

Katherine Rose Weir

Tactical Urbanism and its Interactions with formal planning systems

And exploration of tactical urbanism interventions and their relationship to the formal planning systems of Norway and Washington State.

Graduate thesis in Urban Ecological Planning
Supervisor: Cinthia Freire Stecchini
Co-supervisor: Lina Naoroz Bråten
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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between instances of tactical urbanism and the formal planning systems that are in place in the cities they take place in. The research seeks to fill the gaps in research for how specific planning systems interact with tactical urbanism interventions on the local scale. To this end, the research is focused on four cities that operate under similar planning systems but with different cultural and economic contexts. A theoretical understanding of the contemporary planning systems and existing frameworks for tactical urbanism is explored in the literature section. The context of the overarching planning systems and process is provided as well as a detailed account of the methodology before each case is introduced first by the relevant formal planning process relating to each case. The following research was conducted through interviews with individuals who have been involved to some degree in tactical urbanism interventions in each study city. Each case also included a site visit and a follow-up examination of secondary data that was referenced during the interview.

The cases explored are each unique in its interactions with the formal system. The interventions were either implemented for formally adopted by the formal planning bodies, or they tolerated/ignored or downright rejected by the formal planning authorities in the city. A significant finding was that the individuals who were involved in the interventions were all able to be considered privileged rather than socially or economically disenfranchised. The implications of this research are that there are ways forward for tactical urbanism to become an effective tool for co-creation, but a more in-depth study focused on the interactions between the truly disadvantaged who are engaging in tactical urbanism and how they interact with the formal planning bodies would be beneficial.

1 Introduction

The field of urban planning has long grappled with the concept of public participation and co-creation. Urban planning as a practice is not a new concept, but literature, theory and understanding of the practice are relatively new, compared to ancient cities and the processes of urbanization. Since the field has become a formal part of most government functions globally, the issue of co-creation and participation has been an issue over and over again. This issue has been written of in many academic works dating back to the 1950s, including such works as Arnstein's ladder of public participation (Arnstein, 1969), Lefebvre's right to the city (Lefebvre, 1968), and Lindbloom's science of muddling through (Lindbloom, 1959). Yet still, decades later, formal planning bodies have not found a fail proof way to meaningfully engage the public in the planning practice. As a result, the public often finds its own way to engage with the built environment, through self-help and guerilla urbanism. Such planning interventions are outside the formal planning system, and challenge the notion of urban planning as a top-down practice done by city administrators and experts.

This thesis looks at a rising trend in the formal planning field of attempting to harness informality and allow for such interventions to enter into the formal realm of planning, or to transform it. There are, however challenges in mixing informal planning interventions with formal planning bodies. This thesis will explore some of those challenges in the context of contemporary planning systems that are in place in both Norway and the State of Washington. The reason for this examination under these contexts is because both Norway and Washington State are both smaller areas in the great realm of planning and yet can be considered to be fairly progressive with their planning policies, especially in terms of their focus on public participation. There are also interesting similarities in their planning process but with key disparities that are both due to cultural and historical differences.

Washington State and Norway also conduct planning under Neoliberal values. The market drives much of the development in both of these areas, which has its positives and its negatives. One of the negatives being a disconnect between the planning process and the public. This concept will be elaborated on in the literature section.

To attempt to rectify such issues, many contemporary urban planners and frustrated members of the public are looking toward easy, straightforward interventions that are fast, inexpensive, and temporary. This type of intervention has been branded by planning literature as “Tactical Urbanism” even though these sorts of interventions have been taking place much longer than the concept of tactical urbanism has been in the planning zeitgeist. This thesis will examine the way that the planning systems in question interact with tactical urbanism, and what the implications are as a whole towards the planning profession.

To narrow down the focus, this text will look mostly at instances of tactical urbanism interventions in Trondheim and Oslo, Norway and Washington State, USA between the cities of Seattle and Bellingham. These areas have used TU interventions in different contexts yet under similar power structures. The planning systems in place for this exploration are similar to many others and can therefore be comparable in a broader context. The information that will be collected and discussed here is intended to fill in some gaps that currently exist in literature and theory on TU and informality in northern contexts.

Often, planners are hindered in taking immediate action on issues by a complicated planning system. This is especially true in the strategic and comprehensive planning structures. There must be permits, reviews, funding, public meetings and more. The citizen populations also struggle with the current system. It feels disconnected to their day to day lives, like they have to say in their built environment. There has long been a discussion about the participatory methods that are employed in the rigid and formal

planning systems of the north. Yet recently, as in more or less the last 10 years, a new trend in planning has emerged. This trend is born from informality and citizen led change. Informal planning is not by any means a new topic, yet it can be said that informal planning methods are relatively new in the global north.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to explore how tactical urbanism interventions actually play out in practice within a specific type of planning system. The aim is to contribute to the understanding of how tactical urbanism works under certain power structures and offer recommendations for improvements and additional research. The research questions that seek to be answered here are:

- How are tactical urbanism interacting with the current planning systems in the target cities?
- Who are the actors behind the interventions and what are their intentions?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured to first discuss provide some background on the topic by defining tactical urbanism and giving a brief overview of its principles. Then follows a review of the current literature and academic understanding of the planning systems that are currently in place in the study cities, including a discussion of neoliberalism in planning. The literature then reviews the positive and negative theoretical perspectives on tactical urbanism in order to establish a theoretical framework. Then the text provides some context for the greater planning systems that directly influence the study cities. In the methods section, a detailed account of the research methods for each case as well as a rationale and reflection on the methods is provided. Then the case results are presented for each city, starting with a description of the relevant planning system. Finally, in the findings and implications chapter, the results are analyzed and connected back to the literature and theoretical framework.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 What is Tactical Urbanism

Tactical Urbanism (referred to henceforth as TU) is an emerging form of informal, grass roots planning that relies on low-cost, short-term interventions in cities that can inform long term change. Though informal planning methods have existed for a long time, TU emphasizes small-scale actions that can be accomplished quickly to transform the urban fabric. "... Tactical Urbanism is an approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies. Tactical Urbanism is used by a range of actors, including governments, business and nonprofits, citizen groups, and individuals. It makes use of open and iterative development processes, the efficient use of resources, and the creative potential unleashed by social inter-action." (Lydon, Garcia, 2015) TU is typically "informal, spontaneous, participatory and driven by community issues". (Courage, 2013)



Pop-Up Park in Budapest, Hungary.



TU Example images (Nicoli, T. 2022)



Seattle Design Festival by Trevor Dykstra.

The reason this topic is so interesting is that it is so spontaneous and contextual that it can be done in so many different ways in so many different cities. It can take the unused, dead urban spaces that we so often see in the cities of the global north, like large parking lots or underpasses and transform them into vibrant urban areas that are more welcoming to people. TU is also used to test out different interventions for traffic, including temporary bike lanes and widened pedestrian crossings and areas. It doesn't work towards one-size-fits-all solutions, but flexible responses to the urban issues (Lydon, Garcia, 2015).

Because TU is still relatively new as a planning method globally, there is limited research and sources to reference on the topic. It is certain more will arise as this method continues to grow in popularity and is being used by so many planners in so many different concepts, yet as of now there is lack of connection to the concepts of informality. This thesis will outline some of those contexts, as well as how we engage with TU in the global north in the hopes of providing more research to the topic.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theory/Theoretical Perspective

Since the intent of this thesis is to understand how instances of TU are interacting with the formal planning systems in place, it is important to understand the theoretical framework for the planning systems. This chapter will first review and analyze some literature for the current planning systems that are in place in each study city, which is a variation of strategic and comprehensive planning, with aspects of neoliberalism. The chapter will then delve deeper into the existing literature for TU. This section is broken up into literature that is generally in support of TU and literature that takes a more critical stance towards TU.

2.2 Contemporary Planning Systems

As stated above, the study cities for this thesis currently operate under a variation of strategic and comprehensive planning. Evidence of this is found from a quick search through each city's planning and building regulations. In general, strategic urban planning focuses on setting clear goals, objectives, and strategies to guide urban development. It emphasizes long-term visioning, prioritization of key initiatives, and effective allocation of resources. Strategic planning helps align actions and investments with broader socio-economic and environmental objectives. A general description of comprehensive urban planning is that it involves a holistic and integrated approach to address various aspects of urban development, including land use, transportation, housing, environment, and social infrastructure. It aims to create sustainable and livable communities by considering multiple dimensions simultaneously. This is fairly prevalent in Washington State especially, which will be elaborated further on in the context section.

It should also be noted that a reasonable understanding of the planning field gained through both studying and practice indicates that in general, contemporary urban planning emphasizes the importance of participation and inclusivity. Engaging diverse stakeholders, including communities, interest groups, and marginalized populations helps ensure that planning decisions reflect their needs and aspirations. Participatory approaches enhance transparency, accountability, and democratic processes. This approach is taught in planning schools and considered an important aspect to policy makers and practicing planners.

These approaches to planning sound reasonable and practical when written out simply, however there are noted issues with these planning approaches that researchers are concerned with.

Often in contemporary planning systems, there are multiple agencies in charge of different levels of service in cities. For example, a transit authority which is separate from the city's planning and building department, which is separate from the public works department. While all of these agencies work under the same municipality, their offices are often separate, not to mention other agencies that are outside the municipality entirely. This can lead to a sense of disjointed government and frustration from the public. As a response to this, a planning approach called "collaborative rationality" was introduced. In her review of Judith E. Innes & David E. Boohers book, *Planning With Complexity: An Introduction to Collaborative Rationality for Public Policy*, Patsy Healey provides a comprehensive and accessible account of what it means to engage "collaborative rationality" in public policy making. Her review of the text provides insights to the importance of policy. The text outlines the value of collaborative policy making, especially in contexts where formal government authority and technical expertise is questioned and fragmented. The review argues that "in such a context, it is very difficult to make progress on institutionally complex but pressing urban and environmental issues, such as the management of water and

transport systems.” (Healey, 2010) The book authors do contend that collaborative rationality is not a fix-all for urban complexities and it is not always appropriate to go through the time-consuming process, yet the approach remains appropriate for addressing “wicked problems” in fragmented governance contexts (Innes & Booher, 2010). Ultimately, in collaborative rationality, decision-making is not solely driven by individual expertise or authority but is guided by a process that encourages active participation, dialogue, and shared learning among stakeholders. The aim is to find solutions that are more informed, contextually appropriate, and socially acceptable by considering a wide range of perspectives, knowledge, and interests (Innes & Booher, 2010).

This book has a second edition published in 2018 and remains a somewhat popular concept. It can be said that this process is done at the higher levels of government, where policies are determined and then tailored by each municipality to fit their specific contexts. This will be discussed in more detail in the context section.

Another issue with the contemporary planning systems in place that is of note is the disconnect between the public and the city planners. Some authors have noted that under the strategic and comprehensive planning systems, there is a yearning both at the grassroots and professional levels for stronger public involvement in planning (Burby, 2003). This notable disconnect is especially prevalent in US planning, even as planning research and theory has been grappling with this very issue for quite some time.

Planning researchers have even stated “*Meaningful public participation in urban planning remains an elusive goal despite decades of rhetorical commitment by decision-makers*” (Mees and Dodson, 2007, page 35) In a study of the missing link between the public and the formal planning bodies, especially in terms of transportation planning, researchers and authors “have quantified a quality deficit in public participation in planning for US transportation and land-use cases using the Arnstein ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969)” (Bailey et al, 2011). The authors call this deficit the “Arnstein gap”

(Bailey and Grossardt, 2010) and argue that it poses a significant problem for the planning profession and that work should be done to reduce it (Bailey et al, 2011). Whether this apparent disconnect exists in the study cities will be explored in the results section.

In short, even though the current planning systems may seem like a reasonable approach to the complexities of our contemporary cities, there remains a lack of high-quality public engagement in the planning process.

2.2.1 Neoliberalism

When discussing today's planning systems, it is also important to discuss neoliberalism. Planning literature has been featuring neoliberalism in urban policy since the beginning of the 2000s (Sager, 2011). This chapter does not seek to provide a deep-dive into the vast amount of planning literature on this topic, but will touch on some points that are important for the theoretical understanding and background of the emergence of TU. It has been stated that neoliberal ideology firmly opposes public intervention in the markets where actors engage in urban development activities (Sager, 2011). This, of course is problematic to diversity and inclusion in the planning process, as that can be secured more by public intervention than the other actors. Another issue with neoliberal planning is that it moves the profession away from a democratic process. In a literature review and discussion of neoliberalism in planning, Tore Sager states that "*the rhetoric of neo-liberalism aims to give administrative efficiency, entrepreneurialism, and economic freedoms more impetus than democratic political steering*" (Sager, 2011).

Notably, it has also been said that neoliberalism erodes the welfare state and takes resources away from the public sector in favor of reduced restrictions of businesses and their operations, privatization of public services, deregulation and devolution of a centralized government (Dumenil & Levy, 2004; Harvey, 2005, 2006)." However,

despite the numerous texts on this issue and claims that neoliberalism is strongly affecting the built environment, there is no country with a planning system that has completely subscribed to the concept with all of its “theoretical characteristics in pure form” (Sager, 2011). Instead, for the purpose of this text, the aspects of neoliberalism discussed here will be identified and explored within the planning systems that are under this study.

Neoliberalism may interfere with the participatory approach that many planners strive for as it drives social polarization. Neoliberalism is said to undermine notions of the public as a unified entity and endeavor to replace them with individualized and commercialized identities centered around taxpayers and consumers. (Clarke, 2004:31, 2007).” Another notable characteristic of neoliberalism is its connection to city’s desire to cater to the creative class. Cities seek to attract the creative class through becoming trendy, happening places. The creative class is typically wealthy, and the concept of city planners trying to attract them fits perfectly into to the concept of neoliberal planning (Sager, 2011).

There is literature regarding neoliberalism in context of one of the study cities. Tore Sager, in a text about neoliberalism in waterfront development, conducted a case study of Trondheim, Norway. After reviewing the development process of an area in the city, Sager confirmed the use of strategic planning in the city and concluded that “the strategic municipal plans do not suggest that neoliberalism has a strong position among politicians and planners in Trondheim” (Sager, 2015). He further elaborated by stating:

“They do show, however, that the longstanding goal of pursuing economic growth as a road to prosperity has been coupled to newer ideas that are common elements of neo-liberal urban policy, according to international planning literature (Sager, 2011). Examples are public–private co-operation, city marketing, attracting the ‘creative class’, encouraging individual responsibility and emphasizing participation as consumers and clients instead of as citizens. Accordingly, ‘(t)he goal of residents’ participation is better use of resources’ (Trondheim kommune,

1987: 33). Nevertheless, the ideologies of participatory democracy and environmentalism are also easily recognizable in the goals and objectives of the strategic municipal plans for Trondheim.” (Sager, 2015)

It can therefore be addressed already that despite its lofty goals of economic development, the city of Trondheim, according to Sagers research, maintains a decent connection to the values of public participation. It remains to be seen whether the other subject cities are equally

2.3 In Favor of Tactical Urbanism

There are many articles and academic writings that praise TU. Firstly, there is the book *“Tactical Urbanism, Short Term Action for Long Term Change”* written by Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia. Lydon has been called one of the founders of TU as he was among the first to write about it as a planning method and he continues to work in TU in the US, in New York City.

