

**A Cry and a Demand:
Tactical Urbanism and the Right to the City**

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Abstract

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In many cities around the world a growing interest in small-scale urban design interventions is reshaping urban spaces. These actions (often called tactical urbanism) include: guerrilla and community gardening; ‘creative space’ movements to fill abandoned buildings for a range of purposes; housing and retail cooperatives; pop-up shops; social economies and bartering systems; occupying public spaces with alternative uses, skateboarding; and more. This thesis offers insights on emerging activist roles that designers and urbanists are assuming in an effort to achieve more direct control over urban space. This thesis considers these myriad practices through the context of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city.’ It asks the question: is there a shared politics of the city that serves as a sort of theoretical checklist for these practices? I argue that many of the efforts championed by tactical urbanism can be viewed as liminal additions of rights to the current, liberal-democratic city. However, many critical aspects of the movement give it the potential to move beyond a less radical interpretation of right to the city. This claim is illustrated through an analysis of general tactical urbanism goals and various do-it-yourself interventions taking place in Tacoma, WA.

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Introduction

Guerrilla gardening and street signage, pavement-to-parks, open streets: these are all urban interventions of a sort – quick, often temporary, cheap projects that aim to make a small part of a city more pedestrian friendly, lively or enjoyable (Berg 2012). Often called tactical urbanism (TU), scholars and community activists have lauded this technique as an effective way to spark needed improvements in a city’s urban fabric (Hou 2010). Traditionally the scope of organizations like parks and recreation and urban design firms, city residents are increasingly becoming interested in shaping public space; whether because of a perceived lack of action on the part of their city governments or to add uniqueness and character to a neighborhood, this strategy is becoming ever more popular in cities across the world (Hou 2010).

This thesis offers insights on emerging activist roles that designers and urbanists are assuming in an effort to give citizens more direct control over urban space. Understanding these new roles is important not only for aspiring urban activists but also to officials and other professionals who likewise must negotiate the dynamic terrain between institutions, professionals and publics. Tactical urbanism is a critique of the status quo system of urban governance: specifically, it forwards the idea that citizens should have more say and control over the production of public space.

Jeffrey Hou, in *Insurgent Public Space*, highlights the connection between the acts of what he calls “guerrilla urbanists” and the right to public space. He writes that the small acts initiated by city dwellers engage the public through the debates they spark among neighbors, citizens, and the media. To Hou, they renew the role of public space as a forum for open discussion (Hou 2010, 1). It gives meanings to the full notion of publicity in a public space.

In this chapter, I consider the questions that shape this study. I describe my audience and the purpose of my work for my audience. Zeiger (2011, 8) puts it this way: “how do we measure the impacts of ambiguously defined and informal activities?” As she notes, this cannot be a matter of simply assessing separate practices and projects. It must also be a matter of determining whether a larger picture is emerging across these practices and projects, and asking about the nature of this bigger picture if it does exist. To what extent are these practices helping to ‘give birth’ to a new kind of city, as is sometimes claimed by their practitioners and supporters, and what might this city be like? To ask this question another way: is there a common theme that spans these practices, despite their differences: something that is bigger than the sum of its parts? Here, I think considering these myriad practices in the context of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’ (RTC) is useful, for it asks the question: is there a shared politics of the city that serves as a sort of theoretical checklist for these practices? The main research questions I aim to address are:

- What parallels can be found between TU and right to the city?
- Where does TU resonate with right to the city?
- How do TU practices work towards a more just and inclusive city?

There is no guarantee that the proliferation of DIY experiments with appropriation and alternative uses of urban space guarantee a city along the lines of right to the city theory. However, TU’s various efforts do give a prospect for such a transformation. It must be teased out if small-scale projects can lead to large-scale change. Based on the framework of right to the city, this thesis asks whether tactical urbanism is making strides towards a city closer to the Lefebvre’s conception. I argue that many of the efforts championed by tactical urbanism can be viewed as liminal additions of rights to the current, liberal-democratic city. However, many

aspects of the movement give it the potential to move beyond a less radical interpretation of right to the city.

Purpose

The purpose of my inquiry is to gain insight into the place and role of small-scale public space interventions in urban design. Tactical urban design strategies are becoming ever more popular in cities across the world, initiated by people who are dissatisfied with official urban planning and design—for instance, with the provision of urban amenities like crosswalks, outdoor seating, and public art. From the evidence I collect, I seek to explore the parallels between tactical urban design strategies and RTC. I answer my questions by using an analysis of general tactical urbanism goals and TU initiatives in Tacoma, WA, and critically assessing them through the perspective of the literature on tactical urbanism and ideas on citizenship in cities stemming from right to the city theory.

Audience

This paper provides insight for a number of different audiences. Urban planners are interested in new ways to involve the public in planning processes. Learning from the grassroots, small-scale, and low risk characteristics of TU initiatives would be beneficial for planners. In addition, tactical urbanists themselves have an interest in making their efforts create more lasting change in their cities. My research aims to determine whether TU initiatives provide the opportunity to make cities more democratic and inclusive places. This will provide my audience with a basis for understanding my chosen cases. Finally, general readers interested in urban rejuvenation, pedestrian-scale urban improvements, and becoming involved with their neighborhoods may benefit from my research.

Research Strategy

TU initiatives in Tacoma serve as case studies to explore the questions posed in this paper. As a mid-sized urban port city about 30 miles south of Seattle, Tacoma serves as a relevant case for studying TU initiatives. Semi-structured interviews with individuals involved with TU initiatives in Tacoma serve as cases for understanding the phenomenon and its parallels with RTC theory.

All of the TU cases studied take place in Tacoma's downtown core and its surrounding neighborhoods. Downtown Tacoma experienced a long decline through the mid-20th century, with the opening of the new Tacoma mall giving the deathblow to downtown businesses. Harold Moss, a former mayor, characterized late 1970s Tacoma as looking "bombed out" like "downtown Beirut" (a reference to the Lebanese Civil War that occurred at that time.) "Streets were abandoned, storefronts were abandoned... City Hall was the headstone and Union Station the footstone" on the grave of downtown (Handberg 2008).

1. Chapter One: Literature Review

This review seeks to evaluate the existing research on the topic of tactical urbanism with regard to the theory of “right to the city.” This section commences with a review of right to the city literature, carefully assessing the arguments of key scholars. It identifies similarities and differences, as well as broad patterns, between various treatments of right to the city. Within critical assessments of the theory, we see broad agreement on the original meaning of the concept. Various scholars, however, approach the theory differently, choosing to highlight certain aspects of the theory.

Right to the City

This work aims to address parallels between the concept of right to the city and tactical urbanism in order to analyze the forces at work within current TU efforts. Right to the city theory, or the collective power to reshape the city (Harvey, 2008), can be traced back to the writings of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre’s (1996) work on the theory undergoes much discussion (see for example, Dikeç 2002; Purcell 2014; Harvey 2003; 2008; Marcuse 2009; Mayer 2009; Crawford 2011; Zeiger 2011; Butler 2012; Dikeç 2002). Lefebvre points out the spaces in existing urban systems which are open to be exploited — for him, the production of space is a ‘trialectical’ process in which conceptions, perceptions and lived experiences of space interact (Lefebvre, 1991, 20). Ideas about the proper uses of urban spaces dictated by urban authorities are powerful but not all-powerful, and spaces are always available for appropriation.

The right to the city, according to Lefebvre, allows all citizens to participate in the use and production of all urban space; control over the production of urban space means control over urban social and spatial relations, thus the social value of urban space weighs equally with its

monetary value (Purcell 2008). When economic systems value urban space mainly for its exchange value, Lefebvre argues, the true potential of urban life is suppressed (Purcell 2014). A key concept figuring in right to the city theory Lefebvres' idea of autogestion; it refers to democratic participation, workers' self-management, and control of ordinary peoples' destinies (Purcell 2014, 8). It "must be perpetually negotiated and enacted, relentlessly practiced and earned" (Merrifield 2006, 140). The key is to bring people together to oppose the supremacy of the state and multinational capital (Purcell 2014, 8). Only through *autogestion* can the members of a free association take control over their own life, in such a way that it becomes their own work. This is called appropriation, or de-alienation (Lefebvre 2009, 150).

One of Lefebvre's most significant concepts is his "critique of everyday life." Lefebvre defines everyday life as the interchange between "illusion and truth, power and helplessness; the intersection of the sector man controls and the sector he does not control" (Lefebvre 1991, 40). The everyday is in short, the space in which all life occurred. Lefebvre contends that everyday life was an unexplored realm compared to technology and economic productivity. Moreover, he writes that in the mid 20th century, capitalism moved towards transforming everyday life into a space of consumption.

A critique of this sector of everyday experience shared by everyone in society regardless of class or race, according to Lefebvre, can lead to people understanding and then revolutionizing their everyday lives (Elden 2004, 14). This is essential to Lefebvre because everyday life is where he saw capitalism surviving and reproducing itself. Without revolutionizing everyday life, capitalism would continue to wear away at the quality of this experiential space. The critique of everyday life was crucial because it was "...for him only

through the development of the conditions of human life—rather than abstract control of productive forces—that humans could reach a concrete utopian existence” (Elden 2004, 13).

Contemporary Treatments

Since Lefebvre’s inception of the concept, a broad representation of groups have given treatment to or championed right to the city as their own. It is used by urban social movements, by political alliances, by international organizations, and also at academic conferences (Schmid 2012). A closer look reveals, however, its use varies considerably. It often serves as just as a kind of conceptual umbrella for all types of political and social demands that generally address the problems arising in urban areas today” (Schmid 2012). Purcell (2014) notes that almost all versions of RTC place importance on the user, or inhabitant, of urban space. Based on this, it is commonly agreed that the ‘everyday’ experience of living in the city gives inhabitants the right to the city, rather than national citizenship (Purcell 2014, 2). Thus, these treatments of the theory place importance on use value of urban space over its exchange value (Purcell 2014, 2). Use value recognizes the utility of a good or service, while exchange value conveys the power of purchasing other goods with a commodity (Economic Theories, 2014).

