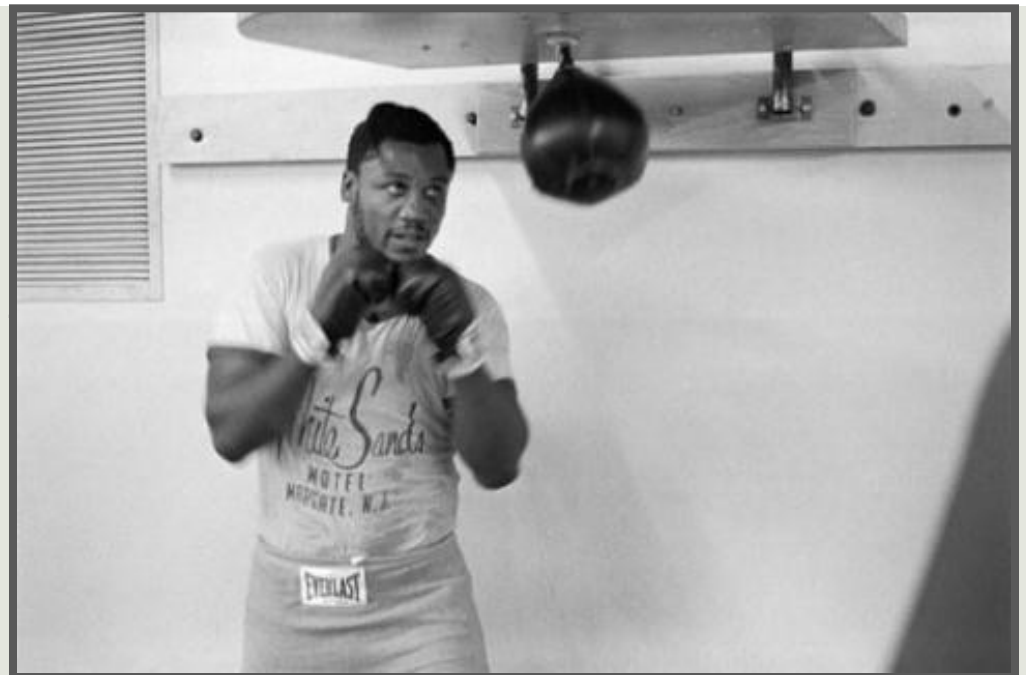


Boxing and Urban Cultures

'Box Club Žižkov '

SOC280: Lecture V



Box Club Žižkov

- Founded in 1994 by Stanislav Tišer, a once successful amateur Roma boxer
- Explicit social function: dedicated to disadvantaged adolescents, especially the Roma, but also the general public—all social classes, races, education levels, ages and gender—to build social relations and foster integration of socially disadvantaged.
- Tišer through the years (photos)

Box Club Žižkov and Urban Youth Development

- Tišer's social reasons for starting the club:
- 'I started the club because I saw little guys just running in the parks, some of them were even already junkies. So I thought it would be good for them to do something, and in 1994 I rented a gym in Žižkov on Cimburkova street...I started only with Roma. The first day we there were about fifty kids, but it gradually diminished'.

Box Club Žižkov

- Like most urban boxing gyms, Boxing Club Žižkov was thus established as a kind of site of sociability to which local urban neighborhood youths were drawn for a variety of socio-economic reasons.
- In contexts of profound social anomie and disrespect, boxing gyms in such neighborhoods characteristically appear as islands of social stability, connectivity, and recognition.
- <http://www.boxclub.cz/index.html>

Box Club Žižkov

- Žižkov and its contemporary urban environment
- Gentrification processes and the displacement and whitening of the gym and its milieu
- Contrast with Badlands history
- Photos

Box Club Žižkov and Ethnicity

- Excerpts of interviews with Mr. Tišer:
- 'Our club is different. Here we have Slovaks, Hungarians, English, French, Venezuelan, Canadian, Irish, Ukrainians, Russians. Many nationalities and no problems. The key is that these people come to my gym and they want to learn something, they communicate with each other. As the time flows by, they get to know each other, they talk to each other and get along. When you close the door of that club racism does not exist...'

Box Club Žižkov and Ethnicity

- Excerpts of interviews with Mr. Tišer:
- Tišer: 'In the beginnings [of the club] I had only Roma kids. Forty or fifty of them—boys and girls—and I started with them. Two years after that there was the first white boy. And after that things began to change. More white guys and less blacks (Roma)...'
- JL: 'Why so'?
- Tišer: 'Roma kids don't have the will. They cannot stick with something. They try it and then go somewhere else. No one from these gypsy kids I used to train stayed on [in the club] ... Our people just do not have the will, the responsibility. Not yours: whites. Ours: Roma...'

Box Club Žižkov and Violence

- Excerpts of interviews with Mr. Tišer:
- *'Boxing is sport not just fighting. It is an art. Everything: wing-chu, thaibox, kung-fu starts with glove-fight. It is beautiful when someone can dance in the ring. The upper-cuts, various punches, but it is about thinking in the ring as well. Quick thinking. You do your set, you slow down, wait and repeat. Second thing is if someone's got courage, to be not afraid is better for boxers. Anyway, if he doesn't, you can always teach him to have it. Even the boy who wouldn't ever seem to get into ring, he trains and after a year he goes there alone. Everything can be taught. Once I had a boy here. He was no earthly good at any sport, but in the end he became a competitive fighter. The thing is you have to go to classes regularly.... {pausing to think...} You know...when I was young I was fighting in the streets all the time. But when I started boxing I stopped...'*

Box Club Žižkov and Social Recognition

- Excerpts of interviews with Mr. Tišer:
- *'I was small and black. Everyone dared to threaten me, although I would win. I would just punch the guy and he would fall down. Nevertheless the thing is I fell in love with boxing. I wanted to win. I loved the fans cheering, showing respect. In one moment I was someone. Do you understand? When you see all the fans that is fascinating. People recognize you on the streets, in the restaurants. They know who you are...'*