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Esra Kut Görgün & İlgi Atay Kaya

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Diverse viewpoints on tactical urbanism in vacant lots: a collaborative design with young planner candidates in Türkiye

Esra Kut Görgün ^a and İlgi Atay Kaya ^b

^aDepartment of City and Regional Planning, Abdullah Gul University Faculty of Architecture, Kayseri, Türkiye;

^bDepartment of City and Regional Planning, Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Architecture, İzmir, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

Urban design and planning require collaborative processes that integrate diverse user perspectives. Tactical urbanism involves small, temporary interventions in public spaces to meet daily needs through the collaboration of various stakeholders. This paper aims to foster tactical urbanism in vacant lots, emphasising the significance of incorporating diverse perspectives. The study, based on participatory action research, discusses the individual viewpoints of young city planner candidates assuming diverse roles across three themes: belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness, and to evaluate the results of two-method exercises applied in the Karşıyaka case study in İzmir. Participants, consisting of students from various universities in Türkiye, expressed their individual opinions and collective viewpoints through the techniques of photovoice and six thinking hats, respectively. Comparing two methods for evaluating vacant lots within three themes of tactical urbanism demonstrated that the photovoice technique enabled students to search for meanings of spaces and express their thoughts through photos. Meanwhile, the six thinking hats technique facilitated empathy towards diverse perspectives. The findings underscore the essentiality of adopting a holistic approach to urban design that encompasses aesthetics, functionality, and inclusivity, integrating diverse opinions. Young planner candidates in this study acknowledged the importance of collaboration and diverse perspectives in urban design and planning.

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Tactical urbanism; do it yourself urbanism; vacant lots; public space; collaborative interventions; six thinking hats

1. Introduction

Scholars have defined collaborative processes in planning as a paradigm shift in planning theories and practice (Kaya 2002; Margerum 2002). Collaborative planning perceived planning as an interactive process (Healey 2003) and was developed upon criticism of rational comprehensive planning (Alexander 1984), which is a planner-centred approach based on their expert knowledge and does not require public participation or collaboration. However, there are still top-down and expert-based approaches dominating planning processes in various parts of the world. The planning system and legislation in Türkiye that are closer to these expert-based approaches often criticised not to require

participation or collaboration (Tekeli 2009). Recent findings indicate that even within participatory practices aligned with institutional decision-making visions, municipalities typically maintain dominance, thereby hindering complete and direct participation at every stage (Topal 2023). This paper argues that either a planner-centred approach or a collaborative approach where public participants and other stakeholders build consensus, public space design process should consider diverse views. Thus, city planners should gain the ability to understand different perspectives. One of the upper aims of this study is to discuss what kinds of methods can be used to make planner candidates aware of the importance of participation and cooperation and to better understand different views on public space design.

One critical issue in public space design that needs addressing is vacant lots. Also known as idle areas and leftover spaces, they are mostly unused, unplanned, irregular, not built-up, or not designed open spaces (Burkholder 2012; Stewart et al. 2019). They have important potential to be repurposed as public spaces.

Urban vacant lots and leftover areas are sometimes formally integrated into design and planning processes by decision-makers, while in other cases, they are shaped by users without waiting for institutional involvement. ‘Tactical Urbanism’, defined as small-scale spatial interventions made quickly with small budgets but serving larger purposes, exemplifies this approach (Lydon and Garcia 2015). Examples include parklets, pop-up stores, guerilla gardening, street art, better block initiatives, DIY (do-it-yourself) bike lanes, etc (Lydon and Garcia 2015). Previous research illustrates spontaneous or temporary arrangements in vacant lots by users and points its contribution to the social production of space and everyday life (Cihanger Ribeiro 2019). Such attempts are assumed to increase the benefits of vacant lots and decrease their disadvantages (Németh and Langhorst 2014), emphasising the opportunities these inexpensive and straightforward interventions offer for urban spaces (Cariello, Ferorelli, and Rotondo 2021).

Collaborative design and tactical urbanism align by allowing flexibility for adjustments and modifications, responsiveness to community needs and preferences, and cost-effective implementation of interventions (J. Kim and Jin 2023). Tactical urbanism provides the inclusion of marginalised groups in design processes (Spataro 2016). Benefits of co-design for enhancing the engagement of various local actors in tactical urbanism include enhanced stakeholder dialogue, improved networking for information sharing, increased inclusion of marginalised voices, and greater participant motivation and commitment throughout project development stages (Külvik et al. 2021). Integrating multiple perspectives and engagement supports facilitating the creative expression of different views (Raman and French 2022).