Right to the city is a particularly popular platform within the international development community. For instance, human rights organizations such as UNSECO and UNHABIT, as well as development scholars, have turned to the slogan as a banner for creating more equitable models of development. Some international NGOs and advocacy organizations have even drafted formal covenants and even a world charter for the right to the city (International Alliance of Inhabitants 2005). The World Charter for the Right to the City highlights the rights that inhabitants of cities can claim, including democratic management of the city, equality and non-

discrimination within the city, the social function of the city, the right to justice, freedom and integrity and the right to water, housing and employment, among others.

Right to the City Alliance also emerged in the US in 2007 as a unified response to gentrification and an effort to stop the displacement of a variety of groups from their historic neighborhoods: low-income people, people of color, LGBTQ communities, and youth (Right to the City 2014). The group is a national alliance of community-based organizations that aims to build a national movement through the common frame of right to the city.

The Alliance lists a range of platforms through which it aims to address a variety of urban problems. Members of the alliance highlight community-organizing efforts and the need for community members to be directly involved in their neighborhoods. At the same time, however, they wish to increase inclusion and involvement in current urban government, such as voter registration and civilian review of local police. In short, the Alliance is a broad effort by civil society groups to experiment with and learn about the political utility of the right to the city idea. This group tends to take a broad view of RTC, as a project that adds to already existing rights given by the state (Purcell 2014, 5).

Critical Perspectives

Since Lefebvre's first treatment of the theory of right to the city, much attention has been given to the idea. As noted above, over the past decade, it has become a popular concept in geography and urban studies (Purcell 2014). Due to this oversaturation of the theory, critical perspectives aiming to return it to its initial conception have appeared. It has been suggested that the phrase has taken on a variety of meanings (Gorgens and Van Donk 2011) and Marcelo Lopes de Souza (2010) argues that as the right to the city has become "fashionable these days", "the price of this has often been the trivialization and corruption of Lefebvre's concept" (2010, 6) and

calls for a return to Lefebvre's genuine meaning of the idea. This slogan represents one important rallying cry and basis for transformative political mobilization in many contemporary cities, and it also resonates with earlier call to create "cities for citizens" through the reinvigoration of participatory urban civil societies (Iveson, 2013, 955). However, as radical critics like Mayer point out, this potentially radical political slogan, much like that of 'social capital,' is also being used ideologically by state institutions, and risks being appropriated for the purpose of legitimizing existing, weakly participatory forms of governance. Mayer also notes that it is being used to justify new forms of citizen participation being introduced in municipal government (Mayer 2012, 64).

Within these critical assessments, broad agreement exists on the essential understanding of right to the city, but with differences in their focus. Most agree that an important part of returning to the original meaning of the slogan starts with a clear definition of RTC coming from a close reading of Lefebvre's work. Several scholars critically engage with Lefebvre's (1996 [1968]) classic concept of the right to the city, which has recently been rediscovered by radical academics and activists alike (Harvey, Marcuse, Purcell, Mayer). There is broad agreement that radical change must take place in the structure of urbanization, which will lead to a more democratic, post-capitalist system that puts human needs above "the imperatives of profit-making and social enclosure" (Brenner et al. 2012, 4). This is Lefebvre's concept of the "urban." Lefebvre conceived of the urban as a new world that combines the "real and the ideal, the existing and the possible" (Purcell 2014, 12). In such a world, the use value of public space is asserted over its exchange value. In *Cities for people, not for Profit*, Neil Brenner asserts that the book, through a treatment of RTC theory, means "...to underscore the urgent political priority of

constructing cities that correspond to human social needs rather than to the capitalist imperative of profit-making and social enclosure” (Brenner et al. 2012, 15).

Some scholars take an explanatory approach to Lefebvre’s right to the city. Peter Marcuse, in his chapter “Who’s Right to What City?” emphasizes that before we can implement right to the city, that “demand” or “goal” needs definition (Marcuse 2012, 24). His main question centers on how we understand RTC today and how a critical urban theory (or an evaluating, questioning attitude towards reality) can implement it (Marcuse 2012, 24). By contextualizing the concept with the current capitalist system and its history of instability throughout the 20th century, he then defines right to the city as two separate things, based on his interpretation of Lefebvre’s statement that it is a “cry and a demand” (2012, 29):

“an exigent demand by those deprived of basic material and legal rights, and an aspiration for the future by those discontented with life as they see it around them and perceived as limiting their potential for growth and creativity...the demand is of those who are excluded, the aspiration is of those who are alienated; the cry is for the material necessities of life, the aspiration is for a broader right to what is necessary beyond the material to lead a satisfying life (Marcuse 2012, 30).

Marcuse also addresses what right RTC actually entails. He stresses that it is not individual rights in the legal sense. That is not enough. Rather, he views it as a “broad and sweeping” right, not one for specific benefits, but a right in the political sense. It is a right “on a higher moral plane that demands a better system in which the potential benefits of an urban life can be fully and entire realized” (2012, 34) In Marcuse’s formulation right to the city is a moral claim rather than a legal claim (2012, 35).

A critical perspective also examines right to the city through the lens of economic theory. In David Harvey’s view, as well, a key task for critical or “revolutionary” urban theory is to

“chart the path” toward alternative, post-capitalist forms of urbanization (Harvey 1976, 314). He takes an economic view of RTC (Harvey 2001), claiming that since the creation of surplus drives the capitalist system (which depends on the subjugation of many for the benefit of those who control the surplus) social movements should focus on gaining control of the production of surplus (2012). He elaborates on this by noting, “to claim the right to the city in the sense I mean it here is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and re-made and to do so in a fundamental and radical way (Harvey 2012, 2). Moreover, it is a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization (Harvey 2008, 23).

Finally, Marcuse (2012) and Harvey (2008) answer what kind of city right to the city promises from Lefebvre’s original work. Marcuse notes that Lefebvre is clear on this question. It is not the right to the existing city that is demanded, but a future one (2012, 35). He emphasizes that is not in fact a city at all, but a whole society; not one that guarantees specific rights, but a totality of rights (for instance, the status of citizenship). Harvey also proposes what such a city looks like in principle, which is along the lines of Marcuse’s explanation. He makes an important distinction about what RTC is; it is far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies. He argues it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city “more after our heart’s desire” (2008, 23).

Another noteworthy perspective on right to the city takes a spatial focus. Don Mitchell (2003) ties a discussion of public space with the theory. Like the previous scholars discussed, he recognizes that right to the city entails the development of a fully urban society (Mitchell 2003, 19). He focuses on Lefebvre’s argument that the city is an oeuvre—a work in which all its

citizens participate (Mitchell 2003, 17). “Out of this struggle the city as a work—as an oeuvre, as a collective if not singular project—emerges, and new modes of living, new modes of inhabiting, are invented” (Mitchell 2003, 18). He reminds us that those rights that we accept as granted, such as the right to assemble in and use urban space, are relatively new achievements (Mitchell 2003, 14-15). And, according to Mitchell, they are contested and only grudgingly given by those who hold power. As hotly contested, rights to public space are never guaranteed (Mitchell 2003, 15). He notes that in the city in which we really live the “oeuvre” that Lefebvre writes about is inherently alienated from most city residents. Thus, the city is not so much a site of participation, but rather one of “expropriation by a dominant class (and set of economic interests)” that is uninterested in making the city a place of exchange of difference (Mitchell 2003, 18). Increasingly public space is being produced for us rather than by us (2003, 10). He argues that inhabitants must re-appropriate urban space through a process of political mobilization that struggles for grassroots control of the production of urban space.

We also see critical assessments of right to the city that focus on political struggle. Noteworthy in this group are Margit Mayer and Mark Purcell writings on RTC. Mayer (2012) sets her discussion of right to the city within the context of social movements around the world struggling against the reach of neoliberal urbanization. She notes that political action is an important element of Lefebvre’s conception of a new urban reality. To her, it is an “oppositional demand, which challenges the claims of the rich and the powerful” (Mayer 2012, 71).

Purcell argues (like the critical scholars covered above) that the only way to capture the true meaning and power of the idea is through a close examination of Lefebvre’s original body of work on the city and urban life (Purcell, 2014). He notes that the overuse of the concept has led to a blurring of its true meaning. Purcell set up his argument by addressing the state of

contemporary initiatives on right to the city. He argues that there exists a “stark gap” between Lefebvre’s conception of the theory and current treatments (2014). Purcell maintains that current treatments conceive of RTC through the framework of liberal-democratic values, or a form of the nation-state that gives people weak democratic control through representative government (2014, 2). At the same time, however, he warns against turning to a single, “orthodox” definition of the term, instead opting for “multiple formulations of the right to the city” that are clearly defined. He contributes to this body by providing one particular definition that closely examines the work of Lefebvre. Through this examination he argues that Lefebvre’s concept of right to the city takes a radical stance for revolution, rather than incremental change (Purcell, 2014, 1-2). Purcell emphasizes that a close reading of Lefebvre is coupled with an understanding of RTC as revolutionary change. He highlights that Lefebvre’s vision proposes a future, “possible world” (2014, 12). At the same time, however, it stands out from other utopian conceptions in that part of this new world, or “the urban,” is already here, operating in our present cities. Purcell writes that Lefebvre viewed every space in the city as bearing:

“the seeds of the urban, a not-yet-realized potential for urban life. As in the Jane Jacobs scene Lefebvre evokes, there are everywhere these little eruptions of the urban, brief moments where use value, meaningful connection, play, and collective autogestion by inhabitants emerge and flourish. But these moments are brief and fleeting” (2014, 12).

Purcell also highlights the importance that Lefebvre put on the concept of autogestion (2014, 8). Lefebvre generalizes the idea of autogestion to imagine self-management in all areas of life. Purcell notes that for Lefebvre, “the most important of these areas is the state. Autogestion in that context means people managing collective decisions themselves rather than surrendering those decisions to a cadre of state officials” (2014, 8). Such autogestion insists on

grassroots decision-making and the decentralization of control to autonomous local units. According to Purcell, removing the state out of its powerful role as manager requires regular people to reach their full potential as urban inhabitants (2014, 8).

Unlike the scholars covered above, Purcell emphasizes Lefebvre's insistence on a more "holistic understanding of social life one that is always attentive to the many aspects of human experience" (Purcell 2014, 6). He notes that the manner in which Lefebvre attempted to achieve this was by basing his analysis on peoples' actual experiences, which cannot be reduced to specific factions of life, like income and consumerism.

