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## **Interview Ángeles Contreras, social integrator of the socio-educational center Díaz Pintado, 06.09.2023**

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### **COULD YOU EXPLAIN YOUR POSITION, THE MISSIONS AND THE GENERAL WORK OF BARRIS INCLUSIVUS?**

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I am Ángeles, a senior technician in social integration, which is done through the Grado Superior, and I occupy a position as a senior technician within Barrios Inclusivos. Inclusive Neighbourhoods is a programme that is part of social services, in basic primary care. It carries out community action. In my programme, they could work as a social integrator or as a sociocultural animator). Normally there are two professionals per programme, in this case there is only me.

The actions we carry out are community dynamisation, development of social skills, development of work skills, creation of intergenerational and cultural links, and improving the quality of life of the neighbourhood, through activities usually free of charge, that cover the needs of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

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### **ARE THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES DECIDED BY THE DÍAZ PINTADO CENTRE, OR ARE THEY DECIDED JOINTLY WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD? ARE THE PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ASKED ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES THEY WOULD LIKE TO CARRY OUT?**

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Before starting the project, you do have to know the needs of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants: what resources there are in the neighbourhood, the needs of the inhabitants, the neighbours, what type of population it is, because depending on the programmes, there may be more elderly people, or more migrants, or more Roma people. In this neighbourhood, there is a predominance of Roma people, 50-60%, and older people in the rest. It is more or less balanced. Because the 613 dwellings is a neighbourhood that was built with industrialisation in the 60s and 70s, and the people came to get work, these people have already aged and are the "lifelong" people of the neighbourhood.

Generally speaking, the population of the neighbourhood has a rather limited economy.

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**AS YOU SAID THAT THE POPULATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IS 50% ROMA POPULATION AND 50% OLDER POPULATION, HOW ARE THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES DISTRIBUTED? DO YOU ORGANISE 50% FOR THE ELDERLY AND 50% FOR THE ROMA POPULATION?**

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The activities are organised according to the resources we have. We tend to focus more on the Roma population and young people, because in the end they are the people who are most at risk of social exclusion or social exclusion. At the end of the day, older people need support that can be provided by other resources.

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**CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE BEEN DONE DURING THE 2023 ACADEMIC YEAR, OR SINCE YOU HAVE BEEN WORKING HERE?**

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Little has been done this year. As I have been on sick leave, it has come to a standstill.

Barris Inclusius has carried out the video game design project, the Roma Day, the 2nd Health Fair, the 2nd Petanque Tournament and the crochet activity. The activity was open to the whole population, but a workshop was created, a meeting point, where women came to socialise with the ultimate goal of making a crochet Christmas tree that can be enjoyed in the Town Hall of the Town Hall.

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**AND ACTIVITIES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, OTHER THAN VIDEO GAMES?**

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This year nothing has been done, but last year there was a pétanque tournament, open to the whole population, but it is true that mainly gypsies signed up, mostly men between 18 and 50 years old. There were also 16 year olds, but they were not the majority. We have done two, and now we are going to see if we can do another one, depending on the resources available. And then there was a FIFA tournament, which was more focused on minors, young people.

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**WHEN THINKING ABOUT THESE ACTIVITIES, HAS THERE BEEN A MEETING BEFORE WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE, HAVE THEY BEEN ASKED THEIR POINT OF VIEW ABOUT THE KIND OF ACTIVITIES THEY WOULD LIKE TO DO, WHICH WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THEM?**

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Just for the FIFA tournament, no meeting has been held, the idea comes from the workers of the centre. If the idea works, we go ahead, if after the diffusion, not many people have signed up, we cancel the activity and nothing happens, we also have this freedom.

## Interview Ángeles Contreras, social integrator at socio-educational center Diaz Pintado

Generally speaking, we need to adjust to the resources we have, for example the work activity that was planned at the beginning of the year can be affected by the lack of personnel, so it is not possible to cover as much as we want. And in terms of the number of activities we carry out, we prefer to carry out fewer activities, but with a greater impact on society).

One thing I haven't mentioned before is that we organised the Day of the Roma People.

The colleagues from Kumpania, who work with Roma people from primary school, or first cycle, collaborated with us.

As a result of them, we were in contact with the centre, and we set up a stand at the street market to raise awareness about the Roma community.

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### HAVE YOU HAD PROPOSALS OR REQUESTS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE TO ORGANISE ACTIVITIES?

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Normally, they either go to the Concierge and then the staff informs the professionals". And also, as the centre is twelve years old, the population knows the workers, so it is easy for them to approach and ask for activities or resources.

They come and propose activities to the staff and depending on the resource they are referred or try to meet their needs. This is a small town and the neighbourhood has approximately 3000 people, so it is not unusual for them to come to the social centres looking for information or to talk directly to the council staff.

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### IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY?

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Young Roma men have more freedom than young Roma women in almost everything. So, if they don't participate, it's usually out of embarrassment, or because they're not interested, or because they don't know about it and think they won't like the activity.

Most of these young people are gypsies, and at the age of 18 they may already have a family. So, they have to go and pick up the child, do the shopping, the food... so they spend their free time doing something else. They have other priorities.

