Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign in Daegu City

Korea Environment Institute
Byungseol Byun

1. Introduction

An urban community encapsulates and expresses the lives of all its’ citizens, and the city represents the people’s ideals and cultural standards. A city’s health and charm depends upon the philosophy and culture of the people who inhabit it.

How does the city we are living in represent our lives? Industrialization and urbanization have left many problems as a result of rapid growth, forcing us to face and resolve the serious issues of environmental contamination and the breakdown of a sense of community and cooperation.

Residents living in a city cannot help but to dream of environment-friendly towns, where people of all generations can live harmoniously with nature and continuously pass down a sound environment to their progeny. The answer to these wishes can be found in the Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign in Daegu City.

The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign in Daegu City is a grass-roots movement that began with the purpose of constructing a park by demolishing the walls of surrounding buildings. What started as a simple intention resulted in the transformation of the city’s environmental culture and the creation of an ecological city.

Walls are usually seen as a way of protecting property and fending off crime, so their removal represents a radical change in convention and culture. A campaigner in the Korean city of Daegu instigated such change by tearing down his own property’s walls in order to share his garden with his neighbors. This event was the starting point of a reformation in the area, and his neighborhood ended up attracting the interest of all the citizens and mass media in Daegu.

Daegu City authorities found this wall-demolishing movement as an effective way to build a mood of social cooperation and community, and have since included it among the themes of the “Love Daegu Campaign”, which is directed by Daegu City authorities and private associations. This movement has resulted in the tearing down of 9,700m of walls in 187 neighborhoods, and creation of 7,600 square yards of green tracts of land, which signified a profound transformation of previously enclosed private space into open and public space. The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign in Daegu City is still actively ongoing, and a parallel movement of ‘not building walls’ when constructing or remodeling buildings is spreading. Other communities, inspired by Daegu City, are also now pushing this movement enthusiastically by using the Daegu campaign as a benchmark.

2. General background

Daegu City is located within a natural basin in the southeastern part of the Korean Peninsula. The city is girded by mountains in the southern and northern areas that have peaks reaching heights of 1,000~1,300m. A river runs in the valley between the mountain ranges and through the center of the city. A ‘sub-downtown’ is being formed in the southwestern part of the city. Daegu City covers approximately 885.7km² and the population has swelled to the current estimate of over 2.54 million, due largely to the influx of farmers and rural inhabitants since the 1960s.

| Table 1 | Present State of Daegu City |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
| Number of Families | 779 | 789 | 805 | 815 | 827 |
| Population (Unit: 1,000) | 2,504 | 2,517 | 2,529 | 2,539 | 2,540 |
| Population Density (person/ km²) | 2,828 | 2,843 | 2,866 | 2,868 | 2,869 |
| Area(km²) | 886 | 886 | 886 | 886 | 886 |

Source: www.kosis.nso.go.kr
Rapid urbanization with a rising population began to bring urban and environmental problems. The overall quality of life seriously deteriorated. The air pollution problem in Daegu was exacerbated by the city’s topographical characteristic, being a natural basin, which trapped the polluted air in the area. Development of residential districts was mainly executed by city authorities and such quantitative development could not meet the social and cultural needs of the city’s citizens. Cultural exchange among the people was essentially cut off, and an unbalanced form of community was deepened by psychological isolation of people.

It was in this situation that the Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign, initiated by a single citizen, began to spread throughout the entire community. The objective of the campaign is to tear down walls and create street parks. The civil activist, Mr. Kim Kyung-Min, initiated this movement by destroying his own walls in order to share his garden with his neighbors. This event developed into a movement to decorate streets, which included events such as an environmental sketch contest and the creation of a Bottle-Cap Fresco. The growing concern about creating environmentally friendly and appealing streets aroused the interest of the mass media and other citizens in Daegu City.

Daegu City authorities adopted this movement into its overall Love Daegu Campaign, the first such grassroots movement initiated by citizens and government, in May 1999. The main objective of this movement is to create a new street culture by tearing down walls, reviving green tracts of land, and reclaiming the social mood of opening people’s hearts.