The book provides an in-depth description and examples of tactical urbanism and how to apply it as a planner. However, the book seems to focus heavily on integrating TU in global north settings. It discusses New York and San Diego. The book gives a historical context to TU, that human innovation to improve their urban environments is timeless and transcends all cultures (SOURCE). The instances and rise of TU is basically in response to neo-liberal planning decisions that have made human environments less friendly to humans. Also, TU is quick and non-bureaucratic, in response to the slow process of top-down planning. In the history section, Lydon discusses the first urban street which was a community effort. It was a small village that had no formal government, but they banded together and build a street that was collectively maintained for a thousand years. Lydon and Garcia emphasize TU as a method to counter overly bureaucratic systems and make quick changes:

“There are plenty of people in a given city with the passion and ideas to make small but momentous changes...yet when it is discovered that

implementing such projects takes months of red tape, insurance, and community consensus just to get permission, few have the ability to follow through. The result, in some cases, is that normally law-abiding citizens take action without permission and ask for forgiveness later. It can be a powerful method for creating change.” (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 84)

A main take away from this book is the bold claim that the suburbs of tomorrow will be different from today's, and that we need to embrace citizen-led protests and reform efforts to ensure that the planning process serves the interests and cultural expectations of all segments of the population (Lyndon & Garcia, 2015).

Other literature in favor of TU is a 2013 article by Cara Courage, titled “The Global Phenomenon of Tactical Urbanism as an Indicator of New Forms of Citizenship”. This article discusses TU as an indicator of new forms of citizenship. It gives examples of other TU efforts that have taken place in different cities across the globe but with a focus on art and creativity. Courage discusses how TU that is based in art and creativity contributes not only to reshaping urban spaces, but also “new models of civic participation”. (Courage, 2013) She goes on to say that if observed in the frame of the built environment, TU can be considered part of a wider practice of placemaking (Courage, 2013). Placemaking is the process of collectively forming an identity in neighborhoods that is specific to those who dwell and do business there. She argues that the use of TU allows for a bridge to be built between the interests of stakeholders in a neighborhood:

The art in tactical urbanism is part of a process of creating a ‘convivial city’ and an outcome of ‘convivial space’ – space that is created from user centred design in a society whose citizens are equal and empowered. The convivial city is a place where creativity is not just limited to artists but can be used by everyone to regenerate the urban realm and to articulate local narratives – either new or revised ones. In the convivial city, tactical urbanism can be a bridge between the public users of a city, decision-makers in positions of formal power and professionals; it can also be a bridge between art practice and protest.”

(Courage, 2013) The article continues by stating that “the social, political and spatial themes that are shared across tactical urbanism projects are indicative of an emerging new form of citizenship. (Courage, 2013)

However, Courage does also conclude that there is not yet enough research on this topic to definitively back her claims.

Other literature provides more practical information on TU. For example, an article titled “Exploring traffic evaporation: Findings from tactical urbanism interventions in Barcelona” by Samuel Nello-Deakin. This article discusses the specific case of TU in Barcelona that was used to evaporate traffic in the city. Using quantitative traffic studies following the implementation of TU methods in streets, the researchers were able to measure the success of the interventions. Overall, the study found that there was a decrease in traffic on the streets with interventions and some adjoining streets while there was a small increase on streets that functioned as an alternative route (Nello-Deakin, 2022). This article demonstrates the success of TU interventions and how they can be used to experiment with changes that will inform long-term change.

Importantly, the article was able to quantitatively measure the success of the TU interventions because there was a clear intent behind them: to reduce or “evaporate” traffic in the city.

Another example of practical literature in favor of TU is the handbook provided by the Global Designing Cities Initiative called “***How to Implement Street Transformations***”. The handbook focuses on TU interventions in streets and provides all the details a practicing planner or community needs to know to implement a successful street transformation. The handbook includes a section on how to monitor and evaluate the success of street-based tactical urbanism approaches, which would prove helpful to planning practitioners who wished to implement and monitor such interventions.

2.4 A Critical Look at Tactical Urbanism

This section discusses some of the literature that was more critical towards using TU interventions. These perspectives are valuable for any planning method, because it is such a complex field with no panacea to solve all the problems.

An article by Fran Tonkiss, titled “Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City” can be considered one of the first political critiques of TU, as outlined in the introduction section in the book *Temporary and Tactical Urbanism:(Re) assembling Urban Space* by Stevens and Dovey. Tonkiss suggests that a good deal of what counts as TU can be seen as a form of band-aid urban planning for cities in decline; makeshift solutions produced by neoliberal policies that enforce a reduced role for the state. Basically, cities are becoming more resilient and patching gaps left by the government (Stevens, & Dovey, 2022.)

The text by Tonkiss discusses practical interventions in vacant and disused spaces of recessionary cities, focusing on temporary designs and provisional uses. It argues for forms of urban intervention that re-work practices of urban development as usual, particularly in terms of timescales, understandings of use, and ways in which value is realized through the production of urban spaces. The paper centers on European contexts of austerity urbanism, drawing on critical examples of urban design and occupation in the region's largest economies. The argument is concerned with a politics and a practice of small incursions in material spaces that seek to create a kind of 'durability through the temporary'. The paper concludes that makeshift urbanism raises questions about the use of urban spaces and who they are made for, and that a positive model of policy and planning creates the conditions for informal, interim, and auto-agencies through various legal, property, and policy measures. (Tonkiss, 2013)

This text is not entirely relevant as it is focused more on instances of barren and more severely underdeveloped areas in cities, but it is relevant in the way that it discusses

tactical urbanism as a band-aid for poorly funded areas of city planning. As will be elaborated on later, the issue of funding was discussed in each city study. Where there is little to no funding for formal improvements, the community and even sometimes city planners will take issues into their own hands and make the improvements they want to see.

Portions of this article that are especially relevant are the four approaches of planning under austerity, particularly the second and third approaches:

Second, a permissive approach to planning and policy does not actively promote these opportunities, but it also doesn't prohibit them. It allows for a certain degree of flexibility and the potential for self-organization and improvised spatial solutions. Whether driven by economic or social liberalism, or simply due to limited regulatory capacity, this planning attitude permits unconventional and occasionally unofficial activities, such as granting minimal protections to urban squatters' rights or showing a level of acceptance towards temporary structures, physical adaptations, and informal economies. (Tonkiss, 2013)

In this approach, the informal activities are generally tolerated, as the municipalities might not have the resources to go out and remove every informal structure or measure built in the city. This approach does not indicate complete acceptance of the informal, as it implies that the more disruptive measures that may be a liability for the formal planning body would still be removed, but in general, others will be accepted.

Third, a restrictive model can be observed that completely eliminates these possibilities. This approach involves excessive planning that allows little or no room for negotiation, improvisation, initiative, or collective expression of energy. It is characterized by practices such as criminalizing squatting, employing punitive evictions, implementing aggressive lock-outs, and intensifying the policing of demonstrations and assemblies. While this pattern is commonly associated with

authoritarian forms of state planning and policy in cities, these prohibitive approaches to regulating and utilizing urban space are increasingly evident in "postliberal" regimes where maintaining public order and safeguarding private property are prioritized tasks of urban governance. (Tonkiss, 2013)

This approach is more strict, with the formal planning body almost completely rejecting any informal activities that come to its attention in the name of preserving public order. While the description of this approach seems rather extreme, it can also be seen in the more subtle actions of contemporary municipalities, like eradicating the camps of the unhoused and maintaining a police presence and even retaliation at public demonstrations. For small informal urban interventions, this might mean the swift removal of the installation, and even potential legal or criminal action against a continued perpetrator. After all, law and order, as well private property rights are prioritized in this approach. This paper is a sound critique of TU from the time of when it was raising rapidly in popularity in major cities around the globe. Any researcher or planner who wishes to engage with TU would do well to consider the point raised by Tonkiss.

Next is a 2014 article from Oli Mould, titled "Tactical Urbanism: The New Vernacular of the Creative City". Mould argues that TU is a buzz phrase that encapsulates a feeling of a cool and creative aesthetic that is being used by policy makers and city leaders to further the framework of urban redevelopment. He then argues that due to this, TU is becoming separate from the citizen-led, activist roots and moving quickly towards becoming cool, "creative urban policy language" (Mould, 2014). Further, TU is at risk of simply becoming the "quick fix" that urban policies of this time so desire (Peck 2005).

TU activities can be implemented and used to activate and redesign a specific place temporarily, but the moment these practices engage in the city's inherent strategies

(neoliberal urban development, for example), they can no longer be considered the tactical methods of the citizens, but rather a part of the city's strategy (Mould, 2014). TU does seem to generate a more community-oriented and people-friendly city, but sometimes it's for some and not others, like those who lived in the "forlorn" neighborhood that is being activated a subsequently gentrified by TU interventions (Mould, 2014). Rather than being a true form of new reclamations of the public in cities, TU interventions are being taken over by the city and shaped back into the system of neoliberal development that's merely disguised as TU (Mould, 2014). The article then finishes by stating:

TU is a growing phenomenon in urban politics and can interject with many current debates within urban studies (Edensor et al. 2010; Hou 2010). It certainly has connotations around urban informality, suggesting that the activities that TU purports to encompass are already rife in the urban areas of the Global South (Simone 2004, 2010), making all the more stark its alignment with a Westernised (or US-centric) style of neoliberal urbanism - (Mould, 2014).

This article takes a harsh stance against the adoption of TU by city planners and administrators to enhance a forlorn space. Mould indicates that the true character of TU is diluted when absorbed into the formal planning system. He argues that it loses its value as a voice for the community to express their unmet needs, and rather becomes another fun and easy, even band-aid like solution for cities to enhance poorly developed spaces without too much of a financial investment.

Another author who has taken a very critical look at TU is Ryan Thomas Devlin. Devlin has written several articles on informality between the global north and the global south and has specifically called out TU as problematic. In a 2018 article titled: "Asking 'Third World questions' of First World informality: Using Southern theory to parse needs from desires in an analysis of informal urbanism of the global North", Devlin makes some very interesting points about informality and especially TU. He states that literature around informality in the city from the global south is "rich and

insightful” because scholars have been working on the topic, debating, theorizing and refining their understanding of it for decades. Yet sadly, we cannot say the same for scholarship in the north (Devlin, 2018). Devlin cites one reason for this as the simple fact that the topic is fairly new to the north. Although there is a wealth of philosophical critiques on other topics in planning that are more prevalent in the north, like top-down spatial planning, there is yet any solid work on informal spatial practice (Devlin, 2018).

Devlin argues that for global planners to engage with informality in a “progressive” way, they require a conceptual navigation tool influenced by normative values of “inclusiveness and economic and socio-spatial justice” (Devlin, 2018). According to Devlin, this would entail planners asking such questions as “**who is undertaking informal activities?**”, “**why?**”, and “**to what ends?**” (Devlin, 2018).

In the article, Devlin defined the informality of need vs the informality of desire. Generally, the informality of need comes from underrepresented groups who band together and use informal methods to improve their situation. The informality of desire, on the other hand, is enacted by wealthy or middle-class populations and is vulnerable to neo-liberal takeovers. He states that to effectively ask and answer the above questions, planners need to consciously differentiate between the two (Devlin, 2018). He continues on to support breaking the boundaries between northern and southern planning literature and using the latter to inform all planning across the globe.

Devlin argues that we can use insights from the global south and their extensive history with informality to inform how we engage with informality in the north. Importantly, we need to distinguish between the informality of need vs the informality of desire. TU tends to pay little attention to the differences in intention and effects of the informal actions (Devlin, 2018).

He concludes by stating:

As in the case of Everyday Urbanism, the idealization by Tactical Urbanism of informal practices can lead to an undifferentiated analysis of informality. Anything that subverts or provides a workaround to sluggish bureaucracy is judged favorably. Little attention gets paid to the differences in intention and effects of informal practices, or the political subjectivity of informal actors. The state is the problem, informal tactics are the solution, and planners should embrace and foster citizen-based informal planning. As Lydon and Garcia (2015) warn, “cities that continue on the path [of unresponsive, cumbersome government] will find it tough to compete regionally, nationally, and even internationally (p. 67) (Devlin, 2018).

Devlin went on to write another, similar article in 2019, titled “A focus on needs: toward a more nuanced understanding of inequality and urban informality in the global North”. In this article, he is still more overtly critical to TU, even calling out Lyden and Garcia on their claims in its favor. His critique of their work is that “*Tactical Urbanism is relatively unconcerned with issues of inequality and need. The main “villain” in the Tactical Urbanism narrative is the state. Informal practices as a whole are viewed as beacons, shining through the doldrums of cumbersome and unresponsive bureaucracy. According to this approach, the state stifles creativity and punishes innovation. (Devlin, 2019)*”

Devlin says that ultimately, the approach of TU “*provides few analytical or conceptual tools for understanding how informality is intertwined with issues of social justice, inequality, or the needs of the urban poor. It is ultimately a business-oriented ideology peddling an ideology of free market principles masquerading as resistance (Devlin, 2019)*”

Devlin concludes the article stating:

*this article makes the argument that the informality of need is something dis-tinct amid the multitude of examples of informality currently under study in the North and that it needs to be understood on its own terms, in a way that existing theory concerning informality in the North does not allow for. Southern literature on the informal spatial practices of marginalized groups helps fill in the gaps. It builds an understanding of informal practice as some-thing complex and indeterminate, but imbued with latent political possibilities. **Incorporating Southern theory into our***

analysis requires, on a theoretical level, for Northern scholars to be open to crossing boundaries in urban theory, and willing to learn from the South (Devlin, 2019).

From the literature thus far, it can be surmised that if done “correctly”, TU can have a very positive impact on the urban environment, like the situation in Barcelona and the many case study examples of similar interventions that are outlined in the handbook.

However, even more recent texts have shed another interesting perspective on TU. In a paper titled “Temporary Urbanism as a new policy strategy: a contemporary panacea of a trojan horse?” Bragaglia and Rossignolo discuss the use of temporary urbanism as a new policy tool to recover vacant areas in Europe. The authors present two French case studies to discuss the characteristics of temporary urban planning and its intrinsic tension between a contemporary panacea and a trojan horse. The paper concludes that temporary urbanism can be a partial response to the issues of social inclusion, housing, and equal accessibility to spaces and amenities, which the contemporary city seems to fail in. However, there is also a risk that temporary urbanism can be used as an alibi for administrations and local leaders to continue perpetrating neoliberal policies. The authors suggest that temporary urbanism should be used as a tool for co-creation and participation within shared governance paradigms. (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021)

What is important here are the arguments that despite its limitations, if done well and not as the entire solution, TU can actually be an effective tool toward co-creation and participation in cities. This would involve the city being more willing to embrace self-help, TU interventions and be willing to meet its facilitators halfway. (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021)

In a paper titled “Guerrilla urbanism: urban design and the practices of resistance”, Hou discusses the concept of guerrilla urbanism, which refers to unsanctioned and unscripted urban activities that appropriate urban spaces in routine and unexpected ways. The paper examines a range of cases that challenge the prevailing social and political paradigm and highlights the scalability of guerrilla actions, the fluid shift between overt and covert actions, and the linkage between everyday struggles and organized resistance (Hou, 2020). The paper argues that guerrilla urbanism can intersect with urban design, serving as the host in a parasitic relationship, and that tactical urbanism represents an approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies. The paper concludes that guerrilla urbanism and tactical urbanism can contribute to the making of urban resilience by building political awareness and solidarity, fostering new subjectivities and belonging, and creating physical and discursive sites for political and social engagement (Hou, 2020).

