

# **URBAN ACUPUNCTURE: A TOOL FOR URBAN VOIDS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Urban acupuncture is a method of architectural design for urban renewal. It entails reviving an urban area with the intention of transforming and enhancing it as well as its surroundings.

It is built around two basic concepts. The first is that transformative effects can be achieved with small-scale, low-cost initiatives in public areas. The second is that enhancing an urban place contributes to enhancing any links that converge there, such as roadways, parks, or squares.

Cities are expanding, and the need to build massive infrastructures leaves empty spaces in some key locations that could be very active for the residents, areas that are not exploited because they are unfit for it. New approaches to urban planning are required to address this issue, and a lack of resources is no longer an acceptable justification for delay.

The goal of urban acupuncture is to intervene in those urban locations that have been left unused and abandoned. In order to make the city more compact, it ultimately aims to repurpose and restore these urban spaces into their setting. To shorten the distances between work and play, one strategy is to use public space as a gathering place.

## PEOPLE AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH URBAN AREAS

At the present time there is at least 50 to 60 percent of the population who are currently in the urban areas and it is estimated that the rate of the people who will be living in the urban areas will increase in the next 10 to 20 years as there is a rapid growth in the population. As the population in the urban areas will be growing there are going to be many challenges major one being the quality of life in these areas. For a space to be welcoming to people it has to be liveable and planned in such a way that it becomes a good place to live in. To make such spaces liveable there has to be several minor public interventions making a place more interactive in nature.

With increasing urbanisation in the cities of India and majority of priority given to the problems such as economy per say there has been a little or no attention paid in addressing the issue of quality of life in these cities. Growth is only weighed on the scales of infrastructure and economy and not on the scales of the quality of life and social culture of life. But as the cities are growing there is little to no scope left to have bigger areas for creation of public spaces or interactive spaces. At this hour it is needed from the urban planners to be more creative with the ideas to create such spaces for the people. Innovation is the only key to seek for the success of this idea of intervening public interactive spaces in this urban jungle of today's era.

In Indore (as per Madhya Pradesh planning commission) level of urbanisation is 70.2%. Indore in today's scenario is one of the fastest developing cities in India. But are we in the state to say if the quality of life in Indore is as good as it should be. We cannot really answer. There are several cities such as Singapore Amsterdam Vienna etc who enjoy the high quality of life with 0.37 m<sup>2</sup> of per capita open space. In India as per guidelines of UDPI it should be 8 m<sup>2</sup> and we can see that very evidently that we are very far away from our own standards of providing a good quality of life.

There have to be major innovative steps taken to intervene public spaces in these quenched cities of rapid urbanisations.

## URBAN VOIDS

Urban Voids are areas that rip a city's urban fabric. In the view of the public, these are areas that are frequently disregarded or neglected. They frequently occur from design that is not in keeping with the environment. They come about as a result of planning sites being treated apart from the urban environment and from poor design. Urban voids are unattractive urban regions that require redevelopment and don't add anything helpful to the environment. They lack definable bounds, are ill-defined, and are unable to integrate the many components coherently.

"The usual process of urban development treats building as isolated objects and sites in the landscape, not as part of the larger fabric of streets, squares and viable open spaces. Decisions about growth patterns are made from two dimensional land use plans, without considering the three dimensional relationship between buildings and spaces and without a real understanding of human behaviour." (Trancik, R. (1986) Finding Lost Space; Theories of Urban Design. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York.)

Plans created using two-dimensional plans do not take into account public areas or everyday life and do not address the real users of the space. This is the cause of the disregard for these areas. Urban space users and designers often have different perspectives on how cities should be used and perceived. By including users in the planning process, voids can be transformed into better urban public spaces, enhancing quality of life overall.

In our cities we can often see around spaces which are left unused neglected and dead for some or the other reason. These spaces can either be seen between two buildings or street corners or other left unplanned spaces which are currently not being used as their full potential.

With each day passing by every piece of land is becoming of more and more value in terms of cost and wasting such important lands can be a disgrace to the urban planning of the cities. Urban voids are in turn the result of poor planning coordination and management of the urban planners and designers.

In his 2017 article Urban Void as a Possibility of the Modern City Development, Agata Pluta expressed the opinion that the idea of urban voids has a complex history and that people's understanding of it changes through time. Trancik's idea was amended by me by arguing that not all vacant land is left unoccupied. Public spaces and roadways are purposefully created to intersect with urban tissue, according to Pluta (2017). Although the public square is deserted, it is not desolate or abandoned (Pluta 2017). The squares are created to fulfil their purpose for the people, hence they are not

Pluta further categorises the three types of "emptiness" that make up urban voids: planning voids, functional voids, and other voids and blanks in the landscape i.e. geographical voids.