3. The situation before the project was implemented

The beginning of rapid population growth in Daegu City started during the period after independence from Japanese colonial rule. Many Koreans returned from abroad and residents from northern Korea migrated to Daegu. During the 1960s, industrial development attracted many agricultural workers from the surrounding towns and villages. Table 2 shows that the population doubled during this period. Recently, the rate of population increase has slowed, but the rate has remained steady.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (Unit: 1,000)</td>
<td>32,241</td>
<td>35,281</td>
<td>38,124</td>
<td>40,806</td>
<td>42,869</td>
<td>45,093</td>
<td>47,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Rate(%)</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationwide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (Unit: 1,000)</td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>1,544</td>
<td>1,889</td>
<td>2,129</td>
<td>2,293</td>
<td>2,475</td>
<td>2,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Rate(%)</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daegu City</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.kosis.nso.go.kr
The rapid increase of population gave rise to an increased demand for residential housing and public institutions. Quantitatively, government development has been successful. The residential diffusion rate in 1998, for example, was 79.8% and the paved road rate was 98%.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Families</td>
<td>589,287</td>
<td>607,740</td>
<td>661,798</td>
<td>676,355</td>
<td>699,299</td>
<td>724,746</td>
<td>745,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum Number of Residences</td>
<td>393,055</td>
<td>417,704</td>
<td>479,305</td>
<td>517,080</td>
<td>545,873</td>
<td>573,564</td>
<td>594,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffusion Rate</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum Roads</td>
<td>1,302,246</td>
<td>1,327,691</td>
<td>1,378,911</td>
<td>1,875,368</td>
<td>1,925,040</td>
<td>1,984,952</td>
<td>2,018,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavement (m)</td>
<td>1,174,314</td>
<td>1,210,249</td>
<td>1,271,093</td>
<td>1,712,586</td>
<td>1,882,580</td>
<td>1,947,758</td>
<td>1,980,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavement Rate (%)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Daegu Authorities, 2001, Yearly Statistics

However, in the wake of the rapid process of urbanization, much of the natural greenery of the city was destroyed to make way for concrete buildings and asphalt pavements. Cultural exchange among residents became extinct and the sense of traditional community was ruined. The key issues that the Tearing-Down-Walls campaign of Daegu City is addressing are the deterioration of the quality of the urban environment, lack of green tracts of land and parks, and decline of a sense of community.

**Urban Climate Issue**

The climate of Daegu City is similar to one of typical basin topography. Annual rainfall is low, and the air is arid. The difference between summer and winter temperatures is very wide. Summers in basin areas, such as Daegu, are very hot because heated air cannot quickly escape beyond the surrounding mountains. On average, the number of days with a temperature of over 30 degrees C is 55.5, which is the highest for any city in the Korean peninsula.

The distribution of the average daily temperatures in the summer is that of a typical heated urban area and the diurnal range is also gradually becoming wider in suburban areas. This typical urban climate is accelerating the air pollution in the city. In 1995, the amount of sulfur dioxide measured in the atmosphere around Daegu was over 0.03ppm, which is the accepted national annual ambient air quality standard. With the mandated switch to low-sulfur coals and cleaner energy sources such as LPG, the air quality improved to 0.019ppm by 1997, compliant with World Health Organization (WHO) ambient air quality guidelines.

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<tr>
<td>SO₂ (ppm/year)</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO (ppm/8hrs)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO₂ (ppm/year)</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust (µg/m³)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O₃ (ppm/8hrs)</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acid Rain (pH)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature (°C)</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Daegu Authorities, 2001, Yearly Statistics
Lack of Green tracts of Land and Parks

Rapid urbanization, which included the prolific and poorly planned construction of buildings and the laying of asphalt roads, caused the widespread destruction of the natural greenery in Daegu. This led to stakeholders’ insistence on the importance of green tracts of land in their urban environment. However, the city was already covered with asphalt, and the high real estate values in the Daegu area made it difficult to create green zones out of existing urban space.

As shown in Table 5, the average area of parkland per citizen in Daegu was 19.0m² in 1998. This is quite a favorable level compared to the overall nationwide average of 6.46m². However, the non-availability of land for park space has gradually been getting smaller and the growing population makes it harder to meet requirements of creating more urban parks. Most of the new parks are created in suburban areas because of the higher availability of real estate for such purposes.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Size (km²)</td>
<td>56,581</td>
<td>76,596</td>
<td>76,587</td>
<td>90,682</td>
<td>88,780</td>
<td>90,724</td>
<td>91,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Size (km²)</td>
<td>30,593</td>
<td>30,593</td>
<td>30,593</td>
<td>43,593</td>
<td>43,593</td>
<td>43,593</td>
<td>43,593</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Size (km²)</td>
<td>25,988</td>
<td>46,003</td>
<td>45,994</td>
<td>47,089</td>
<td>45,187</td>
<td>47,131</td>
<td>47,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Park Area Size per a Citizen (m²/person)</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Daegu Authorities, 2001, Yearly Statistics

Destruction of Community Values

Destruction of community values is not unique to Daegu City. This phenomenon is being experienced in cities throughout Korea. In the past, communities could evolve naturally in Korean traditional society, but the sense of community cannot be formed naturally because of the mobile and rapidly changing nature of modern society. The modern city is plagued with the problems of mass confusion, anonymity, and egoism. These problems cannot be solved through traditional means of working problems out through blood relationships, because the value of blood relationships in Korea is gradually weakening (National Land Research, 2000).