Important concepts from this text include that improvised utilization of urban spaces has gained prominence as a method of urban design interventions and development strategies under various terms such as tactical urbanism, creative placemaking, and pop-up. These temporary and tactical interventions have increasingly become a customary and fashionable element within the technocratic toolkit for activating urban spaces and properties (Hou, 2020). This is a sentiment shared in other literature reviewed here as well. Another important notion from this text is Hou’s questions of TU. While it is crucial to engage in discussions about the implications and effectiveness of DIY and tactical urban design, these debates have overshadowed critical inquiries into their counterparts - unsanctioned and guerrilla urban tactics, which serve as insurgent spatial practices challenging the prevailing social and political conditions. For instance, what can we learn from the unsanctioned actions of the underprivileged and disenfranchised about the existing barriers and conditions within the contemporary city? How can these seemingly small-scale, bottom-up actions bring

about significant transformations in urban landscapes? In what ways can acts of resistance lead to institutional and political change without being absorbed by the system? How do unsanctioned actions contribute to the discourse and practice of urban design, distinct from the more widely accepted forms of tactical urbanism? (Hou, 2020)

Hou also touches on thoughts from Webb's article titled "Tactical urbanism: Delineating a critical praxis". According to Webb (2018), the implementation of neoliberal austerity measures in Western economies, coupled with a sluggish economic recovery following the 2008 financial crisis, is prompting a change in the approach of private developers towards development. He argues that "developers are facing increased risks and the use of temporary interventions is becoming more appealing as a way of testing out change" (Webb, 2018)."

As a final note on Hou's article, a quote that stood out from the text in regard to this thesis is the following: *"One may argue that the number of interventions branded under tactical urbanism is most likely minute compared with the actual unsanctioned and unscripted activities performed by the subaltern and underprivileged in their everyday struggles for livelihood (Hou, 2020)."*

3 Context

For this section, it is not only important to touch on the current planning systems in place for each city, but to also give a brief overview of the cultural norms in order to inform how that has influenced the way that the public interacts with the built environment and formal planners. For example, in Washington state, the built environment is geared more towards cars. In most US cities (if not nearly all), transportation is mostly car-based, since a century of austerity and auto-centric planning and decentralized development resulting from “white flight” has been the norm (Bloom, 2023). This is true in Washington State as well. Even the more cities in the state, like Seattle still rely heavily on personal vehicles for reliable and consistent transportation. Norway, on the other hand has more centralized cities that are built more towards pedestrian use. The city’s also have more robust pedestrian use plans in place.

Other relevant contextual details for both the country of Norway and the State of Washington will be given here anecdotally from the perspective of local knowledge gained from one who has lived both in Norway and Washington State. Since the purpose of this section is to help set the context for why the study areas were chosen for a comparison and this information is arguably not required to be purely academic despite this being an academic work. According to recent population data, Norway, as a country, has a smaller population than Washington. Norway also has more of a cohesive social situation, where community values and traditions of shared work are prevalent. Washington, on the other hand has a more individualistic social culture, no doubt stemming from centuries of capitalist values in the US. Though despite this, a sense of community can still be found in the neighborhoods of the state. Both study areas, like many contemporary governing bodies, favor comprehensive and strategic planning.

3.1 Norway and the Planning and Building Act

Norway utilizes comprehensive planning as a key approach in its planning system. Comprehensive planning is an established and widely applied method in Norwegian urban and regional planning processes. This is indicated by Norway's adoption of the Planning and Building Act in 1985 (Ringholm et al, 2018)

In Norway, comprehensive planning is typically guided by national legislation, such as the Planning and Building Act (Plan- og bygningsloven), which provides a framework for land use planning and development. The Act requires municipalities to prepare comprehensive plans that consider a range of factors, including land use, transportation, housing, infrastructure, environmental protection, and cultural heritage (Norway, 2008).

Comprehensive planning in Norway emphasizes an integrated and holistic approach to address the long-term development needs of communities. It encourages coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders, such as municipalities, regional authorities, government agencies, and the public (Norway, 2008). The aim is to ensure that different aspects of development are considered together, enabling effective decision-making and the sustainable use of resources.

In practice, comprehensive planning in Norway often involves extensive public participation and engagement processes to gather input and involve citizens in shaping the future development of their communities. The PBA has enshrined participation in planning (Ringholm et al, 2018). This participatory element allows for diverse perspectives, local knowledge, and community aspirations to be considered in the planning process.

Moreover, the Norwegian planning system promotes principles of sustainable development, including environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability. These principles are often integrated into comprehensive plans, with an emphasis on

balancing development with the preservation of natural areas, promoting affordable housing, enhancing public transportation, and fostering social cohesion (Norway, 2008).

It's worth noting that while comprehensive planning is widely practiced in Norway, there may be variations in the specific application and implementation across different regions or municipalities. This is because each municipality is responsible for meeting the general requirements of the PBA while also tailoring them to their specific contextual needs.

To elaborate further on the specific requirements for public participation is the PBA, an overview is provided below. The Act requires that municipalities involve the public in the planning process in order to ensure transparency and democratic decision-making. Here are some of the main requirements for public participation under the PBA:

Information and notification: Municipalities are required to inform the public about planning and building projects through newspapers, notices, and other media. This information should be provided in a clear and easily understandable manner (Norway, 2008).

Public hearings: Municipalities are required to hold public hearings during the planning process. These hearings provide an opportunity for members of the public to express their opinions and concerns about a proposed development. The municipality must give reasonable notice of the hearing and ensure that the proceedings are open and transparent (Norway, 2008).

Consultation with affected parties: Municipalities are required to consult with parties that may be affected by a proposed development, including property owners, tenants, and other stakeholders. The municipality must give these parties an opportunity to express their views and concerns about the proposed development (Norway, 2008).

Access to information: Municipalities are required to provide access to information about planning and building projects. This includes providing access to plans, reports, and other documents related to the project (Norway, 2008).

Appeals process: The PBA also provides for an appeals process, which allows members of the public to appeal decisions made by the municipality related to planning and building projects. This process provides an opportunity for members of the public to challenge decisions that they feel are unfair or not in the public interest. (Norway, 2008)

Overall, the PBA provides a framework for public participation in the planning and building process in Norway, ensuring that the voices of the public are heard and considered in decisions that affect their communities.

3.2 Washington State and the Growth Management Act

The current planning system in Washington State can also be broadly characterized as reflecting elements of the comprehensive planning approach. Comprehensive planning is a widely adopted planning theory that emphasizes the integration of various factors and sectors into a unified planning process.

In Washington State, comprehensive planning is guided by the Growth Management Act (GMA) of 1990. The GMA requires local governments to develop comprehensive plans that address land use, housing, transportation, economic development, environmental protection, and other related factors (Washington GMA, 1990). The goal is to achieve sustainable growth, protect natural resources, and ensure the provision of essential services and infrastructure.

The comprehensive planning approach in Washington State emphasizes long-term visioning, coordination among different agencies and stakeholders, and the integration

of multiple considerations into the decision-making process. It encourages the balancing of competing interests, such as urban growth and rural preservation, economic development and environmental stewardship, and social equity and community well-being (Washington GMA, 1990).

Additionally, Washington State's planning system aligns with principles of smart growth and urban containment. The state encourages compact development, the efficient use of existing infrastructure, and the reduction of urban sprawl through policies that promote higher-density development in designated urban growth areas (Washington GMA, 1990).

While the comprehensive planning approach is prevalent in Washington State, it is important to note that planning theories and approaches are not static and can evolve over time. Different regions within the state may also adopt variations of the comprehensive planning approach or integrate other theories or principles into their specific planning processes (Washington GMA, 1990).

To give a more specific overview, here are some of the key public participation requirements under the GMA:

Comprehensive planning: The GMA requires local governments to develop comprehensive plans that outline their long-term vision for growth and development. The planning process must include opportunities for public participation, including public hearings and meetings (Washington GMA, 1990).

The GMA requirements for public participation are as follows:

Public notice: Local governments are required to provide notice of planning meetings and hearings to the public. This notice must include information about the time, date, location, and purpose of the meeting or hearing (Washington GMA, 1990).

Public hearings: The GMA requires local governments to hold public hearings on proposed amendments to comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and development regulations. These hearings must be held at a time and place that is convenient for the public, and must provide an opportunity for public comment (Washington GMA, 1990).

Citizen advisory committees: Local governments may establish citizen advisory committees to provide input and recommendations on planning and development issues. These committees must be representative of the community and must provide opportunities for public participation (Washington GMA, 1990).

Environmental review: The GMA requires local governments to conduct environmental reviews of proposed development projects. This review process includes opportunities for public comment and input (Washington GMA, 1990).

Appeals process: The GMA provides for an appeals process that allows members of the public to challenge decisions made by local governments related to land use and development. This process provides an opportunity for members of the public to challenge decisions that they feel are unfair or not in the public interest (Washington GMA, 1990).

Overall, the GMA requires local governments to involve the public in the planning and decision-making process for land use and development. This ensures that the voices of the public are heard and considered in decisions that affect their communities.

3.3 Key Differences

There are some key differences between the public participation requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and Norway's Planning and Building Act (PBA). Here are some of the main differences that have been identified:

Scope: The GMA applies only to local land use and development planning in Washington State, while the PBA applies to land use and development planning throughout Norway.

Timing: The GMA requires public participation early in the planning process, during the development of the comprehensive plan and subsequent updates. In contrast, the PBA requires public participation at various stages of the planning and development process, including during the preparation of the local zoning plan, the preparation of the environmental impact assessment, and the building permit application process.

Methods: The GMA requires local governments to provide notice of public meetings and hearings, hold public meetings and hearings, and accept written comments. The PBA requires similar methods of public participation, but also provides for more informal methods such as public consultations, workshops, and surveys.

Requirements for public comment: The GMA requires that local governments consider and respond to public comments received during the planning process. The PBA does not have a similar requirement, although the municipality is expected to take the views expressed into account in the decision-making process.

Access to information: The GMA requires local governments to provide access to information about the planning process, including the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations. The PBA similarly requires that information be made available, but also provides for access to information about building permits and other development approvals.

Ultimately, while both the GMA and the PBA require public participation in land use and development planning, there are some key differences in terms of scope, timing, methods, and requirements for public comment and access to information.

4 Methods

In this chapter, you should first give a presentation of the kind of knowledge/information is required for answering your research questions and what kind of methodological approach this requires. Argue for the selection of the case.

Then discuss the method as it was planned before your field work. Following this present the challenges you faced in the field and then conclude with what changes were made to the method finally. Make a clear presentation of what kind of information was collected, from whom, how and include a list of interviewees, dates etc in the appendix. It is also important to illustrate how you have ensured the validity, reliability and rigor in the thesis.

For each city, the first step in collecting data was to conduct desk-based research to understand the city's specific planning process in the context that is relevant to each case that would be discussed in the interview phase of the research. There are three groups of data types available to desk-based research: written, visual, and audio (Bassot, 2022). Following the preliminary desk-based search for data, an interview for each city was arranged with someone who had been involved to some extent in a tactical urbanism intervention. The interview was casual in nature, with a loose interview guide and conversational approach. Following each interview, an analysis of online materials in reference to the discussion was done. Each interview referenced other issues that filled in the context of the case and required additional desk-based research to elaborate on it. This was done by exploring news articles and blog posts, as those resources both provide a local context for the events and issues that were discussed in the interviews. This combination of data is perhaps not considered traditionally academic, but for the intent of the study and to answer the research question, it is appropriate. It is important to note, however, that the blog posts and

newspaper articles are used simply to fill in information about the local response. They are not intended as academic sources.

4.1 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods are valuable when it comes to studying the social side of planning interventions. As the knowledge that this thesis seeks to expand on is based mostly on informal, citizen led planning interventions, a qualitative approach to data collection seems most appropriate.

4.1.1 Case Studies and Interviews

In order to gain an understanding of how tactical urbanism interventions are playing out in real life within the planning systems of the focus cities in Norway and Washington State, the research method of case studies and interviews was identified as the methods that would be the most effective in collecting the desired data. Case studies allow for the examination of a real-life project, and interviews provide valuable information for context and background, as well as the perspective of the interviewee. There is literature in support of interviews as a research method that states “*as interviews are interactive, interviewers can press for complete, clear answers and can probe into any emerging topics. Hence, interviewing is expected to broaden the scope of understanding investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool* (Alshenqeeti, 2014).”

For this thesis, there is an interview (or several) for each case study area. The case studies are not as in-depth as others because the instances of tactical urbanism are, by nature, short-term and quick to implement. The focus was instead split to be partially on the system in place for each case in each city, and how that influenced the outcome. The interviews were set up through tapping in to either a professional or social network

to identify individuals who have, to some extent, been involved in a tactical urbanism intervention in each city.

Each interview was set very intentionally with an interview guide, though they followed a more relaxed, conversational format based on the context. Depending on the environment and case context, the interviews were either formal and in a professional office, or more casual, in a coffee shop or on the street. The more casual, street interviews were done with the intent of gleaning as much information as possible from subjects who may have declined a more formal, recorded interview. Instead, the interview questions were introduced conversationally and the follow up questions were based on the initial response. Casual interviews allow for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and beliefs. The open-ended nature of the conversations enables participants to provide rich and detailed insights, which may not be captured through other research methods (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)

Following each interview, a site visit was conducted. The site visit was to gain a better understanding of the context. In some cases, the tactical urbanism intervention was still standing, in others, it was not. In each case, it was important to the research to understand the perspective of the site from on the ground, using sight and sound to explore why the specific site was chosen for an intervention, and if the intervention is still standing, what condition it is in. Site visits involve physically visiting a specific site or location relevant to the research topic. Researchers can directly observe and document various aspects such as the physical environment, spatial arrangements, social dynamics, and interactions within the site. Site visits can provide rich qualitative data and enhance the understanding of a research phenomenon through direct experience (Robson, 2011). A picture was taken at each site visit, and was compared to the promotional photos that were taken of the installation.

