

Urban Acupuncture in Taipei

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Abstract

A number of conditions can be attributed to driving the recent revolutionary movement of urban acupuncture and locally-led interventions in cities around the world. Political, economic, and environmental uncertainty; the deindustrialization of cities that has led to an increase in vacant lots and buildings; and an increasingly mobile workforce all support the desire for more flexible and adaptable spaces and uses (Bishop and Williams, 2012). The inefficiency of institutional bureaucracy has also been identified as a contributing factor as to why citizens are taking local improvements into their own hands. These all lead to an increasing awareness that traditional planning processes are struggling in its capacity to be adaptable and resilient enough to respond to local needs.

The rising sense of responsibility among citizens who actively partake in responding to local situations, separate from traditional planning processes such as attending planning consultations or sitting on community boards and commissions, reflect the discrepancy between contemporary planning processes and its adequacy in engaging stakeholders and addressing local issues. Temporary interventions have emerged as a gateway for improvements to local neighbourhoods in a more timely, efficient, and less costly and risky manner. These informal initiatives are popularly known as “urban acupuncture”.

In the context of Taipei, urban acupuncture is a city leading in its local transformative capacity where people-centric planning is implemented on a governmental level. Urban acupuncture is put into practice by the Taipei City Government through an apparatus called

“Urban Regeneration Station (URS)” to promote local development through the strength of local communities. URS sites are shared by all citizens - even throughout the innovative progress is public participation the main priority. Creativity, art, culture and design are integrated into the practice of urban regeneration as a catalyst of urban redevelopment.

This thesis purports that urban acupuncture has a particularly important role in the future of cities and its communities because it challenges the assumption that cities can improve only through major spending and tortuous rounds of paperwork and approvals. It allows citizens and officials to test new ideas on a low-cost, low-risk model. If something works, great. If it doesn't, well, on to the next experimental idea. Drawing upon the metaphor of therapeutic acupuncture, examples will be explored to highlight ways in which punctual interventions can activate places, asserting the importance of urban acupuncture in facilitating more holistic understandings of urban health.

Foreword

This Major Research Paper is written as completion in fulfillment to the requirements of the Master of Environmental Studies, Planning stream, at York University. The paper is written and organized into sections that complement and is parallel to the components in my Plan of Study. The purpose of this research paper is to describe, analyze and map the tactics of urban acupuncture to offer insight to all, especially urban planners and municipal administrators who are addressing issues in the built environment as they relate to urban regeneration. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to travel to Taipei, Taiwan to conduct this research. I was honoured to receive the GESSA Award and the John Page Planning Scholarship of 2017; I would like to give thanks to York University, Toronto, for providing these scholarships to graduate students which have made my fieldwork endeavours possible to accomplish. Taipei is a leading city in the world that excels in its bottom-up planning approach for urban renewal strategies. Examples have been documented to depict the revitalization mechanisms Taipei use and to serve as an exemplary for all to consider. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Taipei's Urban Regeneration Office, my supervisor, Abidin Kusno, and my advisor, Liette Gilbert, in their guidance and making all this possible.

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1. Introduction

As the world continues to urbanize - according to United Nations projections (2014), 66% of all people will live in cities by 2050. Cities therefore will need to respond more rapidly and fluidly to evolving needs. Over the past decade, urban revitalization has transcended itself into an evolution of various trajectories that has aligned to what is now an international movement known as urban acupuncture. Urban acupuncture, is bringing about a profound shift in how cities and communities think about urban development and delivery through the incorporation of grassroots planning in the strategy of urban governance.

Since humans have lived together, they have been involved in city-making before any government sanction came into place. The first urban street in Khoirokoitia, on the island of Cyprus, built sometime around 7,000 BCE, connected residents and merchants at different elevations, through a series of steps and walkways (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). “Without any formal, overarching government structure, the residents of Khoirokoita were not only responsible for the creation and maintenance of the street. They understood its importance for the survival of the village” (Lydon and Garcia, 2015) and thereby exemplify the beginnings of citizen-led city building which ultimately gave rise to the formation of urban acupuncture.

Leaping forward thousands of years, the woonerf (Dutch for “living yard”), which came out of a local citizen’s action in the Dutch city of Delft to slow down vehicle traffic in a residential area. The residents tore up the street themselves in the middle of the night so cars would be forced to navigate more carefully in their neighbourhood (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). Their streets progressively became friendlier for bicycling, playing, and walking — not just a through-lane for cars. At first, the municipal government ignored the woonerf, but, seeing it

succeed and spread as a model, they decided to advocate for it. In 1976, the Dutch parliament passed regulations incorporating woonerf into the national streets code (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). Such citizen-led innovations demonstrate how small-scale changes have the potential to sprout up and spread - like the urban grid itself. Today, with the patterns of economic development and increase in population, large scale city planning becomes the norm. However, urban acupuncture offers planners and city-dwellers a new way of looking at urban transformation.

Urban acupuncture further metamorphosed out of citizens' frustration with the status quo and the glacial pace of bureaucracies. Frustrated by the slow and traditional civic change process, citizens across the world in North and South America, Europe, and Asia, are bypassing the bureaucratic apparatus entirely and spearheading local initiatives in quick, low-cost city improvements without government sanction (Lee and Milstead, 2017). Urban acupuncture as a movement eventually gained momentum and visibility in popular culture and planning discourse. It was named one of the top planning trends of 2011-12 (Nettler, 2012). These small-catalytic interventionist efforts can be regarded as part of a burgeoning global movement in relieving urban tension to strategically transform the cities' fabric. Often referring to a city, organizational, and/or citizen-led approach to neighbourhood building using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change, which often get neglected in favour of privately and capital-driven comprehensive master planning.

The Problems of Contemporary Planning and the Potential of Urban acupuncture

Aside from the slow and traditional civic change process of contemporary planning processes today, multiple factors also contribute to the appeal and rising prominence of urban acupuncture. The current cost of making fixed improvements in cities can be prohibitive due to the following:

- unforeseen costs and impact
- lack of allocation of resources in municipal budgets
- lack of political will
- completed projects may fail to properly address the concerns of local stakeholders
- strategic planning processes with long-term implementation horizons make it difficult to
 - respond to local social and economic changes
 - actively engage citizens in the process of planning

When barriers are seemingly high, urban acupuncture approaches can offer affordable, rapid-fire solutions and change the way people think about their streets and public spaces (Matchar, 2015). On the other hand, urban acupuncture can be defined by a number of characteristics including:

- a phased approach
- local ideas
- short-term commitment
- low cost and low risk (with potential for high reward)
- economically efficient and politically expedient
- development of social capital and collaborative partnerships

At its core, acts of urban acupuncture allow for creative, flexible experimentation with public space (Matchar, 2015). Whether sanctioned or unsanctioned, grassroots-driven or orchestrated by public agencies, urban acupuncture has become a widely adopted approach to bringing community health and engagement to the core of neighbourhood planning. While

long-term results can be very powerful, even temporary, playful tactics can have a permanent impact on people's perception of what their community can be (Matchar, 2015). The growing recognition of the value of citizen participation in official planning processes has provided an opportunity for urban planning to find more meaningful ways to empower citizens and work together to address larger planning issues. Instead of tolerating the incompetency of contemporary urban planning processes to stifle the aspirations of citizens, many are now seeking alternatives through urban acupuncture to explore ways in which they can capitalize on (re)development projects that directly impact their communities while collaboratively working with a variety of key players in the process of city-building.

