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Public spaces, in the plural

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'A bridge is a man crossing a bridge'
(*Libro de Manuel*, Julio Cortázar)

The image of cities as promises of integration and freedom is faced with more and more difficulties. On the one hand, cities are the setting for difference, inequality and disconnection. Yet, at the same time, it is in cities that we express our desire to live together, in diversity and on an equal basis. With autonomy and interdependence. That is why we speak of the right to the city, not only in its territorial and physical dimension but also in the personal and community sense. We talk about the right to public space, not just in the form of infrastructure, squares or bridges but fundamentally as the right to cross it, pass through it, inhabit it. In short, we talk about the right to meet.

Public space is plural. We talk about public spaces, in the plural. A shop, a football pitch, a recreation centre or a Social Services centre all have a public dimension. They could be really public, everyday, local places, as the projects you can read about below show us. They are all projects in the Experiences and Good Practices Bank of Barcelona City Council's Area of Social Rights.¹ One of the aims of this bank is to offer opportunities for spreading the activity involved in these experiences and the knowledge they generate by practising them. Consequently, it is the very people behind the projects who have written the articles presented here in this part of the magazine *Barcelona Societat*. What are these practices?

ESFORSA'T (Esport, Formació, Salut i Temps Lliure - Sport, Training, Health and Free Time) is a project that works with young people in the Bon Pastor and Baró de Viver neighbourhoods, promoting healthy leisure activities in an effort to reduce risk indicators such as isolation or taking drugs. Starting from the needs of the area, working with various professionals and adopting a community approach with group activities, the ESFORSA'T project promotes inclusion and connection through different public spaces, ranging from the streets to neighbourhood facilities.

Comerç Amic sense Barreres (CASBA - Friendly Shop with no Barriers) is a sensitisation and training project that targets architecture students, shops and the general public, promoting better accessibility in local shops and more independence for people with functional diversity. It is based on the educational approach of service learning and links the various stakeholders that might intervene in public spaces with the aim of facilitating access to them. CASBA shows us, therefore, that certain private spaces, such as shops, can have a public side.

¹ <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/ca/banc-de-bones-practiques>

Finally, there is 'Vincular x educar' [[Link to educate](#)], a community project set up to further the education process of children and improve the link families have with schools and educational leisure associations in the neighbourhood. It is based on schools working with Social Services to help children take part in local recreation centres and Scout groups (*esplais* and *caus*) 'Vincular x educar' shows us that public space is not limited to its physical dimension. It is also a social space and an educational space. In the words of Richard Sennet, it is the place where two strangers meet. Working to facilitate access to it and ensure children are better equipped to participate in it is essential.

So, I will leave you with three significant experiences that build that public space. I hope you enjoy reading about them.