A Review on Public Participatory Urbanism

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Abstract: This review examines the predominant theoretical approaches of public participatory urbanism adopted for the transformative & cohesive development of the neighborhoods. The conceptual differences between three major theories i.e. Tactical Urbanism, Do It Yourself Urbanism and Insurgent Public Spaces under Guerilla Urbanism will be examined. It will also seek the archetypal planning scenario observed in planning process.

The review will compare and contrast the ideological differences between the three approaches and it will conclude by finding important gaps & by recommending the probable solutions for the same.

Keywords

Tactical Urbanism, Do It Yourself Urbanism, Guerilla Urbanism

Background

In spite of the fact that we are planning urban areas thinking about every single conceivable projection, situations and complexities, it takes substantial amount of time to really observe the outcomes. *"Traditional planning strategies, positioned within Modernist paradigms, required to resolve urban problems through methods of instrumental rationality"* (Wohl, 2017, p. 1). The reality of the matter is that transformative infrastructure and planning projects have their place; new frameworks like rail lines, bridges, public infrastructure , streets or the rezoning of a whole city are difficult, however positively vital and imperative activities. Nevertheless, you infrequently get the upfront investment required through the conventional planning process alone.

The failure of these blueprints to accomplish wanted results, coupled with a general move far from modernist principles, has pushed planning towards more unpredictive, reflective and unfavorable situations. *"These recognize the need to move beyond a faith in master plans with their end-states, and instead acknowledge unknown, ambiguous futures that are often fragmented, relational, and complex"* (Boonstra B, 2011, pp. 99-122).

Day by day the urban character of our fast paced cities is changing rapidly which unfortunately resulted into diminishing our ethos, social character and cultural setting specially in cosmopolitan Metros. It's really a challenge for our Planners to build up a city with all infrastructural prerequisites yet at the same time keeping up the indigenous essence into the city fabric. Another viewpoint is that, the public planning process has turned out to be ineffective on account of either government inaction, fewer finances, unutilized or underutilized public land, inaccessible resources or an absence of consensus.

Categorically, a city can't respond to its predicaments directly through the actions of preparing for the wholesome plans; it ought to moreover move quickly on various more diminutive planning processes. Certainly, these are the ones that attract the citizens and usually have the remarkable effect on community space character as time goes on. In short, urban neighborhoods not only demand oversized plans but little interventions as well.

All such interventions may be for short duration but it may affect the urban scenario in long run. In the further study, three such relevant & prominent theories are reviewed.

1. Tactical Urbanism

Tactical urbanism is the concept which is considered to be more suitable and cohesive in nature. Mike Lydon defines Tactical Urbanism as *"an approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies"* (Mike Lydon, 2015). Such interventions are intended to tryout different things with and reveal alternative methods of designing, appropriating and engaging with urban space, characterize a different & imaginary public realm and connect with the citizens who are generally out of the planning and administrative progressions.

Regarding this, the famous urban designer Montgomery states that *"A nation that celebrates freedom and weaves liberty into its national myth rarely gives regular people the chance to shape their own communities.* He also conveys that *"Cities should make us happy by fostering emotionally intelligent design and creating closely connected communities, with the Benefits shared by everyone"* (Montgomery, 2013, p. 314).

The tactical projects are small scale, easy-to-implement, tangible and measurable urban interventions which can contribute substantially to the city and can create powerful impact on the culture of a city & city policies same as the megaprojects. (Mike Lydon, 2015)
The diminutive scale, creative, innovative urban tactical actions has the potential to bring together a diversified citizens to create an vibrant atmosphere which will make neighborhoods more active, versatile and cohesive. In tactical urbanism, everything seems focused on one thing and that is "action".

The tactical urbanism is considered as a "temporary change and a testing model" in an urban site before actually putting heavy investments into large projects, however during the process if they found to be effective, then such mediations can be executed into perpetual projects. Though specifications of such projects vary widely, their execution methodologies are oriented to make juxtapositions (by creating significant spatial links that sets together the variety of actions), test cautiously

(by attempting low risk ventures before putting heavy investments into permanent projects) and explore broadly (by pursuing numerous rapid spatial possibilities). (Wohl, 2017).

