# TACTICAL URBANISM IN ITALY:

FROM GRASSROOTS TO INSTITUTIONAL TOOL

Francesco Rotondo

Università Politecnica delle Marche

f.rotondo@univpm.it

CHANCING PARADIGMS

SUSTAINABILITY has changed urban planning objectives and tools, together with: the demographic contraction and the progressive aging of many cities and nations of the so-called industrialized world, the affirmation of the cultural paradigm of sustainable development still to be implemented in ordinary practices to modify the era of the Anthropocene and to reconstruct a balanced compatible relationship between man and nature, the shift of meaning of contemporary urban planning from the expansion to the regeneration of the consolidated city, through the concepts of recovery, redevelopment and finally regeneration, with attention to the reuse, reversibility, and temporariness of the interventions



#### THE QUESTION

## TACTICAL URBANISM AS A POSSIBLE TOOL

In this cultural context, tactical urbanism and more generally the multiple forms of reuse of the existing city and the temporary uses that are characterizing it can play a role which overcomes the external one of a response to random circumstances but can be planned as a method to face the multiple forms and evolutions of the contemporary city (Rotondo et alii, 2021)

## TACTICAL URBANISM DEFINITION

Mike Lydon illustrates how he thoughts about the name of Tactical urbanism.

Tactical urbanism, also commonly referred to as guerrilla urbanism, pop-up urbanism, city repair, D.I.Y. urbanism, planning-by-doing, urban acupuncture, and urban prototyping, is a low-cost, temporary change to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighbourhoods and city gathering places (Lydon et alii, 2012).



WHY TU

#### **OBJECTIVES**

"We released the first volume of Tactical Urbanism in 2011. The free digital booklet shed light on an emergent North American movement, one that employed short-term, low-cost projects to demonstrate the need for long-term policy and/or physical change to make neighborhoods more livable".

Lydon M. (2016), Foreword. In: Bazzu P. and Talu V., Tactical Urbanism 5 — Italy, Talamacà, Sassari available on line at:

https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tu\_italy\_eng, retrived on 04.08.2022



WHY TU

#### **OBJECTIVES**

"In the pursuit of progress, citizens are typically invited to engage in a process that is fundamentally broken: rather than being asked to contribute to incremental change at the neighbohood or block level, residents are asked to react to proposals that are often conceived for interests disconnected from their own, and at a scale for which they have little control. In the pursuit of resilient neighborhoods, cities, and metropolitican regions, surmounting the challenges inherent to this "public" process continues to prove difficult. Fortunately, alternative tactics are available and ready for deployment."

Lydon M. (2016), Foreword. In: Bazzu P. and Talu V., Tactical Urbanism 5 – Italy, Talamacà, Sassari available on line at: https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tu\_italy\_eng, retrived on 04.08.2022

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#### WHY TU

#### **OBJECTIVES**

"TACTICAL URBANISM

Improving the livability of our towns and cities commonly starts at the street, block, or building scale. While larger scale efforts do have their place, incremental, smallscale improvements are increasingly seen as a way to stage more substantial investments."

Lydon M. (2010, ed.), Tactical URBANISM Vol.1, pag.1 available on line at: <a href="https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical\_urbanism\_vol.1">https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical\_urbanism\_vol.1</a>, retrived on 04.08.2022

#### TACTICAL URBANISM CHARACTERISTICS



#### **CHANGE**

A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change



#### LOCAL IDEAS

An offering of local ideas for local planning challenges



### LONG TERM

Short-term commitment and realistic expectations



#### SOCIAL CAPITAL

The development of social capital between citizens, and the building of organizational capacity between public/private institutions, non-profit/NGOs, and their constituents.



# TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

#### Better block initiatives

• Temporarily transforming retail streets using cheap or donated materials and volunteers. Spaces are transformed by introducing food carts, sidewalk tables, temporary bike lanes and narrowing of streets.

#### Chair bombing

2022.09.06

 The act of removing salvageable materials and using it to build public seating. The chairs are placed in areas that either are quiet or lack comfortable places to sit.

#### Crosswalk painting

 Zebra crossings painted by the community on roadways and at intersections where the city government has failed to provide a marked pedestrian crossing.

#### **De-fencing**

• The act of removing unnecessary fences to break down barriers between neighbours, beautify communities, and encourage community building.

