#Bengaluru moving X YLAC
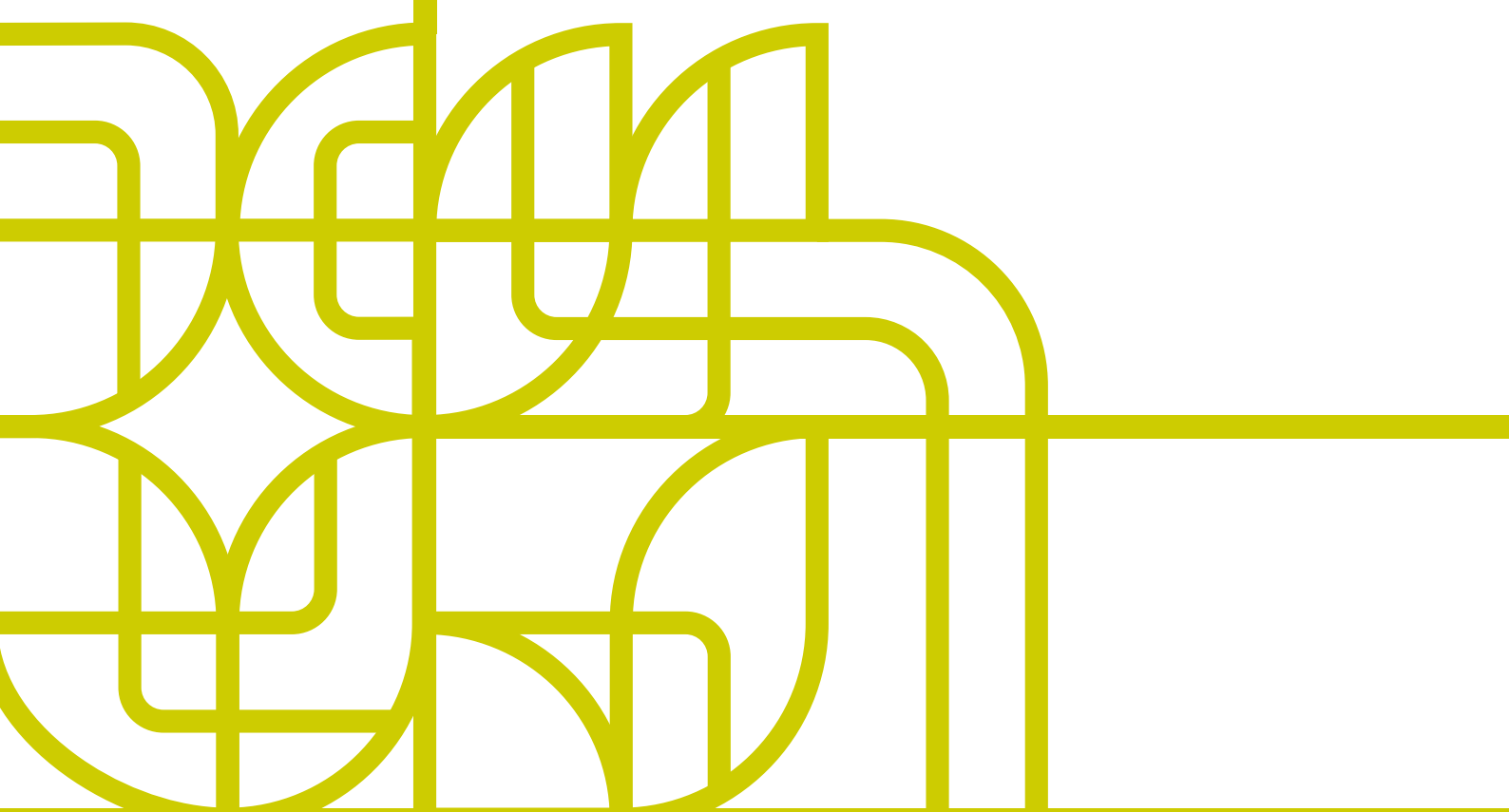
tactical urbanism