Conclusion

All of the scholars addressed in this section share the view that an understanding of right to the city true to Lefebvre calls for an alternative, post-capitalist form of urbanization. They differ, however, in how they approach this ultimate goal. For Harvey, for instance, an economic approach focusing on gaining control of the production of surplus holds the key to a new urban reality. Marcuse, on the other hand, looks closely at what type of city right to the city promises and who deserves this right. Mitchell places a strong emphasis on the place of public space in right to the city. Finally, Purcell aims to make a holistic analysis of right to the city.

2. Chapter Two: Review of General Practice

This chapter delves into the general practice of tactical urbanism in order to assess the parallels between its goals and right to the city theory. It looks at the definition of tactical urbanism as well as current literature on the phenomenon. The concept of urban vibrancy is defined and understood with regard to what may be considered as the missing, ‘people’ variable within orthodox planning regimes. This evaluation of tactical urbanism through the lens of right to the city asserts that some of the efforts championed by the movement simply add rights to the current, liberal-democratic city. However, a number of critical aspects of the movement resonate with Lefebvre’s conception of right to the city.

What is Tactical Urbanism?

The term tactical urbanism is often used to refer to low-cost, temporary interventions that improve local neighborhoods (Dube 2009). Tactical urbanism is a form of intervention within the intermediate timeframe spoken of above. Mike Lydon et al. (2012) define tactical urbanism as an intervention with the following 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 possibly high reward.”
- “The development of social capital between citizens and the building of organizational capacity between public-private institutions, non-profits, and the constituents.” (Lydon et al., 2012, 1)

Art, design, and activist studio Rebar defines tactical urbanism as the use of modest or temporary revisions to urban space to seed structural environmental change (Rebar 2014). They note that their “use of tactics is based on a belief that deep organizing structures (social, cultural, economic, and other) have a two-way relationship with the physical environment: they both produce the environment and are reproduced by it.” (Merker 2011, 49)

Tactical urbanism involves a diversity of approaches. It refers to temporary activation initiatives of a variety of property types, built and un-built (i.e., undeveloped spaces), it also involves activation along built retail corridors, involving informal actors implementing unorthodox solutions to maintain activity within vacant storefront properties for short periods of time. Such initiatives bring together local stakeholders—represented by community organizations, the creative community, small business start-ups, hobbyists, cottage industries as well as the owners of the vacant properties—for a shared purpose. Together these participants seek to enhance or stabilize the vibrancy of a neighborhood in a local, grassroots, and small-scale manner (Lydon et al., 2012).

Much of the current literature on tactical urbanism serves as handbooks for urban design strategies. For example, the Street Plans Collaborative, an urban planning, design and advocacy firm created *Tactical Urbanism 2: Short-Term Action, Long Term Change*. These small-scale interventions are characterized by their community-focus and realistic goals. One of the most widespread of these tactics is the annual Park(ing) Day, in which parking spaces are turned into temporary park spaces. Zeiger’s *the Interventionist’s Toolkit* (2011) also serves this role. The guidebooks provide a helpful framework for understanding how to make these interventions work. The goal is not to simply accomplish an interesting project that will be cleaned up by the city or thrown away, but to make something – even something temporary – that will change how

a place works and is perceived. And once that change has been made, to determine out how it can be replicated or made permanent.

Graham (2012) identifies purposes served by tactical urbanism commonly claimed by its advocates, referenced from a variety of sources:

...increasing the diversity of people shaping urban space (Haydn, 2006; Mackey, 2007; Blumner, 2006), creating opportunities for new directions and for challenging the status quo (Cumberlidge & Musgrave, 2007; Temel, 2006), attracting interest (and people) to a site (Blumner, 2006; Overmeyer, 2007), creating employment opportunities (Overmeyer, 2007; Cumberlidge & Musgrave, 2007), and providing incubator space for new entrepreneurs (Mackey, 2007; Overmeyer, 2007; Gerend, 2007) (as cited in Graham 2012, 3).

Here, we see some important parallels with right to the city. First, the purposes noted above highlight how TU, through separate and varied approaches, aims to build alternative structures within cities; it puts an emphasis on challenging current structures of governance, building alternative economies, and building from the bottom up. These ideals align with Lefebvre's call for a new city, one that "reabsorbs the state into the body of the people" (Purcell 2014, 7).

The ideals and goals of tactical urbanism resonate well with right to the city, but in practice we see that TU is sometimes at odds with the theory. As noted above, many TU initiatives are simply temporary interventions in urban space. It is hard to imagine how temporary actions like yarn bombing stop signs can lead to a reformulated urban reality.

Lefebvre emphasized that the RTC begins with political struggle:

The new political contract I propose will be only a point of departure for initiatives, ideas, even interpretations. This is not a dogmatic text. What is important is that this idea of contractual citizenship gives rise to a renewal of political life: a movement that has historic roots, roots in revolution, in Marxism,

in production and productive labor. But the movement must go beyond ideology so that new forces enter into action, come together, and bear down on the established order. This movement would accomplish democratically a project that has been abandoned: the dictatorship of the proletariat. It would lead, without brutality, to the withering away of the state. (Lefebvre 1990, 37, cited in Purcell 2014, 7)

Many of the tactics proposed in TU's handbook intervene in the city on much less of a political level. Compared to Lefebvre's ideas above, they are premature actions that need room to grow into struggles that insist on taking control from the state.

The Open-Source Nature of Tactical Urbanism

Tactical urbanism has been referred to as the anti-thesis of formalized planning and as "open-sourced" (Sassen, 2011). In the same manner that open-source software code can be altered or customized by anyone who wishes, tactical urbanism begins with the initiative of public participants and not by following official protocol. It is a bottom-up process. Chiara Camponeschi (2010), a researcher on collaborative outreach with community-based, active citizenship endeavors, views tactical initiatives as avenues for city-dwellers to be the initiators of action by contributing perspectives, expertise and solutions. These participants are not merely awaiting the consideration of policy makers who perceive them as municipal elements to be accommodated. Based on her idea of allowing such individuals to become actively involved in the betterment of their communities via interactive and intentional ways, Camponeschi elaborates her concept of 'Place-Based Creative Problem Solving' as "the leveraging of the imagination, and inventiveness of citizens, experts, and activists in collaborative efforts that make cities more inclusive, innovative and interactive" (Camponeschi 2010, 10).

For instance, grassroots initiatives at combatting commercial property neglect through the temporary tenancy of vacant storefronts are referred to as "informal revitalization" (Groth and

Corijn 2005, 3) or “transformative interventions” (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz 2011, 393). ‘Temporary’, ‘Ephemeral’, ‘Transitory’, ‘Provisional’, ‘DIY’, ‘Guerilla’, ‘Ad-hoc’, ‘Open-source’ and ‘Tactical’...-Urbanism are but some of the numerous names given to grassroots efforts at “empowering local residents to take ownership over their environment” (Camponeschi 2010, 5).

Here we see a key goal of right to the city. Because tactical urbanism proposes an alternative to urban governance, it resonates with RTC’s call for a city beyond today’s cities. TU’s aim of moving urban inhabitants to the center of decision making, rather than simply having them take part in the public participation process, resonates with Lefebvre’s call for “real and active participation” (Lefebvre in Purcell 2014, 11).

Urban Vibrancy

Enhancing street vibrancy is considered a primary goal of tactical urbanism endeavors. The concept of ‘urban vibrancy’ within this context has been qualitatively defined by the American organization ArtPlace2, as “attracting people, activities and value to a place and increasing the desire, and the economic opportunity, to thrive in a place” (ArtPlace, 2011, 1), and the creation of areas of identity and pride for the community (Groth & Corijn 2005, 524). Vibrancy is thus created when the public is able to come together for a variety of activities and functions in specific places. Some scholars (e.g. Gehl, 2010; Jacobs, 1985; Zukin, 2010; Campo, 2013) critique traditional, more top-down urban planning revitalization plans (although seeking similar results as grassroots initiatives) as lacking an important focus— people. “A new town square could be carefully, beautifully designed, but there was no guarantee that people would come and use it. People have a wide variety of motivations, needs and resources that shape their personal capacity and desire to use...space.” Indeed, “public space is co-produced through the

active involvement of the user” (Gehl 2010, 10). Such active involvement of people (or ‘users’) is needed not only in the planning and development of space but also in the continued appreciation of it. The concept of the ‘experience economy’, within an intra-urban context, speaks to drawing people back to districts, allowing them to reacquaint themselves to parts of a city with which they may have become unfamiliar.

Finally, tactical urbanisms’ spatial emphasis resonates with right to the city theory. As a movement that primarily focuses on expanding access to the “everyday spaces” between where we live and work by fostering vibrancy, it parallels RTC’s focus on “everyday” life. As noted above, TU recognizes that people (the inhabitants, the everyday people) are an essential element for fostering vibrancy in urban areas. It is the everyday experience of inhabiting the city that entitles one to a right to the city, as most scholars of the theory agree (Purcell 2014, 2). What TU values through its emphasis on vibrancy are the everyday experiences and spaces that make up cities (Lydon et al. 2012, 1). It stresses that top down designed spaces—like corporate plazas—fail to achieve vibrancy.

Power Dynamics

The literature also includes perspectives on power dynamics that shape urban space. The shaping and reshaping of urban spaces is a product of complex power relations, as different actors seek to determine who and what the city serves. Iveson (2013) identifies some of the resources mobilized in these power struggles: capital, property rights, planning codes, spatial design, law, various policing techniques and technologies, education, socialization, and labor. For Zeiger (2011), a growing number of small-scale do-it-yourself interventions in the city “hold at their heart a belief that change is possible despite economic or political obstacles, or disciplinary or institutional inertia.” Chapman (1996) discusses the concept of “interdiscursive

communication”, which “provide the space for both multiple systems of meaning and which also have the power to resist or at least limit the discursive domination of powerful groups in plan-making and subsequent use” (1996, 515).