#### Depaving

 The act of removing unnecessary pavement to transform driveways and parking into green space so that rainwater can be absorbed and neighbourhoods beautified.

#### Food carts/trucks

• Food carts and trucks are used to attract people to underused public spaces and offer small business opportunities for entrepreneurs.



# TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

#### **Guerilla** gardening

 Guerrilla gardening is the act of gardening on land that the gardeners do not have the legal rights to utilize, such as abandoned sites, areas not being cared for, or private property

#### **Open Streets**

 To temporarily provide safe spaces for walking, bicycling, skating, and social activities; promote local economic development; and raise awareness about the impact of cars in urban spaces.

#### **Pavement to Plazas**

 Popularized in New York City, pavement plazas involve converting space on streets to usable public space. The closure of Times Square to vehicular traffic, and its low-cost conversion to a pedestrian plaza, is a primary example of a pavement plaza

#### Pop-up cafes

 Pop-up cafes are temporary patios or terraces built in parking spots to provide overflow seating for a nearby cafe or for passersby. Most common in cities where sidewalks are narrow and where there otherwise is not room for outdoor sitting or eating areas.

#### Pop-up parks

• Pop-up parks temporarily or permanently transform underused spaces into community gathering areas through beautification.

#### Pop-up retail

 Pop-up shops are temporary retail stores that are set up in vacant stores or property.

#### Protected bike lanes

Bike lane protections are usually done by placing potted plants or other physical barriers to make painted bike lanes feel safer. Sometimes there is no pre-existing bike lane, and the physical protection is the only delineator.

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APPROACHES

Bottom - up

Institutional



Il giardino che non c'è(ra)

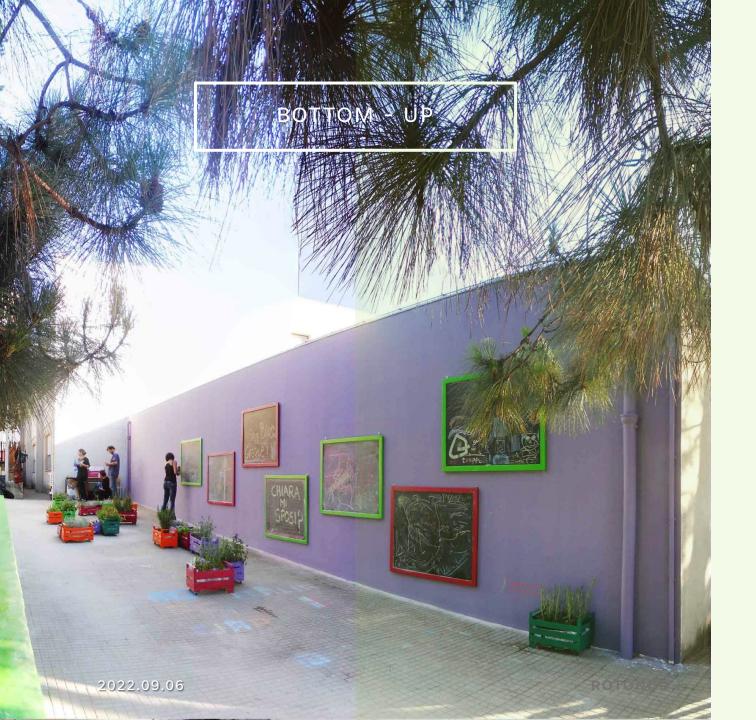
The project "The Garden That wasn't There"

#### **ABSTRACT**

The "Il Giardino che non cè (ra)" project is a micro-intervention of re-coloring and rearrangement of a forgotten corner of the school yard of the primary school of IC Pertini-Biasi, in **Sassari**. It was built through a three-day self-construction site.

https://tamalaca.com/progetti/il-giardino-che-non-cera/#:~:text=II%20progetto%20%E2%80%9CII%20Giardino%20che%20non%20c%E2%80%99%C3%A8%20%28ra%29%E2%80%9D.cantiere%20di%20auto-

costruzione%20della%20durata%20di%20tre%20giorni.



Il giardino che non c'è(ra)

The project "The Garden That wasn't There"

#### **ABSTRACT**

In addition to Tamalacà's team, the self-construction site involved: teachers; parents neighborhood inhabitants; students of the Department of Architecture, Design and Urban Planning of the University of Sassari.