Urban Acupuncture from East to West

In recent years, urban renewal has become a key process of transformation in most Asian cities suffering from post-industrial blight (Wang, 2013). In Taipei, Taiwan, urban acupuncture has become a foundational part of the urban renewal development policy for the city. For over a decade, the city government has been promoting pilot projects to improve the public environment (Wang, 2013) and not until recent years has urban acupuncture been introduced to guide this development. Though urban acupuncture has been implemented on a government level, its aspirations are completely devoted to citizen-led planning.

To bring it closer to home, both Taipei and Toronto are currently tackling urban issues alike including infrastructure deterioration, infrastructure deficits, and municipal governance gridlock (Golden, 2013); (Clark and Tan, 2011). In Toronto, one of the greatest challenges facing municipal governments today is the need to stimulate economic development and urban

renewal in the face of existing financial limitations (Mullin, 2011). Toronto municipalities are increasingly turning to innovative tools; however, these tools are designed to encourage the private sector to participate in economic development and renewal activities such as Community Improvement Plans (CIPs), Public-Private Partnerships (P3s), and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) (Mullin, 2011). Nevertheless, urban acupuncture has still managed to make its way to Toronto in other ways.

Toronto-based Urban Repair Squad (URS) – coincidentally the same acronym as Taipei’s urban renewal program – Urban Regeneration Stations (URS), maintains a website that gathers images of DIY urban repairs in the city’s public spaces. Images of bicycle symbols painted on streets were featured on the site, indicating the need for future extensions of the city’s bicycle network. Their mission statements very much echo the aspirations of urban acupuncture: “To actively construct a positive future of what urban transportation could be by installing it NOW”; “To encourage citizens to reclaim ownership and stewardship of their urban space”; “Your city is broken. Don’t wait for bureaucrats to fix it”; “DO IT YOURSELF” (Urban Repair Squad, 2017). However, in comparison to Toronto’s urban renewal tools, Taipei is at the forefront of local transformative capacity in terms of its community and grassroots driven kind of experiential planning and bottom-up community mobilization.

Taipei is a leading city in urban acupuncture, where the government acknowledges the inadequacy of its bureaucratic apparatus, hence its hopes are to encourage its citizens to dedicate their ideas to sites that are officially labeled for urban renewal. Urban acupuncture is an urban environmentalism theory that combines urban planning and design with the traditional theory of acupuncture – a fairly recent phenomenon and an under researched

concept. Urban acupuncture offers an interesting theoretical view into another dimension of our cities - how they are not merely conglomerations of buildings, spaces, streets, and people (Lerner, 2014), but “complex energy organisms” with overlapping flows of “qi”, energy that can be tapped, manipulated, or repaired (Casagrande, 2013). Punctual revitalization projects revitalize the bigger society by healing in parts, where the pattern of activity and movement of people in the city are regarded as “urban qi meridians”, energy that is vital to connecting the various nodes that have the aggregate capacity to revive cities as a whole (Casagrande, 2013). Releasing pressure at strategic points therefore release pressure for the whole city. The main goal is to maintain energy flows in the city so it can function in harmony.

Originally coined by Barcelonan architect and urbanist, Manuel de Sola Morales, the term ‘urban acupuncture’ has been recently championed and developed further by Finnish architect and social theorist Marco Casagrande, where this school of thought “eschews massive urban renewal projects in favour of a more localized and community approach that, in an era of constrained budgets and limited resources, could democratically and cheaply offer a respite to urban dwellers” (Casagrande, 2013). As previously discussed, urban acupuncture is more responsive and sensitive to immediate community needs than traditional institutional forms of large scale urban renewal mechanisms. It aims to not only responds to localized needs, but do so with an appreciation of how city-wide systems operate and converge at different nodes.

A city is then viewed as a multi-dimensional sensitive energy-organism. Urban acupuncture aims to touch the built and natural environment with sensitivity to understand the energy flows in and between the city and responding to the hotspots. To produce the acupuncture needles for the urban fabric, a weed will root into the smallest crack and

eventually revitalize the city (Casagrande, 2013). Urban acupuncture is the weed and the acupuncture point is the crack. Casagrande (2013) utilize the tenets of acupuncture: “treat the points of blockage and let relief ripple throughout the body”, viewing cities as complex energy organisms with various nodes or areas of neglect that can serve as vital routes with energy flows capable of contributing to the well-being of the city in its whole. Casagrande (2013) is developing methods of punctual manipulation of urban energy flows to create an ecologically sustainable urban development towards the so called Third Generation City, a term he has used for post-industrial city.

Taipei’s Urban Regeneration Organization (URO), under the entity of the Taipei City Government, launched its own urban acupuncture program in 2010 in the form of site projects called “Urban Regeneration Stations (URS)”. According to DeWolf (2015), this initiative’s roots go back to the “work of community activists who fought traditional redevelopment practices by espousing more grassroots, community-led change” especially after the success of Treasure Hill – a squatter settlement slated for clearance, located on a steep hillside overlooking the Taipei River, that was later converted into an artist village that is now home to local artists alike (DeWolf, 2015). The program is described as “an open-ended mission, an experiment” that owes much of its conceptual framework to Casagrande, who worked on Treasure Hill which later advocated for piecemeal urban interventions rather than grand redevelopment strategies (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017). "We call it urban acupuncture," says URO officer, Tzu-Yu Wu.

As evident from Casagrande’s successful urban acupuncture projects in Taipei, the theory is further being developed in the TamKang University of Taiwan and at an independent

multidisciplinary research center, Ruin Academy (Casagrande, 2013). With a focus on environmentalism, urban planning, and urban design, Casagrande (2013) defines urban acupuncture as a design tool where punctual manipulations contribute to creating sustainable urban development.

Research Purpose

Under the entity of the Taipei City Government, Taipei's Urban Regeneration Organization (URO)'s Urban Regeneration Station (URS) program takes pride in its mandate where consensus of urban environment reshaping decisions is made between local citizens and government (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017). Taipei's successful renewal program in meaningfully encouraging long-term stewardship at the local level has gained acknowledgement from the international planning community (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017). The purpose of this research paper is to describe, analyze and map the tactics of urban acupuncture for urban planners and urban designers who are addressing issues in the built environment as they relate to urban regeneration.

Drawing upon the metaphor of therapeutic acupuncture and using Taipei as a prototypical model for cities worldwide, this paper will explore the ways in which small scale (but scalable) creative, tactical, and selective interventions can unlock its potential as an economically efficient and politically expedient method of animating tangible urban change at the bricks and mortar street level (Lee and Milstead, 2017). Although Taipei has spearheaded urban acupuncture on a municipal level, its strong grassroots character has not been compromised. On the contrary, it has enhanced itself by strengthening the power of citizens

and stimulating their self-responsibility in urban renewal. But urban acupuncture as an urban planning and a sustainable community development tool has the potential to go beyond that. This paper aspires to spark advocacy and ultimately facilitate that kind of transformation.

The purpose of this paper is to inspire all, especially urban planners and municipal administrators by offering insight in incorporating low-cost, temporary pilot interventions into planning practice. Urban acupuncture can be utilized as a guiding tool to make local improvements. Examples in Taipei of how community residents/members, local bureaucrats, and experts in various fields have engaged in tactical and temporary projects will be explored to address the logistics and nuances of the potential strengths and weaknesses inherent in urban acupuncture.

