.

However, I have argued that this foundational theory of tactical urbanism greatly differs from how it is practiced. The practice of tactical urbanism often perpetuates a cycle of urban hegemony through an over-reliance on collaboration with public or private organizations by municipalities. This focus on organizations over individuals creates a quasi-bottom-up approach. The quasi-bottom-up approach damages social health and equity, perpetuating institutional vulnerability. The true bottom-up approach – where community members can rally and reclaim their public spaces on their own accord without the need of organizations – faces many institutionalized barriers that inhibit the upward mobility that can occur within communities. Thus, tactical urbanism in its current iteration is not equitable.

Tactical urbanism is not only a trendy, contemporary method of urban planning; it is a process that arose out of necessity. TU has its roots in a political contestation of the production of urban public space. Neoliberal economic policies were the main contributor to the capitalist reframing of TU that contributes to urban hegemony. Applying a post-capitalist approach – i.e. the Right to the City – to governance and

planning can further empower communities to reappropriate public spaces. This reappropriation of public space shifts value into use-value over the capitalist concept of monetary-value. The Right to the City can fundamentally reframe tactical urbanism – and urbanism in general – to promote true bottom-up collaboration and improve social health and equity.

### *Moving Forward*

When looking at urban design interventions in contested space, the practice of true tactical urbanism potentially calls for extra-judicial and unsanctioned public space reclamation.<sup>84</sup> Permitting and regulations should not be the major institutional barriers that perpetuate urban hegemony within tactical urbanism. This research has briefly discussed the importance of rules and regulations in regard to safety; however, to gain high levels of participation within communities, many barriers need to be broken to allow for uninhibited space reclamation.

In reality, local governments will most likely never get rid of the regulatory permitting process that is currently in place. Thus, the power of change must be fostered from within communities incrementally. A paradigmatic shift within the theory of tactical urbanism can reframe the role of community members in collaborative planning. Applying the Right to the City theory to current tactical urbanism guidebooks and texts can empower communities to reappropriate the production of urban space in their neighborhoods. Though it is a radical approach on the surface level, further research can be combined with the legal aspects of

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<sup>84</sup> Pagano, Celeste. "Diy Urbanism: Property and Process in Grassroots City Building." *Marquette Law Review* 97, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 335–

89. <http://offcampus.lib.washington.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=95534520&site=ehost-live>.

tactical urbanism to reframe it in a community-led, intra-judicial practice that can occur whether it is sanctioned or not by local governments.

Effective illegal tactical urbanism has the potential to change laws to become city-sanctioned which can allow other communities to implement their own tactical urbanism interventions.<sup>85</sup> This legalization channel is seen in the *Intersection Repair* case study above. By applying the Right to the City theory to radically – and regularly – challenge contested space for community reappropriation, and by allowing further research to identify potential legalization channels, tactical urbanism can transform into a practice that truly promotes social equity and health.

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<sup>85</sup> Pagano, 370-1.

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