In the final phase, dedicated to planting, the girls and boys of the school and the inhabitants of the Casa Serena municipal residential structure for the elderly, located near the school itself, also participated.



"Piazze Aperte" Program in Milano https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/quartieri/piano-quartieri/piazze-aperte

#### **ABSTRACT**

Since 2018, Milan has been working towards the realization of a municipal program named "Piazze Aperte" (Open Squares) dedicated to the conversion of former street and parking areas into public spaces through tactical urbanism techniques, progressively consolidating methodologies for both realization and citizen engagement through the implementation of multiple experimental activity cycles. After its first ones, where the realizations were actively participated by citizens, but still on areas selected by the municipality, since 2019, the program evolved in "Piazze Aperte in Ogni Quartiere" (Open Squares in Each Neighborhood).

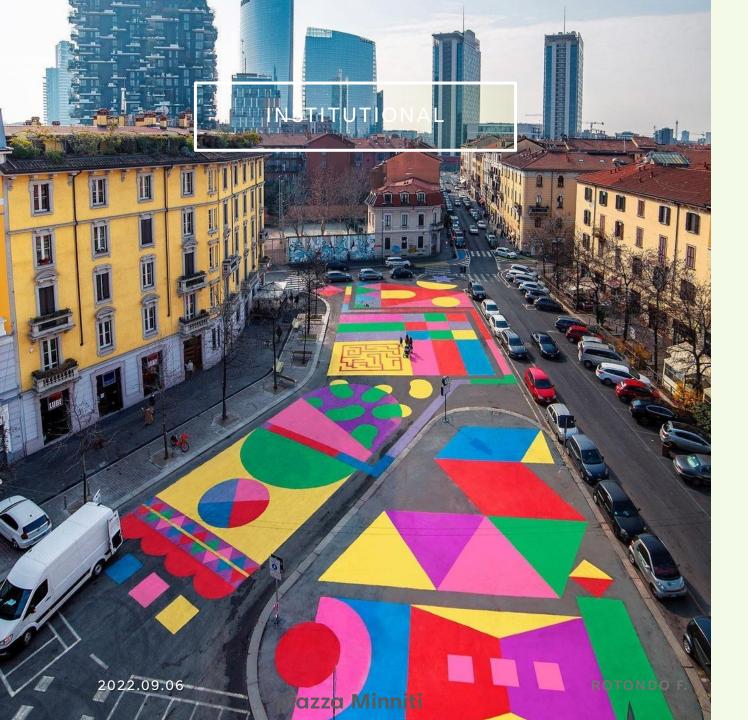


"Piazze Aperte" Program in **Milano** 

#### **ABSTRACT**

the involvement of citizens extended to every step of the process, structured as follows:

- (1) A selection phase, where the City issued a call open to free citizens, informal groups, and associations, to propose urban transformations realizable within the tactical urbanism framework. Applicants were provided a kit of admissible interventions (typically paintings, urban furniture, and potted plants) and a list of 52 urban areas available for a transformation (with the possibility to candidate further ones);
- (II) A proposal phase, where citizens were asked to propose transformations concerning function, aesthetics, and furniture. Interestingly, several groups spontaneously included professional designers to improve the efficacy of proposals. Anyway, regardless of their technical quality or readiness, all proposals were accepted (unless evidently incoherent with the intervention kit);



"Piazze Aperte" Program in **Milano** 

**ABSTRACT** 

(III) A co-design phase in which citizens were involved in a co-design process to refine their proposals and fit them inside the urban safety regulations and traffic management.

(IV) The final realization activity, seeing citizens welcome to actively contribute into the realization of the interventions. Collective painting living-labs were activated with adults and kids, thanks to the use of nontoxic paints and materials.

Currently, the city is in the process of progressively realizing all proposals.

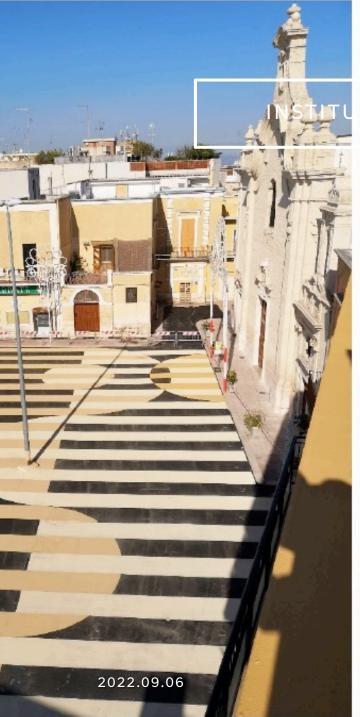


"Isola in fiore" Program in **Taranto** 

#### **ABSTRACT**

The project made by the Municipality transforms the open and public spaces of the historic center into places appropriated by the inhabitants with some specialized operators to guide paths and create parking places, through the use of flowers.