This study focuses on three themes related to tactical urbanism: belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness. The reason for choosing these is the claim that tactical urbanism will increase the sense of belonging of its participants to the place and enhance the aesthetic quality and usefulness of the public spaces (Kut Görgün and Atay Kaya 2017). Although vacant lots can be negatively perceived as abandoned and dangerous (Aydınli and Erdem Kaya 2020), these lots have important potential to be used as public spaces and contribute to these themes of tactical urbanism. In terms of sense of belonging, recent research (Hashem, Wahba, and Nasr-Eldin 2022; G. Kim 2016) assumed that their revitalisation could make them valuable spaces to meet together and enable interactions. In terms of

aesthetic contributions, research (Anderson and Minor 2017; Stewart et al. 2019) defined the potential of vacant lots as only appearing when they are restored, greened, and cleaned. In terms of usefulness, research (Aydınlı and Erdem Kaya 2020; Burkholder 2012) addressed vacant lots as having the potential to provide benefits for social and ecological services and to create sustainable land uses. Usefulness has been used to correspond and inclusive to functionality and usability.

The study aims to foster tactical urbanism in vacant lots and increase planning students' understandings of diverse perspectives on three themes, belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness, in tactical urbanism. To this end, it compares the results of two-method exercises by planning students using a case study located in Karşıyaka. The creative tactical urbanism attempts are expected to be developed by participants, consisting of students, with different views on urban vacant lots. To date, studies on tactical urbanism have not focused on diverse views on these three themes.

Few studies involved university students in the DIY or tactical urbanisation processes and aimed to raise awareness by showing them real-life examples (Gamez and Sorensen 2014; Poole et al. 2009). Gamez and Sorensen (2014) conducted a similar research as part of a Master's degree course in both Urban Design and Geography and Earth Science programmes, and emphasised the importance of students experiencing grassroots' production of space processes along with formal planning and urban design processes. Poole et al. (2009) involved recreation, tourism, and hospitality management students and stated that their experience strengthened community-university relations and ensured the revitalisation of neighbourhood parks. As emphasised by these studies, the significance of raising students' awareness, offering education beyond the classroom, and enabling them to establish relationships with real life is obvious. However, our search of literature did not yield studies in the literature that specifically encourages planning students to adopt diverse roles when evaluating tactical urbanism and to focus on how these roles might influence their evaluations. This present study addresses this research gap by exploring how urban planning students can enhance their empathy and understanding of diverse perspectives through engaging in collaborative design processes.

The research question asks how planning students' collective ideas about vacant lots and tactical urbanism, guided by specific roles in terms of aesthetics, belonging, and usability, differ from their individual perspectives. To answer this question, this study performed field trips, photovoice, and six thinking hats techniques through a workshop attended by young urban planner candidates. Ideas were created about vacant lots in study areas and tactical urbanism prospects through a deliberative and collaborative approach centred around the themes of belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness. What makes this study methodologically rare is that it uses these qualitative research techniques together and presents comparative results.

2. Belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness in tactical urbanism

Tactical urbanism, known for its temporary, low-cost, small-scale applications in urban public spaces, is also associated with similar concepts such as DIY urbanism, urban acupuncture, place-making, and temporary use (Finn 2014; Iveson 2013; Lydon and Garcia 2015). While DIY urbanism involves smaller teams and is primarily led by place users, tactical urbanism entails more intensive collaborations, higher potential for

institutionalisation, and serves broader purposes (Atay Kaya and Kut Görgün 2017; Lydon and Garcia 2015). These initiatives, with a potential for a broader influence in the city, are similar to urban acupuncture (Balicka et al. 2021). Such initiatives are often informal, carry more uncertainty than formal, long-term planning approaches, and involve temporary interventions, yet these interventions have the capacity to impact the formal planning processes (Finn 2014).

Tactical urbanism is applied to improve storefronts, wide streets, parking lots, and mostly vacant lots (Lydon and Garcia 2015). Vacant lot restoration offers potential benefits across ecological, economic, and social dimensions (Anderson and Minor 2017; G. Kim 2016). Participants in this context apply tactical interventions in urban spaces with specific purposes to revitalise neglected areas. These interventions support small-scale initiatives (Lydon and Garcia 2015), promote beautification (Talen 2015), and foster emotional connections between individuals and particular places (Strzelecka, Sorensen, and Wicks 2010). Therefore, the primary aims of tactical urbanism involve optimising urban spaces, fostering community belonging, and creating aesthetically pleasing environments. This study explores viewpoints on tactical urbanism considering belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness.

2.1. *Belonging in tactical urbanism*

As Lefebvre and critical urban theorists accept, the notion of ‘right to the city’ implies people’s right to participate, especially for those who do not have the opportunity to influence formal planning processes (Lefebvre 1967, trans. Ergüden, 2015; Harvey 2008; Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2012, trans. Şen, 2014). Biglin (2022) argued that individuals who participate in the production of a place will increase their sense of belonging to that place. Furtado and Payne (2023) suggested that active engagement in place-making practices, which occur as the transformation of the spaces where members of society live or use, also increases their commitment to society. In place-making experiences, Raffaetà and Duff (2013) reported practices in which the feeling of belonging to a place increases in daily life thanks to social, material, and emotional bonds.

