

The social research of public spaces (squares, streets, neighbourhoods...), semi-public spaces (bars, small trade venues, other local organisations...), and of the urban frameworks, which together form many groups of informal sport, is an alternative route to understanding some aspects of the everyday in the city. (...) They serve to bring social cohesion to an area and a neighbourhood and have an integrating and identity-giving character among the local atmosphere.

Maza G. (2003): "El deporte del bar"

### **What is a Meeting Place?**

"This is the motivation of people (who meet in public spaces): later they get together for other things, maybe during the mushroom season, they meet there and collect mushrooms or meet to go for a bike ride together or they might organise a Christmas dinner. That is to say, this can be seen as a social club at another level, albeit smaller scale.

(user of Parc del Clot)

- A meeting place is not a sports club.
- A meeting place is not an information centre, even though it may communicate much informal information.
- A meeting place is not an institutional location.
- A meeting place is a flexible, non-bureaucratic location.
- A meeting place is a place where people find recognition.
- A meeting place is a place in which sporting activities can help the hybridisation and the self-development of everyday cultures.

MAZA, G. (2002): "Sport as a meeting place with foreign immigration"

### **At meeting places social networks that practice sport can be found.**

According to John Barnes (2003) a social network is a field in which each person is in contact with a number of other people, some of which have direct contacts and other do not. We can represent this in the following way:

"It is evident that many sporting activities find their support in a social network and

friends and acquaintances. We can speak of a social network of friends when we have a gathering of people united by connections of different types: affective, of work, of commitment, and similarly of sport (members of a club or of a weekend activity etc.)”.

Maza, G. “The social capital of sport”, p.45.

### **Which are the social networks that exist in the public spaces of the city?**

In total 62 social networks in 30 public spaces (parks and squares) of the city were studied: Some 2,200 people, of which less than 500 are women.

### **What sports do they practice?**

#### **Family networks**

Groups of children accompanied by their mothers or fathers, who use public spaces during weekends or afternoons of weekdays, to practice sporting activities of an informal and ludic nature.

They practice sports of a recreational form (rollerblading, skating, scooter, table tennis, ball, cycling, frontón, basketball, volleyball etc.) and the game reinforces the family connections.

#### **Friendship networks**

Networks of people constituted by their friendship connections (working, ludic, neighbourly, student, immigration, etc.).

These networks can reinforce connections of friendship, originating new or breaking old relations.

Below we show three specific examples of friendship networks of students.

#### **Friendship network**

**of young people and teenagers who practice *Skateboarding*.**

## **Network Characteristics**

- Teenagers and young people.
- Majority masculine.
- “Locals”: Neighbourhood, Barcelona.
- Visitors: Barcelona, other regions and foreigners.
- Diversity of professions and education.
- Use a diversity of spaces and meeting places. Much movement between spaces.

## **Network Function**

- To belong to a collective.
- Relationships between male teenagers and young people.
- Way of life / social distinction.
- Sports practice
- Tourism

“Its and individual sport (...) The majority of skaters don't call each other to meet up. You go to a site and you know who is going to be there. This is an incredible individuality (...) We are nomads. Equally I might find you here or at the ramp at the next town. The general rule is that I go there and later I make plans”

(Skater, resident of Barcelona)

“The good thing about skate is that even though I don't know you at all, I open the door for you. At least I'll say, “Hello, how's it going” o we'll raise eyebrows in acknowledgement of each other. I make out as if you are part of the clan, but I don't even know anything about you. (...) Maybe I'll see you on two separate days or maybe I'll never see you again.”

(Skater, resident of Barcelona)

## **Network of older people who practice Tanguilla**

### **Network Characteristics**

- Predominantly older people.
- Only males.
- Mainly proceeding from the same hometown (Soria).

### **Network Function**

- Cultural identity connected to the place of provenance.
- Masculine socialisation.
- Friendship connections.

## **Network of adults and older people who practice Frontón**

### **Network Characteristics**

- Young people, adults and older people
  - Only males.
  - Diversity of professions.
  - Maintenance of the installations.
- **Network Function**
  - Social Capital.
  - Health and Sport.
  - **Masculine socialisation.**

“Originally, this was a cinema and what is now the wall surface was set in place by those who first started to come here (for frontón), and then the railing was painted by us”.

(regular user, Parc of Clot)

“Every so often we gather some money between us and we paint it (...). And this, it was repaired by the park management (Parcs i Jardins). They came because, obviously, this for us is very difficult (to fix) and they brought a lorry and they have repaired it. We put in a request for it from them.

(regular user, frontón, Parc de les Aigües)

## **Spaces with informal sporting practice: central o segregated spaces**

Central space appropriated for the informal practice of *skateboarding*.

PLAÇA DELS ÀNGELS

Practice integrated in a central space.

PARC DEL CLOT

Segregated space, appropriated for the informal practice of *skateboarding*.

PLAÇA DELS PAÏSOS CATALANS

Accumulated practice in a segregated space.

PARC JOAN MIRÓ

**Sport in public space is *social capital*.**

What is social capital?

Social capital may be considered when, to a greater or lesser extent, networks of social relations are found, of contacts, friendships, prestige, circulations of favours etc., which within a determined society, can combine to contribute as much value, or even more, than a university title.

The existence of social capital can emerge via civic participation, or connection with other, religious, political, work, neighbourly or sports groups.

(Gaspar Maza, 2004: Social Capital and Sport)