Scholars like Crawford (2011, 13-18) have begun initial classification work that attempts to make sense of and find connections between various types of tactical urban design strategies. Some of the key dynamics that she identifies include:

- Defamiliarization: identifying new possibilities in taken-for-granted spaces of the city.
- Refamiliarization: re-occupation of alienated spaces in the city.
- Decommodification: assertion of use values over exchange values in urban space.
- Alternative economies: such as recycling and gifting economies

Iveson adds to this list by suggesting diagramming tactical urbanism across what he terms “various vectors” such as temporary to permanent, legal to illegal, and authored to anonymous (2013, 943).

Noteworthy here are the dynamics classified by Crawford. Decommodification and alternative economies align with right to the cities emphasis on. Defamiliarization and refamiliarization resonate with Lefebvre’s “deeply spatial understanding of politics, and in particular an understanding of politics that places urban space at the very center of its vision” (Purcell 2014, 9). These two actions, initiated by the everyday inhabitants of cities, emphasize that the “reappropriation” of space is a key dynamic taking place within tactical urbanism. What TU forwards is the idea that change can take place at the level of the street, or the neighborhood (Lydon et al., 2012, 4). This idea was expressed by Lefebvre, who wrote that “The transformation of society presupposes a collective ownership and management of space founded on the permanent participation of the “interested parties,” with their multiple, varied and even contradictory interests. (1991/1974, 422, cited in Purcell 2014, 9)

The categories of decommodification and alternative economies also resonate with key ideas in right to the city. As noted in Chapter 1, RTC values use value over exchange value. A less direct connection exists between alternative economies and right to the city. However, looking at this category through the lens of Harvey's take on right to the city highlights the connection. By appropriating space, tactical urbanism also aims to open these spaces for use by everyday inhabitants of the city (Lydon et al., 2012, 3). By working towards economies that serve residents' needs, rather than simply serving the profit seeking motives of a few, tactical urbanism aims to offer alternatives in today's urban areas (for instance with pop-up shops and guerilla gardening) (Lydon et al. 2012, 7).

Autogestion in General TU Goals

One aspect of tactical urbanism that brings it closer to Lefebvre's conception of right to the city is its grassroots approach, as an effort with ordinary people making up its main body. We can find some parallels of this grassroots approach with Lefebvre's concept of autogestion. First of all, we see the value of autogestion appear in the practice and writings of tactical urbanism. TU connects with RTC because it gives people an alternative beyond the status quo. It asserts that the only way to change our cities is to take our own lives into our own hands (Jordan and McKay 1998). In the case of tactical urbanism, we see this desire for laypeople to control and manage public space, to take it out of control of government and multinational organizations. The Street Plans Collaborative guide to tactical urbanism writes:

In the pursuit of equitable progress, citizens are typically invited to engage in a process that is fundamentally broken: rather than being asked to contribute to incremental change at the neighborhood or block level, residents are asked to react to proposals they often don't understand, and at a scale for which they have little control. For better or for worse, this often results in NIMBYism of the worst

kind. Surmounting the challenges inherent to these “public” processes continues to prove difficult. Fortunately, cities were not always made this way. We do have alternatives. (The Street Plans Collaborative 2012, 7).

The guide goes on to note that it is only recently that the coalition of cheap oil, easy financing, and government regulations, like Euclidean Zoning, has “dulled the spirit of the North American tactical urbanist” (2012, 8). It attributes the interest in tactical projects, which run along a continuum of unsanctioned to sanctioned efforts, to three overlapping trends:

- The Great Recession
- Shifting demographics
- The Internet as a tool for building the civic economy” (ISSUU, 9).

Hou and Rios connect the rising interest in tactical urbanism with the continued state disinvestment and reallocation of resources—communities are developing both approaches that necessitate new relationships between different sectors and forms of decision making that are more collaborative and informal in nature (Hou & Rios 2003, 20) They also note that, increasingly, many design professionals who utilize a participatory approach are expressing skepticism over the prevalent participatory design model (2003, 21). They argue that participatory design and planning is so institutionalized that it no longer meets many of its original goals (2003, 20). They write: “contrary to its original moral purpose, participation is often used to satisfy mandated requirements and is not intended to fully engage the community. As a result, public participation has become a highly bureaucratic and standardized process” (Hou & Rios 2003, 20).

A Theoretical Basis: From Strategic Planning to Tactical Planning

The literature on tactical urbanism also distinguishes between more informal approaches compared to more formal, bureaucratic processes (Arlt, 2006; Groth & Corijn 2005; Temel, 2006). This contrast juxtaposes the vertical power dynamic found in traditionally structured, government-led, ‘strategic’ masterplanning with more innovative styles which display more versatile, horizontal power dynamics, and ‘tactical’, collaborative organizational models.

Tactical urbanisms conceptual basis resonates with right to the city’s revolutionary ideal. Peter Arlt (2006) evokes the military origins of this conceptual divergence. Strategists, he writes, hold sufficient wealth and power to achieve their objectives without paying attention to external conditions, as they can augment such variables at will (2006, 20). Tacticians, lacking wealth or influence, are only able to achieve their objectives through adjusting themselves to their environment and collaborating with other stakeholders (2006, 22). They are “taking control of the conditions of their existence” (Purcell 2014, 11). A tactical urbanist similarly, must conform to the (most significantly, legal) environment created by municipal administrations. While some tacticians chose to resist, leading to legal repercussions for some. But whether they are working within the control of the current system or resisting, both are choosing to participate in the city; not in the sense of going through the formalized public participation process, but actually claiming their right to autogestion (Purcell 2014, 11).

The literature also emphasizes the environmentally synergistic nature of tactical collaboration. Groth & Corijn (2005) claim it is capable of creating local programming with an increased awareness of “particularities” which traditional planning, with its authoritarian and scientific abstraction of city life, may be incapable of recognizing. The tactical stance is also described as more “everyday urbanism” by Robert Temel (2006), where the goal—not the

adversary—is heterogeneity. If strategists are normative (i.e. compelled to follow standards, or norms) in style, he states, tacticians are specific—“reacting to existing situations and attempting to reinforce their qualities” (Temel 2006, 56).

Everyday urbanism arises frequently in the literature in discussing ideals of tactical urbanism (Chase et al. 2008). Harrison Fraker writes that it features “everyday space of public activity” and how everyday urbanism considers the city a “social product” (Fraker 2007, 62). Everyday urbanists are in fact tactical urbanists, as they seek out flexibility of land use programming and planning and call for active citizen involvement in shaping urban space (Fraker 2007, 60).

The foundational basis of the everyday urbanism philosophy leads to a political analysis behind the distinction between tactical and strategic urbanism. Michel De Certeau (1984), in his noteworthy work *The Practice of Everyday Life*, makes an important distinction between strategies and tactics. De Certeau links strategies with institutions and structures of power that are the “producers,” while “consumers” utilize tactics within the boundaries set and defined by strategies (1984, 28-29). In such a circumstance, he sees an explicit understanding that master-planning is conducted by those in positions of power, while those who lack power react through tactical organizing to effect change and alter their urban experience (1984, 30).

De Certeau’s notion of power imbalances is once more echoed by Henri Lefebvre (1991) who analyzes the production of urban space with the contrasting concepts of representations of space and representational space. The former is described as constructed and imposed by those in authority, while the latter is a mediated response by those who use the city. Tanya Toft references Lefebvre (1991, 33) in drawing this framework towards ideas of tactical urban initiatives, noting that, “If rational planning falls into the category of ordered representations of

space, temporary use of urban environments falls into the representational space (signifying) the ‘underground side of life’” (2011, 6).

Strategic and tactical urbanism may be said to exist at two ends of a spectrum. Much has been written about traditional planning’s move towards the tactical end of the spectrum. And the above- theorized, traditional power imbalances are shifting. Described as ‘open-source urbanism’ (Sassen, 2011) or 'bottom-up planning,' what is reflected today, is how newer synergistic platforms are being created to more accurately diagnose and react to local issues such as urban shrinkage, property vacancies, and crime, amongst others, by inviting a multiplicity of contributing perspectives (Groth & Corijn, 2005). Tanya Toft speaks of such “empowered urban agency as a productive force”, with tactical urbanism initiatives being “productive public sociability” (2011, 6).

Conclusion

Tactical urbanisms piecemeal and temporary approach makes it parallel a more watered down version of right to the city. However, this does not mean that TU fails to address some of Lefebvre’s conception of right to the city. This paper points out that because of TU’s disconnected approach, it falls short of RTC’s more sweeping and radical goal for change. Rather, it falls more in line with the liberal democratic approach discussed in chapter 2 by adding to already existing rights guaranteed by the state.

3. Chapter Three: Making a Claim on Space

This chapter looks at tactical urbanism's spatial focus in Tacoma. It compares and contrasts TU initiatives in Tacoma with right to the city theory. Through this analysis, this chapter contends that tactical urbanism holds potential for reaching the ideals of right to the city. The movement differs from right to the city, however, in a number of ways.

Tacoma cases

For this research, I interviewed six individuals involved with TU initiatives in Tacoma. In terms of basic demographics, while mine is not a random sample, some common characteristics of the TU tacticians I studied are worth noting. All of my respondents are in their late 20s through late 50s (with most in their early 30s); they are primarily white (though Asians make up a sizeable minority). They come predominantly from middle-class backgrounds, and most have at least some postsecondary education, ranging from undergraduate and art school coursework to graduate and professional degrees. Tacticians I met have stable day-jobs of a wide variety, from things like professional art practice, writing, and small business ownership to careers in formal design—with some relevance to the DIY projects they create “after work.” Though there are exceptions, the vast majority of the individuals I interviewed qualify as members of the so-called “creative class” (Florida 2002). On more subjective measures of appearance, many of them also match a particular subset thereof: the young, middle-class urban neighborhood newcomers looking for (and making) “neo-bohemia” who interest many in urban studies (Zukin 2010).

With regard to motivations and inspirations, all of my interviewees could explain their motivations behind tactical initiatives. They involve identifying spatial “problems” affecting them and/or their communities and a feeling that they can help “fix” it themselves. The particular DIY urban design responses are often inspired by their own skills, interests, and backgrounds, or

in many cases by hearing (usually via the internet) about something similar that others have created; frequently both. For instance, tacticians involved with street intersection improvements in Downtown Tacoma invariably say their actions are a response to the city's lack of such infrastructure, and also that they were directly inspired by DUI initiatives in other cities. A visible need and inspired response is the case with a DIY effort to address the lack of community and street life in downtown Tacoma. In this case, a group of area residents, working with community organizing specialist Jim Diers, worked together to plan a yearly blockparty that closes off a downtown street from automobiles.

