Do-It-Yourself Skatepark Urbanism

This is the story of how active skateboarders managed to transform skatepark planning in Tampere, Finland. Today's planning processes and regulatory regimes are heavy. Projects tend to grow big and finances are scarce. Plans easily stall. Rather than waiting for local municipalities to improve their neighborhoods, people are increasingly starting initiatives on their own. A new generation of proactive young citizens are, with the help of social media, shaping the way cities are being developed - from the bottom up.

2000s Skateboarding Boom

Skateboarding is a steadily growing youth activity in Tampere. But the city lacks proper facilities to satisfy the demand. Constant pleas for improvement are made.

2008 Big Empty Promises

The city administration reveals a big and expensive skatepark development proposal. However, nothing is eventually done to implement it. Frustration grows.

2009 DIY Idea Develops

Local skateboarding advocates discover a sleepy former industrial site waiting for redevelopment. An idea emerges to build a skatepark by themselves.

2010 Construction Begins

The group pulls together resources by collecting empty bottles, contacting local companies, and via fundraising events. The landowner is inspired and gives his consent.

2012 Things Pick up Speed

For more money, the group decides to take part in a tissue paper brand's competition by a for a great community initiative. Using social media, they engage fellow skateboarders to vote and win. The prize money enables the group to finalize their skatepark in style.

In 2012, the group also forms an official association for their cause. A petition for public skateparks is launched. Local politicians get nudged to act.

2012 Media Attention

Following the competition win and the interesting nature of the initiative, the media features the group and their cause. From then on, several follow-up stories are made.

2013 The City's U-Turn

The media attention and growing dissatisfaction towards the city's skateboarding policies push for high-profile politicians to react. A complete policy turnaround follows.

Several hundred thousand € is found to support skatepark development. At this time, the skateboarders estimate their DIY skatepark has cost 20 000 € worth of material resources.

2013 Big Plans Re-Emerge

To walk the talk, the city launches a project to build a 1 200 sqm skatepark site called Iso-Vilunen.

Public-People Partnership

The success of the activists' DIY skatepark and the city's experience of struggling with facility development result in the city realizing they understand nothing about good skatepark design.

The city hires a skater consultant and invites the local skateboarders to share their expertise in advising the city in the design and implementation of Iso-Vilunen.

2015 Piriplaza Initiative

Trust develops. The activists spot large useless roadside stones and ask if the city could place them in the city center to attract skaters to an under-performing plaza. The city did.

2015 Manserama Event

The skateboarders and the city organize a big skateboarding event together in Iso-Vilunen. By the end of 2015, the park has become known as the best skate park in Finland.

Strengthening Cooperation

The skateboarders are now involved in several park development projects. And there is emerging discussion about long-standing youth service provision by them.

This example from Finland shows that today's proactive and resourceful citizens can stand up to shake the system from within not by only complaining about the *status quo* but by actively proposing, or even creating, something better. The big question is how can government organizations support societally constructive activism, so that the actions of citizens and administration contribute synergistically to the development of great cities.

Want to learn more or get more details? Great! How about getting in touch -

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