#### Planning voids

Furthermore, poor and ineffective planning procedures produced the voids. They result from planning in isolation without taking into account the structure of the city. They can be seen using figure ground theory and are especially noticeable in modern cities.

#### Functional Void

These urban spaces are deserted and dead. When a space is not utilised as intended, it loses its function. These detract from the environment and take up valuable city real estate.

#### Geographical Voids

These are geographical features that already exist in the city. Inaction on the part of city planners and designers results in voids surrounding these geographical features, rendering the area uninhabitable.

For instance, river and nala etc

## URBAN ACUPUNCTURE AS A TOOL

Urban acupuncture is an idea in urban planning that includes making minor, focused changes to enhance a neighbourhood's or community's quality of life. The method is referred to as "acupuncture" because it is similar to the Chinese medical technique of stimulating specific body points with tiny needles to encourage healing and enhance general health.

The idea of urban acupuncture in urban design entails finding small, underused, or neglected locations in a city or neighbourhood and changing them into lively, lovely, and practical spaces. Street art, community gardening, open-air seating, and other elements like making places bike- or pedestrian-friendly are a few examples of these interventions. As a result, residents find the urban environment to be more appealing and useful.

Many social and environmental issues, including pollution, dwindling or a lack of green space, poor urban quality of life, and a loss of vibrancy, affect city centres. Sustainable development has been urged as a result of these difficulties. Urban acupuncture has come into its own as a concept and method for creating third-generation cities. The classical medical philosophy of acupuncture is combined with urban planning concepts, with catalytic and energy-intensive interventions in the urban fabric regulating what are known as "energy flows" (environmental, social, cultural, and informational) inside the city.

Since the technique relies on the treatment of individual parts, it expands the application of acupuncture into a larger metropolitan setting. Lack of thorough understanding of acupuncture theory's mechanics is a research challenge that its advantages with relation to city centres. We developed a thorough theoretical framework for the acupuncture idea and the levels of intervention in general to solve the research issue.

## ROOTS OF URBAN ACUPUNCTURE

Manuel de Sola Morales:

URBAN ACUPUNCTURE, according to British architect and critic Kenneth Frampton, was first used by Barcelona urbanist Manuel de Sola Morales (Frampton, 2000). This idea relates to the reparative potential of small-scale, catalytic urban interventions, with the caveat that they must be implementable quickly and have the ability to transform their immediate surroundings on their own. Sola Morales participated in the development of Barcelona through architectural interventions. It was created during Barcelona's urban renewal in the 1980s when the city rejected the General Metropolitan Plan and instead concentrated on tiny public spaces that needed to be rebuilt in the neighbourhood and throughout the city (Talviste, 2010).

Jaime Lerner:

The concept of "Urban Acupuncture" is presented by architect and urban planner Jaime Lerner through his work as the city mayor of Curitiba, Brazil. It focuses on urban pressure points to produce beneficial ripple effects that benefit the entire community. In order to improve everyday life for inhabitants and to address urgent needs, whether in the centre of cities or in outlying areas, the lines of action must be straightforward, have an instant impact, be affordable, and apply to any situation. Because they indicate close and current viewpoints, these principles illustrate how difficult it is to imagine city utopias and, in the action for the city, they search for something entirely different from the past.

Lerner clarifies the idea by saying that if the city gets hit, but of it, it benefits the entire Country. The entire city benefits by pricking the park with a needle (Marzi et al, 2004). Cities all over the world, including Kabul, New Orleans, Bogota, and Seoul, have adopted his method of effective urban planning, which was time-bound and economical while creating instant impacts.

Moreover, Detroit and Los Angeles want to adopt it.

The city is the final bastion of unity, and since this will be the century of the city, little can be expected of the national administrations. The broad adoption of local measures to discourage car usage and promote

recycling can help to address several global issues, such as the ozone layer's depletion. The relative adaptability of regional politicians is a key component of Lerner's strategy for revitalising cities.

He cites a few successful examples, including the removal of the Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco, the renovation of Puerto Madera in Buenos Aires, and the construction of the Opera de Arame theatre in Curitiba on the site of a defunct rock quarry. Urban acupuncture doesn't have to be restricted to physical treatments. Measures that lessen noise pollution or promote nightlife in otherwise secluded regions are also acceptable.