Beyond immediate fixes, however, many tacticians I spoke with were less confident when asked about long-term objectives or wider impacts. As suggested in examples mentioned above, the broader intended outcomes of these actions vary widely, from the simple and place-specific (improve this street, install interactive art, brighten up those vacant lots) to inspiring others to see and think about the urban landscape differently and perhaps take similar actions themselves. While they differ in the scope of the impacts they imagine for their projects, without fail they express certainty that what they are doing is good, needed, filling a void where the city (or property owner) has dropped the ball. They share frustration with the bureaucracy of planning processes and feel that the city does not or would not do it right anyway, so it is better when “the people” take charge.

Claiming Forgotten Space

Tactical urbanism’s spatial focus resonates with the right to the city by attempting to claim neglected urban space for community use. As noted in the literature review chapter, the question of what kind of city right to the city proposes leads us to a future city different from our existing one (Purcell 2014). Tactical urbanism, with its insistence on remaking our cities despite

the existing framework of control and the limits of capital makes a stride towards a new city (Lydon et al. 2012, 6). The forgotten spaces in our cities, at the periphery of structures of power and wealth, are grounds of experimentation for tactical urbanists. Erica Villagomez calls these forgotten spaces “residual space” (2010). She notes that in order to claim these spaces, the city must be engaged at the “intimate scale of the person, focusing on the potential of ordinary spaces within our built environment” (2010, 95). This step is in opposition to current city planning, according to her. As demonstrated through showcasing a few of the rich precedents worldwide, exploiting and transforming neglected spaces that exist throughout our cities is one of the most direct ways to create a more equitable and dynamic urban environment. Moreover, the transformation of these everyday spaces can have large social, economic, and ecological impacts on the livability and quality of our cities (Villagomez 2010, 96). Given that such spaces are often in disrepair, small interventions need not require large capital investment, particularly through the engagement of local communities and individuals (Villagomez 2010, 95).

In Tacoma, TU’s approach to urban space makes an attempt at envisioning this future city conceived by right to the city. Spaceworks Tacoma, a non-profit supported by the City of Tacoma, the Chamber of Commerce, and Seattle arts non-profit Shunpike, serves as an example of tactical urbanism encouraged by official circles. It is designed to activate empty storefronts and vacant space. The initiative makes no- and low-cost temporary space, training, and technical assistance available to artists, creative entrepreneurs, organizations, and community groups. The organization’s goal is to support small-scale projects that can help Tacoma become a stronger, more active city (Spaceworks Tacoma, 2014a).

The program strives to reclaim neglected space in the city for individuals and groups who otherwise would not have access to the spaces without more upfront capital (Spaceworks

Tacoma, 2014a). In this way the organization enables the collaboration and growth of small, craft producers, artists and community groups. After years of struggling with empty storefronts, the program hopes to address this gap in creative ways, while trying to expand opportunities for residents in the city. They accomplish this by:

- Providing temporary space and visibility to creative entrepreneurs, organizations, community groups and artists.
- Facilitating training and professional development.
- Presenting community events that highlight their participants and encourage community interaction. (Spaceworks Tacoma, 2014a)

A group of stores in Tacoma's Hilltop neighborhood illustrate how the program works. After years of empty buildings lining the neighborhood's main commercial corridor, Spaceworks approached landlords and connected them with "creative enterprises." In one space they teach graffiti art, break-dancing and how to deejay. In another, there's a bicycle co-op and a skateboard shop.

Together the shops give a sense of revival for the empty storefronts all over Tacoma. The property owner provides the space, while participants bring their own insurance, pay utilities, do basic improvements and liven up the spaces. Participants get free rent for about six months. Some have turned into paying tenants. "I think Spaceworks is a good example of how important community is and how we can help each other," Arnold says. Arnold's family-friendly theater allows parents and children to watch and participate in performances. Children are encouraged to draw in chalk on the sidewalk outside and explore the inside. "The beautiful thing now is you drive by this block and it's busy. What's really key is that instead of corporate tenants like Starbucks moving in, they're mom and pop scale enterprises." Arnold says (Interview with Cindy Arnold, 2014)



Figure 1 Grit City Grindhouse interior, a Spaceworks Tacoma applicant (Photo courtesy of Grit City Grindhouse)

The DIY ideal appears in other Spaceworks endeavors as well. Taylor Woodruff, Bobby Boyle, and Kevin Carlton partnered to open a skate shop (Grit City Grindhouse) in one of Spaceworks spaces in downtown Tacoma. With little overhead costs, Spaceworks enabled them to open their doors with much more inventory than would have otherwise been possible. The space holds the store, inventory, meeting space, and an art studio. The creative nature of Spaceworks also allows Taylor house his art studio in the back of the building where he customizes new boards and refurbishes old ones. Taylor describes the people and process of Spaceworks as “crazy supportive, like creative people’s parents almost, so nurturing, they just want Tacoma to be awesome and succeed.”

Along with Taylor’s on-site board customization, Grit City Grindhouse stands out in the skate-retail arena because of its commitment to providing a wide variety and diversity of product. “The best part of skateboarding is the variety,” Taylor says, and he seeks to appeal to as many skate styles and philosophies as come through the shop’s doors. They reach out to the

smaller, garage-based manufacturers who build boards for the love of the sport, regardless of profit. Taylor spoke to the goals of the shop:

It's not like we're just selling a product, you know? Our whole philosophy is about how we grow and change with our customers and our community; that's my favorite part of meeting different skaters. We're so ready to find out what our customers are in to and what they need.

In some spots Spaceworks has livened up storefronts with art displays. More than 60 installations have filled to formerly empty space. "There's this view that there's nothing happening, like no energy and creativity," artist Kenji Stoll said (Interview with Kenji Stoll). "I think Spaceworks is a great way to change that view and show people there's a lot happening." Stoll is part of the non-profit youth arts organization Fab-5. They have been active for the past ten years using churches and community centers for space. Spaceworks gave them their first space where they could work with kids year round. "Through Spaceworks small organizations like us are able to take that next step and contribute back in a serious way," Stoll said.

Most recently, artists Chelsea O'Sullivan and Diana Leigh Surma have been commissioned by Spaceworks to create murals that will bring life to the longstanding vacant building at the corner of South 11th and Market Street in downtown Tacoma. Spaceworks notes that their efforts will activate the intersection, prevent vandalism, and inspire creativity in the community (Spaceworks Tacoma, 2014b). These new murals are part of the 11th round of Artscapes exhibitions. Over the course of the program vacant storefronts throughout downtown Tacoma have been filled with 84 large scale exhibits, including art installations, murals, and



Figure 2 A Spaceworks Tacoma Artscapes mural (Photo my own)

videos. Many of the Artscape exhibitions invite volunteers and students to join in on the creation of murals and other projects. They celebrate the revitalization of Tacoma's downtown corridor and encourage youth participation in the arts (Spaceworks Tacoma, 2014b).

We can see a glimmer of Lefebvre's influence here, particularly the emphasis he places on use value over exchange value (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]), despite the programs contract with property owners. It minimally weakens the primacy of private property. Purcell notes that at the heart of the capitalist city is the property relation (2014, 10). Under capitalism, private property separates the city into isolated sectors. Property rights are supreme. Thus, the production of space is driven by this system (Purcell 2014, 10). In downtown Tacoma, the needs of private property owners have come first. This explains the state of downtown retail spaces since downtown's decline. Small retail spaces in downtown remain unattractive for corporate retail, which locate in malls easily accessible from freeways (Jones 1991). Property owners leave their spaces empty for lack of tenants who can pay market rent (Gratz and Mintz 2000, 38). The spaces remain unoccupied and in turn neglected by absentee property owners sitting on their investments. All the while, these spaces, which are most conducive for encounter, play, and interaction, are inaccessible to everyday people (Jacobs, 1961). Purcell writes that Lefebvre "...argues that capitalist industrialization imposes itself on the city by asserting the primacy of exchange value. It seeks to make everything in the city, including space itself, reducible to economic exchange, to a marketable commodity" (Purcell 2014, 9-10).

Spaceworks, however, works towards something much less sweeping than Lefebvre. It does not seek to move beyond property rights. It simply balances the needs and interests of property owners with the social needs of city residents (Purcell 2014, 7). By reducing the need for upfront capital, Spaceworks puts use value alongside exchange value, while simultaneously expanding access beyond the managerial elite, or the capitalists. (Marcuse 2012, 31). The initiative simply makes the statement that property rights are not our only concern. They are still firmly in place, but now they must co-exist with social use value.

Vacant Property Owners

Two property owners involved with Spaceworks were interviewed for this paper. Both vacant property owners were excited about the basic concept of having temporary tenants maintain their property while it remained idle, and contribute to a livelier location as it was shown, although both did raise some concerns and questions. Liability concerned both property owners. With access granted to their properties in the unconventional form of a license agreement, they wondered about not being held responsible for any potential injuries experienced by the public. Additionally, were the property, or the licensee's contents damaged, they wondered if they would be in any way held financially liable. The question of the level and ownership of risk was of primary concern in this regard.

While both landlords appreciated the maintenance and surveillance benefits from the occupation of their properties, they wondered how hard it would be to have temporary occupants vacate if more permanent options (buyers, tenants or development) surfaced. One owner asked if the disruption from a reversion to a market-rental situation would potentially draw a reaction from the community— would there be a backlash? Would they be seen as being profit-driven rather than socially engaged?