It is a temporary use that lasts only three days, but which helps to change the gaze on these spaces where sometimes cars or engines still circulate, but which due to the materials they are made of and the intimate relationship they have with homes and social functions that often host, in these three days they become a plant link between public and private uses and functions.





"Open Space" Program in Bari

#### **ABSTRACT**

On may 2020 during COVID-19 emergency", the City of Bari launched "Open Space", a "Program on sustainable mobility and public space for the implementation of distancing measures".

The program is intended to reorient sustainability objectives and, more generally, to test the idea of a city based on resilient communities, by adjusting or accelerating some ongoing processes: fostering sustainable mobility; increasing the allocation of open public space; enhancing greenery and proximity services.

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**BUS + AUTO** 

**BUS + AUTO** 

#### **EXPERIENCES IN ITALY**

"Open Space" Program in Bari

#### **ABSTRACT**

Open Space program intervenes in the most densely built contexts, specifically lacking open public space.

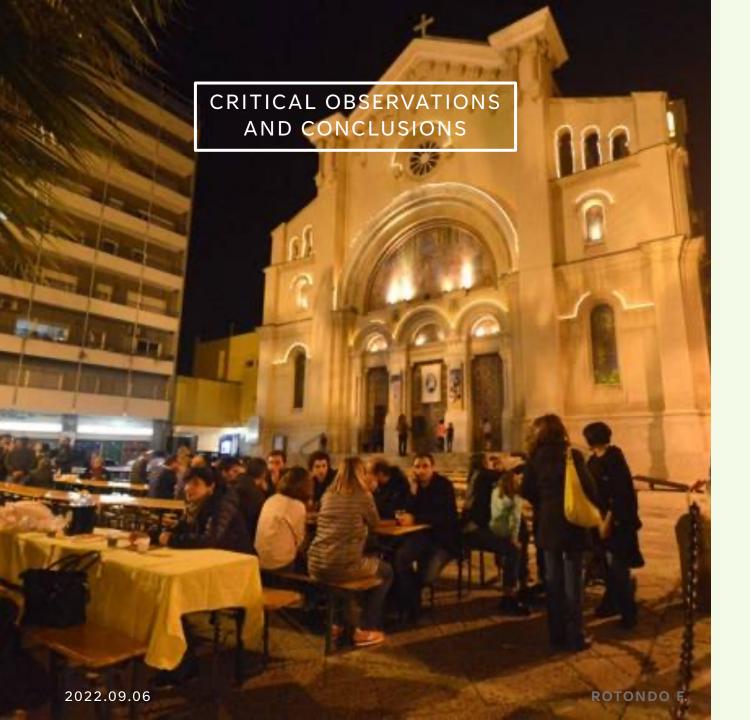
In these context, the open spaces between buildings is always extremely reduced, with restricted sidewalks and pedestrian areas and mobility lanes that already equal or barely reach the minimum dimensions required by road codes. This means that the realization of larger spaces intended for pedestrian use, or the inclusion of new spaces for cycle or micro electric mobility, is infrequently possible by just reducing redundant driveway space.





The experiences described, beyond the specific cases, highlight the ongoing process of institutionalization of tactical urbanism interventions and temporary use in urban public spaces.

The pandemic has offered important motivations for the experimentation of paths already underway in many cities, accelerating a process of reuse and experimentation of tactical interventions in existing spaces, favored by soil-saving objectives, by the demographic aging and shrinking phenomena.