How is Taipei addressing urban revitalization through creative and innovative tactics driven by urban acupuncture? Its ability to foster tangible urban change has met with success, yet the movement itself faces limitations. What have been its theoretical and practical limitations? How might this approach continue to evolve to effect inclusive, sustainable, and meaningful social and political change at the local level and be applied to different cities to inform its urban renewal discourse?

Only when we address the systemic opportunities and challenges can we unlock the full transformative potential of tactical and temporary urbanism to promote longer-lasting social and political change at the local level and beyond.

Methodology

As my take on urban acupuncture is in the context of post-industrial cities and areas of neglect, I explored the various possibilities of tension-relieving projects in Taipei, Taiwan. Taipei is one of the few metropolises where urban acupuncture is the basis and implemented at the forefront of its urban renewal initiatives. Taipei's Urban Regeneration Organization (URO), under the entity of the Taipei City Government, launched its own urban acupuncture programme in 2010 as a means of creating targeted actions that effect things catalytically, generate interest, surprise, and establish energy in places. The URO has encouraged ideas and designs to, on one hand, celebrate Taipei's history, and on the other, to reimagine the city's future. Taipei has been very receptive to acupuncture as a post-industrial city. I hope to inform the discourse of how urban acupuncture can awaken the dormant areas of Taipei and the challenges attached to it.

My methodology involves the analysis and evaluation of the tactics of urban acupuncture using urban renewal projects in Taipei as examples. Drawing upon the metaphor of therapeutic acupuncture, the ways in which tactical and selective interventions can activate areas of neglect in post-industrial Taipei is explored. I am particularly interested in finding who have and who have not benefited of such approach. Methods of data collection have been engaged through an extensive literature review and analysis of urban acupuncture projects in Taipei. This step developed the framework to frame debates of economic, political, institutional, and social forces shaping redevelopment. I traveled to Taipei to work in collaboration with URO. Throughout this journey, I gained a better understanding of the motivations of urban acupuncture and its various successes and limitations of URO's projects.

My investigation focused on the genealogy of the project, the problem it attempted to solve, the process it underwent and the overall results, with the goal of better identifying if and how urban acupuncture lives up to its principles.

My methodology was carried out in the form of Participatory Action Design Research, which consisted of 4 phases:

1) Diagnosis and problem formulation

Participative problem setting/problem formulation – I identified problem areas in collaboration with URO officer Tzu-Yu Wu and gathered a rich understanding of the selected node(s) and their historical roots. Ethnographic research methods was used to gain a sufficient understanding of the ecologies in a particular site as well as the underlying problems in the community. Interviews with URO officer Tzu-Yu-Wu reoccurred throughout my investigation pertaining to the different Urban Regeneration Stations (URS) that is designated under the URO. These findings are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3 of this paper.

2) Action planning

I travelled to Taipei, Taiwan to work in collaboration with URO. URO's own urban acupuncture program is delivered through site projects called "Urban Regeneration Stations (URS). I first got an overview of each of these URS's from Tzu-Yu Wu. Then I made way to visit each of them which included the following: URS44 Story House, URS21 Chung Shan Creative Hub, URS127 Design Gallery, URS27 Grand Green, URS89-6 Regeneration Plant, and URS13 Revived Vanguard. Unfortunately, Tzu-Yu Wu was not available to physically accompany me in these site

visits but we were in regular communication throughout my stay in Taipei, particularly before and after my site visits.

3) Action taking: site visits and investigation

Investigations of the six URS's listed above were carried out. The sites were analyzed according to the following questions: Who lives, works, and plays here? Who lived, worked and played there before? What is the historical background here? What problems is this area experiencing? Who have identified these problems? Who are the subjects of the problem? What are the support resources? What political, economic, institutional, and social forces affect the vitality of the built urban environment? What current factors are shaping efforts to revitalize this area? How are professionals in the field in responding to this insufficiency of institutionalized channels of urban revitalization? What are the major social and civic needs they are addressing? What tactics are they using? How has it been tried and tested? To what end and to what effect are their efforts making an impact? Where has it been un/successful? The questions were explored and answered with the assistance of information provided by Tzu-Yu Wu before and after my site visits, casual conversations with local community residents and pedestrians, and personal observations. All of these questions and sources have contributed to my preliminary framework of opportunity identification.

4) Impact evaluation, reflection, and learning

All the findings are synthesized in the form of a major paper accompanied with visual photographs.

2. Taipei's Built Environment

The democratization of Taiwan has paved way to how city builders reinterpreted their built environment, which ultimately gave rise to the movement of urban acupuncture. The combination of the chronological economic-political regimes that Taiwan endured, the lifting of the Martial law, the weakening of the central state, the rise of the middle class, and the rise of participatory planning and community mobilization, have all contributed to the ongoing change of democratization of Taiwan. These revolutions will be discussed further in detail below to better understand how urban acupuncture is made possible today.

Partisan Ideologies and Governance Gridlock

National identity is a key component of nation building and development. Taiwan has had several ruling regimes, and each as imposed a specific identity on local citizens. Identity politics, a constant in Taiwan's history and a major contemporary domestic political issue, has imprinted its mark on developmental policies, urban development, and urban space (Huang and Kwok, 2013). Taiwan's history has witnessed several drastic regime changes. Each change fundamentally altered state-society relationships, ideology, and cultural norms. Each regime brought a radically different set of governance, economic systems, and developmental goals.

Since the founding of Taiwan, the island has experienced five economic-political regimes: Dynastic Incorporation, Japanese colonization, Kuomintang rule, global competition, and Cross-Strait re-opening (Hwang and Kwok, 2013). Taipei's urban space has been the stage for these disputes and "as national identity questions are unlikely to be resolved in the near

future, while social compromise is difficult to reach, Taipei's landmarks and structures will continue to be targets for political image manipulation" (Hwang and Kwok, 2013, p. 154).

Taipei's share in the allocation of national resources has been steadily reduced because of party political differences between the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) and KMT (Kuomintang). When the mayor of Taipei was in an opposition party from the central government, the political balance in response to Taiwan's democratization has resulted in various administrative struggles rooted in the identity politics of the two major parties (Rigger, 2016). Accordingly, party politics causes resource squandering as well as administrative ineffectiveness. The political conflicts and discordance between Taipei City, the central government, and its neighbouring counties result in a policy gridlock (Rigger, 2016). Policy fragmentation and conflict worsen the decision-making mechanism between central and local government.

History of Urban Planning in Taipei

As history demonstrates, planning has always been a contested arena and full of political conflicts. It would be impossible to discuss Taipei's urban development without relation to the intervention of central state. For Taiwan, highly conflicted international politics, a rapidly changing economy, and a volatile domestic political culture have constantly interrupted the planning process. Cross-Strait interaction with China is one of the primary economic and political issues in Taiwan, with major impacts on Taipei (Huang and Kwok, 2011). Conventional top-down processes of planning no longer work, and various forms of 'grassroots participation'

or ‘collaborative’ models are continuously explored to meet the local needs (Hsiao and Kuan, 2016).

The lifting of Martial law in 1987 – prevention of the formation of political parties, the forced retirement of the “senior legislators” who gave the ruling Nationalist or Kuomintang (KMT) Party a guaranteed majority in 1991, and the first direct election of President in 1996 brought full democracy to the country (Clark and Tan, 2011, p. 78). Then, the election of Chen Shui-bian of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as President in 2000 showed that all was possible politically in the previously authoritarian Taiwan. Yet, democracy, as desirable as it was, did not solve all of Taiwan’s political problems. For example, the development of a fairly even balance of political power between the KMT and the DPP led to growing gridlock and partisan polarization and growing emphasis upon the highly divisive national identity issue (Clark and Tan, 2011).