Build a Better Block	Park(ing) Day	Pavement to Plazas
Informal Bike Parking	Park-Making	Pavement to Parks
Intersection Repair	Pop-Up Town Hall	Open Streets
Guerrilla Gardening	Micro-Mixing	Play Streets
Reclaimed Setbacks	Site Pre-Vitalization	Pop-Up Cafes
Weed Bombing	Pop-Up Retail	Parkmobile
Chair Bombing	Food Carts/Trucks	
Ad-Busting	Mobile Vendors	
	Depave	
	Camps	

Figure: Spectrum of Tactical Urbanism
Source: Street Plans collaborative. (Mike Lydon, 2015)

"Because the places people inhabit are never static, Tactical Urbanism doesn't propose one-size-fits-all solutions but intentional and flexible responses." The former remains the fixation of numerous and overlapping disciplines in the urban development fields, which assume that most variables affecting cities can be controlled now and into the distant future. The latter rejects this notion and embraces the dynamism of cities. (Mike Lydon, 2015).

Mike Lydon also states that the Tactical Urbanism is a growing movement across the world in which individuals, communities, and municipalities are reshaping their cityscapes by community oriented actions. The Tactical process involves the effective & iterative utilization of open & vacant spaces, enhances efficient use of resources, fosters creative concepts put forth by the Citizens and boosts community interaction. The theoretical background can assist in the collaborative revival of urban centres which can be done through small scale pilot interventions which are either sanctioned or unsanctioned.

The thriving tactical urbanism and placemaking projects worldwide has proven that it has increased community interaction, established social equity and encouraged gentrification. Additionally, such informal set of activities driven by the communities have enlivened the Planners and Municipal authorities to explore different avenues with low cost & transitory projects.

Discussion

The theory focuses more on inclusion of tactical and temporary projects which appear to offer an opportunity to improve the resilience and adaptability of both planning processes as well as policies that are created. Though, every city is different and problems faced by each city is different, the challenge for urbanists everywhere will be how to find low-cost, iterative responses for each. The theory also focuses on such initiatives which can be interpreted as an alternative and a challenge to formal spatial planning tools which further can result into more responsive planning system.
The study also suggests, that City planners and others can recognize the potential of Tactical Urbanism which may help to bridge the gap between cities and planners and citizens in the urban development process. In totality, it can create a

more responsive, efficient and creative 'bottom up approach' and can act as a vital catalyst in building energetic neighborhoods.

2. Do It Yourself Urbanism

Though, many a times DIY or Do-It-Yourself Urbanism is equated with Tactical Urbanism, still it differ in its extent. Mike Lydon in his book, Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action for Long-term Change, states that *"Not all DIY urbanism efforts are tactical, and not all Tactical Urbanism initiatives are DIY"* (Mike Lydon, 2015, p. 6). If the objective is to provoke the instant, temporary & miniscule transformations in the city or part of city then we may categorize such intentions under DIY Urbanism.

However, if you expect to boost the long lasting transformations which may be diminutive in scale addressing the major infrastructural issue of city and it may be sanctioned within the ambit of ULBs or unsanctioned changes to the built environment can be included under the scope of Tactical Urbanism. If it is a self-expression of art, that can still be DIY, but isn't necessarily tactical. The DIY also differs from Tactical Urbanism in the sense *"Tactical Urbanism projects exist along a spectrum of legality"* and comprehend the ULB propagated instances and not just unsanctioned activities (Mike Lydon, 2015, p. 8).

Since a large number of the DIY urban intercessions are identical with a considerable set of the informal examples of Tactical Urbanism, the relevant literature has indicated comparative difficulties and strains.

Through many important case studies of North American Cities, Gordon C.C. Douglas characterizes the phenomenon DIY Urbanism. His investigation was ment to discover the type of individuals who are starting such mediations, what their aims were, and what substantial effect they had on the society as well as the built environment. According to him, the DIY urbanism is a *"Small-scale and creative, unauthorized yet intentionally functional and civic-minded 'contributions' or 'improvements' to urban spaces in forms inspired by official infrastructure. Individuals or informal groups challenge expected, regulated uses of particular spaces through unauthorized direct action."* (Douglas, 2013).

Douglas also observes that such changes has been performed majorly by the educated young and middle income groups which belonged to the urbanized areas. His definition aims on the individual or group initiatives which seem to create the purposive changes to the urban spaces but their intention may not be to take the authorization from the ULBs. This notion clearly segregates the DIY from the Tactical Urbanism. Also, the tactical Urbanism concentrates more on cognizance and documentation of the work done which again catalyzes the changes made for long term.

Douglas supports the thought put forth by Mariko Davidson about the alarming situation where the small & unauthorized individual interventions have become elitist and may not represent the society needs comprehensively. Though the DIY & Tactical activities proved to be positive medium for the bottom-up approach of community development still,

problems of equity and community representation need to be addressed.

This problem has been summarized by Douglas with a quote: *"The favorable attention that interventions often receive in trendy publications, and it is entirely possible that these ostensibly counter-cultural acts of organic, positive, informal contribution may, just like official urban design improvements, ultimately help increase property values, and thus precipitate and even encourage the gentrification process"* (Douglas, 2013).