Another aspect of each case study was the desk-based research done to provide context. In this research, official documents were studied, as well as newspaper articles, videos and promotional photos of the intervention. The official documents mostly pertained to the laws in place in each case study city for public participation in the planning process. A flow chart was created from this investigation that shows the general course of the formal planning process. This chart was based on a general search of each cities planning process and finding the common steps.

“Research is all about being open-minded regarding what you might find, even when (and perhaps especially when) it challenges you pre-conceived notions” (Bassot, 2022)

Since each case was unique, a different approach for data collection was required.

4.1.1 The Trondheim Case

For the first case area, the data collection took place in Trondheim. The research for this thesis was in its early phases, so the exact approach was still being developed. In this case, the interview came before any significant desk-based research directly related to the project could be done. However, there was an in-depth study done of the city of Trondheim’s planning process via the municipality’s website and public resources. The interview was arranged through a colleague who is researching a similar topic, so it was a joint effort to discuss the case and its process with the project manager. The knowledge of the intervention preceding the interview with the project manager was thin, but the resulting information gained in the interview followed an interview guide to ensure that all of the desired data was addressed. The interview guide was focused on the process, budget, and response to the TU installation. The guide also concluded with a question regarding the general feelings of the project manager about the result, and whether they would do anything different. The full interview guide can be viewed in the appendix. The interview was held in the Trondheim Municipality offices, in a conference room. The participant agreed to be recorded, and the space was ideal for

capturing the conversation via recording as it was quiet except for the interviewers and the interviewee. The conversation was held in Norwegian, with some English. The recording of the conversation was transcribed and then translated in order to be included in this text. Following the interview, desk-based research was done in order to gain a deeper understanding of the project and the issues that the participant referenced. The follow-up data came from a local news website for Trondheim, called Adressa. Other data was obtained through the municipality's website. Finally, a site visit was done of the project site. The site was observed on a sunny day, where city dwellers were out enjoying the fine weather in hopes to gain a fair understanding of how they might interact with the installment.

4.1.2 The Oslo Case

The research done for the Oslo case included some preliminary desk-based research, followed by an interview, which was immediately followed by a site visit. The follow-up research took place sometime afterwards, as the other methods had to be done in the span of a two-day visit to the city of Oslo. The preliminary research included the study of the city of Oslo's building permit approval process through the city's website and public resources. The interview participant was reached through a social connection, a colleague and friend shared his information. After being contacted, the interview participant expressed enthusiastic consent to be included in the research and sent some preliminary research about the project. In the initial email, the participant was asked whether they had been involved in a temporary, experimental planning intervention and if so, would they like to participate in an interview to discuss their experience. The participant then shared his drawings and brochure of the city garden he developed. The interview was arranged via email and attended in person, in the participant's professional offices. He had a shared workspace that included several conference rooms. The interview took place in a conference room with a projector. The interview was held in English, but the recording was started a little after the conversation began

as the participant enthusiastically began explaining the project before the recording could be started. Throughout the discussion, the participant made use of the projector to further expand on his points. He showed the property lines underlying the existing buildings, and later used it to show the locations and discuss other projects, like a local guerilla garden that inspired his work and a nearby project that a friend and colleague of his had been involved in. After the interview, a site visit was done. Both the interview and site visit took place in early April and it was raining. Even through the rain, the general atmosphere of the site was observed, including the condition of the installation. Pictures were also taken. The interview recording was then transcribed to be used as data. The follow-up research was desk-based, and included an overview of the other project that came up in the interview. This was done because the contextual background that this anecdote provided for the case in Oslo. The information for the overview was gathered through blogs and news websites.

4.1.3 The Seattle Case

The city of Seattle was always planned to be one of the study cities, but the case was discovered through a social connected. The study of Seattle started with the usual preliminary desk-based research of studying the city's planning process. The data was found from the city of Seattle's municipal code. Previous experience as a city planner informed the search and understanding of the process outlined by the city's municipal code. A friend of the interview participant shared their information. The participant responded to the initial email (that asked the same thing as the first email in the Oslo case) listing their involvement in TU interventions over the years and sharing some a report, blog post, and video highlighting his involvement with the subject. His expertise is in transportation planning, so the report and blog post were geared towards TU in public transportation infrastructure. The video, however, was a short piece highlighting a small TU intervention he had done with friends back in 2012. The interview was held in a crowded coffee shop near the participants office, so a recording was not practical.

The interview guide was still followed and notes were taken during and shortly after the interview to capture all the main points. The site visit took place immediately after the interview, as the subject site was within walking distance to the meeting location. The site was observed in the same fashion as the others, and pictures were taken. The follow-up research was through online news outlets and blogs for the city, as those were the only sources available to find information on the issues discussed in the interview.

4.1.4 The Bellingham Case

The Bellingham case was discovered during the preliminary, desk based research for the city. This portion of the research included a review of the city's municipal code to understand the planning and public participation process for traffic improvement projects. This area of the planning process became the focus because a search of TU interventions in Bellingham revealed the story of the case on Eldridge Ave. The preliminary investigation of the case was through a blog post and news websites, before a site visit was done. The site visit and interviews were combined in this case, as prior to arriving in Bellingham, so interview participants had been secured. The information from the blog post indicated that it was the local residents of Eldridge Ave who implemented the intervention, so the approach to securing interviews was to knock on the doors of the houses along the street. Three out of the four homes had a respondent who was willing to participate in a short interview for the research. There was also one respondent who was reached in the right of way, where she was tending her garden. While she was happy to discuss her impressions of the street, she did not have any information about the intervention. Because these interviews were on the fly, and therefore conversational in nature, it was determined that following a the more structured interview guide or attempting to record the conversations would not be appropriate. It was understood that the participants may hesitate to speak freely if recorded, and carrying paper or a computer to access the interview guide while going

from house to house was impractical. Field notes of each conversation was recording on a mobile device directly after each interview in order to secure the data from each participant.

4.2 Reflection of Methods

As previously stated, interviews were selected as a data collection method because Literature for interviews: According to Blaxter et al (2006: 172), it is valuable to do interviews as the method provides researchers with the chance to discover information that is “probably not accessible using techniques such as questionnaires and observations”. Additionally, they state that interviewing is not only just a data collection tool, but also a natural way of interaction that can take place in various situations (ibid: 177). Interviews were also appealing in the data collection due to their allowance for flexibility and rapport.

The informal and conversational nature of casual interviews promotes a comfortable and non-threatening environment. This can foster rapport and trust between the researcher and participant, encouraging participants to share their thoughts more openly (Rubin, 2011). This was especially helpful because the unique circumstances around each case were unique and required flexibility and the ability to adapt. Though the method of interviews was undoubtedly the right approach for this thesis, it is important to note that there are also limitations to the method. In particular, their lack of standardization and potential for bias a subjectivity. Since casual interviews do not follow a strictly predetermined set of questions, there is a risk of inconsistency across interviews. This can make it challenging to compare and analyze data systematically (Fontana, 2005). Casual interviews also heavily rely on the interviewer's skills and interpretations. The interviewer's biases and subjectivity may inadvertently influence the data collected and analyzed (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). To avoid having these limitations invalidate the data, consistent notes on the interviews were kept where

recordings and transcriptions were not an option. The notes were written in the most neutral form possible, with care put into avoiding any commentary or biases in their recording.

While conducting the follow-up research, and even some of the initial research for each case, blog posts were used to fill in context and provide insights into the local response. While it may be a bit controversial, using blog posts in academic research may be justified in certain circumstances, particularly when they provide unique perspectives, real-time insights, or access to niche communities. However, it is important to critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of blog posts as sources. One justification for the use of blog posts is that they provide more diverse viewpoints and perspectives. Blog posts often offer alternative viewpoints and perspectives that may not be found in traditional academic literature. They can provide insights from individuals or groups who have direct experiences or expertise in a particular subject area (Gao & Niedermeier, 2013). Another justification for the use of blog posts is that they can provide timely and current information. They can provide up-to-date information on rapidly evolving topics, emerging trends, or current events. They may offer real-time observations, analysis, or commentary that can complement or supplement existing scholarly research (Bastidas, 2017). Both of these justifications are highly relevant for this thesis, as the study cases were highly contextual and localized, so the background and local context was not available through other information channels.

5 Case Studies and Analysis

5.1 Trondheim

6.1.1 Trondheim's Planning Process

The first step in the data collection process is to research the typical planning process that would apply to the installment if done in the formal way. Outside of the general process described in the context section, the study city's each have their own unique processes for public participation and development.

In Trondheim, there is an emphasis on public participation, and the city has expressed a desire to develop in a co-creative way on their website (Trondheim Kommune, n.d.). This is well represented in the city's standard and general process for public participation for public projects.

The city of Trondheim, Norway emphasizes public participation in public projects to ensure transparency, accountability, and the inclusion of citizen perspectives. While the specific public participation process can vary depending on the nature and scale of the project, here is a general overview of the required public participation process for public projects in Trondheim:

Early Public Notification: The municipality provides early public notification about upcoming projects through various channels such as local newspapers, the municipality's website, social media, and direct mailings. The notification includes project details, objectives, and information about how the public can get involved (City of Trondheim, 2023).

Public Consultation and Information Sharing: The municipality organizes public consultations to gather input, opinions, and suggestions from affected individuals, interest groups, and the general public. Public meetings, workshops, and open houses may be conducted to provide project information, present alternative options, and

allow for public feedback. Information about the project, including plans, drawings, and impact assessments, is made available to the public for review and comment (City of Trondheim, 2023).

Public Hearings: Public hearings may be held to provide opportunities for stakeholders and the public to express their views, concerns, and support regarding the project. During public hearings, participants can provide verbal and written statements, ask questions, and engage in discussions related to the project.

Consultation with Stakeholders: The municipality engages with relevant stakeholders such as community organizations, neighborhood associations, environmental groups, and affected businesses or residents. Stakeholders are invited to provide input and collaborate in decision-making processes to ensure their perspectives are considered (City of Trondheim, 2023).

Feedback Analysis and Integration: The municipality analyzes the feedback received from the public, stakeholders, and relevant authorities. The analysis aims to identify key concerns, evaluate alternative options, and incorporate public input into the decision-making process (City of Trondheim, 2023).

Communication of Decisions: The municipality communicates the project decisions and outcomes to the public, providing explanations of how public input influenced the decision-making process. The rationale behind the decisions, any modifications made based on public input, and potential next steps are shared with the public (City of Trondheim, 2023).

Ongoing Communication: Throughout the project implementation, the municipality maintains ongoing communication with the public, providing updates on the progress, addressing concerns, and addressing any changes or challenges that may arise (City of Trondheim, 2023).

6.1.2 The Planters and Play Area

The case in Trondheim is focused on an experimental, temporary intervention that was done on a pedestrian-only street in the city center. The project was planned, facilitated and funded by the Trondheim Municipality. At no point in any of the announcements for the project does the city refer to their work as tactical urbanism, however the temporary and experimental nature of the project meets the definition of tactical urbanism that was provided during the introduction. The project was initiated because the municipality determined that a street in the center called Elsa Laula Renbergs plass needed some improvement after an art installation was moved to a new location and decided to implement a low-cost, temporary project as a test for a concept. To investigate the process of this project from the perspective of those who planned and executed it, and to understand the community's response, an interview with the project manager was arranged and an investigation of online documents and articles regarding the project was done. A site visit was also done. The project manager is an employee of the municipality, and the interview took place in a conference room in the municipality offices. The project manager outlined their role, the process, funding, and result. The interview was done in Norwegian and it was recorded and transcribed. The transcription has been translated to English for this thesis. The community response was mixed, as was discovered by the interview and desk-based research of online materials, which have also been translated from Norwegian.

The installation, that at the time of writing this is still standing, and consists of boat-like planters with trees and benches, and a tree-formation on the ground with raw-repurposed wood and some manufactured wooden platforms in the shape of leaves. In regard to the project process for this site, it was quite fast. The project manager

explained in the interview that the city owns the land, so there was very little paperwork or permitting required.



Figure 1 The installation seen outside the art gallery. (Grann, 2022, photo by KIM NYGÅRD)

Yes, but there are no facilities subject to application and we who manage urban spaces in Trondheim. But we didn't need to send an application to the building affairs office, and then we had ourselves in a way to approve, so we didn't need anything. But we must have contact with those who, for example, run events. Because they tend to rent out the city rooms for events. So we have to say that now there can't be an event here, but there has to be, and when it's finished building, then the way of organizing will probably have to

change, right? Then the event was moved from Cicignons plass, which was a large open space to Elsa Laula Renbergs plass, where we are now creating a large open area. But we have not had any other approvals.

The project fits even more in line with the values of TU as it had almost no permitting process. What is more unique about this case compared to others, though, is that since it was implemented by the municipality and they owned the land, no real permissions were required. The project was implemented to encourage children and families to use the space, and was part of an initiative to create more spaces for children in the city center. The temporary installation was planned to remain in place from 2022 to 2023 and maybe longer (Porridge, 2022). The tree formation and planters all support the theme of a 'pocket forest', as was the intent of the project manager (Porridge, 2022). The purpose of the installation is to test the concepts of use for the space, from open space to an artistic installation for children to play on.

We want to get more children into the city centre, so there has been a large project underway called children in the city, and there is a political order that Cicignons plass and Elsa Laula Renbergs plass should be an urban space for children.

According to the article issued by the municipality on the project on their website, the project is to test solutions and begin to address the apparent strong demand for play structures in the center. The play structure was intentionally created with the remains of a large tree that was recently felled nearby, to give it new life before it is eventually placed in a natural area to rot for a long time (Porridge, 2022). While the municipality does not specifically call this intervention tactical urbanism, its temporary, cheap and fast-tracked nature allow it to fall under the definition of tactical urbanism. Also, because it was intended as a way to test a concept.

Therefore, we decided that we should try to test the preliminary project plan that we believe in. And then it's special, and it shouldn't cost anything special, yes, I think it's close to a million for the temporary project.

The budget for the project in this area is extremely limited, so a solution other than formal play infrastructure was required. The quote from the project manager in the municipality article addressed the costs and restrictions that a more formal play structure would require. Solid play structures are costly and have very specific requirements based on their size that would require more of an investment than the city is currently able to make. This was addressed in the interview, but the project manager discussed the limitations more specifically in a statement she gave to the local newspaper. She said “there are strict safety requirements for play areas and with a fall height of more than 60 centimetres, there is a requirement for a fall base. Both the equipment and the fall base are expensive, so we have to wait until the urban space is built permanently” (Ulvnes, 2022). The permanent development of the space does not currently have a timeframe, as the city would have to allocate a sizeable budget to the improvement of the area and the process for securing funding is still ongoing.

Following its installation, there was some mild controversy surrounding the project. An art gallery owner whose space is along the project site critiqued the aesthetics of the installation and others in the area complained about their lack of involvement. This was discussed by the project manager in the interview. She cited all the different parties that were involved and addressed the negative feedback the city received from the community.

No, yes. After all, it is Trondheim municipality, municipal engineering, which is responsible for the design, whose consultants are Norconsult and LINK architecture, who have done the design.

