

Kids & Space Challenges designers

Youngsters and public space is a combination that quickly brings to mind thoughts of irritation and destruction; groups of youngsters that no one dares to walk past, scooters precisely where they don't 'belong', or skaters who use a work of art as a springboard.

Space for youngsters has been drastically reduced in the last decade by an increase in building density and an extreme increase in traffic, but also because loitering is more often discouraged.

Public space is designed primarily for adults and not meant as a place to meet your friends or to enjoy yourself. Youngsters got as compensation protected play areas and clubs that organized activities for them. Even though they would often prefer to be part of life on the street where they can see and be seen.

DSP-Group has developed an instrument for involving youngsters in the development of plans for public space: Kids & Space challenges designers to listen to kids.

Fun and Educational

Countless of urban planning interventions, both large-scale and small, will be realized in the coming years within the framework of urban renewal. There will also be dozens of new housing districts formed on drawing tables. Investments will have to be made for the coming 20, 30 years.

This is the moment to consult the youth.

Kids & Space is an instrument in which youngsters from 12 to 18 years old make their wishes known and develop ideas for public space and the built facilities. The youngsters make a plan themselves, build models and present their ideas.

There is much to learn from listening to youngsters. They use the space now and will be responsible for it in the future. They know what youngsters want and what motivates them. They can see places for playing that an adult would never have thought of, or can anticipate problems, sometimes better than an urban designer or landscape architect. Kids & Space is fun and challenging and makes use of the youngster's creativity.

Divide and defend

Kids & Space is an instrument with all sorts of educational and creative components.

We first tell the youngsters a few things about urban design in order to have serious discussions. We teach them to look their surroundings by presenting slides that show national and international examples.

Then they start to discuss with each other. What do you think is important? How is the area used now and how do you want to use it in the future?

We visit the site together with professionals. Then the youngsters make a model of the designated area. Each element in the model represents a number of points. Since there are a maximum number of points to divide up, the youngsters have to make choices. And defend them, of course!

After all, space and financial means are limited and other target groups lay claim to both as well. Experience has shown that youngsters find it quite normal to take this into account: they show themselves to be worthy representatives of their group. Finally, the young designers present their models to designers, city council and resident's organizations.

Short and Powerful

Kids & Space runs simultaneously with a public space Masterplan or Urban planning Programme Brief Requirements. Clients can easily use the results in the design process.

Kids & Space is not a rigid programme. Together with the client, it is tailored to the specific situation. The device can be deployed for both large-scale restructuring operations as well as smaller plans on the neighbourhood level when redeveloping of a park or plaza, for instance.

Kids & Space takes approximately three months. The course can be extended by presenting the youngsters with a more detailed plan in a later phase. They can then assess whether the ideas they contributed have been sufficiently included in the plan.

The DSP- Group employs experts in the fields of socially safe design, youth participation and neighbourhood development. An enthusiastic team of independent professionals is responsible for the implementation of Kids & Space, often in cooperation with (multi) cultural organizations and schools.

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