Around the late 1980s, urban politics in Taipei underwent a major transformation, and the conventional way of planning was challenged. The first is the weakening power of the central state in the face of global economic change and the rise of the middle class (Huang, 2005). The second is the emergence of non-government organizations (NGOs) and the re-introduction of elections (Huang, 2005). The growing political force of the new middle class pushed the KMT government to lift the Martial Law, and abolish the prohibition of organizing opposition parties (Huang, 2005). The parliament began to practice general election. Therefore, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, Taiwan saw a break from the limited electoral democracy of previous decades. In 1994, the mayoral election of Taipei City was restored after nearly 30 years of suspension (Huang, 2005).

In 1996, a general election was called for the presidential election. Political competition was brought on by elections and new political parties – the emerging Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The KMT no longer held sole control over the government as well as civil society. These major social and political movements were not entirely instigated by the middle class but an alliance of various social groups (Huang, 2005). But such social mobilization was unprecedented in scale and variety. These movements finally pushed the national government to lift Martial Law in 1987, marking a revolutionary process of democratization in Taiwan (Huang, 2005).

Post-Martian Law and the Rise of the Middle Class and Participatory Planning

The middle-class culture usually expressed concern for the values of life and living environment and their high alert targeted urban planning. Citizens were active in self-organization and social mobilization. According to Huang (2005, p. 86), “[t]heir actions not only embarrassed the bureaucrats, but also exposed to the public the inefficacy, unresponsiveness, and favouritism of the government.” Indeed, urban mobilization shattered the stability of the KMT administration in Taipei, especially later on, when it had to compete with opposition parties in the election. From the mid-1990s onward, through the administrations and the leaders from the main opposition political party, the DDP, a new system of participatory planning gradually took shape (Huang, 2005). The relationship between the government, planners, and communities began to be restructured.

Participatory planning in Taipei was dedicated to mobilizing community power, creating a better public environment, and building new citizen identities “but over time it has gradually

turned into a formalized and routine practice, and lost its innovation and capacity as the critical force for transforming and improving society” (Huang, 2005, p.96). However, in recent years, the Taipei City Urban Regeneration Office (URO) attempted to disrupt the monotonous routines through integrative creativity and innovative methods within the process of city and district planning through the introduction of the guiding principle of URO’s soft urbanism method. This method is used to regenerate depressed neighbourhoods through the concept of urban acupuncture, in contrast to traditional renewal methods by rebuilding infrastructure. It complements the belief of urban acupuncture in which place-shaping and culture-led regeneration should be driven by truly creative rather than mechanical, formulaic processes. URO’s program also welcomes the opportunity from the public, especially younger generations to actively participate in the reconstruction of communities and neighbourhoods.

Post-Industrial Taipei

Since the late 1980s, there has been a growing awareness that Taipei needed to reconstruct its infrastructure and expand its economic base in line with that of Taiwan’s industrial restructuring – moving away from manufacturing, towards knowledge-intensive industries (Chou, 2005). Since the 1990s, the mounting pressure of post-industrial economic transformation and global competition has impelled the City government to devote much effort to infrastructure and economic restructuring (Chou, 2005). Vast land was designated for post-industrial activities to stimulate Taipei’s restructuring.

With several districts designated for specific development, intra-city competition led to the decline of the traditional districts. Globalization has produced an uneven development in

favour of eastern Taipei, and increasingly divided the city's development between the east and the west (Chou, 2005). Outdated buildings and infrastructure in the west were unsuitable for the new economic requirements of international business. Since the early 1990s, the prolonged recession in traditional districts has increasingly translated into a political discourse favouring regeneration of the western district (Jou, 1999). The urban regeneration discourse finally drove the City government to intervene in redevelopment of the west.

Urban Regeneration Organization (URO) of Taipei City and the URS Movement

The Taipei City Urban Regeneration Office (URO) officially launched its Urban Regeneration Stations (URS) program in 2010, curated by Chung-Chieh Lin, to promote the application of creative concepts for urban revitalization (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017). Urban acupuncture serves as a model of city governance. Such a method for reconciling urban systems and traffic flows are all features of an "Urban Regeneration Station". This method is not restricted by budgets, regulations, or technology (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017). Their mission is to reinvigorate communities and the surrounding environment.

URS is the underlying urban development framework to expand URO's regeneration vision. URS is homonymic to "Yours" referring to yours - the public, and free of predefined subject and structure. Some of the characteristics of URS include the following (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017):

- Mission oriented and people-centered regeneration strategy
- Conceptually understood as a peaceful urban platform, a network, or a movement
- Each URS space is named after its street number

- Each URS can be recognized as a work station, community space, information hub, lounge for coterie, exhibition hall, experience action, shelter for city flâneur - however one chooses to define it
- URSs anticipate a new network extension to a larger community through creative milieu
- Resources are implemented based on an unrestricted concept of soft urbanism
- All URS sites are expected to be shared by all citizens as they are meant to be open spaces for people to meet, share, and exchange ideas, information, and identities
- URSs are developed based on the outcome of public participation
- Creativity, art, culture, and design are integrated into the coalition practice and exercise of urban regeneration as a catalyst of urban redevelopment
- URS partners tap into their diverse resources to provide unlimited possibilities for the participation of Taipei's creative talent in urban development projects
- Historic "qi" remnants from the past are transformed into new visions for the people and by the people
- A shared hope for the future of the city, as well as an effort to shape an even better tomorrow

URS projects are never confined to a particular type of format, and the acquiring of space has never been limited to a particular means. Over the past three years, URS has manifested into various forms throughout the city. Inviting experts from various disciplines to participate in projects give form to the imaginations of a city involving many different perspectives, resulting in the creation of a diverse and dynamic cityscape. Due to its open and inclusive nature as well as its multiplicity in thinking, many disciplines have been expanded upon (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017).

Aside from enriching the cityscape and urban living, URS also encourages thoughts regarding urban values through various perspectives. Prompting various organizations in Taipei to conduct similar activities of spatial development, its influence is starting to spread throughout Taiwan. Here, participants from Taiwan and the international community are able to exchange ideas regarding urban transformation. Each independently-managed URS is the

product of collaboration between experts from various fields (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017).

URS serves as a movement to realize a new vision for the development of Taipei. It aims to achieve a common goal held by the city's residents, serving as a driving force for the achievement of a creative city. It has culminated a kind of creative atmosphere that serves as a conduit for communication with other cities across the world. Gradually, it is gaining momentum, signifying that a new paradigm for a revitalized Taipei has emerged (T-Y. Wu, personal communication, 2017).

URO began working with owners of historic properties. Some donated their buildings to the government in exchange for development rights elsewhere, while others leased their spaces out to URO (DeWolf, 2015). Groups interested in operating the stations were invited to submit applications (DeWolf, 2015). By obtaining the management rights for various sites and spaces through negotiations with government departments, the URS program has opened up a slew of possibilities that serve as testaments to the program's meticulous execution. By allocating appropriate resources into certain spatial nodes within the city, and using creative methods to revitalize old neighborhoods, the URS program and its vast impact can be felt even in neighbouring communities.

3. Urban Acupuncture in Taipei - Philosophy, Applications, and Aspirations

The upcoming examples have been organized into the following three themes to highlight the characteristics of a deliberate, phased approach in instigating change including:

An offering of local ideas for local planning challenges demonstrate what's possible through the execution of temporary projects that expose opportunities for other actors, while adapting ideas to its current context – integrating tactical projects and ideas from other cities. The following examples are referenced based on interviews with URO and personal experiences/observations.