Tactical urbanism demonstrates the possibility of citizens’ urban interventions and encourage individuals to participate in shaping their environments. Thus, tactical urbanism represents the chance of their right to the city (Iveson 2013; Lak and Zarezadeh Kheibari 2020; Lydon and Garcia 2015). Spataro (2016) criticises the treatment of tactical urbanism as a design-based process carried out solely with aesthetic concerns and argues that tactical urbanism helps marginalised groups join decision making and tackles inequality. Among tactical urbanism’s positive aspects, it allows the creation of spaces that increase place attachment and acceptance for participants (Poole et al. 2009; Strzelecka, Sorensen, and Wicks 2010). Furtado and Payne (2023) emphasised that a strong sense of belonging in society can be achieved with creative and inclusive place-making strategies, but for this, it is beneficial to apply participatory methods.

2.2. *Aesthetics in tactical urbanism*

While vacant lots pose aesthetic concerns, acts of greening and cleaning in these areas support and motivate aesthetic and social goals through tactical urbanism (Anderson and

Minor 2017; Stewart et al. 2019). Aesthetic concerns and art are among the purposes of tactical or DIY urbanism practices, for instance, painting public stairs, graffiti, sculptures, and flowerpots (Talen 2015; Atay Kaya and Kut Görgün 2017; Enigbokan 2016). Interventions in spaces, like placing chairs and flower pots at building entrances, can be observed for aesthetics without formal or deliberate design processes (Cihanger Ribeiro 2019). Cariello, Ferorelli, and Rotondo (2021) claims that artistic interventions in tactical urbanism examples can be more daring aesthetically due to their temporary nature, dubbing it the new aesthetics in public space. The relative nature of aesthetic issues underscores the importance of considering diverse and conflicting views on this matter.

2.3. Usefulness in tactical urbanism

One of the physical dimensions of tactical urbanism projects is functionality, which requires criteria including mixed-use, vitality, accessibility and movement, safety and security, inclusiveness, and flexibility (Lak and Zarezadeh Kheibari 2020). Successful applications often emphasise mixed-use and diversity, especially those that enable the reuse of unused vacant lots and offer various options for space users (Lak and Zarezadeh Kheibari 2020). Ensuring usability should prioritise inclusivity and equal opportunities across different social classes (Lak and Zarezadeh Kheibari 2020). Bottom-up approaches like tactical urbanism and urban acupuncture provide new functions and activity spaces in unused spaces, for example, providing relaxing and socialising possibilities in neglected spaces near rivers (Balicka et al. 2021). Transforming unused areas, such as vacant lots, through tactical urbanism holds potential to enhance the usefulness of public spaces.

3. Methodology

This study utilises the participatory action research approach (Biglin 2022; Davis et al. 2020; Meligrana and Andrew 2003) and is designed as qualitative research based on case studies (Furtado and Payne 2023; Hashem, Wahba, and Nasr-Eldin 2022). The research was designed as a workshop where young planner candidates could convene and exchange their perceptions, thoughts, and ideas. The workshop was held with the contributions of the Chamber of City Planners and Karşıyaka Municipality within the scope of the 2023 winter school for undergraduate students from various parts of Türkiye. The workshop was held in a cultural centre, Ahavat Shalom Synagogue, in Karşıyaka, İzmir. All students attending the winter school were included in this study. The participants were 22 students studying at various grade levels for bachelor's degrees at the City and Regional Planning Departments of different universities from 12 different cities in the country. Students referred to as participants are between 18 and 29 years old. The workshop provided a platform for participants to deliberate both their own thoughts and perspectives in the roles assigned to them and to present corresponding designs. The study mainly uses two research techniques: photovoice and the six thinking hats. Both focus on three themes: belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness.

The study included three processes: preparation of data and participants, participation and collaboration in the workshop, and analysis of individual and collective opinions.

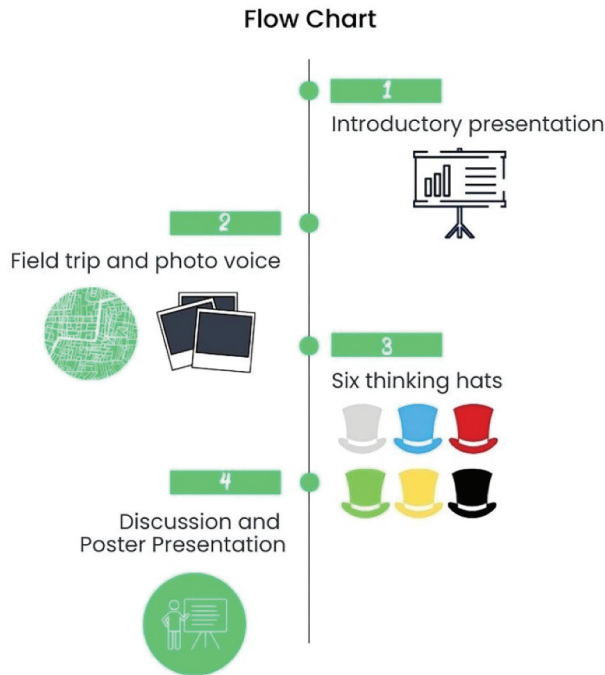


Figure 1. Key steps of the workshop.

