CALL FOR MASTER THESIS

Park use preferences and physical activity among ethnic minority populations in low-income neighborhoods in North Carolina (US).

Project framework:

This MSc thesis is offered within the GEMOTT (Grup d'Estudis en Mobilitat Transport i Territori) research group, within the UAB's Geography Department in collaboration with the Center for Geospatial Analytics, North Carolina State University (NCSU) .

Research Background:

Urban parks provide a large variety of environmental and recreational benefits for children and adults. One of the most important is providing open spaces for physical activity (PA). Neighborhood parks are at the center of current efforts to increase physical activity. It is well documented that regular physical activity (PA) among children leads to better health outcomes including improved weight status, bone health, muscular fitness, and cardiovascular fitness as well as enhanced mental health and cognition. Urban parks offer a broad range of opportunities for children's recreation and physical activity. Park use patterns however are not equal in terms of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In order to design policies to improve park design and to provide healthy park experiences among children of communities of color, insight on park use patterns is needed.

Objectives:

Using data from a large study using the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC), systematic observations were conducted in 20 parks located in North Carolina in 2018, located in low-income areas with high presence of Latino or African-American residents. More than 10.000 park users were counted and their physical activity and socioeconomic characteristics recorded. Information on the built environment and park quality was also gathered. The data allows for multiple analysis that will explore the links between park use, race/ethnicity and physical activity in recreation settings.

Methods:

The student will use quantitative methods to analyze a large dataset of park visits. Potentially, the student will also have available GIS data on parks surroundings and neighborhood characteristics.

Technical details:

The thesis will be directed by Dr. Oriol Marquet. This topic entails working in collaboration with the Center of Geospatial Analytics at NCSU. We expect that a revised version of the MSc Thesis will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication. The final document must be presented in English.

If you are interested on writing your MSc thesis on this topic, please contact oriol.marquet@uab.cat