1. URS44 Story House

Constructed during the Qing Dynasty and reconstructed in the 1920s under Japanese occupation, it has more than 80 years of history. Located in the Da Dao Cheng Region along Dihua Street, though now flourishing, it had once experienced an era of depression. The Da Dao Cheng region's early prosperity was mainly based on the shipping traffic along the Tamsui River. However, along with the build-up of river deposits and the advent of World War II, the government began establishing policies on industrialized development. Taipei rapidly expanded eastward. To link the Taipei region with other cities (such as San Chung, Hsin Chuang, and Banqiao), government funding and construction started to focus on various elevated highways that directly passed over Da Dao Cheng. This not only took away the traffic of people and cars from the area, but the towering riverside embankments also cut people off from a harmonious relationship with the river.

The streets surrounding Da Dao Cheng gradually expanded along with the growth of the economy, and Dihua Street soon became one of the few remaining small-scale streets. Since the narrow alleys were not fit for human and vehicle traffic, and that people were already dwindling out of the community, opportunities for businesses became obsolete. In the late

1980s, the Taipei City Government and the local people started to implement a plan to widen Dihua Street for the sake of urban development. However, the widening of centuries-old streets necessitated the demolition of historic houses, which would destroy the historically significant style of the street. This sparked a response from the media and various groups.

Before becoming the Story House, No. 44 Dihua Street was mainly being used for the wholesale of clothing from north and south Taipei. Ownership of the store changed several times. After the store endured repairs after repairs and transferred its development rights, it was finally donated to the Taipei City Government and designated as the “Story House of Da Dao Cheng”.

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The URS44 Story House is located across from Yong Le Market, the lively heart of Dihua Street, and sits adjacent to the triangular area of prime real estate. Looking out the second-floor window, one can feel the livelihood and local culture surrounding Dihua Street. The bustling crowds in Yong Le Plaza, the hawking of street vendors, the throngs of people visiting City God Temple, the gongs and drums being struck during temple fairs, and the disorderly parking conditions are all part of life on Dihua Street. All of these are reminders of the already existing value of URS44 and the potential it can bring to enhance the livelihood of the neighbourhood if the building and Dihua Street were to be preserved.

As the first case ever in Taiwan that focused on the preservation of an old street, the Dihua Street preservation movement received a wealth of public participation. The institutional innovation (the transfer of development rights) led to a new chapter in the preservation of

cultural assets. This later resulted in the preservation of old streets at the Three Gorges, Daxi, and other areas. Beginning in 2008, the Institute of Historical Resources Management applied for a station at URS44 to continue their care for cultural assets and their part in the Da Dao Cheng story.



Figure 1 – Image of URS44 Story House; Image by URO

2. URS21 - Chung Shan Creative Hub

During the Japanese colonial era, the location was home to a labeling factory for tobacco and alcohol products. After World War II, when the Nationalist Government came into power in Taiwan, the labeling factory was used by the Taiwan Tobacco and Wine Monopoly Bureau for dormitories. In 1999, the tobacco and alcohol monopoly became privatized. The land and buildings under the bureau's jurisdiction were handed over to the National Property Administration, bringing an end to the bureau's prominence in Taiwan.

Under the URS program, URO reopened the site. Certain exterior and interior features of the structure were maintained, revealing traces of the site's past. The old dormitories were torn down and the original distribution center was renovated. Private art and culture groups were invited to make use of the space as part of an effort to revitalize the surrounding neighbourhood.

The Department of Architecture of Tamkang University, organized a creative workshop for students and professors to brainstorm ideas for utilizing the space. During this time, students worked into the night to finalize their designs. The efforts of the students convinced even the neighbourhood chief, who originally wanted to rebuild the site, to accept the idea of transforming URS21 into a creative hub and incubation center. The adjacent vacant land is also beautified, connecting the site to the community park, ultimately creating a 3,931 square-meter urban green space.



Figure 2 – Image of URS21 Chung Shan Creative Hub; Image by URO

The site was under URO’s management only for a short period of time. After an open selection process, the JUT Foundation for Arts & Architecture (JFAA) was chosen as the new management team for the site. Based on experiences gained from the Urban Core project from URS89-6 - Regeneration Plant, JFAA began hosting seminars, exhibitions, and concerts at the once abandoned distribution center. Experts were involved in various art scenes to take part in the many events that were organized, while reacquainting the old and inspiring the new to local residents with their neighbourhood.

All projects are organized with architecture and city planning in mind. Artists hailing from a variety of disciplines have been invited to create all kinds of artworks. With an infusion of art and culture into the location, from the once abandoned space to the old buildings to the rougher parts of the neighbourhood, URS21 Chung Shan Creative Hub was born. It elicited memories of the place and prompted new imaginations in what the former of this structure is now capable of.

Urban acupuncture and the awakening of the urban Implementing design, architecture, and creativity define the goals of URS21. Through an injection of creative energy, isolated corners of the neighbourhood that were once ignored are reconnected with the city, as space and community boundaries are redefined.

The first and second floors of URS21 consist of an exhibition hall and an auditorium, where international events are regularly held to connect Taipei with its international friends. A restaurant is available for citizens to take breaks and interact. Aside from strengthening the ties between a city's communities, it also aims to provide young artists with a place to practice their work. The third floor is the creative incubation center, providing residencies for thirteen creative teams of different disciplines, including jewelry designers, architects, fashion designers, and graphic designers. Some of the professional teams in residence are even winners and recipients of international awards in the design industry. The outdoor green space not only provides a recreational space for citizens, events and activities are also regularly held on holidays. This site has gradually become a creative cluster of all sorts.



Figure 3 – Image of events and gatherings being held at URS21; Image by URO



Figure 4 - Image of events and gatherings being held at URS21; Image by URO

As URS21 hold exhibitions and cultural events of all kinds and sizes, a resident once spoke about how she had been worried about raising a child in a gloomy neighborhood with a dilapidated factory before the opening of URS21. However, after the revitalization of the area, many art and cultural resources have poured into the region, creating a positive influence on her child.



Figure 5 – Image of children activities held at URS21; Image by URO

The hopes surrounding URS21 Chung Shan Creative Hub are implanted like seeds, with the anticipation of them to sprout at different locations at different times, creating hopes and visions for an effervescent life for the people of Chung Shan, Taipei, and beyond.

By using existing resources to leverage current policies and publicly owned resources to support and advance new ideas, realistic expectations are sculpted along with the anticipation of short-term commitment, low-risks, and possibly a rewarding outcome.

3. URS127 Design Gallery

Its history can be traced back to the late 1980s when Dihua Street was in the midst of conflict between the forces of development and historic district preservation. A group of people who saw the importance of its historical significance fought hard for its preservation efforts. Only through their actions was URS127 able to remain today as a Western-style building with a red brick facade.



Figure 6 - Image of exterior of URS127 Design Gallery; Image by author

Originally a mixed-use historical building on Dihua Street, the owner donated the building to the city government upon renovation. This is the very first URS in Taipei, and is named Design Gallery. In 2010, URS127 Design Gallery re-opened its doors to the public after renovation, becoming the first URS base to be activated.

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URS127 Design Gallery is located in the culturally rich area of Dihua Street. As a design gallery, it provides young artists and designers a cradle for nurturing and executing their creative endeavours.