We have also been involved with all the surrounding neighbors. The youth city council, various municipal councils. So we have had a long process, and all units in Trondheim municipality, such as the city antiquarian, city architect, city plan, yes, and art culture yes. very many who have been involved. After all, we have received criticism for not being involved. But we believe that the criticism is rather that they have not had their way, those who say they have not been allowed to participate. Like KUK, we have had four meetings with. And we have heard what they want. And not everything is in line with what the city wants. Because we have to, our task is to think about the city.

The project manager spoke candidly about the issue with the feedback from the local art gallery, but they are looking for as much feedback as possible. The municipality is especially interested in the feedback of the play structure and use of the space for children. The project manager also touched on the difficulty in reaching consensus during the public participation phase of a project. Because this installation is coming from the municipality, the usual methods of public notification and participation were followed, rather than other models of participation and co-creation in tactical urbanism interventions. Still, the feedback, negative or not, is helping to inform the project and could, if done well, contribute to a retro-active co-creative process. Because the intent is to create a space especially friendly to children and families, the municipality is also looking for active feedback from schools and the youth council.

But now we are testing the size in an open space in front of KUK to see if it works, the right size, or they want it much bigger, but we are trying to test things like that, so to help us test out, we have contact schools and kindergartens, as we have a questionnaire for them to answer, the youth city council must be involved.

The municipality is also paying close attention to the way the public interacts with the installation from an observational standpoint. Toward the monitoring the success of the project over time based on community use and engagement, the municipality has hired a local consulting firm to measure the level of use of the site based on visits and observations.

It is also Multiconsult who will stitch this together to create a report in the end, they are in the city room, I think it is up to 8 times during the year, and will observe for an hour each time I think, and I think it is both morning, lunchtime and afternoon, eight times. As them for set use of the space throughout the year.

This step is in line with the standard planning process for formal planning. The final step, monitoring and maintenance, except in this case, the monitoring is to provide justification for why a more formal and permanent solution should be funded at this site. This in combination with collecting feedback and impressions from the public makes up the level of public participation and engagement included in this project. There is little to no maintenance required for this project, as it has already stood for as long as the municipality originally intended. At this point, it is safe to say that if any serious maintenance or repairs are required, the project will simply be removed. In the meantime, the project manager hopes it will continue to be used and enjoyed by the target demographics. Despite the criticism mentioned earlier on in the interview, she mentioned that has also been positive feedback for the project.

Now I just got a picture of a whole school class who were there and sat around the planters mingling. So I know that I was very happy when it happens then or when we get feedback from schools and kindergartens that have been there, and who think it's good.

Other positive feedback that the project manager has received was also outlined during the interview.

Now this winter, we will also take it to spring and summer and autumn and. So we hope that we will get good answers then. Or we think that we are so good at answering then that we know what the answers are then [Laughs], but we'll see. If that's true. It is also very exciting to see the feedback from those who use the space, and we have already received responses from schools and kindergartens that have used the space, and there are several who thought that what we had done was fantastic, and we I didn't think anyone would think it was fantastic, we might have thought that someone would think it was a bit nice. [Laughs]. And be it those who we feel we haven't satisfied then, with a playground, so that they think it's great is good.

It's great that she received more positive feedback than she expected, but her apparent lack of pride and expectation of praise is somewhat misaligned with her claims this is this a concept she believes in.

Following the interview, a review of the other opinions reported from the public was done. In the local news, there were several pieces regarding the installation. The first one more or less reiterated what the municipality had posted about the project on their webpage. The article stated that it was a temporary measure to fill the space following the removal of the previous art installation, and that the city wished to test the concept (Ulvnes, 2022). A follow-up article was then posted a month later by the same local news outlet after the work was implemented and had been standing for a while. The follow-up article cited complaints about the design from the art gallery that was partly involved in the project, according to the project manager. This article outlines the critique that was referenced during the interview. The piece, like all others referenced in for this case, was originally published in Norwegian and

translated. It was titled “We do everything to make the city nice, and then this happens”. The news article does not pull punches about a famous artists response to the installation. “It is one of the worst things I have seen,” (Grann, 2022) was one of the quotes pulled from the artist in regard to the project.

The article is a short piece, just outlining the responses from the gallery owners. One of the owners does discuss their own involvement in the project, as was alluded to in the interview. They did not agree with the drawings and were therefore not pleased with the final result. Further criticism of the installment and the impact it has on the city are that it detracts from the city’s aesthetic value, and that even though it is called ‘temporary’, it will likely stay for a long time.

“Trondheim is a city on the world map and is mentioned in the New York Times, and then a solution like this is presented. I have never come across anything so sad. We've done everything to make the city nicer, and then this shows up. They say it's a temporary solution, but we know what it's like in a city with tight budgets. It remains standing until it collapses, and that can take years, says Killi-Olsen.”

Though the sentiment of the critique is certainly against the project, their assumption that the project will remain for a long time is not unfounded. The project manager stated in the interview that she wouldn’t mind if the project stayed standing for up to five years. Aesthetics are, of course, a matter of opinion, and the fact that the installment sparked a conversation about the space is not necessarily a bad thing. What is interesting is that one of the critiques from the article also stated that they felt as though the drawings and final design of the project was presented “as if that was how it was, for so long.” (Grann, 2021) This indicates the planning and implementation stage was a very top-down approach, not dissimilar to the planning process in general for the city of Trondheim.

Ultimately, the project in Trondheim was a way for the city to quickly apply a project that would test out the concepts they would like to implement long-term in the area. The project timeline is for up to five years, and the hope is that the monitoring that is done by the consultants who designed the project can provide good data that can help the municipal staff convince the local politicians to provide the funding required to plan a more formal and final installment in the area. Or to pass policy that would allow the space to be used more freely by the local businesses and community.

Another detail about this project is that it is at a site that has been brought to the public's attention several times in the recent past. There was an architectural competition for solutions for play structure and street improvements that was done in 2020-2021 and had a winner. This set an expectation for the area, that it should be something special, based on the best design that was determined by a vote. The voting panel consisted of local children and their representatives (Grøtte, 2020).

The site is also on a street that was somewhat recently renamed in honor of a Sami woman. There was a small demonstration and posting of her pictures by a group in support of international women's day. The group also expressed hope that the city would do more to honor the Sami women, and that any permanent installation or street improvements would pay the appropriate homage to the street's namesake a debate article was posted, in discussion about whether the Sami representation at the site had been abandoned (Stavsøien, 2021). A member of the Sami community was invited to discuss the designs for the space, which was very appreciated. (Porridge, 2020)



Figure 2 Site Visit photo 1 - the planter boxes and bench (Author)



Figure 3 Site visit photo 2 - the play structure (Author)

6.1.3 Summary

The concept of this project was purely to activate or test the area for the potential for a more formal and involved project. The fact that the project was coordinated by the municipality with the designs and project monitoring being done by local consulting firms leads to the implication that this was barely a community-based project at all, but simply something to try and activate a somewhat dead space. The collaborative process and everything leading up to the installation of this project was done in a formal way by a formal body, all to install an ‘informal’, temporary project that is meant to test out concepts. This is indeed a form of tactical urbanism that can be done by planning bodies, and can be argued to be a positive way to utilize space while

testing citizen enjoyment and potential for more permanent enhancements. The backlash from the local art gallery and subsequent discussion of the issue could even be argued to indicate some success of the project, as its intent all along was to test concepts and facilitate a public discussion of the space and its potential. The former plans for the space, from the design competition seems to have been abandoned or put on hold for now.

However, the fact that this project was intended purely for enjoyment and enhancement of the space for pedestrians, but still received community criticism after its installation indicates that the planning system in Trondheim interacts very little with the concept of informality from need, and civil resistance. If the project were never implemented, the space would continue to be lightly used by the community. The 'need' of the community is more space for children to play in the center, but it is not entirely clear where or when this need was determined. No doubt it's coming from community feedback, but it seems highly unlikely that those asking for such spaces would ever take matters into their own hands and make their own play spaces without involving the municipality. Rather, they count on the formal government to provide these spaces, and will gladly fill out questionnaires and make formal class trips to spaces with children in support of such efforts.

5.2 Oslo

6.2.1 Oslo's Building Requirements

To begin research on the Oslo case, a study of the general building approval process in Oslo was done. The building permit process in the city of Oslo involves several steps and requirements. While the process can vary depending on the specific nature and scale of the project, here is a general overview:

Project Planning and Documentation: The building permit applicant must define the scope of the project and prepare detailed plans and documentation, including architectural drawings, technical specifications, and environmental impact assessments if necessary. While they work on the permit application, the applicant ensures compliance with local building regulations, zoning codes, and other relevant laws (City of Oslo, 2023).

Application Submission: The applicant then submits the building permit application to the local municipality, typically through the Planning and Building Services department. The application must include all required documents, such as the completed application form, project plans, technical descriptions, and any additional requested information (City of Oslo, 2023).

Preliminary Assessment: The municipality then reviews the application and conducts a preliminary assessment to ensure it meets the necessary requirements and regulations. The assessment may involve consultations with various departments, such as urban planning, fire safety, environmental authorities, and heritage preservation agencies (City of Oslo, 2023).

Public Consultation: Depending on the project's scale, there may be a requirement for public consultation or notification of neighboring property owners. This allows stakeholders to provide feedback or raise objections to the proposed development (City of Oslo, 2023).

Technical Review: The municipality conducts a detailed technical review of the project plans, assessing aspects such as structural integrity, fire safety measures, accessibility, and energy efficiency. If necessary, the municipality may request modifications or additional information from the applicant (City of Oslo, 2023).

Decision and Approval: Based on the assessment and technical review, the municipality makes a decision on the building permit application. If approved, the

applicant receives the building permit, outlining the specific conditions and regulations that must be followed during construction. If the application is rejected, the applicant may have the option to appeal the decision or make necessary revisions and resubmit the application (City of Oslo, 2023).

Construction and Inspections: With the building permit in hand, the applicant can proceed with construction, ensuring compliance with the approved plans and permit conditions. During the construction process, the municipality conducts periodic inspections to verify that the construction adheres to the approved plans and meets building regulations (City of Oslo, 2023).

6.2.2 The City Garden

For Oslo, the case study was a simple case of a community-based project that was done in the Jordal neighborhood in Oslo without any formal permission. The project can be considered a good representation of tactical urbanism, in the way that it was simple, affordable, and done over the course of one weekend. The initiators of the project did not seek formal permission, nor did they bother with any notice or paperwork before starting the project. The project consists of a bench, wooden platform, planter boxes and a swing. Shortly after its completion, pictures were taken and the project was presented from its creators for a local architecture exhibit. The project was ultimately, the result of one person's idea, but the idea took hold among him and his friends and colleagues and was put into action. The project was inspired by other similar projects in the area. It is located in a somewhat central residential street in the city.



Figure 4 The garden seen from the street shortly after it was completed (PowWow Architecture, 2019)

The project was planned and implemented because in the neighborhood, there is a small patch of land near a parking lot that was generally unused. The small area had grass and a large tree, and a general air of unuse and abandonment. When the building made its residents aware of their plans to extend the parking lot and take down the tree, one of the residents wanted to preserve the tree and make the area more appealing and usable by the neighborhood. He happened to be an architect so brought his proposal to his colleagues and they came up with an idea together.

What is interesting about this project is that the intent was very carefree, coming from a place of desire. The desire to save the tree, to have a nice little space instead of yet another paved over parking area. The project included a significant amount of collaboration from other architects and experts on plants and wood structures, but the installation took place over the timespan of one weekend and has been standing for close to 2 years now.

Only time will tell if the new owners will continue to care for the site and repair it was the weak materials eventually begin to crumble away, but the state of the site at the time of writing this shows promise. To understand the planning and building process for this project, an interview with the project coordinator was done. The interview took place in the office of the architect who facilitated the project, he was the resident who decided to save the small green space and tree in lieu of a parking space. The interview was recorded and transcribed, but there was no need for translation as it was done in English.

The conversation included the process the architect followed for the development process. The ownership of the area is vague, with no formal paperwork indicated that he owns the land and is allowed to make alterations. He explained in the interview, however, that the project did not actually require a formal permit because the work was fairly minimal.

I mean, I didn't do any, if you look at the regulations, didn't really do anything that needs to be kind of asked permission for because I didn't, for example, in elevates more than half liter and stuff like that. So but of course, I made a bunch of stuff like that.

He showed the property lines in the area on a projector, and they were indeed vague, as they crisscross beneath the building, and as far as the interviewee knows, there is little to no formal paperwork that clarifies the issue of land ownership. He simply asked the building to not build him a parking space and instead used the tree and small grassy area for a project he put together with himself and his colleagues, even turning outside their firm to collect insight from a specialist on what species of plants would survive best in this area. They took their project to the Oslo open, an architecture competition and received high praise for their work. The interviewee described that process:

So I realized, okay, if if this is three, and this piece of grass is not going to be asphalt, woohoo, we have to save it. So, I offered my space of parking. And I got the whole distance that so this is how we can have a secured area. So it's not really a gray area, because we are allowed to and I own it, but the still, you're not really allowed to build anything. And the ownership here is also vague, because it's not really... I didn't know that I can. It's like a parking spot. So it's more of I can use it. But I don't really. And it's there's no paper on that. And just like, like the agreement that I was allowed to do. And also the border here, too. I mean, I'm using a lot of area for the municipality.

The bench space goes out into the right of way, which is the area for the municipality referenced above. The project was planned over the course of two weeks, and was a joint effort with the other architects in the office as well as their professional connections. As they started to work on it, they realized they may be able to enter the project in the Oslo Open House:

Yeah. Because, because, so I kind of the opportunity, I was just had to grab it. And after that, we sat down in two weeks. We just build it in because we wanted to add and we realized that we wanted to make the project and also tried to go into the Oslo Open House. And we did see that both things at the same time. So it was kind of a motivation to see if we can join. Yeah, it didn't matter if we didn't do it, but we thought it would be cool. So yeah, so that's, that's the whole thing really

When asked what he would do differently if starting the project over, the interviewee stated that he would involve the neighborhood more, especially in the planning and building stage.

...for the street or group, I could own this, and take care of it, or have responsibility for it. Because I needed to do it that way to ensure that that didn't disappear. But then I should have made some smart move handling was an opening with an error at that. At that in see clearly that that was important to do. So now it's up to the new owner to see if they can continue. But to the to the how we planned it and how we might build it.

The interviewee expressed that he was beginning to feel disconnected from doing projects that were creative and interesting to him, rather than just a way to make money. For this reason, he decided to do this project during a lull in work from his company. He mentioned the pleasure of working on a creative and collaborative project together with his friends and colleagues. As an added bonus, him and his colleagues were so pleased with the result of their work that they entered in the project in a local architecture exhibit and were accepted. After reflecting on the results of the project, the interviewee stated that the positive feedback and the ease of simply implementing a project that was inclusive and fun without permission took him back to his original interest in architecture and would inspire his future work:

You know, so this maybe will be was a good project for me to kind of see okay, guidelines for me to see what where I want to go further. Because now I'm still drawing for an industry in a way to see if how I can guide myself in the projects that I found find valuable and valuable for me.

