

Teaching Unit 4: Tactical Urbanism as an Approach of Citizens' Initiatives

Teacher's Instructions

Objectives of this Unit

Tactical Urbanism has proven to be a valuable instrument to test planning interventions in urban space across a variety of different contexts and purposes from promoting sustainable mobility and climate adaptation related design transitions to hosting of temporary events. Also, clearly, the content of tactical urbanism depends strongly on the context of urbanism, taking into consideration aspects such as urban context, climate, topography and cultural traits and norms. Last but not least, tactical urbanism offers itself for encouraging citizen initiative driven design ideas and incorporating various types of civic engagement in the process of design development and implementation. Embarking upon the theoretical basis of tactical urbanism, the course aims to establish the cognitive grounds for the conceptual familiarization with tactical urbanism tools with the aim to provide modular solutions for innovative small-scale interventions in urban public spaces. Further on it will explore how these could acquire a pilot nature for testing permanent and larger scale urban transformation by demonstrating their inherent advantages and disadvantages, that could be adjusted through flexibility and versatility.

The course will be structured in two parts: the first part will offer a general overview of methods and tools, introduction to the theoretical background of the topic and its constituent concepts (e.g. bottom-up urbanism, civic engagement) carried out by the lecturer and self-paced as well, based on study material, valuable for the preparation for the second part. The second part will involve a brief presentation of a specific case-study for the preparation of an organized simulation of a real-life tactical urbanism scenario and the conditions that accompany it. More specifically, this simulation, for the purposes of authentic learning, will be enhanced through a role-play approach, in which students will take on the roles of people involved in the intervention. In addition, the simulation will be reinforced through gamification techniques, employing distinct mechanisms derived from game-design (time constraint, points, cards, rounds etc.). Taken together, these elements will promote active, experiential participation and engagement, strengthen students' practical skills and foster an understanding of the different perspectives—an inherent parameter of such multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this unit, students should:

1. Understand and articulate the core concepts, definitions, and principles of tactical urbanism.
2. Differentiate tactical urbanism from other forms of urban intervention (permanent planning, placemaking, event-based design).
3. Identify the role of bottom-up initiatives, citizen-led design, and civic engagement in shaping urban public spaces.
4. Practice active participation and practical engagement in a way that simulates experiential involvement.
5. Apply practical skills in managing a clearly defined study framework within a limited time frame, decision-making, collaborative group thinking and action, consensus-building culture, critical thinking, peer evaluation, and more.

6. Implement authentic learning and acquisition of experiential background as a form of practice in real conditions.

Teaching Methods

Part I – Theoretical Foundations – Lecturer’s presentation and study material based

- » Theoretical background of tactical urbanism and its related concepts (e.g., bottom-up urbanism, civic engagement).
- » Overview of key methods and tools applied in tactical urbanism projects.
- » Guided self-exploration to specific concepts from additional study material previously provided (scientific articles or the short films included in the presentation).

Part II – Applied Analysis and Practice – Gamified simulation

- » Brief introduction to the case study area: General overview of the area and its broader context, existing land uses, inherent strengths and weaknesses, as well as emerging opportunities or threats.
- » Gamified and playful simulation: Conducting a time-limited workshop simulation of collaborative student interaction, based on significant roles and incorporating gamification practices.
- » Reflection and discussion: Self-assessment and peer assessment of the experiences gained, the decisions made and the overall experience.

Learning Approaches

- » Self-paced learning: The student will be engaged in a self-directed study on their own time and space with study material supplied prior to the course.
- » Simulation: A scaled-down simulation of real-world sharing of perspectives from different positions.
- » Role play: Role-based interaction within the framework of a given narrative.
- » Gamification: Application of specific game design techniques for learning purposes, without framing the entire process as an actual game.

