EMERGENT, TACTICAL AND BOTTOM-UP URBANISM IN NEW YORK:

A NETWORK OF URBAN INITIATIVES FOR EMPOWERED INHABITANTS

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0/ INTRODUCTION

The research project that is proposed is focused on the study of the urban interventions carried out by society and causing physical, political, technologic, or economic changes in cities; in particular, in complex cities such as New York. The issue that this project raises is a concept that has started to become increasingly important in the current situation of crisis. The three terms defining this type of processes were first employed in the field of urban studies around 2010: Tactical, Emergent or Bottom-Up Urbanism. In this writing the three terms will be used interchangeably.

It is also important to highlight that amongst all the cases that Tactical Urbanism describes, the project will pay special attention to the local social and urban processes occurring in the city where this program will be developed: New York. In particular, this work will focus its attention on the relationships between urban cases such as the Centre for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), North End (described by Jane Jacobs in the 60's) or the Green Guerrillas movement (introduced in Manhattan by Liz Christy), amongst others. Together with this, the project will also pay attention to the ideas of people who is involved in this type of phenomena such as Pedro Gadanho (curator of the Moma's exhibition on Tactical Urbanism, Uneven Growth) or Janette Sadik-Khan (commissioner of the NYC Department of Transportation from 2007-2013).

1/ APPLICANT'S BACKGROUND AND ITS RELATION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Three words define my academic and professional project: enthusiasm, innovation, and research. I got my degree in Architectural studies from the University of Alicante three years ago. However, my research on the issues developed here has started much earlier than that and I have developed some projects on urban social phenomena such as the informal vending in Lagos Nigeria or the flea markets in Alicante, Spain.

For almost nine years, I have been looking for experiences that allow me to develop architectural projects while researching and reflecting on the realities in which my projects appear. For instance, I made the most of my academic projects in order to think about issues such as the lack of natural resources, sustainability, landscape degradation, and the design of spaces to produce innovation. In particular, two academic projects, developed respectively in 2007 and 2012, focused on how informal vending and its urban implementation can produce technological, productive, political, and affective environments. In certain way, with these two projects I started to research on the transformation power that these self-managed processes –also known as Tactical or Emergent Urbanism- provide to people living in cities. Please visit the following website for further information: http://juliacervcorazz.tumblr.com/

In this spirit, architectural competitions have been a unique opportunity to tackle the issues mentioned above and to publish my findings in both magazines and exhibitions. Seven of the projects that I have submitted to architectural competitions have been awarded and included in the corresponding publications. The competitions where my projects were awarded are, amongst others, the following: Cátedra Cerámica, Schindler, SB10mad, Future Magazine or Arquine Magazine.

Another type of activity that has allowed me to develop a research career is the collaboration with multidisciplinary teams and institutions related to innovation, such as my participation as Editor in Chief in More than Green, a website on design and sustainability. This project has given me the opportunity to study a high number of references of Tactical Urbanism and one of them is the one proposed in this application, the Centre for Urban Pedagogy (CUP).

Currently, I am carrying out my PhD which focused on researching about initiatives that can be classified as Tactical Urbanism. One of the projects developed as part of this work is the academic article published in the *I2 - Research and Innovation in Architecture and Territory* magazine of the University of Alicante: (http://i2.ua.es/architecture/article/view/88)

> According to Robert Neuwirth, about 1.8 billion people work in the informal economy, producing more than $10 trillion per year. Neuwirth also stated that if all the people involved in the informal economy formed a country, this would be the second strongest economy in the world. Together with its economical importance, its urban flexibility is also remarkable. This model is linked to urban activities and spaces that allow the inhabitants to be more proactive in the dynamics of the city. Looking at the relationship