An approach to implement NMT-friendly neighbourhoods in Indian cities

POLICY BRIEF

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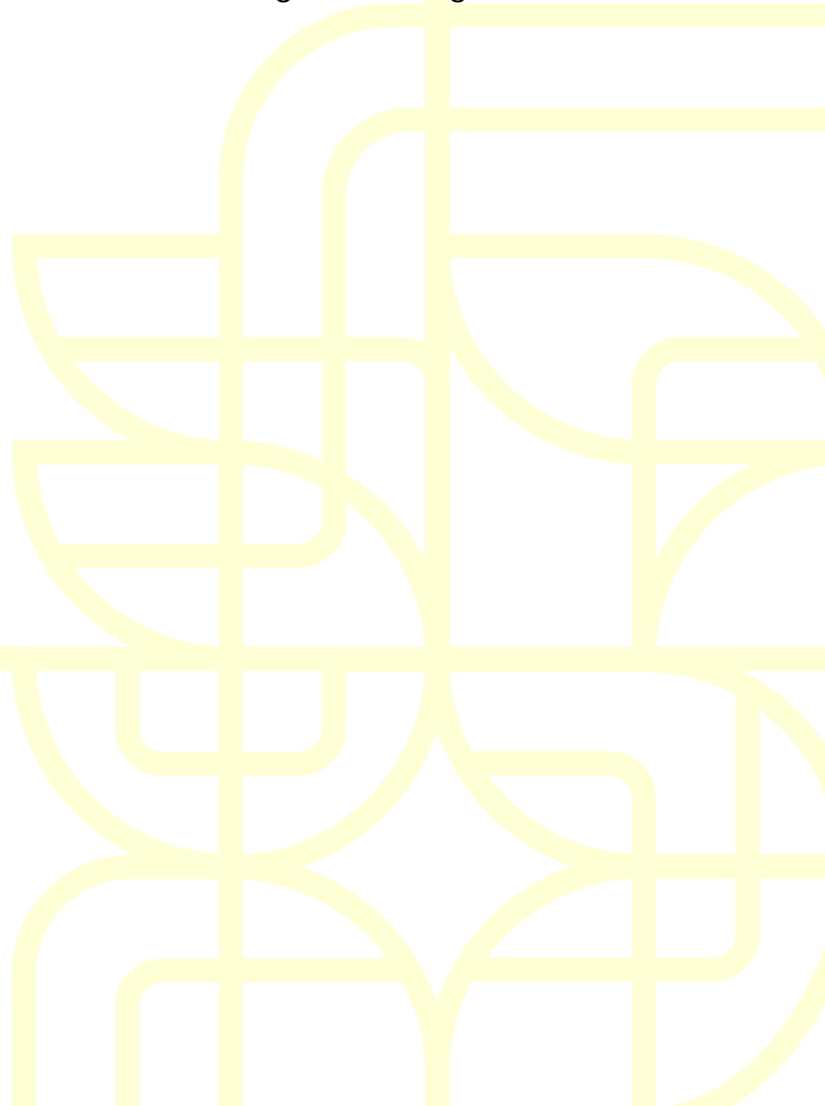
abstract

This brief presents a study of Tactical Urbanism (TU) as a tool to establish non-motorised transport strategies at a neighbourhood scale in Indian cities.

The rapid urbanisation of Indian cities has led to urban issues like overcrowding among other spatial, social and climatic issues.

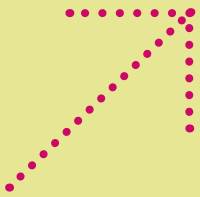Often these issues are unique to the location and need site specific interventions, which is where tactical urbanism plays an important role. Local authorities have powerful influence in designing and ensuring success of non-motorised transport (NMT) and micro-mobility strategies at a neighbourhood level, so do citizen groups and users. Hence it is important for these stakeholders to come together in the design and decision-making of neighbourhood interventions.

The structure of this paper is based on three objectives—first, understanding the elements and characteristics of tactical urbanism (TU). Second, analysis of selected case studies which are provided as examples of successful implementation of NMT using tactical urbanism. Third, recommendations and suggestions to use TU in Indian cities.

The idea is to understand the problems faced by street users and make tangible recommendations for a successful tactical intervention.

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CHAPTER 1

introduction

What is tactical urbanism?

Tactical Urbanism (TU) is a term used in community building and reintegration of urban social and spatial relations. It is a city and/or citizen-led, quick, and affordable way to test and demonstrate change in our physical environments, and the approach is premised on using short-term, low-cost and scalable interventions as a way to catalyse long-term change.[1]
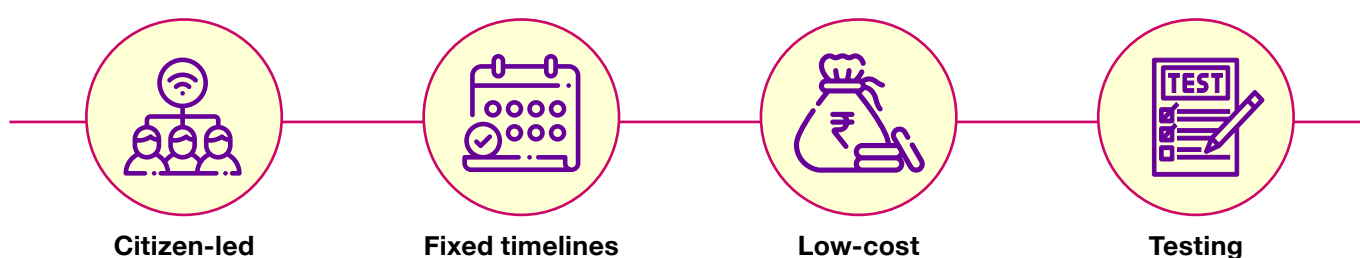

Citizen-led **Fixed timelines** **Low-cost** **Testing**

Figure 1 Tenets of tactical urbanism

Why is it important in the Indian context?

