

Appropriation of public space: combining the Wayfinder methodology and tactical urbanism in a park in the city of Latacunga¹

Apropiación del espacio público: combinando la metodología Wayfinder y el urbanismo táctico en un parque de la ciudad de Latacunga

Apropriação do espaço público: combinando a metodologia Wayfinder e o urbanismo tático em um parque na cidade de Latacunga

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How cite? Cisneros, E. (2022). Appropriation of public space: combining the Wayfinder methodology and tactical urbanism in a park in the city of Latacunga. *Entorno Geográfico*, (24), e21312307. <https://doi.org/10.25100/eg.v0i24.12307>

Abstract

The paper exposes an intervention proposal for an urban park in the city of Latacunga, Cotopaxi (Ecuador). The potential intervention seeks to promote the appropriation of public space where people and future users act as protagonists of the change, by contributing ideas and initiatives to create a place that considers their opinions, needs and suggestions. In order to achieve this, the proposal used the Wayfinder methodology, an *avant-garde* approach that assesses, plans, and acts in social-ecological systems to achieve sustainable, safe and fair transformations. Likewise, it proposes tactical urbanism activities as practical strategies to accomplish the project's objective. The paper concludes that an intervention of this type is viable and capable of generating outstanding results regarding urban public space appropriation. Being viable, it is established that it can be executed in the short term, in accordance with the guidelines presented in the text.

¹ Reflexiones propias planteadas como propuesta a ser aplicada en el espacio público en mención.



Keywords: urban spaces, social participation, urban parks, urban planning and citizen participation

Resumen

El artículo expone una propuesta de intervención para un parque urbano en la ciudad de Latacunga, Cotopaxi (Ecuador). La potencial intervención busca promover la apropiación del espacio público donde las personas y los futuros usuarios actúen como protagonistas del cambio, al aportar ideas e iniciativas para generar un lugar que considere sus opiniones, necesidades y sugerencias. Para lograrlo, la propuesta utiliza la metodología Wayfinder, un enfoque vanguardista que evalúa, planifica y actúa en sistemas socio-ecológicos para alcanzar transformaciones sostenibles, seguras y justas. Asimismo, propone las actividades del urbanismo táctico como las estrategias prácticas para lograr el objetivo del proyecto. El artículo concluye que una intervención de este tipo es viable y capaz de generar resultados sobresalientes en cuanto a la apropiación del espacio público. Al ser viable, se establece que esta puede ser ejecutada en el corto plazo, conforme a los lineamientos que se presentan en el texto.

Palabras clave: espacio urbano, participación social, parque urbano, planificación urbana y participación del ciudadano.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta uma proposta de intervenção para um parque urbano na cidade de Latacunga, Cotopaxi (Ecuador). A intervenção proposta busca promover a apropriação do espaço público, onde as pessoas e os futuros usuários atuam como protagonistas da mudança, contribuindo com ideias e iniciativas para criar um lugar que leve em consideração suas opiniões, necessidades e sugestões.

Para isso, a proposta utilizou a metodologia Wayfinder, uma abordagem de vanguarda que avalia, planeja e atua em sistemas socioecológicos para alcançar transformações sustentáveis, seguras e justas. Da mesma forma, são propostas atividades de urbanismo táctico como estratégias práticas para atingir o objetivo do projeto. O artigo conclui que uma intervenção desse tipo é viável e capaz de gerar resultados significativos em relação à apropriação do espaço público urbano. Sendo viável, estabelece-se que pode ser executada em curto prazo,

conforme as diretrizes apresentadas no texto.

Palavras-chave: espaços urbanos, participação social, parques urbanos, planejamento urbano e participação cidadã

Received: 11 July 2022

Accepted: 22 August 2022

Published: 9 September 2022

1. Introduction

This paper presents a proposal for an innovative change for an urban park in the city of Latacunga, Ecuador. The park is located in the parish Eloy Alfaro, specifically in the neighborhood San Felipe. This theoretical contribution is established as a roadmap that seeks that the place will be, soon, intervened with a focus on the appropriation of public space, in order to develop a place adapted to the needs and suggestions of present and future users.

For the intervention, it is proposed to use the Wayfinder methodology, which is defined as a five-phase collaborative process for assessing, planning, and acting in social-ecological systems. The authenticity of the methodology lies in developing an individual and collective understanding of the complex dynamics of a system, which enables a viable intervention towards the desired change. In addition, it proposes the actions in tactical urbanism as the set of specific strategies to be executed in order to achieve the project's objective.

The document is structured in four sections. This first section consists of a theoretical and conceptual framework that introduces the current situation and the aim of the project. The second section presents the methodology where the different phases for the implementation are presented. The third section presents the results achieved after the application of the method previously described and a brief discussion. Finally, the paper addresses several final reflections.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

The process of restoring a park (system to intervene) is identified as an opportunity for innovation since it promotes a process that includes the appropriation of public space by the

community. For this, the central axis is the construction of a participatory agenda where citizens change their conventional role as observers into active actors, in other words, they go from being critics to collaborators, from consumers to producers.

