Tactical Urbanism:
A Method of Community Empowerment in Cairo Neighborhoods
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Speaker:
Elshater, Abeer

Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

Abstract: This paper follows the principles of Tactical Urbanism Cairo, Egypt. It presents an approach to solve problems of vendors in Cairo. The core issue revolving around: "make a relative balance in the application of the principles of Tactical Urbanism taking into account the achievement of the urban design dimensions especially the behavioral one to accommodate the change and robustness in human needs and rights." The research structure depends on three objectives. First, it interprets the concepts of Tactical Urbanism and Place theory. Second, it analyses the current scene in selected case study. Third, the paper designs an approach to open a wide dispensary to solve the vending problem. The contribution of the approach is to deal with the general problem in the Egyptian context caused by vendors. Finally, the paper tests the principles and the approach of tactical urbanism in informal sectors in the Egyptian urban fabric.

Keywords: Tactical urbanism, street vendors, park(ing) day, Cairo, informal activities

Introduction

Tactical Urbanism is a common term used through community building and rehabilitation. Several approaches deal with this trend in the developing countries as a tool to raise up the urban environment that suffer from selfish vandalism. It can reflect a powerful form of community-supportive activism. Today, overcrowding and informality is a remarkable phenomenon in Egyptian cities, but is most evident in Cairo. On the other side, that informal sector in the capital holds several unemployed citizen. Being a capital holding that types of informality may affect the livability even for inhabitant or for visitors of Cairo. The objective is to follow the approach of Tactical Urbanism to get the results of typically a series of small-scale interventions that alter the public realm. In addition, it makes it advocate more user-friendly for the public.

The paper presents a method to apply the principles of Tactical Urbanism on an Egyptian neighborhood unit. This method tries to solve the problem of existence of unemployed in Cairo. The research structure depends on five objectives. First, it interprets the concepts of Tactical Urbanism and its potentialities in the Egyptian context. Second, it discusses the trend of city repair,” or “do-it-yourself “DIY” Urbanism to find out the philosophical approach. Third, analysis the current scene in selected case study. Fourth, the paper designs an approach to deal with the vending common problem in the Egyptian context. Finally, the
paper recommends a research project to test the principles and the approach of tactical urbanism in informal sectors in the Egyptian urban fabric.

The originality is represented in raising the issue of the research to attach one of Egyptian problems; the informal sector and unemployed people. The core issue revolving around: "make a relative balance in the use of the principles of Tactical Urbanism in Egypt neighborhood taking into account the achievement of the urban design dimensions especially the behavioral one to accommodate the development and robustness in human needs and rights.” The contribution and outcomes lay in to begin the practical application of the informal sector in Egypt, bearing in mind that its scope is limited to the applied urban design projects to upgrading process in major urban cities.

Literature Review: A Movement and Theory

“In the twenty-first century, cities worldwide must respond to a growing and diverse population, ever-shifting economic conditions, new technologies, and a changing climate. Short-term, community-based projects—from pop-up parks to open streets initiatives—have become a powerful and adaptable new tool of urban activists, planners, and policy-makers seeking to drive lasting improvements in their cities and beyond. These quick, often low-cost, and creative projects are the essence of the Tactical Urbanism movement. Whether creating vibrant plazas seemingly overnight or re-imagining parking spaces as neighborhood gathering places, they offer a way to gain public and government support for investing in permanent projects, inspiring residents and civic leaders to experience and shape urban spaces in a new way” (Lydon & Garcia, Tactical Urbanism, 2014)