With local teams throughout the world, Lerner is developing practical solutions for building better cities. During a two to three year time frame, it is possible to improve quality of life in cities by implementing strategies like bus rapid transit (BRT), developing multipurpose buildings, and enticing citizens to live closer to their places of employment (Hinchberger, 2006).

Marco Casagrande

Urban Acupuncture is a philosophy of urban environmentalism that mixes urban design and the Chinese medical notion of acupuncture, according to Finnish architect Professor Marco Casagrande. According to Casagrande, cities are intricate energy beings in which the behaviour of the populace and the growth of the city are both influenced by various overlapping layers of energy flows. In order to promote an ecologically sustainable urban development towards the so-called "3" Generation City, Casagrande is researching strategies for precise modulation of the urban energy flows (Post Industrial City). The theory was created by Casagrande in the Tamkang university in Taiwan.

Urban acupuncture can be used to improve an existing city through art, specifically architecture. Real things have value, and unreal things have no value. With small-scale interventions, urban acupuncture brings the general people into contact with the real world. Nothing is taken away from the city organism, and nothing substantial is added, but the current state of affairs is seen as a component of the rotting and ruining process. Ruin is a process rather than a finished good. Cities should resemble compost. Urban acupuncture transforms the city's compost into productive topsoil (Casagrande, 2003).

Urban acupuncture seeks to connect with the city's collective psyche, which is represented in the collective consciousness that strives to understand the absolute, the true truth. The urban acupuncture hypothesis emphasises the potential for a light touch to have a significant effect. A portion of the absolute is total. The absolute finds a way to reflect in the city through urban acupuncture.

The social drama that keeps the city alive is created by the collective intellect. By being themselves, people are destroying the built-in human ecosystem.

The industrial metropolis's ruins can be found in the third-generation city. The metropolis of the third generation coexists with nature. Acupuncture for urban areas is geared towards third-generation cities.

## CASE STUDIES

### *Moll de la fusta, Barcelona, Spain*

#### Problem

The first seaside regeneration project in Barcelona, Moll de Fusta, was the first project in the sequential execution of the master plan.

The Mall de la Fusta project is relatively small in comparison to the master plan, but it heralds the start of the urban transition of the coastline, which has always been constrained by the hard edge of the aquatic ring road (Pacarisa 2014). There was a clear lack of connection between spaces and their values, particularly between the residential areas and the city centre and the coast, prior to the renewal project's implementation (Clos 2017). It was merely a cbsolee region devoid of any amenity (Clos 2017). This space was a hinderance in the smooth movement of the people from centre of the city and coast.

#### Tool

When Morales decided to create an open space out of a long stretch of dense palm plants by the seaside in 1981, the project officially got underway.

When sculptors like Franciso Lopez, Robert Llimos, and Roy Lichtenstein began to fill the area with their work, it became into an outdoor museum. (Kent 2002).



This early effort was successful in reclaiming the coastline and beaches while also providing a usable and interesting public area. In 1983, Morales built a two-level platform out of an old, used timber dock. The pedestrian entry is on the top level, and traffic and subterranean parking are on the lower level (Busquets 2005). The order of social activities provides for easy movement of people from old city to residential and the coast.

After transforming an urban promenade that can be divided into two sections: the esplanade along the shore and the raised half with car parking and cafés, he reshaped the city's image (Pacarisa 2014). The bottom half of the wharf continues to be used by cars and pedestrians, but the functions are divided, allowing for uninterrupted traffic flows. This enhanced the travelling along Ronda del Litoral by enhancing the views of the sea (Pacarisa 2014). With newly added elements including previously unheard-of areas for reflection and recreation, the beach's presence on the pedestrian promenade is more noticeable than ever. The public's visual and physical connection to the sea was improved by both levels of promenades (Pacarisa 2014).

#### Transformation

"Moll de la Fusts, the selected pressure point, was the ideal location for an intervention."

The Moll de la Fusta site was kept in contact with the metropolitan area despite being abandoned, allowing the "community and society" to act as the meridians for the shift in urban scale. This intervention was deemed effective when the project's clearly enabled the massive reorganisation of the port and the introduction of long-distance traffic that traverses suburban Barcelona (Busquets 2005).

#### Treasure hill, Taipei City, Taiwan

Marco Casagrande, a professor of architecture from Finland, first visited the city in 2002 and was deeply moved by it. He observed humanistic impulses at the street level and was left wondering why the official and soft centres of the city did not coexist.