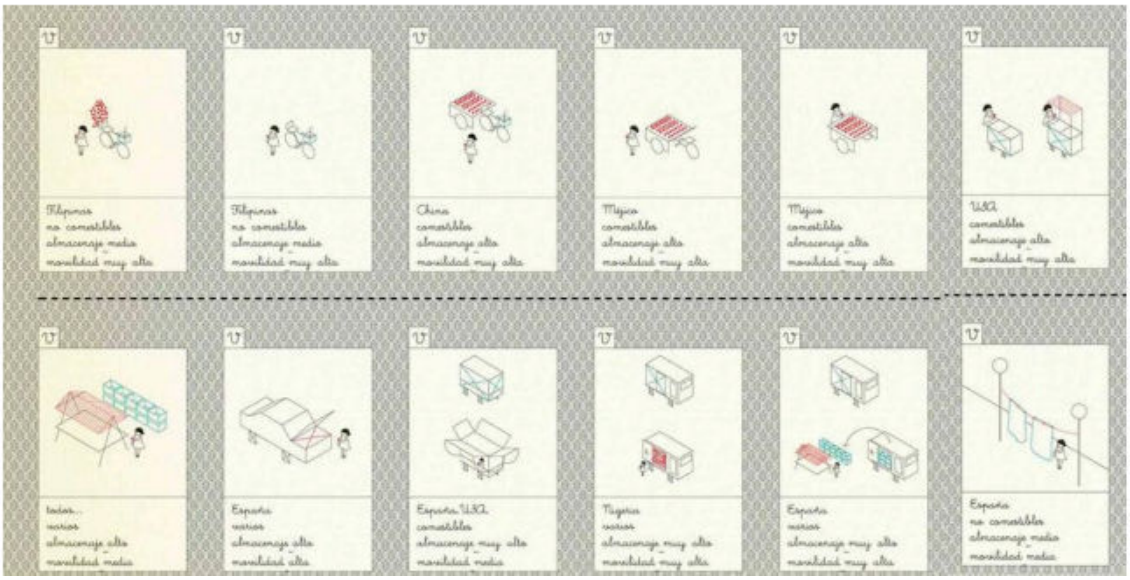
between this phenomenon and several concepts that various authors have employed when defining the current realities, this article analyses how this type of economy and especially the street vending transform the city life and inspires other types of urban interventions such as some involved in the Tactical Urbanism. Firstly the article looks at the way by which the street vending creates, links, and transforms the social, identity, and economic urban dynamics. Secondly, the article also discusses the way in which the informal economy materialized within the current cities as well as the relationship between this entity and the urban spaces without identity, the 'right to the city' or the tactical urbanism, amongst others.



Img. 01 Street Markets in Alicante (Photo by Julia Cervantes Corazzina)

This paper developed further ideas related to the development of my Final Thesis; a project that focused on the innovative capacity of the street markets of Alicante (Spain) and whose aim was to transform them into a platform for innovating and bringing together the ideas of society and researches.

Gleaner-voucher thesis is the transformation of the Street Markets' system in the province of Alicante (Spain) into a technological, energetic and social infrastructure for innovation. We are currently going through an economic, social, energetic, and political crisis. This is not just a moment of uncertainty, but it is also the opportunity to build new more sustainable realities in a collective way. The starting point of the project was a research process about types of existing urban scenes in which spaces of innovation could be developed. It was found that flea markets are one of the most interesting contemporary urban entities. In these flea markets, several existing networks collide – from productive and economic networks to social and identity networks. Moreover, this is an urban entity of identities, affections, and built over self-management. Why don't we make use of these networks and transform them into spaces for innovation? In recent history we can see several cases in which innovation has been produced in spaces such as garages and living rooms; that is to say, domestic spaces that have not been traditionally classified as spaces for innovation. To take advantage of the street market and its networks, why not build a new type of urban entity in which innovation may occur? The project aims to transform the street market in Alicante (Spain) into a place where not only are there goods, but also where ideas are exchanged.