The space in mention maintains a series of inherent characteristics to the environment, in the first place, it is important to emphasize that despite being a public space and therefore, belonging to the community, it has been underused, and has been kept neglected. The non-use of spaces like this park and other public spaces in the neighborhood, limits the development of a sense of community belonging, limiting the formation of ties between the inhabitants of the sector. This behavior directly opposes the development of the social structure necessary to generate sustainable cities and communities² that respond to the needs of the inhabitants. It also affects the development of improvements in the community, as it does not promote active participation that would allow for better results.

The space maintains a series of difficulties, among the main problems of the park we can cite the following: garbage in the vicinity (plastic bags, papers, bottles, among others), old and outdated facilities, presence of stray dogs, lack of benches or spaces to sit, insufficient infrastructure (there are no water troughs, no access for bicycles, it is not pet friendly, among others), certain people drink in the place, among several others. These problems have generated “agoraphobia”, that is, the fear or rejection of public space because people creates a negative image of the place therefore, it is now cataloged in a derogatory way (Borja & Muxí, 2003).

In addition to the above, it is evident that the park has been intervened in a rather simplistic way by the municipal government³, focusing only on the ornamental aspect and in an ephemeral way. Thus, the main problem lies in the lack of value given to citizen opinion, which as a consequence, has caused the interventions not to be adapted to the desires and needs of the users, leaving the park as a marginalized site, little used, and even displaced by the community itself.

The initiative constitutes a substantial challenge in terms of the perception of the public.

² Since the project seeks to strengthen the ties of the community, it aligns to some extent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set by the United Nations (ONU). In this case, it seeks to influence SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (ONU, 2015).

³ Refers to the city's local government

Carrión (2019) states that “public space is a fundamental component for the organization of collective life (integration, structure) and representation (culture, politics) of society” (p. 199); based on this idea, the intervention seeks to create a space in which the importance of people in the construction of the social fabric from the appropriation of what is considered public is addressed in a practical way. The project’s ought to be is to have a united and collaborative community with strong social ties, capable of developing and generating an embellished, safe, useful, and available public space for the activities of the users.

The main approach of the intervention is a public space shaped by the contributions/needs of future users (principle of appropriation⁴). In other words, democratizing the construction processes by including a diversity of actors and based on their aspirations, and finally reaching a common goal (Cisneros, 2021). Therefore, it is possible for that consensual aspiration to become a reality with the support of public and private institutions, residents, students, and the public. The intervention of the space in question is also justified because, since the place is a park, it is considered a fundamental place to escape from routine pressures, a place for recreation and mental rest, which can be enjoyed by young people, children, and adults (Buitrago, 2019).

The execution of this initiative would mainly benefit three groups of people; first, the inhabitants of the sector; second, the university community of the Technical University of Cotopaxi (UTC); and third, the businesses surrounding the park.

On the other hand, it is estimated that the implementation of the project contributes in several aspects: economically, because it promotes a greater commercial exchange with surrounding businesses; socially, by promoting new ties in the community and strengthening existing ones; environmentally, by restoring a green space in an urban area of the city; and politically, by promoting citizen initiatives (*bottom-up* approach⁵), demonstrating to authorities that innovations can come from and for citizens.

⁴ The principle of ownership is understood as the legitimate mobilization of collective intelligence through the inclusion of all the actors concerned in a system, i.e. not only the leading or high-ranking cadres but all the actors involved (in this case users, neighbors, traders in the area, etc.) (Godet & Durance, 2007).

⁵ The *bottom-up* approach to public policy refers to the implementation of a program based on the participation of multiple actors that allows for a differentiated approach, adapted to the specific context. This approach is a direct critique of *top-down* public policies, which focus on executing the ideas of bureaucrats, their pre-established routines, and processes, excluding all other potential actors.

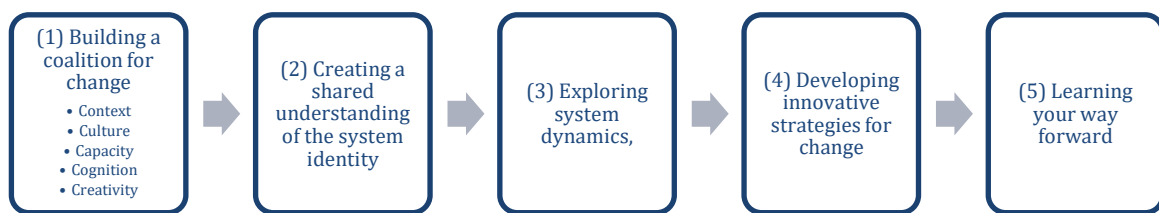
Since public spaces are the stage of social life that provides identity and character to a locality (Daza & Thomas, 2016), the project aligns with the public policy of the Ecuadorian government, which through the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MIDUUVI) educates about building, managing, and taking advantage of the goods, services and resources offered by urban parks and public spaces, contributing to the promotion of the Right to the City and family integration in society (MIDUUVI, n/d).