The rapid urbanization of Indian cities has left us grappling with social, infrastructural and spatial conflicts. A response to this has been to adjust, and to make do—an inherent culture of appropriating spaces for convenience. This space of flexible negotiation is where the principles of tactical urbanism situate themselves.[2] Until the last couple of decades, Indian cities comprised primarily 15-minute neighbourhoods where everything a resident needed could be reached within a quarter of an hour by foot or bicycle.[3] Although we have gone too far to return to that, there are ways to incrementally reclaim it. Providing basic infrastructure of footpaths will go a long way in promoting NMT while TU could be used as a tool to test and achieve 15-minute neighbourhoods.[4]

TU approaches vary with context and situation, but the way to make it work in India has to be a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The focus of this brief will be on interpreting how this concept could reinforce sustainable mobility patterns in Indian cities to make them more inclusive and accessible. It aims to discuss three topics:

One
To consider the benefits of tactical urbanism

Two
To reflect on the potential of tactical urbanism in the elastic urban conditions of Indian neighbourhoods

Three
To understand how citizen engagement can be a propellant for change, and to consider mobility as a service that could be shared rather than a product through various initiatives

What are the tactics?

In the present-day situation, cities around the world must adapt to a large and diverse population, ever-changing economic circumstances, emerging technologies, and climate change. From pop-up spaces to open street programs, short-term communal ventures are becoming a strong and adaptable new catalyst for local advocates, designers, and policymakers aiming to push lasting developments in their communities and beyond. The core of the tactical urbanism concept is these swift, low-cost, and scalable interventions. Whether reusing parking spaces as social hubs or a lively plaza that accommodates different activities throughout the day, they provide a way to activate public spaces and promote community interactions.

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········> **One**
A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change
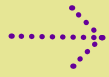
········> **Two**
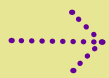The offering of local solutions for local planning challenges

········> **Three**
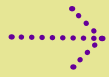Short-term commitment and realistic expectations

········> **Four**
Low risks, with a possibly high reward

········> **Five**
The development of social capital between citizens and the building of organisational capacity public-private institutions, non-profits and their constituents

Tactical urbanism also encourages the citizens and the local authorities to explore, experience and shape urban spaces in a different way by adding multiple functions to them. This approach is also referred to as "guerrilla urbanism", "pop-up urbanism", "city repair" or "D.I.Y urbanism". While displaying a number of overlapping features, "tactical urbanism" is a thoughtful method to city building that includes the five characteristics mentioned above.[5]

The benefits of implementing tactical urbanism measures within any context are four-pronged:

1. Helps in understanding the needs of every stakeholder

2. It serves as a proof of concept, so more people can be convinced that the process has tangible outputs

3. It helps speed up the process of addressing problems and practically intervening rather than leaving it only on paper

4. It brings forth conversation and widens public engagement

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The incredible thing about this method is that different stakeholders have to work together to make any sort of change possible. It is truly led by a collaborative spirit. Even if one arm of the collaboration isn't playing its role, the initiative will most likely not move ahead. The challenge, of course, is streamlining the process with the involvement of so many people in the tight duration of the project. However, safety, coherence, and attractiveness act as a catalyst[6] to push the cause, be it increased use of NMT, facilitating pedestrian movement or allowing for more impactful changes in laws governing mobility.

Who are the tacticians?

TACTICIANS	UNSANCTIONED	HYBRID	SANCTIONED
City council / Local authorities / Ward councillor	Intersection repair		Open streets
		Park(ing) day	Pavement to plazas
	Bike parking	Pop-up shops	Play streets
Non-profits / Entrepreneurs / Developers	Building a better block	Food trucks	Street fairs
		Mobile vendors	Pop-up cafés
	Guerilla gardening	Site pre-vitalisation	
Local activists / Community groups / Artists	Chair bombing	Temporary retail	
	Ad busting	Pop-up civic forum	