The site visit showed that the space was well cared for, even after the thaw of winter when many spaces are still in a state of neglect after the fresh snow-melt. The site visit was done in early April on a rainy and cold day, yet the signs of continued care and maintenance of the area were unmistakable. A new swing had been erected after the previous thefts mentioned during the interview, there were chairs on the residential side

of the platform, and the planting beds showed signs of somewhat recent maintenance. The bench that faced the street was also in good condition. The neighborhood street that hosts the installation is quiet, very few cars passed by during the site visit. Surrounding the space is almost all residential, with a few small corner stores nearby. The chairs and wooden deck-like area is accessible from the parking lot of the building while the bench faces the sidewalk, where there is much foot traffic.



Figure 5 Site Visit photo showing the garden project from the apartment parking lot (Author)

The interviewee mentioned that the project was inspired by a guerilla garden that was built by community members just down the street from the project site. The garden was eventually adopted as a formal communal space, as it mostly fell within the right of way and the city felt that the adoption by the community was the best use for the space,

especially as their efforts and maintenance cost the city nothing. The project, called Føflekken byhage, is apparently still going strong according to its Facebook page. This type of community enhancement project is a positive addition for any unused and abandoned space in a neighborhood, as the city may not have the funding or capacity to upgrade the space, and the community doing it for free is the best-case scenario. This also aligns well with the principles of tactical urbanism, which describe exactly this sort of intervention.

Following the outlining of the project in question and the process and result, the interviewee continued the conversation and shared some interesting insight of the greater context of Oslo, regarding the situation with the building permits, and how there is increasing pressure on the housing market from the neoliberal planning system. He stated that developers in Oslo are also trying to maximize profit. He also discussed the stringent and sometimes difficult process of developing public spaces on a bigger scale than the project he facilitated. This conversation flowed naturally after the recording was stopped, but notes were taken shortly after the meeting regarding the story, as it was relevant to the context of community development projects in Oslo and how the public typically goes about advocating for shared spaces.

The requirements for a formal park or recreational space are more intensive. The process, which follows the general process described earlier on this thesis, is quite time intensive and will get caught on issues that may seem inconsequential to the laymen, but carry significance in the realm of bureaucracy. An example of this is another park that was described by the interviewee. A friend and colleague of his has been successful with a project to turn an unused property into a park and part of the school grounds for a nearby school, but it took many years and a lot of dedication on behalf of one person, who was not employed by the municipality but had the time and expertise to see the project through regardless.

The general situation with the school ground was an issue with the land property use and zoning, as well as reaching consensus on the design. Several times over the course of several years did they consider dropping the project because of the need for funds and interest, but the colleague of the interviewee kept up a steady commitment and was able to use social capital to rally the community toward the cause. After a four-year process of collection money and working with local politicians, the activity park was eventually developed. In the end, the anecdote is a success story, but it can be said that it was largely due to the time and effort of one person. This person was able to continue to work on the concept, attend meetings and garner interest and involvement from their contacts in the community. This is not always possible, and it says something about the planning system that it takes this sort of determination to finish a recreational land use project. One that also, very simply, enhances the school area and public space rather than being an empty, paved lot. But a key take-away from both of these cases is that each of the initiators felt empowered to take action or start a project, and both were able to see the project through. Of course, one was much more straightforward than the other, but it's important to note that one highly motivated individual or group can implement a project.

After the interview, a quick search was done to further inform the anecdotal story from the interviewee. The search confirmed what was discussed, and provided a few more details about the project. The project was advocated for by the parental committee, and took about four years of work and community sourced funding to be successful. The final product received much praise for the community, with comments about how the space no longer feels abandoned and dangerous, but now like a part of a thriving neighborhood (Valum, 2020).

This was tied back to the case study of the small intervention done along the street. It was much easier and faster to simply implement a small-scale community space. However, as stated in the interview, the stakes are much lower for the small-scale

intervention. It was inexpensive, and the maintenance can be managed well enough by the community alone, without public funding.

6.2.3 Summary

Though it must be said that this project was entirely dependent on the interest and skills of one individual who had a decent amount of social and professional capital. He said himself that he had the time, skills and inclination to spearhead the project. He was also able to use the result to promote his architecture business. This instance matches the description from Devlin's piece that differentiates between the informality of need vs the informality of desire. In this case, it is the informality of desire alone that fueled the project. Though that doesn't necessarily detract from the value of the result, but it does present an interesting discussion for the role of informality in the city of Oslo. As far as can be discerned from this interview as well as some desk-based research, informal projects in Oslo all match Devlin's description of the informality of desire. There is no pressing unmet need in the city that must be addressed through informal means. That said, there are some gray-area housing arrangements and history of squatters. However, these tend to lean towards anarchist and free artistic values rather than a drastic lack of affordable housing, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Another important aspect of this project is the intent and empowerment of the individual who initiated the project. It was comparatively low-stakes. As mentioned earlier, the interviewee had a casual and carefree attitude toward the project, and the work came from a place of interest and joy. The interviewee even acknowledged that he had no concerns about legal repercussions for his work, as the only portion of the project that intruded on the right of way was a wooden bench, which is hardly

controversial, even if it may not meet the standards of universal design or others that it would if it were built by the municipality instead. Other instances of temporary or informal interventions studied from afar in Oslo have a similar situation. That is, that they are not hugely controversial or disruptive. For example, the temporary park in Gronnland. It was a collaborative project and arguably a favorable example of tactical urbanism at work. However, like the small site from the interview, it is a result of the lack of funding a capacity of the city to facilitate recreational spaces. This responsibility has instead fallen to collaborations and partnerships from different agencies and volunteers. This is not necessarily a negative thing, as the planning field often relies of such resources, but it does say something about how the city interacts with informal vs formal interventions.

A key takeaway from the story about the school park is that there is some flexibility and power for local organizations who advocate for community spaces. The project was a success in the end because the group was able to raise enough funds and interest from the community to push the politicians to allow for the creation of the activity space. Interestingly, however, there were no temporary measures mentioned to have been done in the four-years that it took for a public space to be developed. The parent group and neighborhood members went through formal channels to attain their desired space rather than take matters into their own hands and start building on their own.

5.3 Seattle

6.3.1 Seattle's Planning Process

The City of Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) outlines the requirements for public participation in the decision-making process for land use and development within the city. Here are some of the key public participation requirements under the SMC:

Public notice: The SMC requires that notice be provided to the public of all land use and development proposals that require a decision by a city department, board, or commission. This notice must include information about the time, date, location, and purpose of the meeting or hearing (SMC. Title 23).

Public comment: The SMC requires that members of the public be given an opportunity to provide written and/or oral comments on land use and development proposals. This comment period is usually open for a set period of time, and all comments must be considered as part of the decision-making process (SMC. Title 23).

Environmental review: The SMC requires that environmental reviews be conducted for proposed development projects. This review process includes opportunities for public comment and input (SMC. Title 23).

Citizen advisory committees: The SMC allows for the establishment of citizen advisory committees to provide input and recommendations on planning and development issues. These committees must be representative of the community and must provide opportunities for public participation (SMC. Title 23).

Appeals process: The SMC provides for an appeals process that allows members of the public to challenge decisions made by city departments, boards, or commissions related to land use and development. This process provides an opportunity for members of the public to challenge decisions that they feel are unfair or not in the public interest (SMC. Title 23).

Comprehensive planning: The SMC requires that the city develop and maintain a comprehensive plan that outlines its long-term vision for growth and development. This planning process must include opportunities for public participation, including public hearings and meetings (SMC. Title 23).

There are specific public participation requirements in Seattle that go beyond those of the GMA. The following measures are the city of Seattle's specific requirements that have been tailored by the municipality:

Department of Neighborhoods: The City of Seattle has a Department of Neighborhoods that provides resources and support to neighborhood groups, and promotes public involvement in decision-making processes. The department also operates a Neighborhood Matching Fund program, which provides grants to support community-led projects (SMC. Title 23).

Design Review Board: The City of Seattle has a Design Review Board that reviews development proposals for their design quality, and provides recommendations to the city on whether to approve or deny the proposals. The board includes community members who provide input on how the development will impact their neighborhood (SMC. Title 23).

Seattle Comprehensive Plan: The City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, which is required by the GMA, includes a chapter on community involvement that outlines the city's approach to public participation. The chapter includes specific policies and strategies for involving the public in the planning process, including outreach to underrepresented communities and the use of technology to increase public access to information (SMC. Title 23).

Public art program: The City of Seattle has a public art program that requires developers to include public art in their projects. The program includes opportunities for the public to provide input on the selection of the art and its location (SMC. Title 23).

Public Utilities Commission: The Seattle Public Utilities Commission has a public involvement program that includes public meetings and outreach efforts to involve

the public in decision-making processes related to water, sewer, and solid waste services (SMC. Title 23).

6.3.2 The Arcade Plaza and the Rogue Crosswalk

The Seattle study contained two different aspects of the uses of tactical urbanism in the city. There was a main intervention, that was discussed by one of the original project initiators, and then there was a secondary case that was discussed during the interview, that was not initiated by the interviewee, but was relevant to the study anyway. The interview was held in a busy coffee shop nearby the participants office, so a recording of the interview was not practical. Notes were taken during and after the discussion to capture the data. The specific intervention site that the interviewee was a part of has been periodically enhanced in different way since 2012, but the level of interaction and structures fluctuates. The site was introduced by the interviewee, who had been one of the first to block the parking at this site and replace it with a small park with seating. The discussion followed the topic of what work the interviewee had done since that project towards promoting tactical urbanism in Seattle and other US cities. He participated in the creation of a report called “Fast-Tracked” that promoted the use of tactical urbanism especially around issues of transportation planning. The intent of the report was to provide some background knowledge that would help legitimize the use of tactical urbanism interventions. So, if politicians or city administrators are in conflict with private parties who are implementing TU interventions on their own, or they need to convince politicians to allow for such interventions, the report could help justify why TU is valuable and how useful it can be in certain situations. The interviewee sent this document as well as some other materials that he’s been involved with throughout his

career. Along the lines of this issue, the interviewee also discussed other instances of tactical urbanism in the city that were more controversial than his project.

Included in the materials sent over by the interviewee was a short YouTube video he and his friend created in 2012 when they first started blocking the parking spaces at the subject site. This was in the height of the popular “PARKing Day” movement that was moving through many major US cities. In the video, the project facilitators (the interviewee and his friends) can be seen taking ‘no parking’ signs from other streets in the city, taping a piece of paper to indicate a park, and placing them at the entranceway of the subject area.



Figure 6 "Borrowed" parking sign used to block off the area (YouTube Video Screenshot)

They then set up small outdoor furnishings and used sidewalk chalk to label the area as a park.



Figure 7 One of the project facilitators writing "park" on the street with chalk (YouTube)

Along with the video was a blog post and the “Fast-Tracked” report. The blog post was from the interviewees former company, and discussed why tactical urbanism is valuable for public transportation development. Looking through the fast-tracked report, it seems that many of the interventions are for bus or bike infrastructure, and there are fewer on crosswalks. The report does specifically point to “user experience” as a portion of their work, and they define that as the general comfort and support people need to use public transportation infrastructure (Garcia & Wall, 2019), which could be argued to be safer crosswalks.

This is interesting because during the interview, it was discussed that there are significant issues of tension and conflict in Seattle regarding TU, especially around crosswalks. Though the interviewee said that the city eventually adopted the space of his initial project as an official and accepted area for TU and even the mayor attended a

grand opening of the space as a new public asset which was named “Arcade Plaza”.



Figure 8 An image of a thriving plaza (Do26, no date)

he also mentioned other projects that are implemented by the public that are rejected by the local government. For example, there have been many instances where neighbors have come together to create some form of traffic calming infrastructure in their neighborhood, like painting the street and setting up traffic cones. They do this because there is no formal crosswalk in at a popular pedestrian crossing area and they feel unsafe. The interviewee stated that the city’s response is typically to come and dismantle their work. He then discussed these instances and referenced the report he co-authored to try and aid those who would argue in favor of such interventions. The issue is that Seattle uses strategic planning, which means they may have plans to address these safety concerns in the neighborhood, but it is part of a greater plan that

will take years to implement in the current planning environment. The efforts of the public to alleviate the issue in the interim are taken away because the local government has high standards for traffic infrastructure and can therefore not sanction the small community efforts, which means they cannot allow them to continue once they have been brought to the municipality's attention. One main factor for this is that it becomes a liability. If the city allows the intervention to remain standing after it was been brought to their attention, and then there is a traffic accident at the site, the city will be held accountable. The interviewee did state, however, that there is some tension with the city not removing all illegal installments in the right of way with swift efficiency. He referenced eco blocks being placed in the right of way to prevent the unhoused from parking their vehicles along some residential streets. He said these blocks are not removed by the city, and mentioned a rumor that a city councilmember had even installed one such block along their own street.

Following the interview, an investigation was done on the topic of tactical urbanism interventions in Seattle that were brought up during the discussion. First was the site that the interview participant was directly involved in. The arcade plaza is the site that the interviewee introduced as his initial TU intervention from 2012. After the grand opening, the plaza has taken different forms depending on who is willing to collaborate. The plaza that was discussed had several news articles and blog posts about its re-opening, with pictures of food trucks and people enjoying games in the space. The photos were taken during the Covid-10 pandemic and the attendants were shown wearing masks while they enjoyed the playful offerings of the plaza.

The site visit to Arcade Plaza that was done after the interview revealed a space that was not currently in use for any public enhancement, but that's not to say there won't be something in the future. The site is still painted with the arcade designs and remains sectioned off from the main street and unavailable for parking. The space is available for the use of the community, but this often takes participation and collaboration

between the public and private businesses. This has been done to some success, but it is highly contingent on the businesses or an association holding the project together. For example, the news article specifically called out the business that shared the plaza as the sponsor and facilitator for its re-opening. This business way no longer exists, because as mentioned, the site feels somewhat abandoned. However, the area is still sectioned off from the main road, and still has the painting of the arcade-style designs. Though it has not been reclaimed as a parking area for cars, the space was not in use by the community at the time of writing this. The site is along a noisy street, with few businesses in the immediate area, creating a somewhat unwelcoming atmosphere for one who would want a space to spend leisure time. Though it would be unfair to say that the area has no potential for future use, like the play area with food trucks from figure 8. The area also may be put to use in the warmer months. The site visit was done in early April, where regular rain showers are still common in that climate.