Expanding Access to Urban Space

Tactical urbanisms's spatial focus also resonates with right to the city because it aims to claim spaces for average people, and shake up the status quo. In Tacoma, temporary action that interrupts the status quo is taking place through the efforts of tactical urbanists. Behind the concept of the right to the city is the notion that all city residents have rights of access to public space (Iveson 2013). But as discussed above, access to city space is often contested, and many groups within the city are excluded access. One notable case is skateboarders. As a truly



Figure 3 Go Skate Tacoma in Tollefson Plaza (Photo courtesy of Ben Warner)

contested practice in public space, skateboarding has received much negative reaction from city governments, businesses, and parks (Chiu 2009). Deemed a destructive sport, it's been banished from "sanctified" public space: the corporate plaza, parks, and institutional parking lots to name a few. In Tacoma, we see how urban tacticians were able to overcome this barrier through interventions in public space.

Go Skate Tacoma, an event led by a varied group of skateboarders and downtown enthusiasts in Tacoma, forwards the notion that urban space should be open to all. With this in mind, GO Skate Tacoma organizers aim to break down the stereotypes about skateboarding, and win the right to utilize the space. But at the same time, they've carried the banner of urban "vibrancy." They argue for their right to use space through the language of reinvesting and rejuvenating underutilized urban areas (Go Skate Tacoma, 2011). Exploiting and transforming neglected spaces that exist throughout our cities is one of the most direct ways to create a more

equitable and dynamic urban environment (Villagomez 2010, 95). Moreover, the transformation of these everyday spaces can have large social, economic, and ecological impacts on the livability and quality of our cities (Villagomez 2010, 96).

The first GO Skate Tacoma event, held in June 2011, brought together area skateboarders in one forgotten space in the city-Tollefson Plaza. The plaza, wedged in the triangle created by two intersecting roads, is most often missing people (Boe 2009) and has been described as empty, vacuous, and dull (Planetizen 2008). The event lets skateboarders legally skate downtown. As part of the official worldwide “Go Skateboarding Day” Tacoma skaters and non-skaters alike are invited to come together in what local organizers, made up of a varied group of Tacoma skateboarders, college students, and community activists, hopes to be an all-inclusive community event (Tacoma Weekly 2011). Go Skate, Tacoma showcases skateboarding competitions and live music, and offers youth mentoring and outreach as well. The first such event also included a message from Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland discussing the City’s abolishment of skateboarding restrictions in downtown Tacoma and its incorporation in city policy as a viable form of transportation (Tacoma Weekly 2011).

We see parallels with Lefebvre’s concept of appropriation in the skateboarders use of public space. Warner notes that skateboarders in the city have skated in spaces traditionally closed off to them, risking backlash from the law. To him, the event at Tollefson Plaza makes a statement on par with this. Skatestoppers were removed from the plazas steps to make room for a group previously unwelcome to enter or even shape the space. Lefebvre sees the right to the city as “a struggle to “de-alienate” urban space, to reintegrate it into the web of social connections” (Purcell 2014, 10). Appropriation, to Lefebvre, can bring about this de-alienation. In order for inhabitants to gain a right to the city, they must appropriate space within it (Purcell

2014, 10). To appropriate something is to take it to oneself, to make it one's own. In claiming a right to the city, inhabitants take urban space as their own, they appropriate what is properly theirs. One of the events main organizers, Warner's major goal is to open access to spaces like Tollefson Plaza to skateboarders. Warner notes:

City police officers and other authority figures have pretty much run them out of downtown Tacoma for doing something that they love. What that says to a child is whatever they do, or who they identify themselves as, is inherently wrong. It says 'this is a community space and you belong outside of it.' If you treat a kid like who he is or what he does is wrong... they're going to believe that. A lot of kids identify themselves as being criminals for skateboarding. You can't go grind all over the city, but you should be able to skate down the street. It's a complicated situation, but there is a way to do it so you're not keeping certain people out and only letting certain people into the community (Interview with Ben Warner, 2014).

At work during Go Skate Day is what Hou calls "self-made urban spaces" (Hou 2010, 2) The skaters are temporarily taking over existing urban sites and injected them with new functions and meanings. Hou sums up the phenomenon well:

These instances of self-made urban spaces, reclaimed and appropriated sites, temporary events, and flash mobs, as well as informal gathering places created by predominantly marginalized communities, have provided new expression of the collective realms in the contemporary city. No longer confined to the archetypal categories of neighborhood parks, public plaza, and civic architecture, these *insurgent public spaces* challenge the conventional, codified notion of public and the making of space (Hou 2010, 2).

Although we see a level of appropriation taking place here, the approach through which the skateboarders achieve this right points to a more liberal-democratic context. Through his

work, Warner pushed for legalizing skateboarding as a means of transportation downtown, which was previously illegal in the downtown business district (Tacoma Comprehensive Plan 2013, T-11 and Tacoma Municipal Code 2013, 11-32). There is a difference between what's at work here and Lefebvre's radical conception of right to the city. The skateboarders gained the right to skate downtown. This right has been added to the "list of existing liberal-democratic rights" (Purcell 2014, 2). One can interpret this as more of an effort towards inclusion, or the "desire to integrate currently excluded groups into the structures of government and the formal economy" (Purcell 2014, 3). This differs fundamentally from how Lefebvre's conceived of RTC. He saw it as a radical stance that offers an alternative to existing state and capitalist structures.

Reimagining the Urban

Tactical urbanism's focus on urban space also parallels with the right to the city because it uses space to imagine a new urban reality. In a premature sense, TU evokes Lefebvre's concept of the "urban." As expanded upon in chapter two, Lefebvre conceived of a new world that combines the "real and the ideal, the existing and the possible" (Purcell 2014, 12). In such a world, the use value of urban space is asserted over its exchange value. At the core of the idea is that a "holistic understanding of social life" can move our cities away from reductionisms like capitalism, with its focus on exchange values (Purcell 2014, 6). With this in mind, Harvey makes an important distinction about what the right to the city is; it is far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies. He argues it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city "more after our heart's desire" (2008, 23). Moreover, it is a collective process (Harvey 2008, 23). Tactical urbanism strives to build this capital spatially, by injecting social meaning in neglected and forgotten spaces of the city: by striving to makes these spaces truly "urban" (Purcell 2014, 12).

In Tacoma, we see tactical efforts at play that are centered around the goal of building more holistic understanding of social life. Once a year Downtown Tacoma's Opera Alley hosts what is quickly becoming a popular destination. The vision behind the Downtown Block Party is giving attendees the chance to feel what it would be like to make their neighborhood a better place by working collaboratively and creatively (Block Party Info). Organized by Local Life, a non-profit focused on growing community and neighborhoods from the bottom-up, the event celebrates the walkable neighborhood of Downtown Tacoma while asking attendees to explore what it's like to collaborate creatively with their community. A centerpiece of the event is a community mural project in which event-goers can contribute to. Local Life's Downtown Block Party reprograms the city's focus on space from exchange value to use value. Instead of vendor booths, the event is full of artistic demonstrations and activities. Local Life's director highlights why the event forgoes vendor booths:

We wanted this event to be about creating a community in downtown. To us it is a statement about how our streets, public spaces, and neighborhoods could be. Places of exchange, social interaction, and creative enterprise, rather than simply conduits between work and home. We want to move peoples' perceptions away from that kind of utilitarian perspective. We want to shake up how we're used to doing things by imaging another reality. So in that way block party is a visioning process (Interview with Justin Mayfield, 2014).

The event—complete with milling people, a community mural, artistic demonstrations, and outdoor seating—reprograms the public street for the duration of a day. It transforms the space from a street dedicated to the movement and storage of automobiles to a place of rest, relaxation, and social interaction in downtown Tacoma. From the moment one steps into Opera Alley, the atmosphere asks you to participate in the life and activity around you. Participants can paint, craft, dance, eat, and drink.



Figure 4 Downtown blockparty closes off a street from auto traffic (Photo courtesy of Justin Mayfield)

Here we see the distinction that Lefebvre gave between the “city” and the “urban” (Purcell 2014, 10) Purcell writes that the “contemporary “city” is the capitalist city, which for him [Lefebvre] is not “the urban” at all, but merely an impoverished manifestation of it, an urban world reduced to its economic elements” (2014, 10) Purcell notes that the urban does not exist in its “mature form” (2014, 12). Likewise, Local Life’s Block Party is simply a taste of what the urban in Tacoma could be like. But there is a place for such pilot endeavors. Part of its role is to recondition our senses towards the “urban”; to give us a city where use value can overcome exchange values (Purcell 2014, 13).

Conclusion

In each of these cases, I have explored the connection between tactical urbanism's claims on public and right to the city theory. Expanding access to undervalued spaces of Tacoma and working on building the "urban" within these spaces figures prominently in these cases. The case studies are intended to be illustrative rather than representative—I make no claim that the processes of urban transformation and tactics discussed in this chapter are indicative of trends being practiced elsewhere. The tactics discussed are by no means unique to Tacoma or the Northwest.

4. Chapter Four: Social Component

This chapter addresses the “who” aspect of tactical urbanism in Tacoma. Scholars critically assessing Lefebvre’s original conception address the question of who has the right to the city (Marcuse 2010, de Souza 2010, Mayer 2012). I analyze the social and organizational aspect of tactical urbanism through the lens of right to the city in order to answer the following question: to what extent do these practices ‘give birth’ to a new kind of city? Do they assert “use value over exchange value encounter over consumption, interaction over segregation, free activity and play over work” (Purcell 2014, 13)? This chapter delves into the practice in Tacoma. Tactical urbanisms piecemeal and temporary approach makes it in many ways a “watered-down” approach to RTC. However, this does not mean that TU fails to address part of Lefebvre’s conception of right to the city. In many ways it falls more in line with the liberal democratic approach discussed in chapter 1 by adding to already existing rights guaranteed by the state.

Rogue Tactical Urbanism

In Tacoma, a noteworthy case reflects Lefebvre’s call for autogestion and the appropriation of space. A group of vigilantes painted several Tacoma streets in spring 2013 with crosswalk-like stripes and bike markers. The City of Tacoma announced in early June that the painters, if caught, would be prosecuted. Three of the painters, including the ringleader, told The Tacoma News Tribune in July that they had grown frustrated with what they perceived as lack of action surrounding city officials' rhetoric of wanting more walk-able and bike-able streets. City officials countered that there simply isn't enough funding for improvements (The News Tribune 2014).