2. Methodology

Wayfinder: A resilience guide for navigating towards sustainable futures

The Wayfinder methodology is a five-phase collaborative process for resilience assessment, planning, and working in social-ecological systems that seeks to generate sustainable, safe and fair transformations for the future. The Wayfinder methodology is composed of five phases which are (1) building a coalition for change, (2) creating a shared understanding of the system identity, (3) exploring system dynamics, (4) developing innovative strategies for change, and (5) learning your way forward (Enfors-Kautsky, Järnberg, Quinlan, & Ryan, 2018), (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Phases of the Wayfinder methodology



Source: Enfors-Kautsky, Järnberg, Quinlan, & Ryan, 2018.

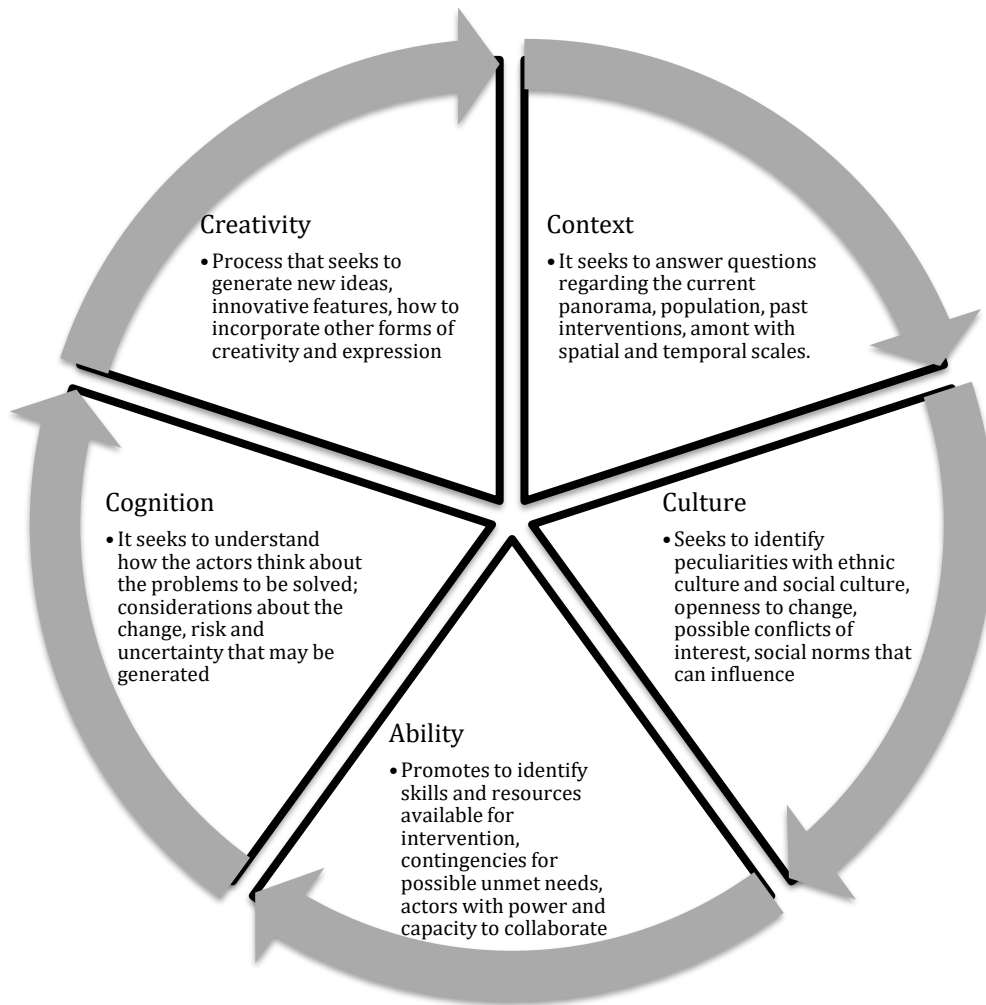
The first phase can be summarized as establishing a working team of committed people with the capacity to carry out the process. The second phase aims to generate approaches in an extended environment with the purpose of getting to know the aspirations of other actors and the potential challenges for the intervention in question.

The third phase executes a deep analysis of the existing dynamics in order to know what happens in the system, the possible limitations to change and the resources that can be used to generate change. The fourth phase builds the specific strategies to be carried out to generate the desired change; the peculiarity of this point is that it proposes a continuous reflection that promotes innovation, ergo, an unprecedented change. The fifth and last phase raises the ideal of assertive adaptation while the project's execution is on, i.e., the methodology establishes that the implementation of the project poses a phase of feedback based on the experiences, and this has the potential to be useful in future processes.