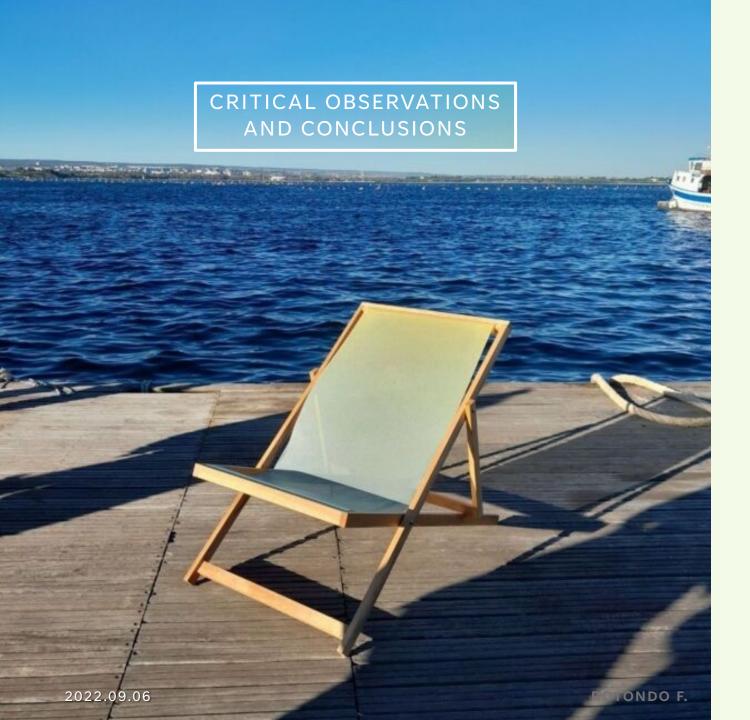
From the point of view of administrative capacity, a necessary critical reflection must be made. The classical municipal structures hardly adapt in the management of transformations requiring massive use of human resources merely destined to mediation and facilitation, as well as to monitoring works that, even if procedurally lighter than usual public works, still, in their temporary nature, might expose the administration to the accuse of waste of public money, as the resources are allocated on transformations that, sooner or later, will be removed. Therefore, the need to hinge tactical urbanism actions well in a longterm strategy, where temporary experimental interventions anticipate permanent transformations and substantial public works investments, is increasingly consolidating.



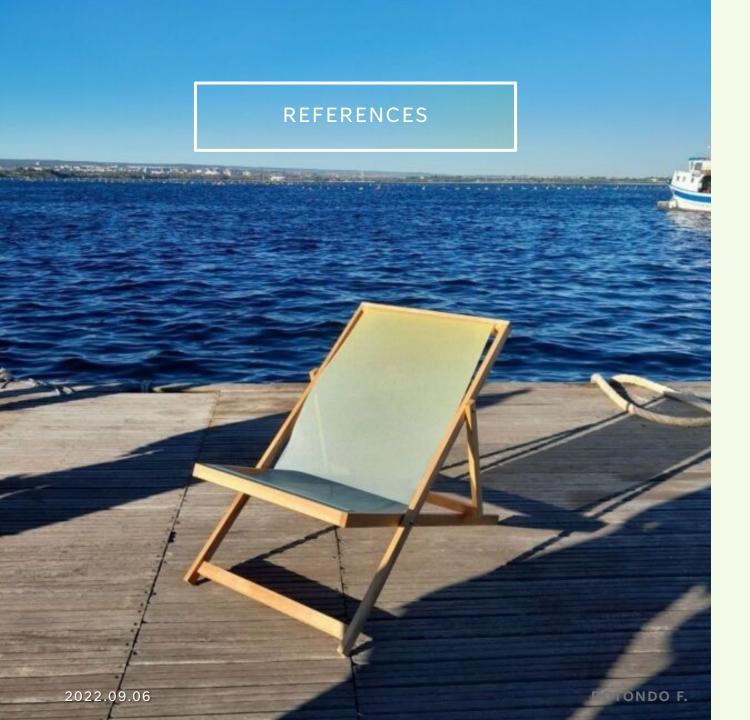
From the **social interaction side**, instead, we can say that it is now of extreme interest to both observe how the new squares will be used and interpreted once permanently transformed and to understand whether some deeper lessons may be learned from the "temporary" dimension of tactical experiments.

Time, indeed, emerges as a crucial element for a complete assessment of these experiments.

From one side, transiency highly limits the scope of solutions to be implemented. From the other side, impermanence inherently allows a higher level of audacity and daring.



it will be necessary to verify whether there will be the desired connection between the short time of temporary use projects and the reversibility of tactical interventions with the longtime of long-term territorial regeneration projects.



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Francesco Rotondo

 $\underline{f.rotondo@univpm.it}$ 