Another Author, Donovan Finn has also iterated about the DIY urbanism as the set of activities performed in illegal way by the smaller groups of citizens in a regular manner aiming at improvement in the functioning of urban environments. He also focuses on how the ULBs can reciprocate to the DIY in an impartial way. These thoughts have been part of his research which conveys how any city can confront and even amalgamate the DIY changes in the formal planning process. Finn seems to analyze that *"DIYers need to accept the reality that certain DIY tactics will be co-opted by cities, thereby stripping away some of DIY's rebellious 'guerilla' luster"* (Finn, 2014).

Discussion

Though DIY interventions provides more attention to arts and cultural practices to be implemented in the urban setting considering the city as a laboratory, still such initiatives practiced by people is reasoned as unsanctioned and illegal by the authority. It's a fact that such intents covers the blighted parts of the city and facelifts the city. The theory also pinpoints the dilemma between top-down and bottom-up initiatives observed during the DIY processes. It comments that the formal structure of modern municipal planning and design still leaves very little room for true DIY efforts. It proposes to increase the role of planning is to maximize the Community benefits by private actions and minimize their attendant ills.

3. Guerilla Urbanism for Insurgent Public Spaces

Jefferey Hou in his book 'Insurgent Public Space : Guerrilla urbanism and the remaking' conveys that the insurgent or illegal practices happening within the archetypal urban spaces like City Parks, Plazas, Urban Squares and civic spaces have extended beyond the peoples imagination of 'Public Realm' and recapitulated in a new form. Such spaces have totally changed the character of the formal public spaces thus becoming the thriving part of economical changes within the city.

His accretion of enriching articles throws light on how today's social, economical, environmental and political, concerns are being confined and challenged in the public domain today. He conveys, these issues have a long lasting impact on the public realm.

He defines the insurgent spaces as unstructured & dynamic pop-up spaces. Such 'Self-made' spaces can emerge out of cultural, social an economical changes in the society like temporary events and festivals. The character of such spaces

may change as per geography & cultural context of the city (Hou, 2010). As the book's title proposes, insurgent open space is pronto unconstrained and radical, yet also orchestrated and vibrant.

His book has showcased 20 elaborated articles on insurgent actions in public spaces , under following six chapters based upon a typology of interventions (Hou, 2010).

1) Appropriating, 2) Reclaiming, 3) Pluralizing, 4) Transgressing, 5) Uncovering, 6) Contesting.

Based on these six broad terms, the characteristics of Guerilla insurgent spaces are summarized. The term 'Appropriating' has been used to define how people tend to use the spaces tactically and add a new significance to the existing weak urban spaces while the term 'Reclaiming' conveys the revival of abandoned and underused city spaces into a new and productive spaces. The heterogeneous spatial distinctiveness is created within the spaces due to the mixture of various ethnic groups which tend to interpret and transform the spaces and its function in more unique way. This phenomenon has been very well explained under the term ' Pluralizing'.

The term 'Transgressing' analyses the intrusion, surpassing & negotiation upon public-private domains of open space by a variety of groups of people. The regeneration and rediscovery of memories of urban spaces through the uncovering and revealing of dormant & dead urban landscapes has been potentially explained in the 'Uncovering'. The last term 'Contesting' exposes the struggle for individuality and the rights in the public realm. (Hou, 2010).

Discussion

Hou claims that the guerilla urbanism is expanding due to its bottom up approach and a collective concurrence of the informal or marginalized sector people. There may not be any pioneer or organization to foster these insurgents but they have been raised decisively due to societal concerns.

Authority may not be able to answer such concerns holistically but such 'Smaller yet grander' guerilla spaces helps to nurture the real public realm. His book also confronts many successful cases where marginalized and unconsidered groups are now taking over the urban realm.

The contextualized and place-based approach has given the new insight to the study as how different places in the world respond in a different way to such insurgent guerilla spaces. It also questions the dormant role of government in the whole process.

Conclusion

The three predominant theories reviewed here concludes mainly upon questioning the role of community and authority in enhancing the Public Participatory approach in city building. Though the theories have touched upon many aspects of people participatory planning approach, still role of planners and authorities in boosting such initiatives in public domain with a sanctioned framework and financial responsibilities still remains unanswered.

The strategies for enhancement and empowerment of community participation shall be focused upon in a very unique way through cultural associations. The context based activities & strategies can become crucial element in bottom-up city planning. Even the symbiotic relationship between the formal and informal sector along with the authority may create an overall positive picture which may prove to be more holistic, sustainable and successful approach of Urban space planning.

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