Figure 7 - Imagine of interior of URS127; Image by author

Through diverse exhibitions of design, architecture, and art, URS127 attempts to trigger interdisciplinary integration in this site once known for traditional retail and wholesale commercial activities. The first floor is open as the community corridor, providing a free space for creative curators; the second floor is an incubation center for young creative talents from different disciplines, including architecture, environmental planning, and art; the third floor is a small theater for rehearsal and performance. By bringing different disciplines together and have them share the same site, a vibrant creative energy is activated.

4. URS27 Grand Green

URS27 Grand Green once served as the largest rail freight transport hub for Taipei and undoubtedly played a vital role in the development of Taipei. As early as the Japanese colonial era, what is now URS27 Grand Green, Hua Shan Sport Park, and Huashan1914 Creative Park were all established in honour of the first Taiwan Governor-General, Kabayama Sukenori. People never cease to be in awe by the lush greenery and clear skies that this site has to offer to Taipei.



Figure 8 - Image of outdoor space of URS27 Grand Green; Image by author

Given the large volume of passenger and cargo transportation entering the capital at the time, Taipei Main Station's capacity was severely strained. In response to this, Huashan Station was established as a railway hub to handle the cargo coordination of the city. In the 1980s, Taipei's railways were shifted underground. With this change, Nangang Station began to take over the role of Huashan Station. As Huashan Station began to lose its relevance and usage, its surrounding areas also became vacated.

URO tried to obtain the managing rights to Huashan district since the initiation of the URS program in 2009. In the summer of 2010, the Grand Green was introduced to the public and presented as an open space for cultural events and performances. As the location became a cultural venue, its surrounding communities began to reevaluate the relationship they have with their bionetwork.

In the summer of 2010, the long abandoned Huashan station was reopened to the public as URS27 Grand Green with "Happy Platform & Creative Reclaimed Land". The once abandoned platforms of Huashan Station were transformed to convene people of all communities to the surrounding greenery. Exhibitions in this space invited various artists and nearby schools and communities to take part in dance competitions, performances, and concerts.



Figure 9 - Image of dance performances/competitions held at URS27; Image by URO

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The core value of these events lies in its goal of reintroducing people to their surroundings. Respect, preservation, and transformation of local stories and sentiments became the focus for curating this exhibition. URO recognizes that Taipei does not need to undergo large-scale urban reconstruction, nor does it need to be completely renewed for the site of URS27 Grand Green to be appreciated under a new light. The impracticalities of old structures were simply mitigated in practical and inexpensive ways to improve the functional features that allure old and new communities alike.

Tactical projects are championed when social capital between citizens, and the building of organizational capacity between public/private institutions, non-profit/ NGOs, and their

constituents is developed (Pfeifer, 2013, p.4); ultimately yearning to respond to and learn from citizen-led tactical projects and getting internal buy-in by working with municipal departments.

5. URS89-6 - Regeneration Plant

Turning into a small alley tucked between Chunghua Road and Yanping Road, Section 1, No. 89-6, one finds a group of buildings that evoke the atmosphere of Hong Kong's Kowloon Walled City from the '50s and '60s.

Surrounding this Kowloon Walled City-like structure is an already present hustling and bustling daily life in the square block - the Environmental Protection Administration, Ministry of National Defense, Soochow University's downtown section, and Chinese Culture University's School of Continuing Education. The first floor of the square block consists of restaurants, while the second floors are comprised of small rooms for rent. However, people gradually moved away and left this site as an empty space when this "Pending Redevelopment Area" was designated as a condemned building with an unsound structure, insufficient fire safety measures, and a risk to public safety.

The "UrbanCore Art District" plan attempts to fill the entire neighbourhood with multidisciplinary art. Before the anticipated renovation of the block during the transitional period from 2010 to 2012, JUT Foundation for Arts & Architecture (JFAA) first established an artist's studio in a building near Chung-hwa Road. Later, several art organizations, such as We're Open, Taipei Contemporary Art Center, and Riverbed Theatre, stationed there successively. UrbanCore continues to become a hotspot for all kinds of organizations because of its capacity for freedom. Artists are free to experiment with the art space however they want as

long as they do not cause damage to the structure of the building. As a result, the space progressively became an experimental gathering spot for contemporary art and art groups.

URO Taipei City is now collaborating with JFAA as part of the open space planning for UrbanCore. The third to fifth floors will serve as an interdisciplinary exchange center stationed by National Chiao Tung University's Graduate Institute of Architecture. Amongst the fields of art and design, it takes the role of an architectural practice. Gathering results from data collection, analysis, collation, research, and events, it provides professional services for the architectural history and textures of urban communities, enabling UrbanCore to sculpt an even more comprehensive record of research that impacts urban renewal strategies. An active platform is produced as the combination of old and new elements converge.

Additional construction on top floors and back alley extensions are two very common violations found in Taiwanese construction. This is a popular topic of debate as this collective dwelling experience reflect the design possibilities and constraints of a unique architectural phenomenon of Taipei revolving around residential well-being.

In March 2011, JFAA co-sponsored the Illegal Architecture exhibition along with URO Taipei City. The exhibition invited architects to create works of "Illegal Architecture" using the rooftops, alleys, and other spaces of the neighborhood, complemented with the architects' works and documents over the decade, thereby initiating a dialogue surrounding this unique architectural phenomenon.



Figure 10 – Image of "Illegal Architecture" along Chang-hwa Rd., Taipei; Image by URO



Figure 11 – Image of "Illegal Architecture" along Chang-hwa Rd., Taipei; Image by URO

The exhibition – Illegal Architecture – describes the expansion of illegal architecture in Taiwan through a variety of sprawling apartments and illegal structures built on rooftops, while highlighting these violations as a form of cultural character. “Illegal” implies that they are not recognized by the mainstream system, and have been simply dismissed as objects in violation of building codes. However, for who do building codes actually exist or service? Such illegal architecture poses a reevaluation of the use of space by its citizens as people transform their living spaces to enable their homes to develop and grow alongside to the most suitable

circumstances for their daily life. However, rigid laws and regulations make such changes difficult, exposing a long-term sustainability problem of Taiwan in which current urban spaces are struggling to reflect and keep up with contemporary needs.

In the UrbanCore Art District plan, URS89-6 utilized a variety of methods and techniques to open a friendly platform for dialogue exchange with local residents, as well as transform specialized academic knowledge into a series of events, lectures, seminars, and exhibitions. Different experiences were intertwined and presented to imagine opportunities for its peoples.

6. URS13 - Revived Vanguard

The region of Nangang holds a rich history of industrial development for Taipei, tracing back from the beginning of the Japanese colonial period. After the Nationalist government took over, Nangang became home to a large number of industrial plants. The predecessor to URS13, Nangang Bottle Cap Factory, was established in 1941 by the Japanese. In 1958, it was renamed the Tobacco and Wine Monopoly Bureau Bottle Factory.

For this curatorial project to better reflect the cultural context behind this area, and to create a blueprint for the future of Nangang, the initial concept for URS13 was to be based on the various possibilities imagined in professional planning, consultations, and student perspectives through a collaborative exchange amongst 16 schools and urban design experts.

On another end, the project, Play Ground, organized by Artfield had the renowned curator of Echigo Tsumari Triennial Art Festival, Fram Kitagawa, as one of its consultants. By integrating works of art from the community, artists were able to conduct an even more in-depth method of participation for their works. As a result, community residents were able to

rediscover certain cultural characteristics and urban spaces reminiscent and unique to Nangang, thereby opening a range of possibilities for the future of URS13.