Daegu City has also been plagued with this social pandemic. Economic success has been the overwhelming priority of Daegu residents. People did not place a high value on neighborhoods and villages because of the new mobile lifestyle. The majority of people moved into massive apartment complexes, and the walls of individual houses were built high. People’s lives were increasingly becoming physically compartmentalized and socially closed off.

Relations with neighbors were severed, and people were exceedingly indifferent to the public space outside their own walls and concerned only with decorating their own private property. Public spaces of the city deteriorated. This phenomenon cannot be illustrated quantitatively, but an indirect quantitative understanding of the phenomenon of community destruction can be derived from Table 6.

Volunteerism is one of the indices that can give us a glimpse into the values of a community. Table 6 shows that volunteer activities accounts for only 0.1% of the time of citizens. Of course this phenomenon is not the only problem Daegu City has.
4. Process

The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign is progressing as a pan-citizen movement in Daegu City. Started by one social activist who tore down his own wall to share his garden with his neighbors, it evolved into a street-decorating campaign in Samduk-Dong, Joong-Gu. Daegu City authorities then developed this campaign to restore the regional community and to reclaim the traditional values of Daegu society.

Since May 1999, The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign has since developed into a successful, full-scale movement, and by December 2000, 121 associations were participating. These associations were composed of 55 executive agencies, 34 public institutions (educational 10, religious 9, hospitals 7, parks 3, other related institutions 2, “others” 3) and 32 civilian associations (19 families and 13 businesses). The participation rate of public vs. private associations was 71:29 until 1998, but in 1999 it was 85:15 out of 48 associations, and 66:35 out of 66 associations, with increased civilian participation. Therefore, 7,290m of walls disappeared in just eighteen months, and 6,600 square yards of parks and green tracts of land were created to build open and public space that all citizens could enjoy.
To more effectively promote and disseminate this campaign, Daegu City authorities encouraged public institutions set examples so that other institutions and individual citizens would join in and voluntarily participate. The organizational structure of the Love Daegu Movement is presented below. The Daegu City Mayor and the Economic Justice Practice Association’s representative play the role of co-chairman, and there are 123 participating associations in this movement.

![Organizational Structure of the Love Daegu Movement](image.png)

In addition to the leading executive agencies, the Love Daegu Campaign Council also includes hospitals, religious institutions, schools and public institutions, and these organizations have aided in the renovation of main streets and buildings.

However, the actual work of tearing down walls was not easy because it meant breaking the border between properties and therefore threatening a sense of privacy. In order to induce voluntary participation, Daegu City authorities provided citizens who demolished their walls with financial aid, free refuse disposal, and free gardening design advice. The amount of financial aid was 3 million won, and this was to encourage passive citizens to participate and gain an appreciation for the movement.

Additionally, the self-administrative office in Daegu City Hall installed a help center for the Tearing-Down-Walls campaign to provide information related to wall demolition and support. The Working Committee and Secretariat, composed of experts, offered advice to citizens about breaking down walls and planting gardens. Trees and gardening supplies were also provided to participants.

To proliferate this campaign more effectively, a “Tearing-Down-Walls Award” is being offered to encourage further voluntary participation. Also, a “Supporting Ordinance of the Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign” has been prepared to better establish and maintain consistent administration services from the Daegu City government.

This Tearing-Down-Walls campaign in Daegu City has been developed to restore the sense of community within the city and to improve the city’s overall image. Many agencies started this campaign voluntarily, and public institutions are encouraged to participate.
5. Effectiveness

This Tearing-Down-Walls movement can be highly praised as an environmental initiative. In addition to the basic objective of community rebuilding, this movement has also brought about the additional benefits of significant environmental improvements, including alleviating air pollution and increasing green tracts of land. This article will describe the environmental aspects of the campaign’s effectiveness.

*Alleviating air pollution*

Daegu is very warm in summer because radiant heat is trapped between the surrounding mountains. The typical urban environment of the city further aggravates the level of air pollution. Local city officials as well as the central government are working hard to alleviate the level of air pollution in Daegu.

The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign is being studied to see how it may address the problem of air pollution. However, the effectiveness of the Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign in abating air pollution, aside from other local and national environmental policies, cannot be measured separately.

Then again, it can be conjectured that the flow of air could possibly be hindered by the walls in the city. The city of Stuttgart in Germany is such an example of this related environmental problem. In Stuttgart, green tracts of land were created in the pathways of airflow, and wind barriers were removed to help ease the air pollution problem. The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign in Daegu can also be understood in the same light. Walls were obstacles in the way of natural airflow, and eliminating them helped contribute to reclaiming the city’s fresh air.
In addition to this quantitative data, the overall response of citizens has been very positive. Data gathered by the Ministry of Statistics shows that the negative response to the air pollution levels in Daegu decreased from 72.6% in 1997 to 56.3% in 2001.