The methodology has proved to be effective since it has been used in diverse projects such as planning urban landscape in Stockholm, Sweden (Borgström, Andersson & Björklund, 2021), improving the capacities for Watershed Resilience in the Bay Area of San Francisco Bay in the United States (Hamel, Hamann, Kuiper, Andersson, Arkema, Silver & Guerry, 2021), improving Water Management in Pakistan (Mitchell, Allan, Punthakey, Finlayson & Khan, 2021) and Water Systems in North American (Cosens & Gunderson, 2021) and in the development of sustainable farming systems in Europe (Paas, Accatino, Bijttebier, Black, Gavrilescu, Krupin, & Reidsma, 2021).

Additionally, it is necessary to explain that the Wayfinder methodology, in its first step, establishes the concept of the 5Cs as a tool to introduce and develop an initial outline that establishes several characteristics of the situation and clarifies some doubts about the project. The 5Cs developed for this work will be described below. (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The 5Cs proposed by the Wayfinder methodology to analyze and adapt the process



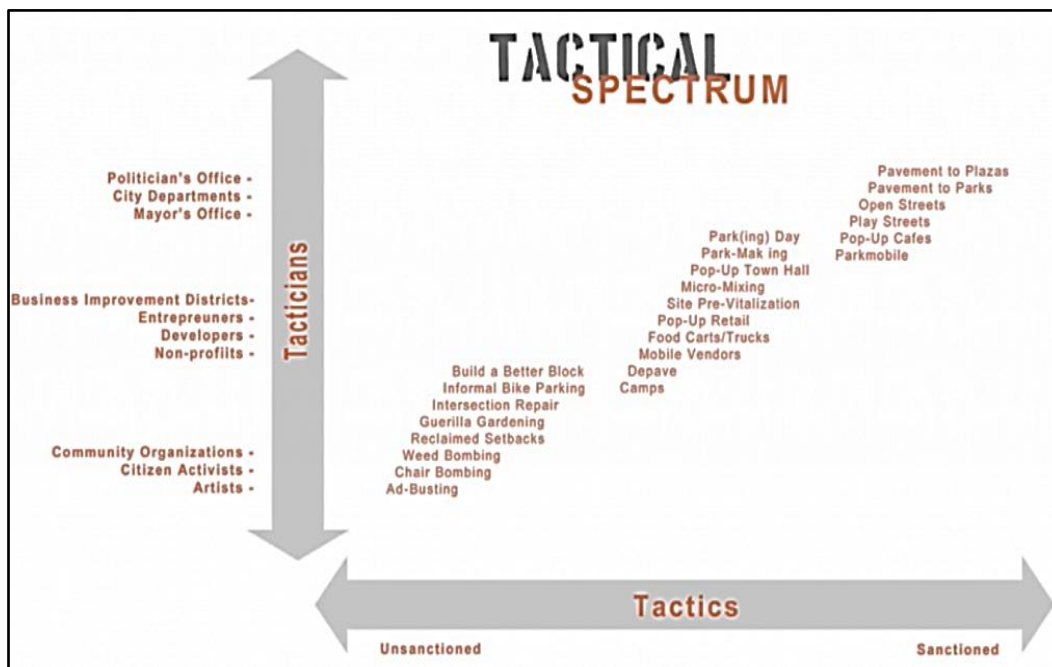
Source: Enfors-Kautsky, Järnberg, Quinlan, & Ryan, 2018

The two schemes outlined above show the five stages of the Wayfinder process as well as the 5Cs proposed for the first stage; however, it is worth mentioning that as the project develops each stage outlines the proper peculiarities of the system. This constant and deep analysis enriches the analysis in its subsequent stage and grants a full understanding of the system when it is applied to a practical case.

Tactical Urbanism, a critical approach to urbanism

The framework that will be proposed to promote the expected change for this specific public space (to develop a public space that has been created by and for the community based on his opinions, thoughts and needs) are the maneuvers of tactical urbanism. Tactical urbanism refers to an intentional and progressive approach that seeks to generate change, through small-scale interventions, allowing local actors to understand, promote and develop concepts and ideas *in situ*, achieving transformations on the perception that is held of the city, before giving way to major political and economic commitments (Padilla & Martínez, 2021). (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Strategies in the spectrum of tactical urbanism



Source: Lydon, 2012

Tactical urbanism maintains several characteristics worth highlighting, among them are the realization of small actions with a short duration, the opportunity for local actors to participate, valuing informal actions, low risks with the possibility of great rewards, and building relationships between citizens, public and private institutions, NGOs, and civil

society. The ultimate goal of tactical urbanism is to awaken the interest of all actors in order to generate permanent changes that benefit citizens in the long term (Lydon, 2012; Steffens, 2013).

Through the years strategies from tactical urbanism had been used in different locations around the world, Figure 4 shows some examples of actions executed in Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, and the United States. As it is shown, some actions are relatively simple while some others are a bit complex. The level of complexity depends on the level of intervention, the available resources and the context of the place where they were applied.