Tactical urbanism is trend/movement come to the field of “City Repair” and “Do It Yourself Urbanism (DIY)”. It aims to enhance the urban life experience through incremental action plans of improvements (Courage, 2013) (Figure 1). It is often small-scale, temporary, low cost, quick to install and dismantle, informal, spontaneous, participatory and driven by community issues, and often initiated by emerging architects, artists and creative urbanists working outside of professional boundaries (Shackelford, 2014). One of the most efficient axes in tactical urbanism is Park(ing) Day and Street Vending (Figure 2). These two phenomena are about making the places for people to draw attention towards particular local issues of livability, in a way far from crowded visual context. This urban intervention is differed from conventional activists’ concepts in favor of fun activities (Coombs, 2012). The first official Park(ing) Day was in San Francisco, 2006 to draw attention to the lake of green space in downtown. Addition, tactical urbanism moves in a parallel way to create places for vendors to do business in outdoor places.
In return to the main crux of urban design to create livable places (Carmona & Tiesdell, 2007); (Eisinger & Seifert, 2012; Madanipour, 2010), street vending in Egypte participates in making sense of place. “the role of the urban designer is not merely to manipulate form to make space but to create a place through a synthesis of components of the total environment, including the social” (Trancik, 1986, p. 114). The palace theory tries to understand the cultural aspect and human characteristics of the physical places (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). Trancik (1986) abstract the meanings to differentiate between urban spaces and places in case the designer involve the cultural contents. To design for a prosperity of both the physical and public life, experts should explore the local history, the feeling and the needs of the populace, the traditional lifestyle, and the reality of political and economic realities (Hertzberger, 1980). Looking at the city in parts, the place theory can be recognized in the term of three main axes: good city form (Lynch, 1984), sequential movement (Cullen, 1971), and the mutual impact of every physical and social component (Appleyard, 1982); (Jacobs, 1995). Cullen (1971) describes the feeling on users while they are moving in the city at the eye level. Lynch (1984) adds to Cullen’s description that the effective/ responsive form can analysed in term of legibility, structure, identity, and imaginability. Appleyard (1982) analysis the social complicit os street space in a way he assesses the impact of traffic on outdoor life. In this way, people usually modify their life. Thus, if the urban designer puts in consideration people’s way of modification and adaption the chaos becomes around.

In conclusion, the current research reviews a movement, and theory of urban spatial design: tactical urbanism, and place theory. These set of theoretical background has a wide contribution to one of the most common problem in Cairo; the street vendors. The potentially disruptive problem, in Egypt, is that the designer developers and decision makers are obsessed with designing phase to develop the context regardless to the whole urban environment. The key, therefore, is put in spot this theoretical base as contribution to vending problem in Egypt.
Street Vendors in Cairo: a Hidden Community Empowerment within Informal Activities

Street vendors are various in term of scale, types of goods, remuneration, location, and mobility (Figure 3). The term also refers to ‘street trader’ and ‘hawker’ (International Labour Office, 2013, p. 2); (Kusakabe, 2006). Street vendors may move depending on events in the city, the weather, customers’ location, or the time of day (Bromley, 2000). In Egypt, they offer an abundant part of the informal earnings income; they are responsible for 25% to 60% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) according to some estimates (Viney, 2012). Once the unemployment is high (over 12% at the end of 2011), and the bribery cases to initiate towards an obstacle, illegal course, trading on the street is often the only available act. Vendors that are not universally welcomed have increased, in part, owing to diminished harassment from authorities, who have turned their focus elsewhere (Cross, 2000, p. 41); (Williams & Gurtoo, 2012). Conventionally, street entrepreneurs were either seen as a residue from a pre-modern era that is gradually disappearing or endeavor into which marginalized populations are driven out of necessity in the absence of alternative ways of securing a livelihood.