The preparation took place before the workshop and covered preliminary data collection and research design. Secondary data about vacant lots and idle areas of Karşıyaka, including their locations and sizes, was collected from the municipality in this process. The data about students' individual and collective opinions about the tactical urbanism ideas and vacant lots are collected in the workshop. These data included handwritten notes, recordings of student sessions, and visual images of group activities. In addition, participants sent and shared their photos with written opinions via email.

The workshop had four main steps (Figure 1): introductory presentation, field trip and photovoice, six thinking hats, discussion, and poster presentation. In the first step of the workshop, the subjects of Tactical Urbanism and Do It Yourself Urbanism were presented to the students. During this presentation, sample studies were presented, and expectations for the workshop session were outlined. Detailed explanations were provided regarding research methodologies that were unfamiliar to the majority of the students. Furthermore, students were informed that they would work individually in the photovoice phase and collectively in the six thinking hats phase. Also, a consent form was obtained from the students for the use of the photographs in this study.

3.1. Photovoice technique

The utilisation of the photovoice technique is well-suited for elucidating the varied meanings of places through visual materials depending on individual perspectives. For instance, a study involving African American women in Oklahoma, USA, used photovoice to explore their perceptions of neighbourhoods security (Davis et al. 2020).

Another study on immigrants in Manchester, UK, collected data via photovoice on the meanings ascribed to place in the daily lives of participants, their place-making practices, and the ways they claim their sense of belonging and rights to the city (Biglin 2022). Given the practical limitations of publishing all photos, Davis et al. (2020) selected among photos based on research priorities and themes (Davis et al. 2020).

In the current study's second phase, students conducted a field trip and utilised photovoice to examine and photograph vacant lots, accompanied by reflective writing. In this technique, although many additional photographs were captured and discussed, not all photographs were used in this paper, but the selection was executed first according to research priorities and themes. Photos with low resolution and those focusing more on details rather than the overall space were excluded.

3.2. Six thinking hats technique

The six hats technique abstracts diverse viewpoints through coloured hats (De Bono 2015). These colours are white, yellow, red, blue, green, and black. This technique encourages individuals to examine the problem from various perspectives. The white hat stands for clarity and infallible knowledge. The yellow hat symbolises optimism by considering advantages and possibilities. The red hat embodies passion and represents emotions, intuition, and enthusiasm. The blue hat is focused on making rational decisions. The green hat stimulates creativity, innovation, and energy. Lastly, the black hat represents a negative perspective (De Bono 2015). A study by Hu, Ren, et al. (2021) on the relationship between the six thinking hats technique and creativity in design suggests that group dialogues can influence individual approaches and foster deliberations that enhance ideas. The six thinking hats technique is useful for designing activities (Hu, Yu, et al. 2021).

For the third step of the workshop, students worked in six groups, each comprising three or four students, representing six thinking hats technique. Discussions within and between different hat groups facilitated the understanding of various perspectives regarding vacant lots and DIY urbanism. They evaluated the vacant areas with these perspectives based on hat colours and also presented design proposals assigned to them on these roles. In this study, students were provided the opportunity to think individually, engage in group discussions, and collaboratively generate ideas with peers. This step concluded with the design and preparation of posters representing each thinking hat (Figure 2).

3.3. Discussion and comparison of outcomes of photovoice and six thinking hats

The final step of the workshop involves discussing both individual and collective efforts, along with presenting posters. Each of these techniques offers advantages in enabling participants to see a place through others' perspectives. Díez et al. (2017) lauded photovoice as an engaging and valuable technique for understanding the residents' viewpoints. De Bono (2015), the founder of six thinking hats, described this technique as a practical method that brings about impactful simplicity and fosters more productive discussions. This study leverages both techniques and compares the outcomes in terms of students' perspectives, examining whether their views change based on the hat roles assigned to them.



Figure 2. The collaborative design process with six thinking hats technique.

Following the workshop, there was an analysis process. The data collected during the workshop underwent coding and classification into three themes. Individual viewpoints were compared with collective proposals. Photos were grouped, and duplicates were removed. This process facilitated the clarification of key insights gleaned from the workshop.

3.4. Case study

The study areas are located in Karşıyaka, İzmir. Karşıyaka Municipality conducted an inventory of 291 vacant lots ([Figure 3](#)) covering a total of 186,516 m². These areas include vacant lots, wide pavement, streets, yards, and walls. Some have undergone urban design and place-making projects, while others remain undeveloped, wait for future ideas and projects. This study focuses on three of the undeveloped areas that remain idle, called ‘Case study areas 1, 2, and 3’ from now on (see [Figures 5–7](#) for photographs). The purpose of field trips to these areas was to gain practical insights and analyse the specific challenges and opportunities presented by each study area.