Figure 4. Example of practical activities executed in other locations that could be conducted in this proposal



Source: (Lydon, 2012) (Steffens, 2013) (ArchDaily Team, 2016)

1. An intersection in Los Angeles, California and a colorful zebra in Bogota, Colombia. 2. A trash bin, tables and chairs made from recycled material (Wood and tires) in Mexico City, Mexico and Valparaíso, Chile. 3. Parklet in San Francisco, California, U.S. and in Ibarra, Ecuador. 4. Chairs that were placed in two locations in New York, USA.

3. Results and discussion

In the following section, the results will be presented following the order given by the

Wayfinder methodology synthesized by Enfors-Kautsky, Järnberg, Quinlan, & Ryan (2018) in the five (5) phases previously presented.

Phase 1: Building a Coalition for Change

The first phase involves the creation of a partnership for change where a team of committed people with the capacity to take the process forward is assembled. This team will be able to design and adapt the project to the specific context. Members of “Colectivo Llatak” from the city of Latacunga form the team selected for the execution of the project.⁶ “Llatak” is a civil group (part of the Organized Civil Society) composed of professionals, leaders, managers, and social activists, which among one of its purposes, seeks to rebuild the dialogue for the appropriation of public space in the city. The organization has varied human resources, with professionals in the areas of law, architecture, social sciences, communication, engineering, and administration, among others. The diversity in the profiles will allow obtaining different points of view for the intervention of the proposed system, besides an integral development in diverse areas that procure the success of the proposal.

The organization maintains a horizontal structure, as a consequence, there is no defined hierarchy and therefore all members can support, discuss and contribute to the various activities. The organization's principles are respect, freedom of criteria, proactive participation, and creativity. The team maintains constant dialogues, where they develop proposals for new events and approaches in the community. This space will introduce the concept of the system, and every subject related to what we will try to intervene in, also we will try to take advantage of these spaces for the free exchange of ideas regarding the transformations that can be produced for this and later cases. Next, we will analyze the 5Cs tool used in the first step of the Wayfinder process.

Context

The Park is located in the urban area of the city, in the neighborhood “San Felipe”, nearby

⁶ The official name of the civil group is "Asociación de Desarrollo Social e Integral de Jóvenes Colectivo Llatak" according to the Resolution MIES-CZ-3-DDL-2019-0014-R, issued by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) of Ecuador.

the Technical University of Cotopaxi (Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi, UTC), specifically in the segments of avenues Simón Rodríguez and Iberoamericana. The space borders to the north with privately owned land, to the south with local residents' homes, and to the east and west with the avenues mentioned above (see Figure 5).

The access is easy, with urban transport that passes through the place constantly. The park has never maintained an intervention of the type currently proposed; in the past, interventions have been developed where the ornamental aspect has prevailed, that is to say, that the park just looks good. Appropriation is not part of the needs of the municipality, the residents, or the users. It is considered that the best approach is to seek direct interaction with the actors through workshops, meetings, focus groups, interviews, etc., which implies a creative approach, different from the conventional.

Figure 5. Views from the surface, back and front of the park



Source: Google Maps, 2022

It is worth mentioning that around the university are concentrated houses occupied mainly by local residents and migrant students from various provinces of the country who have moved to pursue higher education at UTC, which is the largest public university in the province⁷. Finally, the park does not have a proper name other than “UTC’s Park” (*Parque*

⁷ Translated from the Spanish word *Provincia*, it refers to the administrative division within the Ecuadorian

de la UTC), a name that has been assigned and accepted by most people.

Culture

The population that uses the park to be intervened is mostly composed of *mestizos*⁸ and a minority of indigenous population. In the socio-economic context, it is established that most of the population has low incomes. By conversations held with people from the place, it is estimated that there won't be a high degree of importance from the citizenship for the project at first; nevertheless, it is estimated that once the appropriation process starts, it could be given increased importance.

A mapping of the actors of the system shows that it will be necessary to establish dialogues with the authorities of the university, the inhabitants of the neighborhood and its board, the student federation of the university, and the local government of the city (specifically the direction of planning). In brief, both the personnel working at the university and the employees of the local government can present themselves as actors of conflict due to their own interests. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the project has a gender component since it has the potential to empower both men and women, in similar percentages. This considering that the demographic distribution of the sector is similarly divided between men and women and the project is open to everyone's contributions; therefore, there is equal opportunity to participate and contribute to the initiative.

Capacity

The project will seek to manage most of the resources. The initiative seeks to finance the project through national and international cooperation systems, mainly with the German Technical Cooperation GIZ and the NGO "Grupo Faro", who have contributed to projects of this type in the framework of their program "urban laboratories in sustainable intermediate cities"⁹. The project will request collaboration from the mobility unit of the local government as

territory. The equivalency in other territories is State, Department, Regions, etc. (Eguino, Porto, Pineda, Garriga & Rosales, 2010).