Table 1: Classifications of vendors in Cairo, source: author’s observation of street vendors and (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vendors’ Locations</th>
<th>Types of Vendors</th>
<th>Licensed</th>
<th>Period (hours)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Amendment</td>
<td>Veteran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12Metro Station    | ●                | ●        | ●              | yes     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | Food vendors also provide drinks and tea for bus drivers which called “farsha”.
| Bus Stations       | ●                | ●        |               | no      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | The time that vendors spend within in may be different from a site to another Based on the context. |
| Bus Stop           | ●                | ●        |               | no      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |
| Public Instruction | ●                | ●        | ●              | yes     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |
| Shopping paths     | ●                | ●        | ●              | no      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |
| Shopping malls     | ●                | ●        | ●              | yes     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |
| Crossing street (nods) | ●            | ●        |               | no      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |
| Under bridges      | ●                | ●        |               | no      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |
| Inside public transportation | ●        | ●        |               | no      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |
| Freeways exists    | ●                | ●        |               | no      |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | |

Content Analysis of the Contestation: Vendors’ Attitude vs. Inhabitants’

Universally, literature on street vending can be categorised into four groups illustrated in (Figure 4), (Kusakabe, 2006). This research focuses on the third and fourth set because they are near to the concept of tactical urbanism. The short term action in the relationship between the vendors and a public space makes a long-term change in that relationship. The same can be found in the fourth set of literatures that have a long change on the quality of urban configuration. In addition, there are two obvious notes in street vending, in Cairo. The first, most policy, takes place in Cairo (Babb, 1989); (Cluster, 2013); (El-Kouny, 2012); (Elmaghrabi, 2014); (Mansour, 2011); (Nagati & Stryker, 2013) focus on the second and third
set of literatures. The second, from reviewing (Figure 3), all street vending in Cairo are unlicensed except kiosks with light construction that build in street platform.

Figure 3: (top) Types of stable street vendors, source: (Lydon & Garcia, Tactical Urbanism, 2014); (Lydon, Bartman, Dwoudstra, & Khawarzad, 2010, p. 14). (down) types of mobile vendors, source: (Mansour, 2011)

To find out the characteristic of the Egyptian vendors’ problems, the research chooses two approaches; content analysis and interview. The content analysis is based on the literature presses on the online journal during the last four years (El-Kouny, 2012); (Cluster, 2013); (Elmaghrabi, 2014). The interviewers’ sample was chosen through some vendors and inhabitants inside the case study (ELShafie, 2013) (Figure 7). Obstruction caused by vendors is a significant obstacle to local citizen and passing-by traffic. According to the 2010 World Bank Cairo Traffic Congestion Study, congestion costs the city $13-14 billion LE ($2.1-2.3 billion USD) annually in wasted fuel and time. Action to support traffic flow more efficiently, the government, is endeavoring relocation of vendors to side streets or to resettle in surrounded marketplaces. This action may not prove successful. Vendors unavoidably be attracted to the busiest and most profitable paths. In whatever place, some would be ready to pay for the right to do his informal business. On the other side, vendors are not welcomed in Egypt by inhabitants where they make a disturbance to their privacy although they buy, sometimes things from them (El-Kouny, 2012). They hold a feeling of marginality and
exclusion of the society. Several action plans were taken to move in another place; 6th of October city which located many mile fares from Cairo. The vendors’ comments to the action represented in (Figure 4).

Table 2: Vendors’ opinion versus the users’, source: author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vendors’ Opinions</th>
<th>Users’ Opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We belong to the place; we are from here.</td>
<td>They are not like us; they make much noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We cannot afford to leave Cairo</td>
<td>They have to move in a way this area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer demand is for affordable goods and provide it to him/her easily, and cheaper</td>
<td>Cheaper goods are available for poor people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>States should provide open market outside Cairo for vendors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do not look for trouble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of us are responsible of a family, and we have no fixed income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: The four set of literatures of street vending, source: author

Lydon and Garcia (2014) mention that whatever the given the limited street space, a suitable arrangement can provide more rooms for efficient usage of it. Commercial activities are genuine and vital use of the street, as is transportation. Vendors should be permitted to sell in well-trafficked areas that are visible and accessible to customers, as is being prepared in some areas. Public transport should be given priority, perhaps by designating exclusive bus lanes, although they depend on traffic requirement unless there is a physical barrier. Provide parking area where vendors are located near the parking exits facilitates to keep free-flowing situations (again, enforcement is key). Considering vendors as unwelcome citizens earning money in illegal in any site is critical issues. This may cause a social negative impact once
they gathered. For this reason, an article (Mansour, 2011) present an initiation as solution (for vendors with regardless of the others’ protestations (Figure 5). Mansour (2011) gives a suitcase addressed “Ali Baba Box” to help the vendor display his goods in a foldable way.