TACTICS

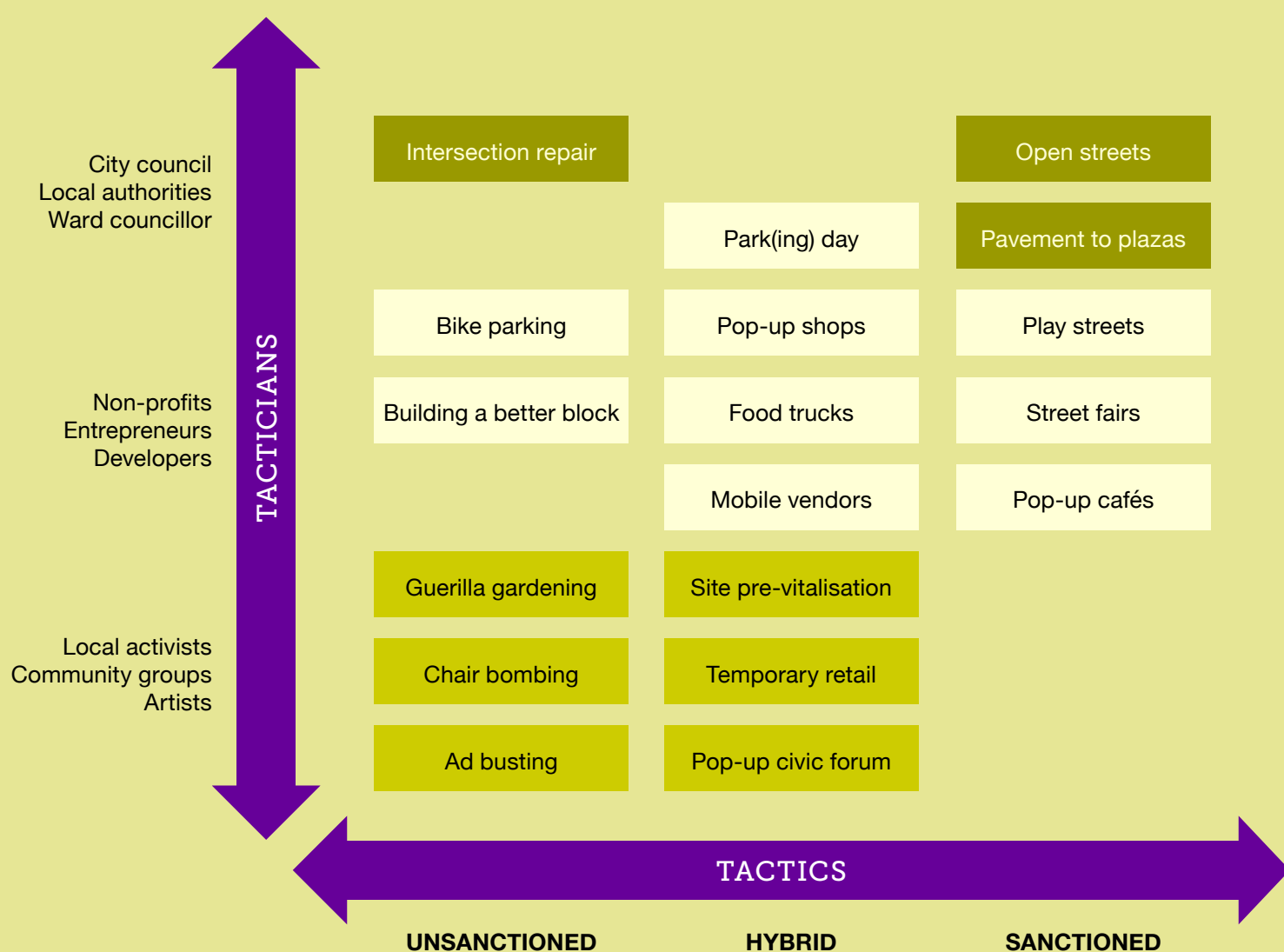**Figure 2**

literature review

Tactical urbanism in developing countries like India

Figure 3

India, much like other developing countries is characterised by remarkable pluralism. Today, Indian cities are composed of two components occupying the same physical space. The first is the Static City—built of a more permanent material such as concrete, steel and brick.

The second is the Kinetic City. This is a city in motion—a three-dimensional construct of incremental development. The Kinetic City is temporary, and often built with recycled material: plastic sheets, scrap metal, canvas and waste wood. It constantly modifies and reinvents itself.[7] The kinetic spaces are carved out by values and urge, and are synonymous with what tactical urbanism envisions.

This highlights the local logic and quick use[8] changes that transgress the lines of what we refer to as contemporary urbanism. Tactical urbanism shows how with a little imagination and the resources at hand, cities can unlock the full potential of their streets.

Things are often more formal and regulated in developed economies, which sometimes prevents this ever-changing, fluid utilization of space.