⁸ *Mestizos* refers to the mixed-race people who predominately live in much of the Latin American Region, including Ecuador (Telles & Garcia, 2013)

⁹ The project proposes to improve the processes of generating sustainable urban policy, through active citizen participation, the strengthening of municipal capacities and the collaborative creation of urban solutions (Grupo

well as the help from its workers to assist in the various activities. Likewise, the project will ask for college students' participation by contacting their community outreach units. The project expects the support of the aforementioned actors; however, contingencies are established to act in case their collaboration is not on the agenda.

Cognition

There are different positions on the part of the actors involved in the change. Due to some informal conversations, it is established that the initiative should seek an implementation process mostly done without the support of the local government, neighborhood or university authorities, as each actor can maintain interests contrary to what is sought to be done. The beneficiaries do not know about the importance of the appropriation of public space in the social dynamics, therefore some rejection is also expected in the initial stages; to mitigate this, it will be sought to maintain fluid communication with the community about the benefit of the appropriation of public space. The community is not used to abrupt changes in their daily lives, so small and progressive changes will be sought. The possibility of little involvement on the part of authorities and community forces to maintain the project with a high degree of flexibility, and capability to adapt to adversities.

Creativity

It is considered that the initial ideas should come from the experience and knowledge of the civil group Latak and its members because they know and understand the technical aspects involved in the appropriation of public space. Subsequently, the knowledge, ideas and proposals will be socialized with the actors involved and the members of the civil group, in order to encourage the formation of grey matter that contributes to new ideas and adapts to the particular realities of future users. It will also allow the inclusion of utilitarian ideas that come from outside the context to be adapted and implemented as far as possible.

Considering the diagnostic of the system, an initial step will be to establish the flow of park users, their main activities, and their perceptions of the place; this will be done through surveys. Subsequently, a dialogue will be held with the various stakeholders in order to find

out in-depth details. Surveys will also be elaborated with the use of digital tools that allow for efficient tabulation. Planning will be designed with clear chronograms regarding the execution and fulfillment of activities. Additionally, meetings will be held within the working group to inform and inform each other about the situation, inconveniences, experiences, etc.

An initial scan of the system

It is established that the park is owned by the local government of Latacunga, therefore it is a public space, open to all citizens. The care and maintenance of the space are not recurrent and are carried out by the Planning Directorate, through its Projects Unit, and the Environment Directorate, through its Parks and Gardens Unit; the main task of these institutions is to keep the park clean and showable for the citizens.

The park maintains a constant transit of students from the university; however, it is not used as a recreational area; with this context and considering the natural wear and tear of the facilities, it is established that the efforts from the municipality are not enough to fulfill the purpose of maintaining the space in optimal conditions.

Historically, the park has been built based on the perceptions of public servants, relegating the public opinions of residents and potential users, so the park maintains a minimum number of recurrent users. Among the factors not considered for the formation and structuring of the park are the fact that the area is a high-traffic area because of the college (the university currently has approximately 11,500 students), it is located between two main avenues in the neighborhood (*Iberoamericana Avenue* and *Simon Rodriguez Avenue*), the area has a high number of stray animals, its location is relatively close to the city's wholesale market (approximately 800 meters away), among several others.

In the past, this system has never proposed an innovative dynamic that collects ideas from the community to be subsequently evaluated and implemented in the public space of the neighborhood such as the one proposed here. Therefore, the strategies of tactical urbanism are established as the framework of change for the project, to generate an appropriation of the public space by the community. This allows users to become the protagonists in the

transformation of the park.

Phase 2: A Shared Understanding of System Identity

The second phase of the Wayfinder aims to reach out to an extended group of project stakeholders in order to understand their aspirations and additionally identify the specific challenges for the intervention in question.

Aspirations and challenges

For the current application, the action is limited to a geographical space of approximately 2,705.12 m², that is the space occupied by the park to be intervened; nevertheless, it is considered that the project can be considered as a kind of test laboratory, being the park an experimental space, where the results of the intervention to restore the park can result in future replications at larger scales (other points of the neighborhood, other neighborhoods of the city, other cities). It is also proposed that in case the project is not successful, the losses in resources will be minimal and a rigorous evaluation of the reasons for failure will be carried out, serving as information for future interventions.

Based on the various problems identified in the park, the priorities to be solved are placing garbage cans, establishing an outdoor study area (tables, benches, umbrellas, etc.), well-marked crosswalks to facilitate pedestrian circulation, installing drinking fountains, and removing the parking lots from the area to prioritize pedestrian traffic.

These solutions arise from the knowledge of urbanism and architecture of several members of the civil group, considering the first observations of the system. With this in mind, we will proceed to socialize the results with the community, who may agree or not, but could always contribute with ideas from their worldview and experience.

The implementation of this initiative responds to solving the lack of loyalty of citizens to a public space that appeared and developed with the foundation of the college since the Technical University of Cotopaxi was established 27 years ago and changed the dynamics of the community. Currently, what is sought is a balance for the use of this space, which can

manage to benefit all potential users.