Figure 3. Vacant lots and study areas in Karşıyaka (Prepared by authors on Google Earth images with data from Karşıyaka Municipality, 2023)

During the field trip, two additional areas (Sample designed areas 1 and 2 from now on; see [Figure 4](#) for photographs) were visited. These areas were designed with residents and implemented with Karşıyaka Municipality and Japanese design team Sotonoba through a tactical urbanism approach in cooperation with the scope of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Türkiye.

[Table 1](#) presents the attributes of these five areas. All these areas are within walking distance of the bazaar and pier of Karşıyaka and the cultural centre, where the workshop took place.

Study area 1 comprises a park including an idle board and a wall. Although most of the area is designed as a children's playground, there are unused or idle parts within its vicinity. Study area 2 hosts various informal DIY urbanism attempts such as installation, planting, and painting. The use of Study area 3 was temporarily prohibited for safety concerns during the field trip of this study. Sample designed area 1 serves as a cat feeding area and includes various seating arrangements. Sample designed area 2 showcases formal tactical urbanism efforts such as murals, seats, and playing equipment for children. The mural on the building facade in this area was created during an international workshop held in 2022.

4. Findings and design process

The findings of the study were presented separately under the headings of the photovoice technique, in which the students convey their individual perspectives, and the six hats thinking technique, in which they convey their collective perspectives. For both parts, three predefined themes of belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness were focused on.

4.1. Findings of photovoice

Photovoice findings in three study areas have been coded according to the themes of **belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness**. The assessment of these cases within these themes is expected to guide the research questions. Each student expresses their perspectives



Figure 4. Previous tactical urbanism attempts in the vacant lots of Karşıyaka (sample designed areas 1 and 2).

through photographs of the areas, often using similar images to illustrate their viewpoints.

The initial focal point of discussion concerns a park with distinctive features, including cat shelters, announcement boards, painted walls, and wall drawings (Figure 5). The second study area involves interventions such as establishing a rest area and creating mural art by residents in a walled space (Figure 6). The third project area can be described as a non-functional space surrounded by trees and enclosed with barrier tape (Figure 7).

Students expressed generally positive opinions regarding **belonging** in all three study areas. In the first study area, a student expressed that the park, strategically located near residential areas, serves a dual purpose:



Figure 5. Study area 1 ((a) cat shelter, (b) board, (c) painting of wall, (d) drawing of wall).



Figure 6. Study area 2.

It not only strengthens the bonds within the community but also cultivates a deeper sense of attachment to the locality.

The presence of cat shelters was particularly noted to enhance the sense of belonging in the park (Figure 5(a)). A student emphasised this by stating:

Residents' affinity towards the park expanded due to their involvement and care for these cat shelters.

However, another student offers a contrasting perspective, highlighting that while those who cherish animals may feel a heightened sense of belonging, individuals with differing views might experience discomfort within this park.



Figure 7. Study area 3.

Table 1. Attributes of study areas and sample designed areas (revised from Karşıyaka Municipality, 2023).

No	Neighborhood	Area (m2)	Short information
Case study area 1 (C1)	Alaybey	280	Idle parts of the park including wall, board, etc.
Case study area 2 (C2)	Tuna	54	Vacant lot between buildings
Case study area 3 (C3)	Alaybey	32	Open space surrounded by trees in the street
Sample designed area 1 (S1)	Tersane	247	Green area and cat shelter
Sample designed area 2 (S2)	Tersane	90	Open space including wall, street furniture, etc.

In the second study area (Figure 6), a strong sense of community attachment was evident. One student emphasised that the transformation of the locality through initiatives such as colouring, greening, and the establishment of a sitting area by local residents serves as clear evidence of their sense of ownership towards the place. Another student pointed out that the murals initiated by residents and merchants, along with the community's initiative to create a gathering space with tables and chairs, signify a strong sense of belonging among the neighbourhood's inhabitants. Another student remarked:

The deliberate placement of trees at the entrance of the area serves as a symbolic representation, signifying a sense of belonging for individuals and functioning as a defining boundary that designates the space as their own.

In the third study area (Figure 7), a student noted a positive perspective on the sense of belonging. He emphasised that it integrates seamlessly with the surrounding environment by incorporating existing trees and catering to the needs of the population, despite being non-functional.

Considerations regarding the **aesthetics** theme in the first study area primarily focused on the wall and the board. A student described the elephant graffiti as attractive (Figure 5(c)). According to many students, a white-painted wall detracted from the aesthetic quality due to scribbling (Figure 5(d)). A student noted that while useful for cats, the visual of cardboard boxes used as cat shelters was aesthetically displeasing. While the area provides a sense of belonging or usefulness, it has dimensions that raise aesthetic questions.