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Initiating and championing	**Coordinating and logistics**	**Design and construction**	**Communication and documentation**	**Fundraising**

ULB

Traffic police

Motor Vehicles
Department

SmartCity SPV

Government officials

Multilateral agencies

NGOs

Community groups

Design team/
contractor

Site survey agency

Students

Volunteer groups

Media persons

Photographers/
videographers

Communications
students

Volunteer groups

Government officials

Multilateral agencies

NGOs

Community groups

Business groups/
industries

Figure 4

Considerations for a tactical urbanism project

To streamline execution, there are some aspects that need to be kept in mind for a project to succeed and be approved by local bodies for permanent change. In the recent past, TU has been accepted as a formalised framework with several small-scale interventions within India. Examples include the case of 'Kovai Connect—Celebrating Public Spaces', an initiative by the Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation (CCMC) in association with the Coimbatore City Traffic Police and German International Cooperation (GIZ). This project was implemented to promote non-motorised transport (NMT) and public transport, under the 'Integrated Sustainable Urban Transport Systems for Smart Cities' (SMART-SUT).

An important aspect to consider in developing countries is the constant conflict between livability and mobility. To combat this, Kovai Connect aimed to create a safer space for pedestrian
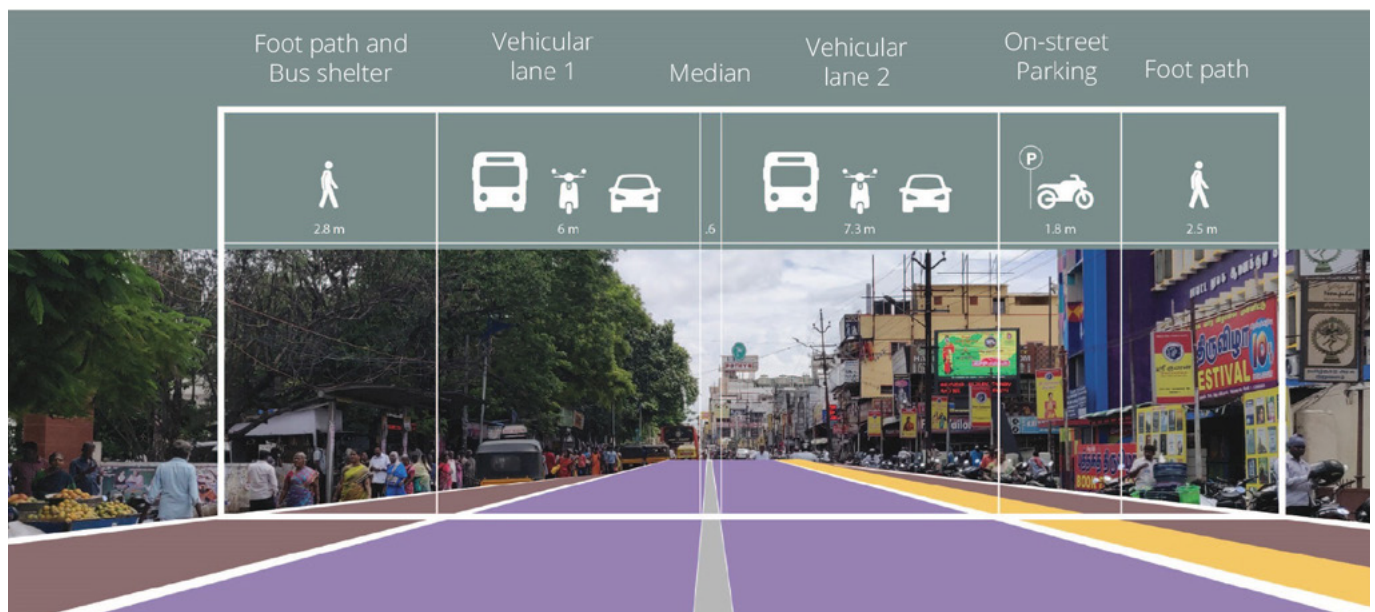
movement. Initial surveying and mapping of the area indicated that there was a problem of unequal space distribution in the usage of the streets. Other issues that were identified were the lack of safe crossings and unregulated intersections, lack of shade owing to the orientation of the road, and lack of seating.
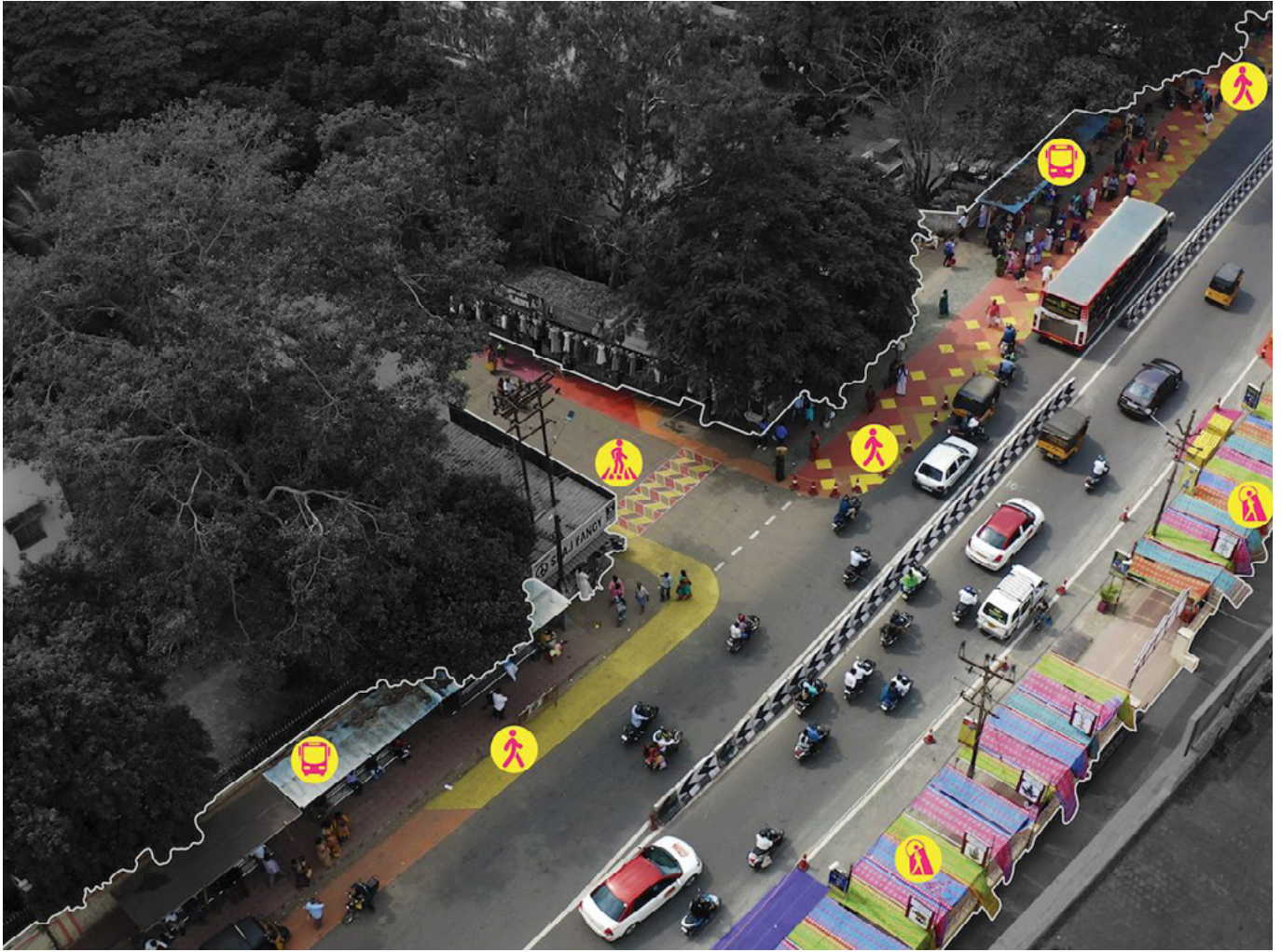