The park is a point of interaction for students, residents, and shopkeepers in the area. Relationships are informal, mainly because it is a public space. The main users are university students, and to a lesser extent children, residents, high school students and workers from nearby establishments. Besides the municipality, there are no other actors in the system that assist, help or cooperation to contribute to the park.

Towards the New System, a New Narrative of Change

Stakeholders will mostly state that the intervention of the park will be positive, mainly because of the repairs to the physical part, the implementation of new activities and the constant maintenance. However, some stakeholders do not consider the intervention beneficial; in this context; two main stakeholders have been identified who would oppose the intervention. In the first place, the Directorate of Planning of the local government of the city, through one of its representatives, has implied that intervening in this public space, specifically with this approach and methodology, will discredit the work done by this institution. This comment has been reiterated to several members of the civil group Latak, thus establishing that their collaboration may be minimal or non-existent, especially for the modifications to the infrastructure. Secondly, through dialogue with UTC's members, it was learned that many of the public parking lots outside the university are used by various authorities and some workers from the university. This would imply that, due to the potential inconvenience for certain people, the institution would not allow the removal of cars in order to prioritize pedestrian traffic.

An actor that could be counted on without limitations is the neighborhood directive, who watches over the well-being of the inhabitants of the neighborhood, as well as other civil groups of the city, such as "La Esfera Pública" and "Los Chasquis", who can contribute immensely to the execution of the project. These actors will be considered strategic partners in the intervention process. However, certain internal problems that occur within the neighborhood board are known, so their contribution may be limited until the problems are resolved.

The initial change will involve running activities over several days that seek the use of public space. These activities should be low budget, self-financed and managed by civil groups, neighborhood authorities and the various supporters of the project.

Phase 3: Exploring the dynamics of the system

The previous sections have established which are the variables, the actors, and the main dynamics of the system. This section will place special emphasis on the potential of the proposed intervention, after knowing its limitations and the resources available for its implementation.

Given that, the Planning Directorate of the local government does not consider the initiative as fundamental, but on the contrary, sees it as a criticism of its management; its collaboration is not expected, as well as any significant contributions that may help to the disruptive change sought. Therefore, it is established that the action should be much more discreet but striking and that it should have a high impact in the long term. However, as the Municipality of the city is a highly relevant actor, and as it is the institution that would approve the use of public space, a direct approach will be sought from the mayor, who is the highest authority. He is known for his openness to execute citizen initiatives by events held in the past and therefore approval and collaboration are expected, even with the opposition of the Directorate of Planning.

It is premeditated that even if the intervention is small, short, and limited, it can awaken people's interest, allowing them to observe that the use of public space can be built from any position, including from the user community. In the same way, this first set of actions aspires to constructively criticize the authorities, imposing the ideal that the community can overcome and work in autonomy. Likewise, it demonstrates that the work of public institutions does not comply with its basic mission, which is to promote the welfare of citizens, and that their work approach should be to listen and collaborate with the demands of the community so that in the long term their proposals are institutionalized through public policy.

From a prospective view, it is hoped that this first intervention will be successful in applying

the methodology and approach to other public spaces in the same neighborhood that can be considered public spaces –sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian walkways, coliseums, commercial spaces, cultural spaces, among others– (Marroquín, 2007), with greater community participation and regularly. In the same way, it is expected to be exported to all corners of the city, contributing to the territorial development of the city of Latacunga.

Phase 4: Developing Innovative Strategies for Change

It is established that the approach is an innovative one, that looks forward to improving the efficiency of the intervention in public space, and by following the principle of appropriation that encourages the participation of citizens. The main objective is to restore a public space, including mainly the demands/desires of the citizens. At this point, the definitive actions to be executed will be presented.

1. Execute a diagnosis that allows knowing the activities that the park maintains, the current condition, its weaknesses, its strong points, the number of users and their preferences.
2. Based on the diagnosis, develop a proposal from the civil group on the main improvements to be implemented. These improvements will be based on the following conditions, considered priorities: placing garbage cans, establishing an outdoor study area (tables, benches, umbrellas, etc.), well-signposted pedestrian crossings, establishing drinking fountains, and removing the parking lots from the area to prioritize pedestrian traffic.
3. Socialize the proposals with as many people as possible. For this purpose, a virtual survey will be used, accessible to all. This digital tool, in addition to socializing the proposals, will allow the collection of needs, points of view, criticisms and adaptations, coming from the actors in the area, which will improve the proposed activities.
4. With the information obtained, we will proceed to develop a face-to-face focal workshop, where we will discuss with community leaders, authorities, strategic allies and other collaborators, topics such as ownership, public space, tactical urbanism, etc. Likewise, dynamics such as “design your park” will be carried out, with the assistance of architects and urban planners, in order to obtain a product that combines the technicality of the

creation of public space and the needs of the community. In addition, this personalized approach is carried out in order to encourage critical thinking and enthusiasm for the actions undertaken here to be replicated.