Figure 5 Tacoma rogue crosswalks before and after (Photos courtesy of Seong Shin)

Call them “rogue” or “vigilante” or “guerrilla” – unofficial crosswalks appeared at a handful of Tacoma intersections in the spring of 2013. The following summarizes the course of events (The News Tribune 2013):

- Mid May a hand-painted crosswalk appeared on part of the intersection at 6th and St Helens (pictured above).
- The City responded by grinding it off, stating the crosswalk failed to meet ADA regulations (one of the ends of the crosswalk attached to an older island with no egress).
- The City met with a group of stakeholders, Tacoma Urban Landscaping, and gave some options to help the intersection improve (specifically they addressed the old fence that lines the vacant lot on the east side of the intersection).
- Over the course of a month 4-6 more hand painted crosswalks appeared throughout Downtown Tacoma and into a nearby neighborhood.
- The Tacoma News Tribune quoted the City as saying they will pursue legal action against the crosswalk painters. The Tribune wrote an Op-Ed stating that was a misguided idea, with strong support of the painters on social media and the Internet. Also, the City went to further lengths by calling in forensics to investigate the scene.

Here we see inklings of how Lefebvre conceived of autogestion in regard to everyday life. Purcell (2014) notes that Lefebvre reinterpreted the idea, which has its roots in factory workers taking over the means of production and manage decisions on their own, to mean self-management in every aspect of life (8). This would mean the decentralization of control and a “great awakening on the part of regular people” (Purcell 2014, 8). The rogue crosswalk painters made a move towards refocusing control, albeit for a limited few. Their action can be interpreted as making a statement on how decisions should be made: directly. As noted above, city officials claimed a lack of funds for failing to provide sufficient pedestrian infrastructure. Whether that is the case or not, everyday people are far from the decision making functions that allocate funding for projects. And even for those who chose to be civically engaged, their influence is filtered through the liberal-democratic system of representative government (Purcell 2014, 2).

The rogue crosswalk painters also make a statement on self-organizing can create spaces with value to everyday people. Admittedly, the guerilla urban designers organized and acted

based on the interests of their narrow group. But this incident is hardly citizen action in a mature state. It is reactionary and meant to elicit shock and discussion. Following this, Lefebvre imagines appropriation to have a much broader and more structural meaning. Not only is appropriation the right to occupy already-produced urban space, it is also the right to produce urban space so that it meets the needs of inhabitants (Lefebvre 1996, 179). Because appropriation gives inhabitants the right to ‘full and complete usage’ of urban space in the course of everyday life (Lefebvre 1996, 179), space must be produced in a way that makes that full and complete usage possible. The use value aspect of urban space must therefore be the primary consideration in decisions that produce urban space Mayfield touches on this when talking about the effects of the rogue crosswalks:

...I started seeing people’s reactions online and hearing them in person. I walked past the crosswalks. I used them. And I was unexpectedly encouraged. The crosswalks communicated a lawful and missing truth: the city and its neighborhoods are meant to be walked. (Or at least the older neighborhoods were. The post-WW2 ones could’ve been planned with that intent, but that’s another story.) Unfortunately American car-culture has had a few generations to lodge itself deep inside our collective psyche. We’ve forgotten the satisfaction of fresh air, using our legs, and bumping into people on the way to get dinner. And our streets are thirsty for participation. They’re waiting for bustle and bumble. If streets are a neighborhood’s arteries, people walking them are the blood that brings the community to life (Interview with Justin Mayfield, 2014).

At this point such efforts only touch on the tip of the right to the city as imagined by Lefebvre. Hope lies, however, in the power of such everyday acts in sparking more lasting change, as Purcell (2014) writes:

But recognizing the urban requires a revolutionary imagination. It requires a habit of thinking in terms of urgent utopia. To see the present urban we must be willing

to imagine and demand a possible world, even if that world is impossible under the conditions that exist now. For Lefebvre the urban constitutes a revolution, but one that requires millions of everyday acts of resistance and creation (Purcell 2014, 13).

Tacoma Neighborhood Organizing

In the cases considered in this project, tactical urbanism efforts center on the concept of self-management. *Local Life* organized because of a perceived lack of citizen control over shaping the city's urban space. The organization stemmed out of the notion that the root of community development should be the neighborhood. A group of residents in Downtown Tacoma met regularly for "learning parties" that focused on discussing urban planning and built environment topics and issues. Out of these gatherings came the common recognition that community organizing would be a healing step for downtown (Interview with Justin Mayfield, 2014).

The movement began when *Local Life* partnered with other downtown non-profits and the Downtown Merchants Group to present a charrette called *Go Local or Die*. After enduring decades of disinvestment and disinterest, significant work has been done toward revitalizing the physical structure and community networks of downtown Tacoma. For downtown residents, much more work was needed. To ensure the future vitality of the neighborhood the initial residents who founded *Local Life* invited residents, organizations, and businesses to gather and discuss the immediate and long-term benefits of living a more community based life (Interview with Justin Mayfield, 2014). According to Local Life's website, the non-profit "nurtures and promotes holistic neighborhood identities through cultural and learning events, grassroots organization, and community mentorship, resulting in a powerful interactive network" (Local Life, 2014).

Jim Diers, the former Director of Neighborhoods in Seattle and author of the book *Neighbor Power*, facilitated the charrettes. He is a consultant on community mobilization. Diers is well known for empowering Seattle's neighborhoods in the 90s and has since facilitated productive action-oriented dialogues around the world (Seattle Community Media, 2012). The charrettes featured opening ideas and continued public dialogue with local innovators and leaders whose work has been valued in the downtown community (Interview with Justin Mayfield, 2014). They addressed questions such as:

- How do I get involved?
- What kind of city can I imagine loving to live in?
- What does quality of life mean for my whole neighborhood?
- How can I combine my creative power with others?
- What change would make us all come up at once?

“This sort of thinking outside of our own yards is the start to a whole lot of grassroots power that has saved and improved places such as Portland, Austin and the Seattle neighborhoods of Wallingford and Fremont,” Diers says. At one of the community organizing events, Diers said, “Involvement, surprisingly, starts right next door. At the most basic level, connecting with the people around you is the fastest track to making positive change in more than just your patio furniture” (Diers 2014). The director of Local Life summed up the groups bottom-up approach:

It all just seemed like random actions. You know, we'd organize an event, facilitate community gathering, but there was nothing to link them. So, that's when we decided to form Local Life. Everyone in the group had something to offer, one neighbor was instrumental in developing our brand...he designed our logo. And then after we incorporated we felt like we were poised to really make a difference in the community...specifically the downtown community (Interview with Justin Mayfield, 2014).

The key concept emphasized by this activist is the importance of grassroots initiatives. As noted above, development towards Lefebvre's "urban" happens when people get together in order to change the order of things. Purcell notes:

Through this kind of participation, inhabitants experience an awakening. They come into consciousness of themselves as inhabitants, as embedded in a web of social connections, as dependent on and stewards of "the urban." As they become conscious in this way, they recognize the need to struggle against the industrial capitalist city and for the urban. They come to see participation not as speaking at a public hearing or serving on a citizens' panel, but as the living struggle for a city that is controlled by its inhabitants (2012, 11).

This process stands as a new form of politics within the city, vastly different than the narrow view of politics that refers to achieving and exercising positions of governance. It is a politics that convinces through action. Local Life's blockparty serves as a key example:

A key idea behind blockparty is that it should serve as example to partygoers of what their city, neighborhood block could look and feel like. We're [Local Life] saying "this is an idea you could in your neighborhood. It can be lively. It can be walkable. It can be local. You and your neighbors are a key asset. You can organize and create a community (Interview with Justin Mayfield, 2014).

In relation to the discussion of the right to the city in chapter 1, Local Life's practices are a good example of how RTC is not so much demanded as declared through action. In a manner that might now be described as 'do-it-yourself' or 'guerrilla' urbanism, Local Life's activists took the concept of urban space to mean that they must spark an interest in the city's spaces.

Tacoma Urban Landscaping

A noteworthy case of neighborhood organizing involves a tactical project initiated by neighbors in Tacoma's historic theater district. Neighborhood residents organized and met

regularly through their neighborhood council. They realized that the intersection of 6th and St. Helens needed attention, with conditions for pedestrians bordering on unsafe. According to one of the lead tacticians, the neighbors decided that if they wanted to see the intersection improve in the short term, they had to do it themselves. One of the groups key organizers, Seong Shin, lives in the neighborhood. The tactician was instrumental in getting the neighborhood organized and connected:

We didn't get city approval for most of our projects. It was just a matter of connecting with people in the neighborhood to get the ball rolling. After they saw what we were doing, though, the city responded positively. When we wanted to improve the safety of the sidewalk along St. Helens the city offered to give us cement barriers. But from the beginning we realized we couldn't wait for official approval in order to get anything done (Interview with Seong Shin, 2014).

One of Tacoma Urban Landscape's project phases involved setting up an interactive art installation—Love Tacoma Lane—created by the community, including UW Tacoma and Tacoma School of the Arts students and passersby, on the gated walkway along the east side of St. Helens Ave. just south of 6th Avenue. Shin noted that the nearest thing in view on St. Helens is a big, gaping “Silent Hill” hole where a building (and a sidewalk) used to stand. Over the six and a half years the organizer lived in the theater district, this particular area has been a sore spot for residents in the neighborhood. There used to be signs advertising new condos, but those have since disappeared. Because the organizer is a professional designer, she thought it was going to be too long of a process to ask permission from the city. Her group had three goals: make people pay attention to the street, create interest for possible investors, and celebrate Tacoma.

The idea evolved into creating a walkway adorned with tags with messages about what



Figure 6 St. Helens Street in downtown Tacoma before and after Tacoma Urban Landscaping intervention (Photos courtesy of Seong Shin)

people love about Tacoma. Before the installation of the project, three metal bars were put in over the top to improve the safety of the gated walkway. ARC Printing located just down the hill provided the tags. Cards were made at community meetings, by local shoppers, and by people just walking through. Still somewhat fearing backlash, Shin was relieved when members of city government she was connected with responded positively.

Shin summed up a lot of the motivations and inspirations that I heard in my interviews, when she explained how she and her group started making DIY improvements along St. Helens St.:

We were just kind of looking into ways that we could make the street more comfortable. The whole point of it is to make the place better to be in. It would be great if the city did it, but I think for us to expect and wait and hope for the city to do something like this is unrealistic (Interview with Seong Shin, 2014).