Figures 9 and 10 Site visit photos - the space is empty except for the paintings (Author)

Secondly, an investigation of the other, more controversial cases of TU was done. Namely, the information found online regarding the topic of tactical urbanism crosswalks and the issue of eco blocks being placed illegally in the right of way. The interviewee had discussed how the city had several well-publicized instances of rogue crosswalks and was Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) was facing criticism as they were quick to remove the rogue crosswalks but very slow to remove the illegal eco blocks. The tension lies in the notion that the formal government looks past issues that affect the unhoused while coming down swiftly on efforts by the community to create safer street crossings. A search of local news sites and blogs revealed that there was indeed a lot of tension around this issue in 2022. A rogue crosswalk appeared at a popular pedestrian crossing and was removed as soon as it came to the city's attention. The news articles and blogs cite the response from SDOT, with some even sharing the statement they received directly from SDOT in response to their article. The official statement of SDOT in regard to the criticism of their response to the rogue intersection is as follows:

We have heard the message loudly and clearly that the public wants more crossing and safety improvements. We appreciate the passion which has driven someone to paint their own crosswalk, however this is not the right way to voice your desire for change.

There are standards which we are legally required to follow when painting a crosswalk. The unauthorized markings at E Olive Way and Harvard Ave E have been removed because they do not comply with city standards.

We are committed to increasing safety and working with communities. For example, in September SDOT applied for [*nearly \\$50 million in federal grants*](#) to improve safety and support our bridges. The [*grant proposal*](#) included crossing improvements at

Harvard Ave E and E Olive Way. We'll learn whether we receive the grant as soon as January 2023.

There are many needs throughout the city. We need to focus our resources on safety improvements based on safety, health, and equity. We're committed to continuing this conversation including [co-creating a new Seattle Transportation Plan with the community](#) (Jseattle, 2022, statement from SDOT).

In short, the director of SDOT states that tactical urbanism is not an effective way to have one's voice heard, and city residents should instead attend the city meetings to express their concerns. The formal channels for public participation are those outlined in the planning system overview for Seattle. However, it can be argued that this approach is not a viable option for some city residents, as tension is mounting and they feel the need to go out and make their own street crossings. However, the SDOT director still points to the typical outlets that the city of Seattle has adopted toward public participation in the planning process.

Overall, the City of Seattle's public participation requirements go beyond those of the GMA by providing a range of opportunities for public involvement in decision-making processes. It can be said that these requirements reflect the city's commitment to involving the public in decisions that affect their communities, and to ensuring that all voices are heard in the planning and development process. However, the situation with the rogue crosswalks is in contradiction with that statement.

Interestingly, it seems that despite the public statement and the response of SDOT in further online comments, including the following

Political participation is not the same as altering the public right of way yourself. Folks are invited to participate in all sorts of ways and

we are listening.”—SDOT director Greg Spotts, responding to tweets supporting a guerrilla crosswalk on Capitol Hill

Tactical urbanism in this case can be argued to have been an effective method toward public participation. According to the city, the rogue intersection will indeed be formally adopted as part of the 2023 traffic safety grant package that was awarded (Jseattle, 2022).

6.3.3 Summary

The city of Seattle public participation process is in theory very inclusive, but there are several factors that may have led to the situation with the crosswalks. The reality is that all of the city’s publication participation methods take quite a bit of time on behalf of those who would like to be included, and the projects go on for so long that often people get participation fatigue before the project is complete. Also, though many of the public meetings take place in the evening to accommodate those who cannot attend during normal business hours, families with small children and those who work in the evening are still not able to attend. And even when able to attend, the public comment portion of the evening is very formal and citizens may leave the meeting wondering whether their statements made a difference. Then they are left waiting for long periods of time while the city undergoes the lengthy process of implementing the required solutions. One might think that a temporary solution in the interim would be looked upon favorably, but instead, the city will dispose of the local efforts to enhance the built environment in the present in favor of the longer-term solutions. This seems to exacerbate tension in the community, as people feel that they are not being heard, and any effort to solve the problem on their own is shut down. Meanwhile, small, easy and less controversial TU interventions are endorsed by the local politicians as efforts toward community-based planning, like the arcade plaza. At the time of writing this,

however, the plaza did not seem to be a space that was utilized for community enhancement.

5.4 Bellingham

6.4.1 Bellingham's Road Improvement Process

The study area in Bellingham pertains to road and traffic infrastructure. For this reason, the planning system overview is focused on the city's process for developing road improvements. While the exact process can vary depending on the specific project and circumstances, here is a general overview:

Identifying the Need: The city identifies the need for road improvements based on factors such as traffic congestion, safety concerns, public input, and long-term planning goals. This identification may involve data analysis, traffic studies, public feedback, and coordination with various departments and stakeholders (CBM, Title 2).

Planning and Design: The city develops a plan for the road improvement project, including conceptual design, engineering considerations, and budgeting. Design aspects may include road widening, intersection improvements, signage, sidewalks, bike lanes, or other relevant features. Environmental impact assessments and permits may also be necessary to ensure compliance with local and state regulations (CBM, Title 2).

Public Engagement: The city engages with the public and stakeholders to gather input, address concerns, and incorporate community needs and priorities into the project. Public meetings, open houses, surveys, and online platforms may be used to gather feedback and ensure transparency (CBM, Title 2).

Funding and Budgeting: The city determines the funding sources for the project, which may include a combination of federal grants, state funding, local funds, and other potential sources. The budget is established based on the project scope, engineering estimates, and available funding (CBM, Title 2).

Permitting and Regulatory Compliance: The city obtains necessary permits and ensures compliance with applicable regulations, such as environmental permits, right-of-way requirements, and stormwater management (CBM, Title 2).

Construction and Project Management: The city oversees the construction phase, which involves selecting contractors, managing timelines, and coordinating with utility companies and other stakeholders. Inspections and quality control measures are implemented to ensure that construction meets specifications and standards (CBM, Title 2).

Monitoring and Maintenance: Once the road improvements are completed, the city monitors their effectiveness, collects data on traffic flow, safety, and other relevant factors. Regular maintenance and periodic assessments may be conducted to ensure the ongoing quality and safety of the road improvements (CBM, Title 2).

This overview is to inform of the general process, specific projects may not always follow the general timeline, as funding, public comments and other factors might impact the progress of the project.

6.4.2 Eldridge's Safer Crossing

The Bellingham case covered a small TU intervention that was done by a group of people from the neighborhood. The intent of the intervention was to slow traffic on the street between the neighboring houses and a park. The interviews for this case were

done on the street, where pedestrians were approached for an interview and residents were asked to participate at their front doors.

The street is long, straight and wide, yet because it is a residential street the speed limit is reduced to 25 miles per hour (40 kilometers per hour). Despite the speed limit, the structure of the street is so that speeding is very common. This creates a problem for the people who live on this street, especially those who live across from a park and have small children according to the general consensus from the conversations held with the local residents. One neighbor who was approached while tending her garden discussed her impressions of the street. The portion of the street that goes along the park includes only one crossing area, with no signage or lighting that might encourage cars to slow down before the crosswalk. As a result, crossing the street feels very dangerous with the speeding cars. When approaching the crosswalk on foot, it doesn't seem like the drivers will be able to see you, and even when they do, they may prefer not to slow down. The pedestrian right of way is often not honored here. The speeding issue has even resulted in tragic accidents along the street, including one in which a speeding car hit a pedestrian who was unloading a gardening trailer along the street. According to the resident, the pedestrian survived, but suffered the loss of her legs.

In an attempt to calm the traffic along the road and create a safer crossing for children and families, the neighbors came together and painted bulb-outs on the street and placed traffic cones along them. Some preliminary research of this project that was conducted prior to approaching the local residents for interviews revealed a video documenting the project and the result.



Figure 11 Residents work on their makeshift crosswalk bulb out (Strondtowns, 2022)

After the paint and traffic cones were installed, the cars in the video are seen slowing down appropriately for the crosswalk, and children can be seen coloring with chalk in the newly protected area. The video then shows that the intervention was removed by the city mere days later. The blog site, Strong Towns, that featured the video also included some comments from the director of public works for the city of Bellingham. In a conversation with the blog author, the director expressed empathy with the community members, but stressed that the formal process and liability of allowing an unsanctioned traffic calming measure to remain on the street was an issue for his department:

It's never appropriate to install traffic control without the permission of the regulatory authority," he said. "As a human being I recognize the need for safety and addressing people's concerns... I don't discount their frustrations. I have the same ones. It's normal and

natural, but it doesn't mean we take the law into our own hands. We follow the law. (Stang, 2022 – Statement from PW director)

Ultimately, however, the city did not allow the pedestrian-built traffic calming measures to remain standing for long. As soon as the administrative offices were open again for the week (the project was implemented over the weekend), municipal staff member came to remove the traffic cones from the roadway and paint over the new bulb out. Other key quotes from the public works directors conversation with the blog author were “*We've made millions of dollars of investments in improvements... (some) are identified on Eldridge, but they haven't made the priority list yet,*” and “*There is a difference between being heard and not having things progress in the time frame that residents prefer.*”

The neighbors attempted to have their work formally recognized and allowed to stay in place. The blog references a slideshow presentation that was prepared and shown to the local city council, but the effort was in vain. The presentation includes examples and arguments in favor of tactical urbanism and why it is a good solution for community issues. At the time of writing this, nothing has been done to allow for citizens interventions at this crossing, nor has the city done any formal measures to improve pedestrian safety at the crosswalk in question.

The interview data collection was carried out with the intent to discover what the process was for those who were involved with the intervention, and what their reflections were about the results. The interviews for this site were very casual, where each house was approached and if the resident was willing to discuss the issue, the interview guide questions were asked. As mentioned earlier, one interview participant was approached outside her home, but even though she shared her impression of the street, she was not involved with the intervention and had no other comment on the action other than that she was in favor of it. When seeking further comments from the

residents, four of the surrounding houses were approached, but only three residents answered their doors.

The first house that answered was right across from the park, and clearly had a family with children. The interviewee stated he was a father and was the impression was that he was potentially involved in the intervention, though it seemed he was hesitant to say. He did say that he loved the intervention and fully supported it. He continued to say that he never let his kids cross the street at the actual crossing, but rather only in full view of the house and only when there are absolutely no cars on the road. He went on to discuss his frustration with the speeding cars in general, even pointing out several that sped by during the interview, which took place in his front yard. When asked about which of his neighbors might have been involved in the intervention, he indicated the houses up and down the road and said it was likely some of them. He also mentioned that they might not say whether or not they were involved, as the intervention was illegal and they wouldn't want to be identified as one of the culprits. The conversation moved along to the roadway and why the city might have taken down the intervention instead of allowing it to continue. He said they (the city) are planning on building a bicycle lane along the sides of the road, which is planned with the intention to also slow the traffic. But according to him, the addition of bike lanes with the speeding cars will result in a 'derby'.

The second house that responded was on the other side of the street, the side with the park. A man answered the door and agreed to participate in an interview about the intervention. When asked about the project, he said he had no involvement at all and that he disapproved of the action of installing a temporary bulb-out at the crossing. He went on to say that it seemed like a spontaneous effort put together by some of his neighbors. The neighbors involved had apparently not informed him of their plans to set out the project. He was against it because he felt that it made it more unsafe for cyclists, even if it was safer for pedestrians. This is because the cyclists had to go

around the bulb out, which put them farther into the road and in the way of traffic. His main point, was ‘safer for whom’ as a critique of the work done by his neighbors and that the city knows best how to implement traffic projects that are safe for everyone. He also discussed the city’s plans for the bike lanes, and that he believed it would solve all the problems for the speeding cars and would also be much safer for cyclists than a bulb out.

The third house approached did not have anyone answer the door, the residents were apparently not home.

This fourth and final house did have a respondent. The resident was willing to discuss the project after learning of the study and intent of the research. After being asked if he knew anything about the intervention, he declared easily that he was one of the neighbors who was directly involved in the project, contrary to what the interviewee from the first house suggested. The follow up questions revealed that the neighbors had talked about the project through email and Facebook groups for months prior to its implementation. He stated that there was one neighbor in particular who instigated the project and him and the others were mostly ‘following along’. This neighbor shared their emails between himself and the city administrators with the others in the neighborhood group, with mounting frustration when nothing was done. They even tried to elevate the issue to the city mayor. The TU intervention was the result of months of planning and emails, and a combined effort by the interviewee and others in the neighborhood. When asked about the results, the respondent said that he believed the traffic calming measure they built together was a success, and the city should not have removed it. When discussing its removal, he remarked that the city seemed like the guilty one, as they came at odd hours in what he believed was an attempt to avoid any confrontation with the neighbors. According to him, it would have been nice to be able to have a conversation with the city officials about the project and why they were taking it down, but there was no such interaction.

The site visit elicited emotions of empathy with those who felt the street was not safe. The road runs east to west along the park, and cars do indeed speed by. The roadway is wide and straight, with no visual hindrances that would encourage a driver to slow down. Between the houses on one side of the street and the park on the other, there is a single crossing point. The crossing is at one end of the park, so those who live on the other end would have much longer to walk, even though the park is still directly across from their home. When approaching the crosswalk from the park side, there is a clear view of the road and oncoming traffic. Even though the traffic is coming fast, it seems apparent by the line of sight that drivers can see in advance that there is someone approaching the crossing and should have time to slow down. However, there is no sidewalk directly along the street on the park side, and the landscaping partially blocks pedestrians for drivers coming east down the road. Crossing from the other side of the street however, does not give the same impression. The parked cars on the side with the houses impede the view of the street and oncoming cars, which of course impedes the driver's ability to see a pedestrian approaching the crossing. When crossing from this side, the average pedestrian may feel more inclined to wait until there are no oncoming cars at all in order to feel safe.



Figures 12 and 13 The intersection as seen from multiple perspectives (Author)

Following the interviews and site visit, an investigation into the planned street improvements was in order. Since most of the interview participants mentioned future plans for their street, it was clear that they had been informed by the city of its intent. However, as discussed in the planning system overview, street improvements in the planning system of Bellingham tend to be a lengthy process that's highly dependent on political investment and securing funding. The general planning and development of street improvements for the city of Bellingham is as similar to the planning process outlined in the context section, however the environmental review step is typically combined in some way to the public meetings and review step.

This process varies from project to project. According to the city's comprehensive plan, there are several policies and goals for improved pedestrian and bicycle networks, but the funding is a major issue. The city provides documents that are open to the public to see the progress and plans for future pike and pedestrian pathways. As shown from city documents, the area of the intervention is indeed planned for improvement, but as of writing this, the funding remains to be determined. This is typical of strategic planning, as there are many needs in the city that are in competition for very limited funds and staff capacity. This was also referenced by the public works director in his conversation with the blog author. In another article, it was noted that the traffic and accident data for this intersection indicates a less significant safety issue for other intersections in the city (Jseattle, 2022). The reason this particular intersection is under so much public discussion is because the neighborhood came together to do something about the safety concerns on their own.

As part of the data collection, an attempt to reach the city planning department was made. This attempt was unsuccessful. First, an in person visit to city hall was done, but an appointment was required to meet with a member of the city planning staff. Then, after reaching a planner over the phone, their response to a simple question about the cross-walk intervention and the city's plan for the area was met with hesitancy for the

staff member to speak on behalf of the city on the issue. They deferred to the director of the department, who did not respond to any emails. This matches a bit with the frustrations expressed by the interview participants in reaching the city and feeling heard.