![Image of vendor postures](image1)

**Figure 5: attitude of mobile vendors, source: (Mansour, 2011)**

**The Analytical Study: Existing Situation raised from observation and interviews**

This research was conducted on a path in Cairo (Figure 6), where the author resides. The author’s residency there provides clear discovery of the district’s context over seven years. Generally, the path passes through district that serves various functions: residential, educational, administrative, and for cemeteries. In addition, the site is surrounded by vending uses to the south and southwest (Figure 7). The site’s boundaries were set within walking distance (300 m). Additionally, the site holds attraction poles for vendors: bus station, exits of underground metro, educational public building, and administrative uses. Some photos were recently taken to depict the chaotic elements of built environment (Figure 6).
The outcomes of the site analysis phase can be regarded in the followings (Figure 7):

- The path span provides as an opportunity for both the street user and street vendors to participate a range of activities. The width is varied between 200m at its entrance and 75 m at end.
- There is a social collapse between the vendors and inhabitants. Parking cars compete with vendors that may cause frequent quarrel.
- There is no rule or law adjusts the relationship between the vendors and inhabitants and even between vendors.
- Umbrella or shading tools are used by vendors to create territorial demands. These treatment in all case is poor in urban aesthetics.
- Vending in the sidewalk prevents a flow for pedestrian. Sidewalk as a margin of demonstration between private and public domains encroached upon and often rendered impossible for the pedestrian.

**Short Term Action towards Long Term Change**

In this level, the research proposed a four axial solution (Figure 8): people, time, place, and laws. Some few concepts can be discussed to develop the proposed methods the others is listed in the last mentioned figure. Dealing with problems caused by vendor should cover multidisciplinary system established to cover the context of the city which is different from others. The new development project should have a maxim benefit of the day/holiday/festive/anniversaries time. This to manage the time spent equally between users and vendors. These projects lay attention to people whether they are vendors or inhabitants. For this inhabitants considering the behavior setting of both vendors and inhabitants, must be put on a priority. On the other side, getting the over the environmental impact on the context raise the urban aesthetics toward physical prosperity. The physical tactical action that can be taken place in the context should consider the lost space and get the maximum benefit of place and design for good accessibility. A review and guided process should establish for every context. The main task that it focused on, for example, assist and review in vending and display, vending design Process.

**Conclusion**

This paper tried to find out the relationship between the principles of tactical urbanism with one of the most common problem in Cairo, Egypt; vendorsThis was under a certain hypothesis. The hypothesis is true if taken into account the following notes. First, the public participation can play a role in motivating the tactical urbanism principles, towards a real application. For examples, although the tactical urbanism called for park(ing) day as a raising of community empowerment, some communities are against the idea. Second, the action plans of tactical urbanism should respect the cultural context of the certain context which conserve the crux of the place theory. Third, the mutual impact between the four proposed action needs to be tested through a digital model.
The current work is based on a research justification to follow the analytical approaches. This approach focused on the content analysis and interviews for both vendors and residents in the case study. In conclusion, the crux of the current paper is to give a contemporary action plans guided by the theoretical base towards the problems of vendors in Cairo. It extends to propose an analytical study to find out relationship between vendors and built environment through an approach of finding lost space.

Figure 8: the proposed four axial solution of the vending problems, source: author
References


Mansour, A. (2011). How can design provide Cairo street vendors with the necessary means to enhance and grow their own independent businesses? Retrieved from www.behance.net:
http://www.behance.net/gallery/Ali-Baba-Box/2483331


