Book Review

Tactical Urbanism – Short-term action for long-term change

Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia
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Tactical Urbanism isn't a text book to adorn your bookshelf, it isn't a book to thumb through and forget about, it is a call to arms, it is a manifest for change, it is an invitation to get involved and empower each and every reader to improve their built environment.

This is the idea behind *Tactical Urbanism*. It is the 'XS' or the Extra Small interventions that can be replicated, rolled out and scaled up. It is the small changes that are easily achievable where larger projects would be held up by regulation and control. *Tactical Urbanism* is 'decentralised, bottom-up, extraordinarily agile, networked, low-cost, and low-tech. It will be the urban planning equivalent of the iPhone replacing the mainframe'.

Although American-centric, the ideas, processes and approaches contained within this book can be used to guide and inspire similar approaches the world over. There are other issues of Tactical Urbanism, including a Spanish and Portuguese version, an issue covering Central and South America, and an antipodean version covering Tactical Urbanism in Australia and New Zealand.

The book looks at the history of Tactical Urbanism, outlining the authors' first small scale interventions in Miami and New York. It considers the differences and similarities (and overlap) between Tactical Urbanism and DIY or Guerrilla Urbanism. It also considers the three common applications of Tactical Urbanism, namely:

(1) A grass-roots approach initiated by citizens exercising their 'right to the city';
(2) A tool for planning authorities, developers or other stakeholders to engage with the public during project planning, delivery and development processes; and
(3) A 'Phase 0', that is using it as an early implementation tool to test out projects before long-term investment is made.

Tactical Urbanism may in fact apply one or more of these approaches, with the first often leading to the second, which in turn may lead to the third.

Following discussion on the history and subsequent evolution of Tactical Urbanism, the book considers five case studies, or 'stories' as the authors call them. These include 'Intersection Repair', which could also be considered as the enhancement of 'meeting points' where the local community socialise and congregate, 'Guerrilla Wayfinding' whereby people, residents or activists (depending on your perspective) encourage the use of active travel rather than car dependency highlighting the proximity of destinations and the relative ease of reaching them without the need for the motor car. Other case studies focus on 'Building a better block', 'Parkmaking' and 'Pavement to plazas'; similarly themed initiatives of differing scales which seek to reclaim lost space (often underutilised spaces given over to motor vehicles) to transform them into more usable attractive spaces for people.

Ultimately that's what the book, and *Tactical Urbanism*, is about. It's about people making modest interventions and reclaiming those under-utilised and otherwise lost spaces within their community. It's about shaping and improving their streetscape for it to work for them, in whatever guise that might be. The final chapter of the book is 'A Tactical Urbanism How-To' guide. This is the toolkit, the arsenal, the guidebook and the manifesto. This is the prompt for the reader to act upon what they've just read, and this reader for one is going to do just that. Watch this space!

'The challenge for urbanists everywhere will be how to find low-cost, iterative responses for each (city specific challenge)' (Lydon and Gardia, 2015, Preface XXII). This book won't necessarily provide you with all the answers, in fact it provides very few, but at the very least it asks the question and challenges you to explore the potential solutions.

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