Figure 12 - Image of PlayGround Exhibition of URS13; Image by author

In 2011, URS13's first large-scale exhibition, Play Ground, attempts to introduce art forms that feature thoughts on the environment of Taipei. The concept that the curator, Hui-chen Wu, conveys is: "An exploration of human history and culture is conducted, not through a standard national- or city-level method of observing abandoned spaces, but an ecology-based perspective of daily life. In this manner, a local identity and pride is re-constructed. Through sensual methods, the region's underlying environmental and social issues are resolved as a way to clarify the city's own identity and lay a foundation of progress for the next generation." This type of public art which focuses on interaction and locality puts less emphasis on the aesthetic

presence of artists, and more on the creation of thought-provoking mechanisms and platforms, allowing both local residents and tourists to gain an even greater level of understanding and connection with Nangang culture throughout the process.

During the planning stage, the organizers held endless discussions with local residents, incorporated a foundation of fieldwork, and searched for the relevance between artworks and the locale to develop various forms of planning that would awaken a local consciousness, and enable the factory to no longer exist as just a desolate and dilapidated piece of industrial waste, but as an encapsulation of past and present memories. Interaction becomes a product of public art, and becomes part of a process to initiate a dialogue with the area. The imaginations and dialogues surrounding the factory shape a cultural and creative activity that serves as a positive public implementation of a curatorial practice.



Figure 13 - Image of PlayGround Exhibition of URS13; Image by URO

After city rezoning, demolition and reconstruction, preservation issues may arise for the industrial community. However, local ideas are integrated in hopes that the value inherent in preserving industrial sites will be considered. Hence, a variety of activities intend to lead the audience towards an attempt to gain an understanding of the value of this area. The implementation of public art exposes various possibilities for development. A playful and interactive method of art enables more people to develop a better relationship with URS13. Play Ground not only liberates the history of a place, but also the local culture and lifestyle of a community from a wide creative spectrum. Perhaps, it provides a new way to liberate the possibilities of what this site could become in realization of its urban revitalization potential.

The project, Play Ground, for URS13 has become a large-scale, comprehensive, and creative urban activity. As long as URS13 remains standing, it continues to offer culture, art, creativity, music, and other events. Furthermore, it has since become an important film venue in Taipei; continuing to generate positive memoirs and attachments. Through a blend of cultural symbols into the space, people gain awareness in the role that post-industrial spaces can play in cultural and creative fields and ultimately activating dormant sites.

Under the joint planning of these various activities, multi-faceted methods have established a platform for discussion regarding the present and future of Nangang. The Nangang industrial zone and its community residents are also helping to define their positions while establishing subjectivity in the relationship between themselves and the city, as well as their future role in Taipei. Though a clear consensus has not yet been formed, approaches are taken into action to mediate between various cultural roots of the locale, popular frameworks, and aspirations of internationalization of the city. Promoting policies as well as a mutual

understanding between the executors and the locale has formed the basis of empathy between its stakeholders and for the site.

The occurrence and concentration of creative industries drive the formation of a modern city and its culture. When the industrial declines and gets abandoned, the city will begin to look for other economic models such as the creative class. Grasping the relationship between the creation of new urban scenes and the preservation of historical roots has become part of an important balancing act that all contemporary cities must face.

Critique of Sustainability of URS

Urban acupuncture is most effective when used in conjunction with long-term planning efforts that marry the urgency of now with the wisdom of patient capital. The examples illustrated qualities including gateways of local ideas and local planning challenges, capitalization of existing resources and policies, and facilitation of social capital and unified momentum.

However, it still needs to address the below issues:

While local ideas, processes, and planning challenges open up a variety of possibilities, measuring the impact through comprehensive, data-driven, and evaluative studies is essential to evaluate and provide critical insights into how people respond to such interventions. In today's data-rich society, anecdotal evidence is insufficient to measure the impacts of urban acupuncture projects (Lee and Milstead, 2017). Who benefits and who doesn't? What's the impact on the local real estate market, traffic circulation patterns, or nearby commercial activity? What's the social and economic cost to scale the project? The answers to these kinds of questions were absent from the examples. Practitioners can deploy quantitative and

qualitative measurement tools—such as pedestrian counts, participant observations, survey intercepts, geotag metadata from social media, and mobile crowdsourcing—to address projects’ efficacy and salience (Lee and Milstead, 2017).

Tactical urbanists frequently cite their frustration with the “intransigent bureaucratic systems of city governments and valorize their own nimble methods as a means of achieving real change by sidestepping government altogether” (Lee and Milstead, 2017). This is the case for cities worldwide except for Taipei, where failing resources and policies are currently being addressed by the government. Hence, tactical and temporary planning practice demonstrates great potential for other cities, where urban acupuncture serves as a domain of resistance against the conventions of the city and the state. However, as urban acupuncture is implemented on a municipal level, the lines of resistance are blurred as it becomes increasingly accepted and promoted by the city government. One needs to be wary of the degrees and the nuances on which it is institutionalized without corrupting the pureness of its grassroots nature that urban acupuncture so strongly celebrates. Though it is operating on a municipal level, its mandate, strategies, and outcomes still prove to be stronger than ever in its emphasis on citizen-led planning.

Navigating the policy process can be complex and demanding. Where public policies are failing or inadequate in their communities, practitioners need to confront urban problems at their source, and when necessary, strategize about the types of interventions that can spur policy movement and mobilize like-minded people to effect change on a bigger scale (Lee and Milstead, 2017). Policy follow-through such as this is how practitioners can realize the true potential for long-term impact. Perhaps government implementation is not necessarily an

unfortunate outcome for urban acupuncture, rather we can capitalize on government acknowledgement to drive this forward in a way that continues the spirit of its grassroots planning. As URO demonstrates, the government acknowledges the value of participatory planning and has designated that as the underlying mandate for all of the site projects, where its urban renewal apparatus is carried out by its peoples for its peoples.

When such experiments are done inexpensively, and with flexibility, adjustments may be made before moving forward with large capital expenditures. Indeed, there is real merit in a municipality or developer spending \$20,000 on a temporary project before investing \$2,000,000 in changes that are permanent. If the project doesn't work as planned, the entire budget is not exhausted and future designs may be calibrated to absorb the lessons learned from what is surely a particular and dynamic context. If done well, such small-scale changes may be conceived as the first step in realizing lasting change.

Facilitation of social capital and unified momentum:

When social capital between different groups achieves a unified momentum, it ensures equitable participation. As each URS include and engage with neighborhood residents throughout the brainstorming and implementation process, both new and old players have a better understanding of neighborhood dynamics and needs, as well as strengths and weaknesses, and are therefore well-positioned to help set priorities and determine the best methods for working towards a common goal. It may also be very likely to activate those plans already sitting on the shelf, help recover the momentum gained during the actual planning process, and move some of the most realistic or exciting ideas closer to fruition.

Included in the examples, urban acupuncture better facilitates trust amongst disparate interest groups and community leaders. Indeed, if the public is able to physically participate in the improvement of the city, no matter how small the effort, there is an increased likelihood of gaining approving public support for more permanent change later. Involving the public in the physical testing of ideas may also yield unique insights into the expectations of future users and the types of design features for which they yearn; truly participatory planning must go beyond. “The process of community buy-in also reveals that the built environment is not so much an urban laboratory ripe for experiment, but an interconnected ecosystem in which the smallest of interventions can have ripple effects on economic, social, and cultural conditions” (Lee and Milstead, 2017).