The idea of the intervention was not to change the space entirely but to redistribute and reallocate the usage of the streets—first by demonstrating potential impact through temporary, reversible interventions. The streets were redesigned to increase pedestrian area and redirect traffic and parking spaces by painting and clearly identifying the sections which would serve as the pedestrian area.

Since the majority of pedestrian users in the area were school children and senior citizens, the crossings and pedestrian paths were painted with colourful patterns to encourage usage. The intersections were also tightened by changing the turning radius to provide waiting area and crossings. This proved useful to the pedestrians as the vehicles now did not encroach on the painted areas due to adequate turning radius provisions at the intersections.

Figure 5

Foot path and Bus shelter	Vehicular lane 1	Median	Vehicular lane 2	On-street Parking	Foot path
2.8 m	6 m	.6	7.3 m	1.8 m	2.5 m

Figure 6 Points of intervention on the street to improve walkability, vending, and transit wait time | Source: UDC

Based on the above case study, some key considerations for pilot sites would be:

One
Picking areas with high movement of people; loops are also preferrable since there will be more footfall and the route will be part of a larger network

Two
For the trial, mixed-use streets are best to test the intervention on

Three
If there are older citizens and children that can be brought in as part of the process, they can become unofficial guardians of the public space

Figure 7 The final outcome of the process | Source: UDC

Citizen engagement as part of the process

One example of how involving the community in participatory design can shape the spaces they live in, was an intervention along the Sringeri Mutt Road facilitated by The Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (ITDP) India Programme in Chennai. It was a quick and cost-effective initiative that was largely community-driven. It aimed at enhancing the road and personal safety of the neighbourhood, primarily for women and children.

