

Engaging Youth Rights to the City through DIY Skateparks

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Concrete is plastic when wet, brittle before it cures, coarse without polishing or wax, cheap, readily available, easy to mix, and easily demolished. The paper presentation will unveil how a group of skaters and non-skaters, young people and young adults, failed and eventually triumphed to create the first public skate park in the City of New Orleans. Working in a post-Katrina environment, they faced limited resources, communication issues, and an endless amount of free coping from abandoned swimming pools. Extensive photographs and videos, social media posts, kickstarter campaigns, community meetings, fundraising events, weekly site clean-ups, outreach with local universities and researchers, and a relentless push to convince the city of the value of the skate park for the local youth lead to one simple, necessary action: permission. Such DIY projects have unfortunately been described in academic literature with negative, anarchic connotations, such as guerilla, tactile, and insurgent. However, young people in New Orleans demonstrated the wherewithal to overcome multiple losses and create a great public space from underutilized urban space by just adding water. The case study will review how an award winning DIY project sets a new precedent for inspiring other young people to create positive, youth inclusive environments in cities.

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