Img. 02 Study of street Markets in Alicante (Image by Julia Cervantes Corazzina)

Recently, I have initiated the study of the relation between Tactical Urbanism Movements and tourism in the province of Alicante. Such is the case of Guadalest, a touristic Mediterranean village close to Benidorm (Spain). In spite of having a small population of 238 (according to the data provided by the Spanish "Instituto Nacional de Estadística" in 2012), this village has eight small museums devoted to the private collections of its inhabitants (toys, miniatures, etc.). The interest in this project is based on the power of all these small private initiatives when transforming the urban scene, as well as the way it establishes relations with the touristic activity of Benidorm. This work is being developed with a series of interviews to the owners of these museums and an analysis on the urban transformations that this group of economic and cultural private initiatives has produced. Furthermore, the comparison between this bottom-up phenomenon and other important museums such as the Prado Museum, in Madrid, will provide us with conclusions about how these small enterprises are able to create economic activity and identity.

In this line, the project that I propose to develop during this Scholarship would give me the opportunity to approach the issues mentioned before from the perspective of a complex city whose characteristics make this type of phenomena to flourish in a special way. This would give me a series of useful tool to contextualize the case studies developed during the PhD.

2/ FIELD OF RESEARCH: EMERGENT, TACTICAL, AND BOTTOM-UP URBANISM AS A TOOL TO STUDY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NEW YORK.

The starting point of the project will be taking into account that the cities are platforms for emergent creativity, bottom-up innovation and wealth. This phenomena has been gained the attention of the urban experts and has been targeted with the name of Tactical, Emergent or Bottom-up Urbanism. In New York, due to the complexity of its society, there are hundreds of social initiatives that enhance social participation in urban issues and create negotiation between institutions and inhabitants. One of them is the Centre for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), "a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement".

But, what do we exactly mean when talking about Tactical, Emergent or Bottom-up Urbanism? Despite the fact that these terms were created in 2010, they are employed to describe a multitude of both new and traditional urban processes. For instance, street vending and social demonstrations can be considered as Tactical Urbanism cases since they provide people living in the cities with tools to use public spaces and negotiate in them. The political awareness of individuals has when participating in them can differ in each case; however, it is evident that the political consciousness of these movements is growing. People are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of participation in the decision-making process when designing their cities and this makes them to carry out initiative aimed to propose alternatives to their urban environment: Better Block Initiatives, Chair Bombing, De-fencing, Depaving, Food Carts/Trucks, Guerrilla Gardening, Open Streets, PARK(ing) Day, Pavement to Plazas, Pop-Up Cafés, Pop-ut Retail, etc.

A great number of urban experts are looking at the phenomenon of Tactical Urbanism with special attention. These experts also focus on the complexity of its urban networks and the potentialities to create empowered urban inhabitants and urban identities. Several of these researchers are Robert Neuwirth, Tedy Cruz, François Ascher, Ignacio Farías, Henry Lefebvre, and David Harvey. The study of this phenomenon is important in order to research the future roles that the architectural profession may have. Some of these authors have analysed how these processes contribute to the creation of social entrepreneurism, innovation, and wealth. Robert Neuwirth has remarked the social right to use the city as a platform for economic production and the creation of new ideas in the same way that Lefebvre and Harvey have talked about the Right to the City as a political arena.

Some authors and institutions have developed their own definitions and interpretations in relation to the concept of Tactical Urbanism. Amongst others, we can see the definition provided by Google:

> Tactical Urbanism is an umbrella term used to describe a collection of low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighbourhoods and city gathering places. Tactical Urbanism is also commonly referred to as guerilla urbanism, pop-up urbanism, city repair, or D.I.Y. urbanism.

Another definition in Wikipedia is the one offered by the initiative known as *The Street Plans Collaborative*:

> The Street Plans Collaborative defines Tactical Urbanism as an approach to urban change the features the following five characteristics: A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change; the offering of local solutions for local planning challenges; short-term commitment and realistic expectations; low-risks, with a possibly high reward; and the development of social capital between citizens and the building of organizational capacity between public-private institutions, non-profits, and their constituents.