Reading the official information and maps about Taipei and walking the streets for him was almost like analysing two distinct towns. He understood that environmental factors will cause the city to perish. Modern man dies when he loses his connection to nature. As Taipei on the streets was substantially different from the official information, the information provided by the authorities to preserve the city was ineffective. The

folks on the streets were incredibly kind, vibrant, and engaged. They appeared to balance the official pollution while also destroying the city's industrial machine. He believed the data should not even be saved; rather, it should be destroyed (Casagrande, 2003).

## Tool

When Casagrande first arrived in 2002, he was astounded to find Treasure Hill. It was a matriarchal, urban farming village that was isolated within a contemporary city. It was on its last days when he came to Treasure Hill. The first three levels of the terraced dwellings had already been bulldozed down when the official city sentenced this unlawful hamlet to death. The farmers were relocated to flat buildings while the farms were transformed into lawns. The aroma of a slow death permeated the entire atmosphere. Yet, Casagrande perceived that the location's spirit lingered.

Professor Casagrande perceived a powerful human force that was, nevertheless, focused on causing death and destruction. In order to harness these secret energy flows and bring tiny elements to Treasure Hill that are comparable to acupuncture needles, he needed to devise a plan on how to tune this same energy towards construction. Urban Acupuncture is how he describes it (Casagrande, 2003).

## Transformation

His form of action was initially regarded to be small-scale and covert, but as more and more people offered to help, the authority eventually visited Treasure Hill and began to understand how undeveloped and sustainable the hamlet is. They were quick to recognise Casagrande's concepts and concur that Treasure Hill should be maintained in its current state (Casagrande 2015).

After being successful in revitalising Treasure Hill's energy, the area was recognised as a sustainable urban living area in Taipei and was given legal status as a piece of public environmental art (Casagrande 2015). Also, it was promoted as a must-see urban living model in Taiwan. Casagrande's work transformed the perception of a deplorable colony in a globalised city to be perceived as a desirable organic community (Casagrande 2015).

## CASE STUDIES IN INDORE CONTEXT

Pipliahana square flyover:

The flyover of pipliahana, Indore is one of the best examples to portray the practise of urban acupuncture in urban voids.

These flyovers are made to make the traffic flow easier and more comfortable for the people who are taking the respective route. But with the construction of the flyover leaves behind an urban void specifically functional void under it.

With the minds of planners, we were successful to intervene activities for children here and make these voids functional.

Specifically in this case Ida took the initiative to plan playing areas for the children with proper safety measures.

This in turn turned into an interactive space and not a dead space as most of the under of the flyovers do.



Bengali square flyover:

As discussed earlier this flyover was also constructed for the sole reason of making the transportation of the people travelling from that place easier.

But again, the same problem aroused from the construction of this flyover which was the formation of urban void under that bridge.

Seating spaces have been created around the columns of the flyover for the people to sit.

Other than that, this space is currently been used by the vegetable vendors.

This space can have other uses if planned properly and if urban acupuncture is properly applied and different interventions are made.



## CONCLUSION

In this paper research has been done on the relatively newly tossed term URBAN ACUPUNCTURE. It is at this point of the development of the country very important to be familiar with the term and understand the theory behind this whole concept.

To start with the subject, it was considered important to make the people familiar with some other terms that are related to the whole concept of urban acupuncture. To do so a study of relation of people with the urban areas has been done.

Further an attempt has been made to shed light on the concept of urban voids in the surroundings. And how urban acupuncture is a tool that has to be used on these urban voids to make these spaces alive again.

Furthermore, to understand the topic in depth and to understand the essence of the topic it is important to understand the visions of the pioneers of the subject. This research paper has provided the readers the overview of the vision of the three major pioneers of the subject.

With the help of the paper, it has been further tried to put forward different case studies to make an understanding on how urban acupuncture is practised to make these spaces liveable. How small-scale interventions are made to increase the liveability of the area.

Case studies in the context of the city of Indore has also been put forward to keenly observe as to how this concept can be applied in our own country.

Through all the study that has been carried out in this research paper I would like to conclude and summarise the concept:

***“Urban acupuncture is a tool and a catalyst that can be used in today’s urban context on the places that can be commonly referred to as urban voids by introducing small scale interventions to create a more liveable environment. “***

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Urban acupuncture in Taipei

City acupuncture: Zhang Minhao, Lou Lubel