6.4.2 Summary

Similar to the rogue intersections in Seattle, the attempts of residents in the city of Bellingham to create safer street crossings is removed swiftly by the city. The residents are discouraged by public authorities to implement their own traffic safety infrastructure and are instead urged to follow the law and use the formal channels for public participation. Though as clearly displayed in this case, those channels do not produce the timely results that the residents would like to see. The city does have plans to address their concerns, but at the time of writing this, there was no funding for the improvements. With the limited resources and other needs discussed throughout the city for traffic improvements, it may be years still until the residents along the street see any formal improvements. In the meantime, they are not permitted to take any action. This indicates a clear disconnect between the city's formal planning process and any informal projects implemented by the public.

However, it can be argued that the residents attempt to build a safer crosswalk were not entirely in vain. Even though the public works director and others stated that the subject street was lower on the list of priorities for traffic improvements than others in the city, and the intervention was quickly removed, it did spark a public conversation. Their efforts brought more attention to the issue and therefore placed more pressure on the local politicians to make actions toward safer public crossing throughout the entire city.

6 Findings and Implications

The findings are that the interaction with the formal planning system varied based on the context of each project. Each study city resulted in a unique perspective of how instances of tactical urbanism is currently interacting with their respective planning systems. The below table summarizes and characterizes how each project that came up in the interviews interacts with the formal planning systems:

Project type	City and Country/State	Actor	Interaction with formal system	Need or Desire
Planters and park	Trondheim, Norway	Trondheim Municipality	From within formal system	Desire
Rogue Planters and park	Oslo, Norway	Individual resident	Outside the formal system, though ignored/accepted	Desire
Plaza/park	Seattle, WA	Individuals	Started outside formal system, was eventually accepted/adopted	Desire
Rogue Crosswalk	Seattle, WA	Individuals	Outside formal system, removed/rejected	Need

Rogue Crosswalk enhancement	Bellingham, WA	Individuals	Outside formal system, removed/rejected	Need
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6.1 Case Characterizations:

In this section, each project will be discussed in how in terms of whether it can be characterized by the theoretical framework. The projects interaction with the formal planning bodies in place will be compared to the framework presented in the theory section. Though it is a gross simplification of Devlin’s point and main critique about informality in the Global North, each TU intervention discussed will be characterized as either stemming from the informality of need vs the informality of desire. This is done in order to further characterize the unique circumstances for each intervention.

7.1.1 Trondheim

The first project to be examined is in Trondheim, where the municipality implemented a TU intervention in the center based on the desire to enhance the space on a limited budget. It could be argued that urban austerity played a role in what the city decided to implement in this space, especially after all of the public hype that came from the architecture competition and renaming of the street that were mentioned in the case. But despite of its comparatively tiny budget for a public project, there was still funding for the project to the tune of around a million Norwegian Kroner. The intervention in Trondheim can be characterized as an implementation toward the informality of desire (Devlin, 2018), perhaps a result of urban austerity, and not necessarily considered a response to neoliberal planning. The reason it can be characterized as an implementation toward the informality of desire is because there is no discernable need

for the installment in this space. Though the project manager did mention a need for more spaces for children to play in the city center, and ‘need’ is somewhat subjective, the installment did not come from a place of true need in the context of Devlin’s description of this framework. Rather, the project manager facilitated the project in response for a desire for the space to be seen as an interesting contribution to the public sphere on behalf of the municipality. This installment can even be seen as the city attempting to appeal to the creative class by creating something interesting in the space, even in the face of a limited budget. In that way, the project does align with some of the principles of neoliberalism, rather than being in response to negative effects on the public environment of neoliberalism. In this way, it matches somewhat with Mould’s critique of TU being absorbed into the neoliberal planning process (Mould, 214). Though, the project avoids fitting in perfectly with this characterization because while it does align with some neoliberal values, and it was indeed implemented by a formal planning body, the municipality seems to be maintaining a strong commitment to public participation in the process. The project fell almost completely in line with the standard formal planning process in place in Trondheim, though it is slightly unique due to its temporary nature and its standing as a test for a concept. It could be argued that the TU installment in this case

7.1.2 Oslo

The second project that was examined was in Oslo, where an individual, together with his colleagues and friends installed a small park-like platform with planters, a bench and a swing. This project was interesting because more than any of the other concepts from the framework, it matches with the very positive responses to TU. It cannot be argued that this project was a result of a lack of funding for public infrastructure and therefore a side-effect of urban austerity (Tonkiss, 2013). It also cannot be said to be a response to neoliberal planning practices, as the interviewee did not cite any specific lack of public infrastructure, but merely a desire to preserve an attractive tree and make

something nice. For this reason, it can most certainly be characterized as a project that stemmed from the informality of desire. But it also aligns well with the fun and creative interventions that are described in the TU positive literature. It can also be an indication that the creative class is thriving in Oslo, because the facilitator and his companions could be considered members of the creative class, as architects and landscape architects (Courage, 2013). Though the interview did include a discussion of the more stringent building process that was outlined for the city of Oslo, and how other projects that the interviewee is familiar with were significantly slowed by the process and the limitations of the city's funding, to the point that it was funded by the public, his project was able to skirt any formal planning requirements and exist peacefully under the city's radar, as a non-disruptive public space. The city's response (or lack thereof) resembles Tonkiss's description of the second approach to planning under austerity. The city tolerates the temporary structure rather than enforcing the local planning policy and demanding that the implementation meet the local requirements or be removed (Tonkiss, 2013). The other project he discussed has interesting implications for the planning situation in the city, but that could be addressed by a different city. For the purpose of this thesis, the school yard project that was discussed simply provides some context for Oslo. The case that was discussed in the interview, along with the rogue community garden that inspired it, indicates a tolerant relationship between the formal and informal in Oslo.

7.1.3 Seattle

The third study area was the city of Seattle, where there is a contradiction between two instances of TU that were discussed by the interviewee. Though the second instance, the rogue crossing was not a project directly related to the interview participant, it is included in the findings section because enough data from the case was discovered and it provides an interesting look at the dichotomy of interactions between formal and informal in the city of Seattle. The first case of TU that was discussed, where the

interviewee was one of the original facilitators, indicated a fun and low-stakes take on TU in the city. The intervention was fairly non-disruptive, as it only blocked off a small side street that was used as parking and transformed it into a space for the public to enjoy. The project was first enacted in a time when TU interventions like PARK-ing day were riding in popularity due to their palatability by the formal planning systems. As a result of the original rogue parklet, the small side street was eventually renamed “Arcade Plaza” and adopted as a new public space in the city. The space has been appropriated in several different ways since, including a re-opening that was facilitated by a local business. The plaza project can be characterized under the informality of desire (Devlin, 2018). There was no apparent need being addressed in its original installment, as the interviewee state plainly that he and his friends thought it would just be fun. Its eventual adoption into the formal planning sphere can be related to Mould’s critique of TU and its interactions with neoliberal planning systems (Mould, 2014). And its subsequent iterations of public space funded by private stakeholders aligns with both the values of neoliberal planning and Tonkiss’s claim that TU is sometimes used as a band-aid for public spaces when the city fails (Tonkiss, 2013). However, the site visit indicated that the space had stagnated a bit, with the temporary nature of each iteration and an apparent waning interest from the city and the public. The only indication that the space is public that remains in the arcade-style painting on the pavement.

On the other hand, the city of Seattle has more controversial and disruptive instances of TU at play. The rogue crosswalk is indicative of the disconnect that was discussed between the public and the formal planning bodies that was discussed in the literature section, the “Arnstein gap”. The crosswalk was painted by anonymous members of the public where they felt there was a strong need for one. Despite the city’s response that the rogue crosswalk was an inappropriate way to express public opinion, the attention that it brought to the intersection resulted in a more expedited plan for the city to build a formal remedy. The interaction between the formal and informal in this case was

contentious, but it cannot be said to have been ineffective. This aligns with the roots of TU that Mould discusses as a way for the community to express their demands for their city (Mould, 2014). This case could also be argued to belong under the informality of need (Devlin 2018) as the public's need for safety while crossing the road is arguably strong enough to characterize it as such. Both of the Seattle cases point to an interesting relationship between TU and the formal planning system. Though the city has limited funds to allocate toward public spaces and road improvements, in part due to austerity, both cases of TU that came up in the discussion lead to a public conversation and some action from the city. This was the case even though each TU intervention discussed did not fit into the formal planning process and standard public participation requirements at all.

7.1.4 Bellingham

The final study area was the city of Bellingham, where a small-scale, road-based TU intervention was examined. Though it was a small-scale, local intervention, the project garnered a fair amount of public attention and triggered a public discussion of the tactics of TU. Whether this intervention can be characterized under the informality of need vs the informality of desire (Devlin, 2018) is more difficult to say. Unlike the intersection in the road-based intervention in Seattle, this intersection is less busy and already has a crosswalk. The problem at this site stems from the speeding cars and a feeling of unsafety from pedestrians as they cross. Despite the fact that the crossing already exists, and it mainly just separates children from a park, the intervention could still fall under the informality of need due to the history of dangerous auto accidents on this section of road from speeding cars. There is arguably a need for improved pedestrian safety features at this intersection. Despite this, and the public attention and pressure from the intervention, the city has no immediate plans to implement any infrastructural improvements. The city has a very limited budget due to austerity measures (Tonkiss, 2013) and must allocate those resources to more pressing projects.

Also, the city response to the intervention somewhat resembles Tonkiss's description of the third approach to planning under urban austerity, where informal measures are not tolerated, but removed in order to hold up law and order (Tonkiss, 2013).

6.2 Implications

Several things stood out in the results for this analysis. Firstly, the interview participants were all white, and none could be considered economically disengaged. In fact, all of the interview participations showed signs of the opposite. The first participant, the project manager in Trondheim was a professional with a strong title in the municipality, the offices where the interview was held were handsomely furnished in contemporary styles. The architect in Oslo showed signs of economic comfort and stability, as he discussed selling his last apartment where he implemented the intervention to buy another. He also worked in an attractive shared office space that was located in a central neighborhood in Oslo. The participant for the Seattle case, at the time of writing, holds an executive position at a small company and gave every appearance of one who does not worry about finances. The interview participants for the Bellingham case all lived in large, attractive homes in a very desirable neighborhood. The individuals and professionals who engage in TU within the specified planning systems all seemed to enjoy a certain level of privilege. The implications of this is that there are very few instances where the truly disadvantaged are using TU as a method to improve their livelihoods, but rather it is the well-to-do implementing projects that mostly conform more to the informality of desire (Devlin, 2018). Devlin's other, more scathing critique of TU comes to mind in light of this implication, that Tu interventions are namely a business-oriented ideology, pushing a narrative of resistance that masks an ideology of free market principles (Devlin, 2019). The results of this study, while illuminating in the way of who is implementing TU in these cities and how they interact with the formal systems, do not contribute meaningfully to understanding informality in the global north context under conditions of economic disadvantage and

social injustices. Also, existing power structures are a very interesting factor in TU. Who gets to define it? Who gets to practice it? In the US, it seems like the public is not often able to implement such interventions on their own. While in Norway the public barely even bothers because they trust their government and can more easily go through formal channels to have their needs met.

The results imply, however, that the suggestions of Hou and Bragaglia & Rossignolo that TU can be combined with the formal planning processes to some degree to help bridge the gap between the public and the formal system. It is stressed that if TU is done appropriately and not used as the entire solution, it can be an effective tool towards co-creation if the formal planning system is willing to compromise (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). TU can potentially be an effective contributor to very beneficial to the city (Hou, 2020). Yet the implications of how each case interacted with the formal systems in place was not necessarily promising. The TU interventions were either completely absorbed in a system which most literature on TU is critical of, or it was ignored or outright rejected by the formal planning systems. This calls back the questions asked about Hou in the literature section. Particularly, in what ways can acts of resistance lead to institutional and political change without being absorbed by the system? How do unsanctioned actions contribute to the discourse and practice of urban design, distinct from the more widely accepted forms of tactical urbanism? (Hou, 2020)

There is, perhaps a way forward. Despite the responses from city officials in both instances of roadway-related TU interventions in Washington, the efforts still showed promise as methods to spark public discourse on specific local issues. If policy makers had the inclination to consult existing literature to guide such processes, for example the practical handbook, the fast-tracked study, or the example given from the quantitative study done in Barcelona, and combine them with the growing body of theoretical knowledge, maybe TU can indeed become a very effective tool towards co-creation.

Importantly, this section will touch on power structures and social justice in TU. While the results from this study imply that only the privileged are engaging with TU, there must be more of a study of the less privileged and their interactions with the system. In the US, there is tension between social classes and issues around race. There is a significant issue of systemic racism due to American planning history – do people in vulnerable communities have a chance of having their community-build interventions becoming formalized? It's already a legal fight for people of privileged neighborhoods, what of lower income minority neighborhoods? Do they even dare? For a future study and potentially an extension of these findings, it would be valuable to study instances of how TU interacts with the formal systems but more focused on interventions done by the economically or socially disadvantaged. This would help to further fill in the gap between theory and practice for TU, and potentially identify needed changes within the existing systems in terms of social inclusion. Also, the fact that this study has revealed an existing and current tension between the public and their formal planning systems indicates that still, after all this time and effort put toward improving planning including collaborative rationality and enhanced policies for public participation, there remains a struggle. The implication is that the systems, especially in Washington State must learn adapt further, following the potential way forward mentioned earlier.

On a more positive note, the findings also imply that the efforts towards community engagement policies make a difference. Despite the erosion of public unity from neoliberalism that may be taking place in some of the subject city's instances of citizen-driven TU intervention preservers. Can this be due in part to the foundation of public participation that each city has, despite its deficiencies in public resources? Does the mere fact that public participation and the value of the public voice is codified in the local planning policy empower people to act in their combined interests?

Ultimately, this affects the findings because the interventions in Norway were both geared more towards public enjoyment and leisure while the interventions in the US were focused on reclaiming pedestrian space in the streets.

The type of TU and informality then, is hugely contextual and depends on the limitations presented to the public by the built environment and planning history. This can be very informative for planners who wish to use community-based initiatives in the planning process. As discussed in other literature around tactical urbanism, these interventions are a public cry for help, one that should not be ignored by planners. They are a strong indication of where planning efforts need to be focused, because people will do it themselves otherwise.

Or, in the case of Norway, the flexibility and tolerance of the city (see Tonkiss, 2013) allow for creativity and citizen empowerment to shape their urban spaces. The reduced dependency in the urban environment on cars results in fewer disruptive actions by the public.

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Appendices

Interview Guide

Can you describe the project you were involved in

- What was the intent of the project
- Where did the funding come from
- What was your role
- Who were the participants, was there a target group?

Can you briefly describe the planning process on your side of the project? What the process was for approvals, what paperwork needed to be done, who needed to approve the project etc.

What was the outcome?

- How did you measure the result?

Were you satisfied with the result? Would you do anything differently?

What do you think the local societal impact of the project was? Is that something you have measured/attempted to measure? If so, what were your methods for the measurement?



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