An increase of green tracts of land

To requisition a site for green tracts of land in an urban area was not easy because of the high value of real estate; so tearing down walls became an alternative method to guarantee room for green tracts of land in the city. With the cooperation of Daegu’s citizens, the creation of green tracts of land progressed with a minimal administrative budget.

Table 9 shows that the park area per person in 1999 in Daegu was 30.1 m², which is an increase of 58.4% over the previous year’s level.

Reclaiming a Sense of Community

The effects of modern society have greatly influenced the manner in which communities now organize themselves in order to serve the common good. Modern communities are now comprised of people with a wide variety of skills, professions and social backgrounds. This is very different from the way...
communities had traditionally been formed in the past.

The Tearing-Down-Walls campaign in Daegu City contributed significantly to modern community creation. Destroying walls has not only entailed demolishing physical barriers, but also ridding the community of emotional obstacles that exist between people. Tearing down walls helps greatly to restore a spirit of cooperation.

An analysis of hourly daily living data presented earlier in this article has not been prepared. However, Kwon (2001) conducted a survey of 220 citizens in Daegu City to indirectly show the evidence of community creation by the Tearing-Down-Walls campaign.

In this survey, 201 people (91.4%) out of 220 enthusiastically supported the campaign. The main goal of this campaign was to create an open society. The main reason that the people survey supported the campaign was that it enabled the city’s citizens “to have the opportunity of living in an open society,” which accounted for 24.4% of replies. Other responses included: improving scenery of the streets, building resting places and green tracts of land.

<Table 10> Reasons why citizens supported the campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Ratio (%)</th>
<th>Effective Ratio (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To create scenery on the street</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create resting places</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create green tracts of land</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve access</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a pleasant walking environment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have the opportunity of living in an open society</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53.6% responded positively to the idea of participating in the campaign and 34.1% were neutral. If the administration took effective public awareness measures, the number of positive responses could be expected to rise.

<Table 11> Intention of Participation in the Campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Impacts

Other outcomes of this campaign included the improvement of urban scenery, revival of a spirit of cooperation, unity of the residents, and the improvement of the overall urban environment. The Tearing-Down-Walls campaign has developed into a movement for beautifying the town environment and making it a pleasant place to live and do business. The cooperative spirit of the campaign, moreover, has changed the way urban planning is being done. Instead of the traditional top-down, government-led approach, this campaign started and has progressed as a result of a bottom-up, grass-roots community movement. This campaign has also been a vehicle through which residents could unite. Parks created after the campaign are not just physical spaces, but also serve the community as a place for cultural exchange. Those parks act as a mediator for restoring the community.

6. Lessons learned

Any change made to a city depends upon the people living within it. The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign in Daegu City is a very good example of this proposition. A single citizen committed his idea of ecology
and sparked a dramatic change to the conventions of society, and this developed into a newly found appreciation for ecologically pleasing urban areas. Volunteer organizations and other citizens associations were also very important during the voluntary process. An event that could have been a solitary incident developed into a pan-citizen movement and changed a city and reclaimed its community.

Three lessons can be derived by this campaign: a new sense of citizenship can be realized which can curtail negative ingrained conventions; the crucial role that volunteer organizations can play; and the importance of the will of government institutions.

First, one can learn from a new sense of citizenship that can abolish anachronistic conventionalities seen from the Daegu example. Walls had been constructed to fend off intruders, to demarcate the boundary of one’s property, and to secure one’s privacy. In other words, building walls caused a feeling of interruption, defensiveness, distrust, and alienation. It took one citizen to break this cycle and transform a social landscape. A citizenship which had previously been regarded as passive and having a wait-and-see attitude was the seed of a change for the city’s environment and culture. The Tearing-Down-Walls Campaign, initiated by a single citizen, developed into an urban spirit of linking, trust, and sharing.

Second, the guiding role of volunteer organizations is a lesson to be learned from the Daegu experience. The Tearing-Down-Walls campaign could be developed into a pan-citizen movement because of the roles of citizen-led volunteer organizations. Such organizations were central to the promotion of the Love Daegu and the Tearing-Down-Walls movements. The role of the volunteer organizations triggered the participation of citizens and local governments. Namely, it was the power of the volunteer organizations that propelled the movement to success. When a local government tries to lead any kind of movement or project to success, it is very important to utilize the resources of the local volunteer organizations and support them.

Third, the will of the local government is very important. This Tearing-Down-Walls campaign was the adoption of one citizen’s private action, and the overall spread of the campaign was supported by the local government administrations and financial aid of the city authorities. Moreover, many administrative and public institutions voluntarily participated in the campaign. The strong commitment of the local government for public awareness campaigns to change the minds of citizens and widen the campaign successfully proved significant.

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