ITDP India Programme did site visits and held stakeholder consultations with frequent users of the street like local residents, students and teachers of the neighbouring school to identify the root causes and concerns of the area. They also engaged in deliberative solution generation by involving different bodies/organisations such as the Chennai Traffic Police, Greater Chennai Corporation, civic action groups like Thiruveedhi Amman Koil Street Residents Association (TAKSRA) and Karam Korpom, as well as the Chennai High

School (Mandaveli) for highlighting concerns and finding solutions.

An issue that was identified was abandoned vehicles and unauthorised parking which led to the breeding of anti-social activities. This was addressed by first vacating unauthorised parking and then cleaning and painting footpath and walls in the area. With the help of school students and the RWA, the street was transformed into a vibrant place by painting a portion of the road and compound walls in vibrant colours. Not only did this help increase pedestrianisation, as a result of the higher movement of people, the area became a lot safer for users. A post-implementation survey showed that 90% of the users who used the street felt an increased sense of safety.

| BEFORE | AFTER |

Figure 8 Before and after a TU implementation with children and women on Sringeri Mutt Road | Source: ITDP India

CHAPTER 3

# short-term action towards long-term change

Challenges

Tactical urbanism blurs the lines between processes and outcomes. This is a strength and a potential downfall of TU interventions. TU interventions are short-term and have an advantage of quickly demonstrating return by succeeding or failing at early stages. But these interventions are likely to be useful only if learnings feed into something more permanent. TU by itself is an incomplete process which is constantly evolving—either by way of the materials being used or how detailed the design is. Hence, TU should be perceived as a tool to test, gather learnings and implement feedback into the design process.[10]

A common trap that these initiatives often fall into is **beautification of the selected site, purely at an aesthetic level**. No TU project will be a success if its utility is only superficial.

Another gargantuan task is **convincing the public why such an intervention is needed** and what impact it will have on them on a daily basis. This needs to be communicated in the right way for people to fully grasp the potential of the idea.
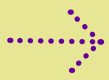
Formalizing the intervention with the support of the relevant stakeholders is the last barrier. Bridging gaps and communicating with various authorities to be **granted approvals and permissions often ends up taking long**. One has to be well versed with local policies and transportation laws to create anything within a neighbourhood. This can be a challenge if there are no existing stipulations or mandates provided.
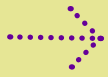
It **can be an eye sore if the intervention is not maintained or abandoned after the testing** period. Post implementation surveys and gauging user reactions should be an important part of any project. There should also be transfer of ownership to prevent misuse or degradation of the tactical plug in.

To equip people with the tools to manage their social infrastructure, constant engagement is required. This proves difficult to achieve, considering **behavioural change often requires longer periods of interaction**.

Recommendations

Based on the learnings through this research, the following suggestions can be made:

As TU is very contextual and site-specific, the government should incentivise initiatives that bring local designers and communities together to work on localised solutions for localised problems.

Permissions and sanctions from concerned authorities for TU projects should be given quickly through short and easy processes.

Investment in TU as a tactic should be for a long term/permanent goal; TU is only a method of implementing a design goal by trying and testing different methods in a participative manner; the interventions involved in this process are not ends in themselves.

There is often a glaring gap in the involvement of stakeholders. More often than not, people who advocate for walkable streets and cycling lanes come from more privileged backgrounds and have access to cars and two-wheelers. Unfortunately, the discourse often ends up excluding the large strata of people who actually need the walking paths and cycling tracks. For this reason, all platforms of engagement should be accessible and inclusive. Some tactics that can be adopted for inclusive stakeholder management are as follows:
- *Identifying and grouping stakeholders by demography during project planning; identified stakeholders can be further consulted to check if any other stakeholders have been inadvertently left out.*
- *More than social media campaigns, in-person interactions such as interviews, focus group discussions, presentations, events etc. are required for getting actionable, inclusive feedback.*
- *Conscious efforts must be made to bridge language and class barriers by conducting meetings at spaces that are easily accessible to all stakeholders.*

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Social/environmental/project impact assessments ought to be carried out post implementation to understand the true value of a TU intervention before it is scaled up.

For sustaining TU, citizen engagement is the way to go. As a result, stronger and more accountable local institutions are well positioned to facilitate TU as they are embedded in empowered and engaged communities.