In the second study area, aesthetic considerations largely centred on efforts such as wall painting and drawing, effectively transforming the area into a pleasing space. However, a student observed a space surrounded by concrete blocks and perceived it as aesthetically lacking, offering a different perspective on the area's aesthetics.

The students expressed varied opinions about the third study area but they generally agreed on the need for aesthetic improvements while emphasising the importance of fostering a sense of belonging within the community. Another one highlighted:

This area, which is an important opening between the street and covered with trees, does not create an aesthetic in the space with its current situation.

The sense of **usefulness** was associated with various elements of park design. From a student's perspective, the cat shelter serves a practical purpose in protecting cats from environmental elements like rain and sun (Figure 5(a)). However, the announcement board is obscured from view for those passing by on the street due to green landscape elements obstructing it, rendering it unusable (Figure 5(b)). Also, one student said that:

The park's design includes activity areas for children and young people but lacks spaces designated for the elderly.

In the second study area, a student highlighted that the area between the two buildings remained underutilised in terms of usefulness. Echoing this statement, another student remarked:

While this area has the potential to be used in different functions, it has not been evaluated.

Regarding the third study area, one student noted that it was closed off to prevent it being used as a parking lot, which is useless. She suggested that its potential could be realised not only by protecting it but also by assigning it other functions. Despite its current shortcomings, there is recognition of its potential for development or improvement.

4.2. Findings of six thinking hats

The six thinking hats technique enabled this study to explore diverse viewpoints on belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness within tactical urbanism practices. Students expressed their opinions on various study areas using this technique. The six hats technique includes both poster making and discussion, and the combined findings are presented in this section. Visual analysis of the posters revealed that some suggestions or opinions overlapped across multiple themes (Figure 8).

The present study has observed that groups with yellow, blue, and red hats developed visualisations related to **belonging** for Areas 1 and 2 in their posters. The Blue Hat Group, characterised by their rational perspective, proposed organising workshops catering to diverse audience effectively in Area 1. In addition, the Red Hat Group, known for its passionate approach, suggested creating a welcoming environment in Area 1 to foster interaction among all users, including children, elderly persons, individuals with disabilities, youth, and animals. They specifically identified the area, surrounded by residences and visible from all sides, as a secure space promoting neighbourly relations. In Area 2, the Red Hat Group highlighted the sense of belonging experienced by users who intervened there, noting their embrace by neighbourhood residents. Nonetheless, they also raised concerns about inadequate lighting at night, posing