4. Conclusion

Urban acupuncture in Taipei demonstrates the build-measure-learn cycle of urban acupuncture, where the possibility of failure is accepted and highly tolerated while continually adapting and refining. No matter the nature, scale, and degree of government implication in the projects, the most important consideration is how it will affect the community. This is something that is often absent in the conversation about urban revitalization: who is doing the revitalizing, for whom, and to what ends?

As Taipei demonstrate the potential of urban acupuncture in allowing its citizens to take leadership in the facilitation of bottom-up planning, urban acupuncture proves that its needles *can* work in the capacity of short-term action materializing into long-term change, and eventually as a new celebrated planning practice free of formal conventions that come with

institutionalized bureaucracy. This practice derives rigour from harnessing residents' skills, energy, and imaginative foresight to balance comprehensive, long-term planning with the kind of quick-win, prototyping work that can get folks excited about improving the places they live, as evident in the URS examples.

It is understood that urban acupuncture is not a catch-all solution for all problems. However, the URS projects are put into practice to build community sustainability and to empower neighbourhoods and people-friendly improvements. Community building can lead to new coalitions that yield tangible improvements in quality of life and replicable models that spread (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). This is where the methodology for bottom-up empowerment becomes valid.

A city would constantly search possibilities for innovative governance based on geographical and cultural characteristics. A network of district coalitions which provide support and technical assistance to city officials, volunteer-based neighbourhood associations, community groups, and individual citizen-activists needs to first be in place to ignite the momentum and serve as the foundation in which these initiatives can grow. Much of the success of urban acupuncture in Taipei therefore relies on the social organization of the neighbourhood as a unit of urban community. Truly, anyone can do urban acupuncture but it may be in this type of supportive partnership that the strengths of both urban acupuncture and bureaucrat-led planning can be leveraged to build communities that are both functional and personable.

The value of developing allies within and outside of city staff is underappreciated. By getting these coalitions on board early in the process by documenting successes, including

community buy-in, and as city officials perceive value in this, they're that much more likely to advocate and fight for the big policy changes that can facilitate what you are trying to champion. Either formal or informal partnerships between citizen groups and city government need to be engaged to create the possibility of a new planning practice. Maintaining a balance between multiple groups with competing visions, including the visions and plans laid out by the city government, while negotiating the space for urban acupuncture without undermining each other's efforts will continue to be a challenge (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). However, when these groups collide together, it fuels a medium that serves as a conduit for influential ideas and concepts for change. Land is not merely a plot to be developed, but a place where people's imagination about life and their environment embarks. Its influence can be channeled from individuals to a community, from a home to a city.

For citizens, "it allows the immediate reclamation, redesign, or reprogramming of public space. For developers or entrepreneurs, it provides a means of collecting design intelligence from the market they intend to serve. For advocacy organizations, it's a way to show what is possible to garner public and political support. And for government, it's a way to put best practices into, well, practice - and quickly!" (Lydon and Garcia, 2015).

As demonstrated in the examples, the premise of urban acupuncture and the URSs are socialized and promoted as a local approach associated with identity constructs as seen in the ways in which each URS attempt to reconnect citizens with new and old remnants that each site carried. By acknowledging each of the site's humble beginnings, it enables citizens to appreciate the space under a new light by realizing the potential they themselves have in the retransformation of the URS, while complimenting the cultural characteristics of Taipei's

architecture. Nevertheless, URO recognizes the importance of creative economies and milieu to compete as an international city.

With regards on the competition between international cities, the construction of major landmarks and the creation of favorable investment environments for entrepreneurs have reduced in its significance. Instead, the focus should be placed on formulating policies and programs that attract human capital – a way of creating a comfortable and rich quality to the area, as well as in establishing comprehensive facilities and amenities for daily life and forming milieu that attract various creative people (Florida, 2005). At least on this capacity, URO recognizes the URS program as a “global” approach, where the direction of cities and urban regeneration has shifted to seek a new method of development, promoting the establishment of creative cities, and deploy innovative governance while adhering to a foundation of sustainable development. Currently, the theory of urban acupuncture is being further developed in the TamKang University of Taiwan and at an independent multidisciplinary research center, Ruin Academy, established by Casagrande (Casagrande, 2013).

Despite the celebratory intentions of URO, the “needles” of urban acupuncture may render ineffective the more it becomes implemented on an institutional level. As soon as urban acupuncture becomes institutionalized, it no longer defines as a community movement or a domain of resistance from the larger society, but rather, it becomes a strategy or a new way of treating the city in a bureaucratic manner from the state. As urban acupuncture become recognized in a more reputable and promising regard where it is managed by its citizens for the citizens, people will continue to find innovative ways to mobilize and to shape the places they

care about. These experiences are valuable and are translated in hopes of using them as the foundation in opening up an exchange and dialogue with cities across the world, as well as promote a creative environment that is even more representative of the life of its inhabitants.

Limitations and Future Research

There is an inherent tension built into urban acupuncture by virtue that all human interventions in the built environment take place within an established social and economic power structure. Indeed, one of the potential strengths of the approach is that, at least in theory, it recognizes this fact (Lee and Milstead, 2017). However, as ubiquitous this movement becomes, it raises questions about who these improvements are for and what kind of cities they will nurture over time. A lot of the approaches inherently sometimes assume a privilege in using public space and existing in public space, with bigger implications on age and class limitations.

The Millennial Generation

The rise of urban acupuncture is due to a convergence of several factors. Over the years, more and more young people - have moved to cities (Matchar, 2015). The 'Millennial' generation has a heightened interest in cities, and the ease of sharing new ideas and resources via the Internet and social media applications has increased the visibility of projects and raised awareness among citizens that they can actively impact their communities (Lydon, 2012). Young urbanites want real "city living," with walkability and vibrant street life. At the same time, economic downturns have meant cities have had even less financial resources for civic improvements (Matchar, 2015). Frustrated, citizens began to take matters into their own hands and this kind

of consumer-driven innovation resonates particularly with Millennials (Matchar, 2015). But as millennials start to raise families, and as the elderly population grows, there's a pressing need for urban spaces that welcome all ages and abilities (Hurley, 2016). As the creative class increasingly resonates with the millennials, one needs to acknowledge how the discourse of urban acupuncture simultaneously caters to the creative class yet excludes others.

The affluent and the educated

Gordon Douglas, a University of Chicago academic who studies cities, surveyed DIY urban improvers and found that most were relatively affluent and highly educated – often planners or designers by training – and active in their own prosperous or gentrifying neighbourhoods (Hurley, 2016). By contrast, getting people from underprivileged communities to be active participants is a challenge. In such efforts, it poses even more difficulty for people working long hours with limited childcare options, they simply can't find the time (Hurley, 2016). This exposes the issue of the kind of demographics that these projects tend to cater towards, as well as how to better tackle those barriers in order to facilitate a more inclusive atmosphere regardless of one's social class. In the context of Taipei, the idea of urban acupuncture coming into form was only made possible after the formation and rise of the middle class. The inclusionary and exclusionary nuances embedded in urban acupuncture demonstrate the flaws that needs to be addressed in order to better this discourse.

While appearing to be ad hoc and informal on the surface, the urban acupuncture approach intentionally and strategically positions demonstration projects so that - if they show promise - people can implement them on a more formal, established level. Systemic rigidities -

whether sociocultural, economic, or political - are therefore as much a reality as physical or geographic challenges. The full transformative potential of urban acupuncture can be realized only when and if we address these systemic challenges head-on.

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