Across all of these motivations, justifications, and goals, the decision to make DIY alterations like these also implies a strong sense of self-entitlement. It involves a value judgment of some neglect or deficiency or opportunity in the space that the do-it-yourselfer hopes to address, and a willingness to make changes to the community based in large part on one's own preferences. At a minimum, “we're not hurting anybody” is a pretty common sentiment amongst those I spoke with.



Figure 7 Tacoma Urban Landscaping's process (photo courtesy of Seong Shin)

Who's Right?

Despite tactical urbanisms grassroots organizing, it falls short of the goals of right to the city by risking being an endeavor for the privileged and educated. Marcuse (2012) makes an important assessment of Lefebvre's writings on RTC by highlighting who deserves the right to the city. As noted in Chapter 2, he writes that Lefebvre right is "both a cry and a demand"

(Marcuse 2012, 30); it is a demand by the deprived and an aspiration by those who are unsatisfied by the status quo. Only by uniting these two elements can we come close to Lefebvre's conception of right to the city (Marcuse 2012, 32).

In the case of Local Life, we see this failure to bridge the divide between the deprived and the alienated. Although Block Party is free and open to all, Local Life falls short of right to the city's goal of creating an "urban" for all members of society. As Marcuse notes, in order for his conception of RTC to be fulfilled, the deprived and discontented members of society must link up (2012, 30). Without connecting those in want, whose immediate needs are not fulfilled (e.g. the homeless, the hungry, and the racially oppressed) with those who are "integrated in the system and sharing in its material benefits, but constrained in their opportunities for creative activity, oppressed in their social relationships..." right to the city cannot be fulfilled (Marcuse 2012, 31). The director of Local Life expressed this concern about the course of the non-profit. He said that Local Life's various events and conferences run the risk of only serving "white people" desirous of creating more meaningful and connected communities from corporate influence. Ideally, the organization would like to bring together "a more racially diverse representation of our community, since everyone should feel like our public spaces are accessible."

At the community-organizing (City of Neighborhoods) event held by Local Life, this concern surfaces as well. All of the attendees were white residents representing more affluent neighborhoods in the city. One participant outwardly expressed this concern, asking how City of Neighborhoods can attract a more racially diverse involvement. Thus, as of yet, Local Life has been successful in uniting the "discontented" in the city; those who feel their neighborhoods lack opportunities for social fulfillment and local amenities.

As with *Local Life*, *Spaceworks* addresses who's right to the city that Marcuse (2012) forwards. This varied group of artists, small-scale entrepreneurs, and community organizations can be defined as the *alienated* segment of society that Marcuse so explicitly defines. This group is in resistance to the dominant system as preventing adequate satisfaction of their human needs (Marcuse 2012, 34). Because *Spaceworks* overcomes some of the hurdles to public space placed by traditional neoliberal cities, it comes closer to the call for reimagining our cities. However, it falls a step short from reaching its transformative potential in that it fails to unite the alienated with the deprived, making its efforts fall short of a politics of change.

Conclusion: The Challenge for Tactical Urbanism

Will an alternative urban reality emerge out of diverse tactical initiatives, giving birth to a new kind of city such as imagined by Lefebvre? To close off a street for people, to install a piece of furniture on the street, to convert a disused building into a temporary gallery, to DIY paint an intersection—such takeovers certainly hint at alternative possibilities for urban space, they show us the possible ‘beach beneath the street.’ Such tactics do have the power to question authorities’ role of shaping and controlling space, and their potential to garner attention is shown by the lengths authorities go to close them down.

I have argued, however, that tactical urbanism does not necessarily amount to a new urban society that will result in a more democratic and just city. Certainly, such practices have the potential to establish democratic rights to the city. But for this potential to be realized, new democratic forms of authority in the city must be asserted through the formation and action of new political subjects. I am not saying that all forms of DIY initiatives fall short of this goal. The sheer diversity of tactical initiatives makes it difficult to assess them individually on this basis. In the cases examined in Tacoma, we see this diversity of actions represented in one city. In the case of Tacoma Urban Landscaping and Local Life, DIY practices were made political by the assertion that city residents could get things done without the city’s involvement. *Local Life’s* City of Neighborhoods conference explicitly makes the point that change starts at the grassroots; it tracks the power to change our realities to the neighborhood, by linking urban interventions with a politics of the urban inhabitant. Here we see hints of a desire to go *beyond* the state (Purcell 2014, 3). Residents get together in order to find power in numbers to overturn ingrained processes and implement change in their neighborhoods (e.g. at one meeting, participants envisioned setting up neighborhood corner stores).

For tactical urbanism to be truly emancipatory in the long run, however, it has much to learn from right to the city theory. It can learn much from Lefebvre's concepts of autogestion and appropriation. Simply taking over a space for a short period of time will not do. TU needs to learn from right to the city that the restraints and codified controls of cities today will not do. The initiative needs to find ways for inhabitants "to take control of the conditions of their existence" (Purcell 2014, 11). Thus, holding an event or temporarily decorating a street needs to be pushed further to implementing true changes. This possibility could grow from Tacoma's City of Neighborhoods group, for instance. By coming together regularly and discussing ways that inhabitants can make changes themselves, like supporting neighborhood businesses in residential areas, the group is trying to move beyond the state.

As an on the ground practice, through, it holds much potential. If urban inhabitants continue to forge initiatives that assert their role as key shapers of urban space, the possibility of weakening and eventually doing away with the current systems of capitalist and state controls could take place. I argue that tactical urbanism grassroots approach, as an emerging and evolving practice in cities across the world, gives an inkling of what self-organized and actualized production of space could look like. What I want to emphasize here is that it hints at Lefebvre's right to the city at a premature state. As Purcell writes: "For Lefebvre the urban constitutes a revolution, but one that requires millions of everyday acts of resistance and creation" (2014, 13).

Go Skate Tacoma organizers also channeled individual and uncoordinated acts of appropriation (e.g. skateboarders skating corporate plazas) into collective and public action. They asserted new rights to the city based on inhabitation and a sport often marginalized from urban space. However, these assertions over space do not reach the full radical change that Lefebvre conceives of in his writings on the city. Rather, such participation defines new

territories by modifying and contesting the boundaries imposed by planners, architects, designers, policy makers and politicians. They make a temporary statement. By pushing to legalize skateboarding in Downtown Tacoma, The skateboarders added one more right to a system of weak democratic control (Purcell 2014, 2). They have gained the right to be included in the spaces of the state and capital (Purcell 2014, 2). All of the cases examined in this paper work within the limits of the liberal democratic system, and try to carve spaces within it.

In order to make more lasting change, TU must forge a stronger politics of the inhabitant (Marcuse 2010). Instead of planning temporary events and alterations in the urban fabric, TU needs to connect these initiatives with politics that demands a new structure of decision-making. It must be a politics that assumes equality, a declaration of rights to (appropriate the) city as inhabitants, and the act of disagreement with the current city through the creation of new political alternatives. This would involve something very different than the current city. It would be one where decision-making starts at the grassroots. Where “public participation” and “city council hearings” would be wholly unnecessary because the urban would be cooperatively managed: an urban reality without authoritarian institutions that control certain means of production and where an owning, political, economic elite subordinates the majority.

By making this argument, my aim is absolutely not to minimize the significance of small-scale experiments in urban change. Rather, it is to argue that such experiments will only give birth to a more democratic city if we can find ways to make them more permanent. There are important differences between individual, anonymous and uncoordinated acts of appropriation, and collective and public actions that assert new rights to the city as democratic forms of authority based on inhabitation. I think it is crucial that we pose these questions about a greater

politics, even as we are inspired by various interventions that hint at possibilities for a city that is truly ‘urban.’

Of course, to act politically in this sense is far from easy, or guaranteed to succeed. So, part of this process of politicization calls for tying these various practices together by sharing and reflecting on them as part of a continuous endeavor to make them more lasting. This can be achieved by building platforms on which we can stage a disagreement with existing urban authorities and their governing titles (Marcuse 2010). I think looking at the practices making up tactical urbanism through the framework and political context of ‘right to the city’ gives an opportunity to raise questions about whether or not a politics is forming through these initiatives. It also helps suggest ways in which urban tacticians can truly work towards a new and more democratic city.

Finally, more research on tactical urbanism and its creators is necessary to reveal the processes behind these initiatives and their spatial, cultural, and socio-economic significance. The rise of TU may represent a shift in how people in the US and other developed economies relate to the physical and policy environment of the contemporary city: a willingness to make improvements to a place without permission, taking their ideals for urban space into their own hands, and the growth of partnerships between government, non-profits, and everyday citizens that mimic such informal activities. This shift implies changes to how we conceive of the boundaries between personal, public, and private property, of who is entitled to alter urban space, of the authority and responsibility of local government, and of urban use value.

Although tactical urbanism fails to reach right to the city’s potential, that is not to say that it is insignificant as a movement. I think TU’s ultimate value lies in its ability to spark action on the grassroots level. By assessing TU through the lens of RTC, however, this paper aims to

highlight where it is achieving RTC's goals and where it could do with more work. Right to the city serves as a vital framework for keeping movements such as tactical urbanism accountable to city residents, while highlighting a concern that its presence remains in white, well off demographics.

The 'right to the city' based on an urban politics of the inhabitant holds much promise in this regard, as a guide that can unite the diversity of tactical initiatives. It can also ensure that the question of 'who's right' is central in these initiatives. As noted in the Tacoma cases, those who most need this right (the deprived) can easily be overlooked in tactical initiatives. A very real concern is that these practices continue to simply serve those who are unfulfilled by the current state of our cities. In order for this movement to truly assert the right of all inhabitants to the right to the city, it cannot remain an endeavor designed and initiated exclusively by the "alienated." Tactical urbanism truly dedicated to supporting a right to the city "needs to expose the common roots of the deprivation and discontent, and to show the common nature of the demands and the aspirations of the majority of the people" (Marcuse 2010, 39). We must recognize that the need for a new city to emerge out of our present dysfunctional and unjust urban condition is just as urgent now as it was in Lefebvre's time.

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