Wikipedia also includes the origin of the Tactical Urbanism movement:

> The term was developed circa 2010 to describe a range of existing techniques. The tactical urbanist movement takes inspiration from urban experiments including Ciclovía, Paris-Plages, and the introduction of plaza's and pedestrian malls in New York city during the tenure of Janette Sadik-Khan as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation. Tactical Urbanism formally emerged as a movement following a meeting of the Next Generation of New Urbanist (CNU NextGen) group in November 2010 in New Orleans. **A driving force of the movement is to put the onus back on individuals to take personal responsibility in creating sustainable buildings, streets, neighborhoods, and cities.** Following the meeting, an open source project called *Tactical Urbanism: Short TermAction | Long Term Change* was developed by a group from NextGen to define Tactical Urbanism and to promote various interventions to **improve urban design** and promote positive change in neighbourhoods and communities. In 1984, the English translation of The Practice of Everyday Life by Frenchman Michael de Certeau used the term Tactical Urbanism to describe events that occurred in 1968 in Paris. Certau described tactical urbanism in opposition to "strategic urbanism" although the modern usage tends not to make this distinction. The Project for Public Spaces uses the phrase "Lighter, Quicker, Cheapter," coined by urban designer Eric Reynolds, to describe the same basic approach expressed by Tactical Urbanism.

Laira Pfeifer's reflection on this term in *The Planner's Guide to Tactical Urbanism* book is also interesting:
(http://reginaurbanecology.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/tuguide1.pdf)

> The term tactical urbanism is often used to refer to low-cost, temporary interventions that improve local neighbourhoods. Although the Berlin-based Studio Urban Catalyst explored tactical and temporary uses in post-industrial Europe in the early 2000s1, the term "tactical urbanism" came into common use in 2010-2011 when a group of young urbanists created the publication Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action, Long-term Change, which showcased temporary public space improvement projects from across North America. The authors define tactical urbanism as small-scale, short-term interventions meant to inspire long-term change (…). The intentions behind tactical urbanism projects are diverse – some projects are intended to boost economic revitalization while others are aimed at improving pedestrian safety and offering opportunities for citizens to connect with one another. (…)
>
> Tactical urbanism as a movement has gained momentum and visibility in popular culture and planning discourse. (…) These citizen-led interventions have also inspired a larger discussion around incremental planning and the involvement of informal actors in urban planning processes. Temporary interventions are starting to be incorporated into official planning processes in some cities -- making improvements to the public realm in a way that is low-cost and low-risk. The temporary nature of tactical projects may also provide an opportunity for planners and citizens to collaborate on local projects. Both can observe an intervention on the ground and make adjustments before committing to long-term, costly improvements. If successful, temporary and pilot projects that gain local support can be made permanent over time.

It is worth highlighting that Pfeifer underlines the proliferation of this type of urbanism when a crisis such as the current one takes place. Also, she raises the issue of the influence of new technologies when society becomes aware of its right to take part in the design of cities:

> A number of conditions are considered to be driving the recent interest in tactical urbanism and locally-led interventions in cities. Political, economic, and environmental uncertainty; the deindustrialization of cities that has led to an increase in vacant lots and buildings; and an increasingly mobile workforce all support the desire for more flexible and adaptable spaces and uses. The 'Millennial' generation has a heightened interest in cities, and the ease of sharing new ideas and resources via the Internet and social media applications has increased the visibility of projects and raised awareness among citizens that they can actively impact their *communities*.

Along the same line, it is worth remarking that tactical urbanism is a relevant term in the current situation of crisis. It is clear that the future of our society relies on the production of more sustainable and inclusive urban models. However, there are hundreds of initiatives that have understood that the creation of these urban alternatives will not be only proposed by governments and big institutions, but also by bottom-up movements. There is evidence that, thanks to the new technologies and the liquid society to which Zygmun Bauman refers, citizens' movements can play a relevant role in the future of our cities.