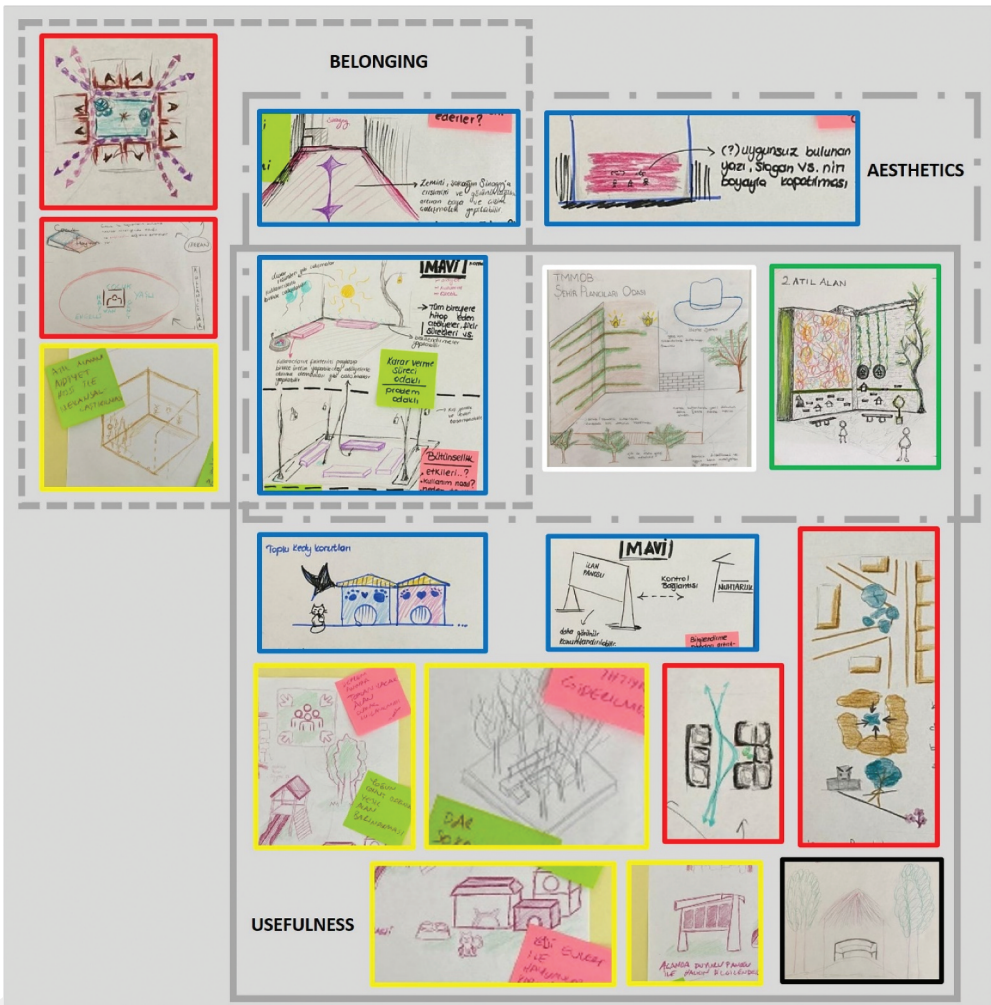


Figure 8. Visuals from the posters of six thinking hats associated with three themes (The colors on the frames represent the hat colors).

a potential safety risk to certain users. Consequently, the prioritisation of mind-oriented workshops by the blue hats and the red hats' emphasis on the emotional well-being and safety of users aligns with their respective perspectives, regardless of the field of study chosen. Furthermore, during the discussions, the pessimistic black hat group emphasised the lack of inclusivity and social cohesion in areas organised exclusively by specific residents.

In addressing the **aesthetics** issue, groups wearing blue, white, and green hats articulated their opinions through illustrated posters. Focusing on making rational decisions, the blue hat group has made suggestions to solve issues that pose aesthetic challenges. They suggested covering inappropriate slogans on the wall in Area 1 with paint, while another proposes making the ground on the street connecting the area to the synagogue more aesthetic and visible with paint and drawing works. Their drawings emphasise the

incorporation of aesthetic elements like murals and plantings to attract attention. The white hat group, representing openness, criticised the inadequate consideration given to the aesthetics of the animal shelter and the neglected walls. Their suggestions included creating an animal sculpture and embellishing and colouring the transformer wall.

The green hat group, characterised by their creativity, aimed to alleviate monotony in Area 2 by suggesting visually stimulating improvements. They proposed introducing vibrant elements such as ivy, trees, and wall painting to create more appealing spaces. The red group engaged in the discussion, emphasised the feelings of the children, and suggested appropriate colouring for them. Despite their differing perspectives, the shared mention of wall painting by both groups implies that they may have been influenced by the examples presented to them.

The topic of **usefulness** is a subject upon which all groups express their viewpoints in their posters. One of the important functions identified in the study areas is sitting or resting. However, as expected, the groups approached the same function from different perspectives. For instance, while the optimistic yellow hat group depicted the rest area as an asset, the imaginative green hat group proposed the idea of having more practical seating units. Conversely, the cynical black hat group criticised the absence of covered pavilion-like seating units, and the red hat group, which prioritises emotions, put forth the suggestion that rest areas should be combined with other purposes. They emphasised that this would give it a lively and dynamic ambiance. Lastly, the blue hat group, which advocates for rationality, recommended the integration of seating elements that could facilitate idea exchange and production while seated.

Associating functions with users is a common practice in the posters of most groups. Prominent ideas include playgrounds for children, feeding and sheltering opportunities for stray animals, bird feeders and houses, rest areas for tradesmen, and facilities for the elderly and disabled. The critical black hat group emphasised infrastructure shortcomings and the occupation of green spaces. They argued that the absence of recycling bins, parking lots, pedestrian paths, fountains, landscape planning, trees, plants, flowers, and sustainable urban furniture is a pressing issue that needs immediate attention. The groups often criticise the underutilisation of the bulletin board. The positive white hat group identifies situations where the entrance and boundaries are clearly defined and also highlights the importance of shading. The red hat group raised concerns about the trees in Area 3, stating that construction activities have negatively impacted their health and functionality. The proponents of the yellow hat group placed great emphasis on the advantageous attributes of Area 1. They articulated that its intended function as a designated gathering area during emergencies held significant importance.

5. Discussion and comparison of the outcomes of photovoice and six thinking hats

This research, which investigates three themes, belonging, aesthetics, and usefulness, from diverse perspectives, has the potential to contribute to the tactical urbanism process, research areas including collaborative design, participatory methods, and planning education, and practical audiences and processes. As Lak and Zarezadeh Kheibari (2020) emphasised, evaluating tactical urbanism and place-making practices requires a holistic framework and multiple perspectives of place. Even if a space is aesthetically

appealing, its success hinges on its utility. Places appreciated by some groups but criticised by others are also candidates for development. Tactical urbanism, even in the form of public art, raises social, political, and economic issues beyond mere aesthetics (Bordin, Toso, and Carvalho 2022).

Aesthetic preferences vary among individuals, leading to interventions that may not be universally embraced (Atay Kaya and Kut Görgün 2017; Spataro 2016). This diversity of perspectives, as exemplified in this study by different students representing varying viewpoints, highlights the importance of incorporating a wide range of voices in the urban design process.