Scaling up of TU can be performed by preparing toolkits and ensuring interactions between citizens, policy makers and elected representatives through knowledge exchange sessions.

The incentive to use TU as a design strategy by policymakers is that it is a low cost, temporary and evidence-based trial. It is therefore only prudent for policymakers/ designers/ planners to opt for TU in order to save time and resources.

conclusion

Tactical urbanism is the white man's jargon for "jugaad"

Tactical urbanism has played a key role in implementing non-motorised transport strategies in many Indian neighbourhoods till date. The main factors behind its success are cost effectiveness, short project durations, long term impact, and community involvement. The government should promote TU projects because it strengthens community ownership of public spaces by increasing participation in design and decision-making.

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endnotes

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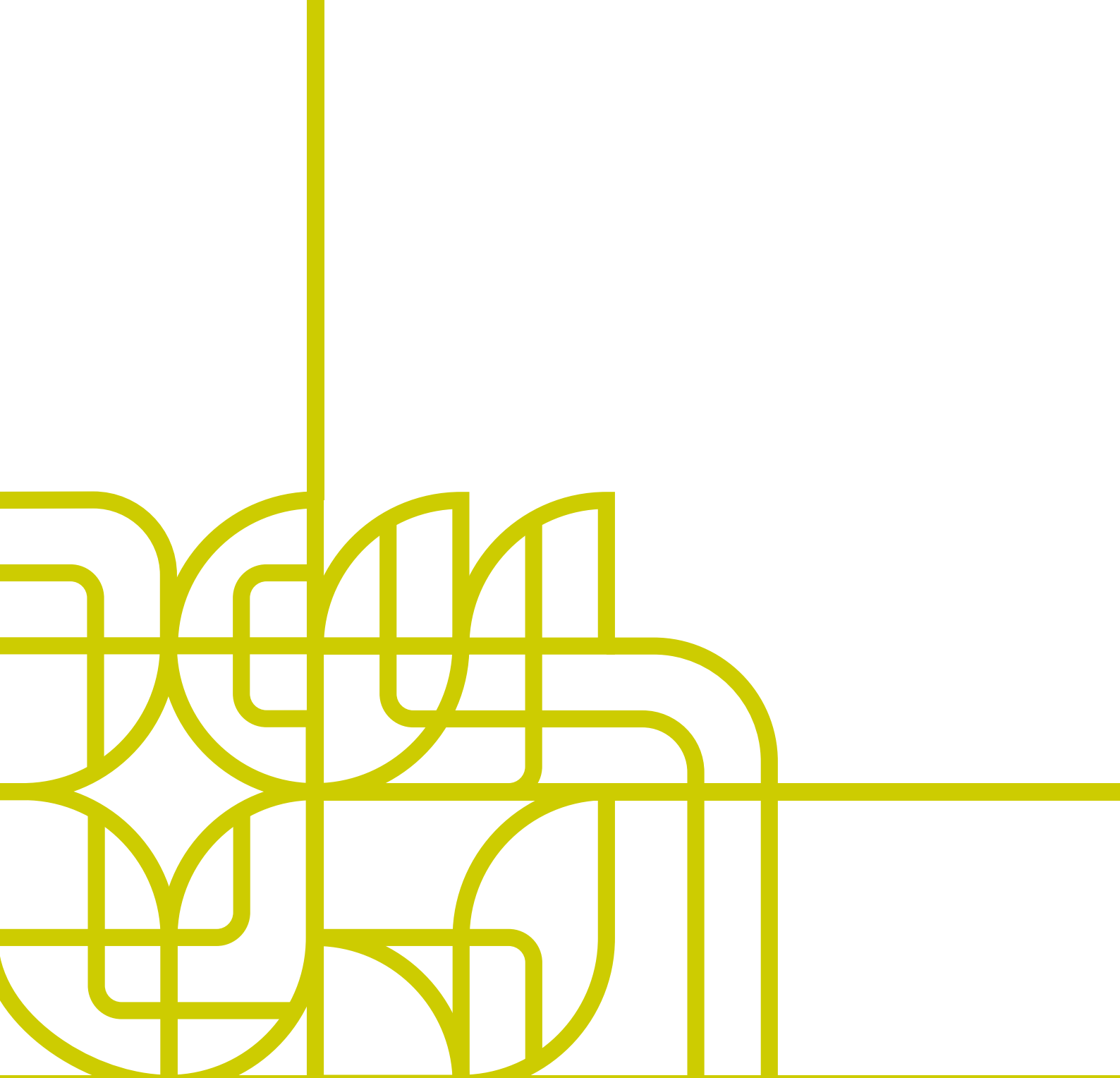se2/002.html*

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