Furthermore, Juan Freire links the study of Tactical urbanism with the existing informal urban phenomena:

> La imagen oficial de la ciudad tiende a centrarse en las consecuencias de la planificación y en la parte tangible que representan la arquitectura y las infraestructuras "duras". De este modo, la ciudad informal o emergente tiende a pasar desapercibida. Pero, si somos capaces de realizar una lectura más amplia y profunda de los procesos urbanos descubrimos que es posible aprender de la ciudad informal, y que este tipo de procesos "no oficiales" o "no planificados" tienen una importancia mayor de la que nos proporciona la visión convencional.

Another interesting aspect of this phenomenon is that it is able to empower urban inhabitants and provide society with political tools. Tactical Urbanism is also related to movements such as Gamonal or 15M (both of them in Spain); that is to say, movements by which society shows the disagreements, its collective desires and utopias, and its "passions" (see Chantal Mouffe) when creating cities. Besides, Tactical Urbanism also entails small-scale economic or productive initiatives that have an impact on cities and territories. Present and past examples of this are the local touristic proposals that, being set up by people individually, have transformed cities and villages in the province of Alicante. Amongst them we can find the small museums in Guadalest or the "Limón Express" train.

3/ METHODOLOGY: QUESTIONS TO REPLY WHEN UNDERSTANDING TACTICAL URBANISM IN NEW YORK AS A NETWORK

The methodology of this project will be based on the field study of cases such as the Centre of Urban Pedagogy in New York or North End. Thus, the applicant will be immersed in the network that links this type of initiatives and will develop a series of diagrams and maps that make visible these movements, their connections and their history. The work also tries to find out how Tactical Urbanism transforms New York and the knowledge provided by these proposals will pave the way for future cities.



Img. 03 Vendor Power! Project by Street Vendor Project, Center for Urban Pedagogy NY and Candy Chang. (Source: Center for Urban Pedagogy NY website<http://welcometocup.org>) © Center for Urban Pedagogy NY

In line with this, the project will try to find the answer to a series of questions about the potentialities –focusing on economic potentialities-, weaknesses, and utopian character of these initiatives.

-Which is the city model that this network of Tactical Urbanism initiatives aims to build in NY?

-Could they provide knowledge to design NY in a more sustainable way, from the perspective of economy, energy and society?

-Could these examples propose a productive and wealthy urban model for NY?

-What is the relationship that these initiatives create between tactical urbanism and knowledge?

-Is a different type of education necessary to prepare NY inhabitants for Tactical Urbanism?

-Is Tactical Urbanism always a bottom-up process in NY? Could a up-bottom tactical urbanism be possible in this city?

-Is Tactical Urbanism an intervention that is only able to transform NY public spaces? Could Tactical Urbanism exist in the private spaces of this city?

-In which way do public institutions in NY have to change in order to make Tactical Urbanism a real project?

-What are the political implications that Tactical Urbanism have in NY?

-What is the relationship between tactical urbanism and activism in this city?

-Can tactical urbanism and a capitalist model coexist in NY?

-IN a city such as NY, which is the relationship between Tactical Urbanism and the smart city concept?

-What could be the relationship between Tactical Urbanism and new technologies there?

--What could be the relationship between tactical urbanism and sustainability in NY?

-In which way does change Tactical Urbanism the role of architects? Would it transform the architect into a mediator? Is Tactical Urbanism a new career opportunity for American architects?

-In this city, how has Tactical Urbanism evolved throughout history?

-Despite being a term created in 2010, which other urban phenomena occurring in NY can be classified as tactical urbanism?

-What is the relationship between tactical urbanism, democracy, and social empowerment? What could be its relationship with movements such as Occupy Wall Street?

-Which is the weakness of Tactical Urbanism in a city such as NY?

-In which way does Tactical Urbanism create identity and collective affections in a global city such as NY?

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