



Street panthers in action_ Thessaloniki, Greece.

The Street Panthers are a group who prowl the streets of the major Greek cities, slapping the vehicles of parking violators with orange stickers depicting a donkey in a car above the message, I park wherever I want . They surged from the fact of Running Out of Space to Park and Places to Walk



Background & Objectives

In Greece, the concerns and rights of pedestrians are widely disregarded. Step on a sidewalk or try crossing any street here, and chances are you'll instantly feel like the prey of a safari hunt, claims the Hellenic Association of Road Traffic Victim Support. This is the only place in Europe where the golden traffic rule that pedestrians have the unconditional right of way is so brazenly disrespected.

In Greek cities, big or small, swarms of scooters race down crowded sidewalks. Pedestrians struggle to circumnavigate construction debris, torn-up pavement and mounds of refuse. The greatest impediment, however, is the fleet of vehicles that each day mounts the cities' tree-lined sidewalks or other walkways to park.

In contrast to the patterns observed in other Countries of Western Europe, household car ownership levels in urban areas of Greece are much higher than those recorded in rural areas. With an estimated two million vehicles, the city of Athens has the European Union's highest per capita car ownership with 450 cars registered for every 1,000 residents. Street panthers are a Greek group which decided to bring driver cars to reason by slapping their cars with a smart sticker. The stickers are depicting a donkey in a car above the message, I park wherever I want . The aim of this action is to remind car drivers that pavements are for pedestrians and that they should walk rather than drive their cars.

Implementation

Street panthers started in the end of 2006 in Thessaloniki and their activities were dispersed rapidly in all over Greece. The explanation for the I-park-where-I-want-and-I-don't-care-about-anyone phenomenon is rather simple.

The donkey is a self-adhesive reminder for inconsiderate drivers to respect those who commit the unforgivable crime of walking. The ignorant cannot see the crosswalks. The pedestrian, crosswalks, and walking genes do not exist in their brain. They stop and park their cars, as if pedestrians were see-through. After the sticker is placed though, they start complying! Since their start, Street panthers have created a series of such creative stickers and more than 250,000 stickers have been distributed.

Other stickers bring the message Do not park in a handicapped area for your CONVENIENCE. Try to take their position to see what DIFFICULTY means

More info about Street panthers can be found in their website: www.streetpanthers.gr

Conclusions

In the last year alone, the most innovative display of activism has sprung from the Streetpanthers, a band of thirtysomethings who under cover of night prowl the streets of Athens and Thessaloniki, the two largest cities in Greece slapping the vehicles of egregious parking violators with Day-Glo orange stickers depicting a donkey in a car above the message, I park wherever I want . Now people in more Greek cities are joining this initiative and as a result, after being slapped with a sticker, cases of violations are definitely on the decline.

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Posted: 08-12-2008