Participatory research methods such as photovoice encompass critical dialogues, facilitating deliberations in which diverse perspectives and the self-representations of marginalised factions are negotiated (Biglin 2022). In this study, students with varying viewpoints had the opportunity to experience this negotiation environment, especially in the final part of the workshop, including the poster presentation and discussion (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Discussion and poster presentation.

When comparing the results of the six thinking hats technique in this study with a previous study using the same method (Göçmen and Coşkun 2019), two issues emerged. The previous similar study indicated that the number of ideas representing the hats did not change and that the optimal outcomes were achieved with the green hat. However, in this current study, it was observed that the group representing the green hat did not demonstrate exceptional creativity compared to other groups and they reflected few ideas on their posters together with the black hat group.

This study examined the different opinions of the students regarding the same area across three themes, both individually and in group settings. Initially, students expressed their individual thoughts, afterwards, they approached the same topics through the lens of assigned roles. For example, a student mentioned that the second area created a sense of belonging for her. However, when she assumed the role of 'black hat' which involves identifying potential problems or negative aspects, she viewed the same area from a negative perspective. The collaborative planning process based on role-playing is suggested to be an innovative approach, helping participants develop new common meanings and creating opportunities for young people to learn interaction and dialogue skills (Innes and Booher 1999). The results of this research also enabled the students to recognise issues that they may have overlooked individually or not considered significant, thanks to joint work and discussions involving diverse perspectives. For example, on the one hand, individual opinions found it positive in terms of belonging that the second study area was bordered by trees, and it was defined as the creation of their own space by those who made interventions there. On the other hand, when group opinions are formed by taking a pessimistic role, it has been suggested that this will prevent inclusiveness and lead to its use only by certain residents. Role-playing proved instrumental in raising awareness among student participants about such issues.

In the photovoice part of the study, which captures individual opinions, it was observed that the students considered other potential users. For example, they took into account the needs of children and the elderly when determining usability. Another example was that a student who, despite being an animal lover, considered those who do not like animals. One reason for this may be that the students are planning students rather than any other user group. Despite being pre-graduation students, their education has evidently begun to enhance their ability to address different segments of society comprehensively. The utilisation of the six thinking hats technique in this study has played a vital role in enhancing planning students' capacity to empathise and understand others' viewpoints. As previously emphasised in a study that used role-play simulations in planning education, this method provides the opportunity to see and understand different perspectives on the same subject (Meligrana and Andrew 2003). Real-world planning experiences must take into account complex, changing, and uncertain environments with multiple stakeholders and fragmented societies (Innes and Booher 1999). While the six roles in this study are limited in encompassing all societal perspectives, they serve as an initial step towards understanding different views.

This study contributes to planning education by virtue of its methodology. This study differs from previous similar studies engaging students in tactical urbanism practices in terms of including students from various universities. Previously, studies from the United States (Gamez and Sorensen 2014; Poole et al. 2009) performed their fieldwork with students from the same university. These two studies aimed at both implementing

spatial interventions and increasing the awareness of students. However, this current study, different from them, does not focus on implementing tactics; rather, it emphasises diverse viewpoints and encourages students to evaluate vacant lots by proposing ideas from different perspectives.

Incorporating role-playing exercises with design can significantly enhance planners' understanding of community needs and preferences. The collaborative planning process facilitated by role-playing encourages dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders. This contributes to co-design and collaborative planning by emphasising the importance of considering diverse voices into the planning process.

The study has its limitations. The research design did not include residents or user groups. Further studies could benefit from organising an exercise for planning students to engage in a participatory design process with such user groups. In its initial steps, the study may have inadvertently conveyed the impression that using role-playing exercises could substitute for genuine public participation. However, the discussions at the end of the workshop highlighted that empathy from designers or planning students about different possible views of user opinions cannot replace actual participants. It was emphasised that planners' gaining different perspectives will not make the participatory planning process an element that can be ignored.

6. Conclusion

The study illustrated how students' perceptions of views, needs, priorities, and concerns regarding the same urban area can expand when they assume different roles. This dynamic process of evaluating the same space from various perspectives highlights the complexity of urban development and the need to consider both individual and collective viewpoints. As a result, young planner candidates gained awareness of diverse views, both individually and collectively. The impact of different perspectives can differ depending on the context.

The three themes included in this study are integral to both planning and urban design. Success in urban design requires collaboration and a combination of aesthetics, usefulness, and a sense of belonging. In conclusion, this research emphasises the multi-faceted nature of urban planning, where aesthetics, usefulness, and a sense of belonging must be considered alongside the diverse opinions and roles of various stakeholders. Besides, by experiencing two methods that can be used in planning education, this research underlines both the search for meaning in space through photography and the ability to empathise with different perspectives through the role-playing experience in the six-hat thinking technique.

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ORCID

Esra Kut Görgün  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1030-1002>

İlgi Atay Kaya  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1764-1408>

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