The Concrete Scenario for the Role Play

1. Introduction to the concept of the simulation and case study (DURATION: 15’)

- » **Brief introduction to the selected case study** that should be addressed with a tactical urbanism approach. The issues and the area of the real or hypothetical scenario under examination are at the instructor’s discretion. **The case should be limited, targeted**, and focused so that it can be described concisely, shortly and the issue for discussion is clearly defined. **The instructor may consult the topic pool** (topics organized into different levels of difficulty) for general ideas that help as context-foundations, if needed.
- » **Introduction to the simulation rules:** The simulation involves students representing **5 different groups** in a **joint consultation**, with the **aim of reaching a proposal** for a tactical urbanism approach towards the given case study.
 - 1) **Group A:** Citizens
 - 2) **Group B:** Advocates

- 3) **Group C:** Decision Makers
- 4) **Group D:** Experts
- 5) **Group E:** Case study experts (experts specifically relevant to the assigned case study)

Note 1: The 5th group (E) is determined by the lecturer of the course, **in accordance with their selected case study** (e.g. AI specialists, XR specialists).

Note 2: The acquisition of each of the five specific roles is determined **through cards that are randomly distributed** to students by the lecturer.



Figure 1 Game cards templates

Note 3: The lecturer should prepare the cards **according to the number of students enrolled**.

Note 4: All members of each group **are further divided into sub-categories** related to different features, focus areas etc. prepared by the lecturer before the simulation. Two or more students in the same group may be also in the same sub-category,

Example 1: Group A: Experts: 1.1) Environmentalist, 1.2) Civic Tech Expert, 1.3) Economist.



Figure 2 Different sub-categories in the same Group

2. Defense preparation process and team representative election (DURATION: 10')

- » **Initial group discussions:** Each member of every different team creates a short defense strategy for a proposal regarding the case study, which covers all the key-aspects of the group's nature.

***Note 5:** Each participant is unaware of their colleagues' sub categories and can only make assumptions about them.*

***Example 2:** In the Group A: Experts, the particular **Environmental Expert** should make a proposal that covers the areas of the **Civic Tech Expert** so as to earn their support*

- » **Selection of representatives:** Following the presentations, each group selects the representative who, in their view, made the most impactful, suitable, well-reasoned etc. proposal.

3. Brief presentations by the representative of the groups (DURATION: 25')

- » **First Round (10'):** The representative chosen from each group gives the initial brief presentation defending of the tactical urbanism proposal of their team **within 2 minutes**.
- » **Points Allocation (1'):** After the first round of presentations, each group allocates its reward point (positive feedback) to the best concept presented.
- » **3R Round (3'):** A short break for all the team to **Regroup, Rethink, Refine** their proposals, defenses.
- » **Second/Final Round (10'):** Same structure as in the first round.
- » **Points Allocation (1'):** After the second/final round of presentations, each group allocates its reward point (positive feedback) to the best concept presented.

***Note 6:** At each stage the key-elements of the defense and its preparation are collected in a shared document by each group. After the course, a digital copy of every document is shared with all the students who participated in the scenario.*

***Note 7:** The team that scores the highest (total points from both of the rounds) wins for its proposed concept.*

***Note 8:** Draw due to the same number of points is accepted.*

4. Reflection and Discussion (DURATION: 10')

- » Self-assessment and peer assessment **at the end of the course**, focusing on performance and overall experience in an open discussion led by the lecturer
- » Self-assessment and peer assessment **after the course** related to the proposal materials (five shared files) available for home study and future reference

Helpful Notes for the instructor/lecturer:

- » During the simulation, there should be a visible clock to emphasize the time-constrained nature of the process. Ideally, this should be accompanied by a strong auditory signal (e.g. a bell marking the end of each phase) to reinforce the process through sensory cues.
- » The prize is purely symbolic and is at the instructor's discretion; for example, the winning team may have the honorary privilege of choosing the topic of the next lecture of the course
- » The cards can be provided in either physical or digital format.

Gamification and simulation extension:

- » The instructor has the flexibility to go beyond the topic pool, the predefined the groups, and the sub-categories of them, creating their own combinations tailored to the social, political, cultural, and other context in which their educational system operates

Associated educational material:

- 1) Presentation on Tactical Urbanism
- 2) Role Cards File
- 3) Group Subcategories Pool File
- 4) Topic Pool File
- 5) Game-design Mini Lab

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