5. Finally, the proposals will be analyzed in order to obtain a viable product, which will then be executed. The final proposals are expected to be executed over one week, during the so-called “PSW” or Public Space Week.

This scheme will be the basis for the project. Depending on the support and opposition to it, accessible and available resources, and knowledge of tactical urbanism, a priority focus on the following activities will be sought:

- Place trash and recycling bins, tables and/or chairs made of reusable material, which are sturdy and eye-catching (try to paint them in bright colors).
- Establish an outdoor study area, for this we will try to implement the strategy called Bombardment of Chairs in the park and sidewalks. The chairs will be made of materials and waste, this strategy will allow the activation of public space from reusable material, and it will also support the economic activity of artisans and carpenters in the locality.
- To improve pedestrian crossings, these spaces will be painted in bright colors to communicate to drivers that access to a place of importance to the neighborhood should be a priority for pedestrians.
- It also seeks to vacate the parking lots of the area, promoting strategies called “Park(*ing*) Day” and “Parklets”, in which the spaces dedicated to parking are temporarily converted into public spaces for interaction (to see some examples of these activities, see Figure 4).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the proposals presented in this stage, should be approved by the community members and it should be verified that they are in line with their interests, desires, and needs. With respect to those proposals that are not viable at that moment, mainly because they involve greater resources and require the action of the municipal authority, they will be presented to the mayor and the council of the local government in the form of an open letter. This letter will contain the current reality, the wishes of the community and the potential solutions so that they can be considered *a posteriori* in the management of public

policy.

Phase 5: Learning the way forward

This last phase establishes the idea of learning by doing, which means, learning while the project is being executed. Some considerations arising from experience are presented and the ambition in the short, medium, and long term is set out.

All processes will be followed by feedback in order to learn from the various experiences, focusing mainly on the solution to problems that may arise. Regarding the implementation team, it will be formed by the same civil group, by Latak, additionally the participation of the residents mobilized by the Directive of the Neighborhood, UTC's students gathered by the student authorities and other civil groups of the city such as La Esfera Pública or Los Chasquis, the latter with whom permanent contact and collaboration are maintained.

The diagnostic processes and digital surveys to collect initiatives can be carried out immediately and smoothly. It is estimated that the fieldwork would have a greater impact by changing the theme from "Public Space Week" to "Public Space Month", carrying out the intervention not for a week in a row every day, but one day for four consecutive weeks (1 month). This implementation will allow for a detailed and in-depth evaluation each week, fine-tuning details with each execution.

Once executed, it is expected to have an impact on the community to such an extent that, in the medium term, these actions will be carried out on a quarterly, biannual, or annual basis. For the medium term, it is proposed to continue with the initiative in the indicated temporalities. At the same time, it is expected to have the support of organizations such as the Federation of Neighborhoods of the city (a civil society authority that brings together the board of various neighborhoods of the city), replicating the idea in other neighborhoods, as well as in other public spaces near centers of higher education (some institutions of this kind are: I.T.S. Cotopaxi, I.T.S. Vicente León, Escuela Politécnica del Ejército (ESPE) Latacunga extension, among others).

Likewise, it is expected to count on the participation of the Municipality so that with its resources the initiative can be strengthened, for example through the Mobility Unit, which if necessary can remove cars from the parking spaces, on the days that the intervention is carried

out. Finally, in the long term, it is expected that these initiatives will be institutionalized in the projects department of the Planning Directorate, as well as in the parks and gardens department of the Environment Directorate. This can be the first step for these kinds of projects to be carried out permanently, with fixed deadlines and with resources allocated from the budget of the local government; likewise, this can be a strategic step, to add similar projects such as a bicycle lane in one of the avenues leading to the UTC.

4. Final Reflections

The appropriation of public space should be generated from the community because citizens, based on their worldview and daily life, are the ones who know what they need to improve their daily lives. Therefore, public space interventions of this type, in order to be inclusive and follow the principle of appropriation, must be executed jointly, including citizens, private institutions, managers, governments and all kinds of collaborators related to the system in order to be successful.

The appropriation of public space is an efficient mechanism to generate links within communities, generate an identity and promote citizen participation. By including *avant-garde* modalities of appropriation of public space, such as tactical urbanism, there are great opportunities to empower communities, due to its outstanding characteristics, among which are low-cost, low-risk, feasible and possible high-impact actions.

Finally, it is convenient to highlight that the Wayfinder methodology maintains as a great advantage the deep study of the complex dynamics of a system, this understanding would allow the intervention with great possibilities of success, allowing it to reach the desired change.

A final reflection is to approach the problem from the complexity, understanding that it is necessary a clarity concerning the context and dynamics of the system, since this understanding is a key point to adapt the actions as the project develops. It is essential to always keep in mind that changes are unpredictable and are permanently present, and in order to face them, the capacity for resilience is necessary since it will allow for adaptation in an early stage that will mitigate any type of threat. This will allow the project to continue and

achieve the ultimate goal.

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