Then there is also the issue of prejudice: "What will they say if I go to this activity?" What will they say if, as a Roma person, I sign up for an activity for the Roma population, or if I am a girl and I sign up for the petanque tournament? These prejudices are still there.

We have thought about creating activities only for girls, but there was no consensus within the team, so in the end it wasn't done. In general, the participation of Roma women, voluntarily and freely, is very low.

**BUT THERE IS ALSO A ROMA ASSOCIATION IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD, ISN'T THERE?**

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The associative fabric of this neighbourhood does not work. They have been given the spaces, but the organisations are not active.

Participation used to be a little more notable, but with the COVID issue, the associations have left the neighbourhood, they have even moved to other cities, and they have stopped doing activities. Some organisations were given a space, but even if they are not doing activities, it is difficult to remove them from these premises.

There is the residents' association, which is doing something, but it's more related to paperwork and procedures, not much more. Then there is a gypsy association, but I don't really know what they do. When it comes to carrying out activities, there is no coordination with this association, there is no support.

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**IN GENERAL, IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN A CAUSE, OR A SOCIAL PROJECT IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, BUT WOULD YOU SAY THAT BEFORE COVID YOU COULD FIND THIS FORM OF PARTICIPATION?**

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There used to be a football team and a youth sports association for young people, but between the fact that the sports centre is in ruins and the Covid, it started to disintegrate and stopped working, I don't really know if it stopped working before or after the Covid.

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**AND HOW DO YOU THINK THIS YOUTH ACTIVITY COULD BE REACTIVATED, AND THAT THERE COULD BE MORE ACTIVITIES FOR THEM?**

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The burden is not only on Barris Inclusius, because in the end, there is space for associations, but it is in disuse, maybe if this space is available again, activities could be reactivated.

What else could be done? Subsidies? Yes, but I wouldn't change everything either, because you may have subsidies to organise a course, but people don't come. It would be necessary to re-educate, perhaps to raise awareness, in the long term.

Another thing is the rotation within the team of professionals; since I've been here, for a year and a half, I haven't been able to get close to many associations in the neighbourhood, maybe if someone else comes in now, I would have to take up all this work again and start all over again.

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There is no good coexistence or relationship between the organisations in the neighbourhood. We do want to organise a joint activity, which would be the pretext for bringing the organisations together: to organise an activity such as a blood donation, for example, and for the associations to join forces.

We would also like to create a crochet association, we are going to see if the women would be willing to create an association, and that they would have more autonomy, and another one for petanque. The idea would be to encourage them to create the association, give them space, and then gradually start to let them go. The idea would be to launch the dynamic in the neighbourhood, and that based on this, other people would be encouraged to create associations, and that this would come from the citizens.

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**DO YOU KNOW IF THIS EXISTS, IF THERE ARE SOME YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE A ROLE OF "LEADER" OR PROTAGONIST IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD?**

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Yes, there are some who could have this role, but their employment situation is precarious, their economy is precarious. Most of them have already started a family, so they don't have time to lead this kind of process. First they have to cover their basic needs. If they had a stable economy, a job with decent hours, perhaps they would dedicate themselves more to the associative fabric. In their free time, they tend not to be very active and prioritise activities to relax, which is totally understandable.

However, the lack of responsibility is more noticeable than before. Before, they had more of this type of responsibility, they didn't mind having it. Now a young person doesn't want to have this responsibility, when 20 years ago they would have had it. As the years go by we notice that young people no longer want to have this kind of responsibility and engage in these activities.

This can be explained on the one hand by the fact that when the neighbourhood was created, the population was more committed to its development, to promoting coexistence. When the neighbourhood was created, everything was new. Now there is a tendency to think "why am I going to do this if this space is full of rubbish", or "I'm not going to do that if nobody does anything". It's like a vicious circle, it's hard to get started.

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**DO YOU ADDRESS THE 3 PILLARS OF THE EU STRATEGY "INCLUSION, SUSTAINABILITY AND DIGITALISATION" IN YOUR WORK?**

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In the activities, they are all for inclusion. We also try to raise awareness on sustainability issues, no waste, take care of the use of light, try to be sustainable in this sense.

As far as digitalisation is concerned, if the activity requires it, yes. For the crochet activity, of course not, but when it comes to the FIFA tournament, we do use digital resources.

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We still tend to register for activities manually, on paper, because the Town Council doesn't provide the resources to do it any other way, and it's quicker that way.

Díaz Pintado does organise workshops or courses focused on carrying out administrative procedures online, very practical things.

Now we want to launch training sessions on registering for the Labora service, another on how to obtain a digital certificate, etc., very practical things. We also discussed the possibility of making 2 computers available to citizens, mainly to make it easier to carry out online procedures.

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### WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NEEDED FROM CURRENT POLICIES (AT LOCAL, REGIONAL OR NATIONAL LEVEL TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION?)

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First of all, policies must be able to be adapted to the local reality. You can develop the idea of an incredible project, but an idea that would be relevant for the neighbourhood of Paterna –*another municipality of the Valencian Metropolitan area*- is not relevant for the neighbourhood of 613 Viviendas in Burjassot. It is necessary to know the neighbourhood well, the group on which the action is going to focus, and their needs. The actions must be very much adapted to the local context. We have to make a monograph of what the inhabitants need. And then, the policy must be comprehensive, not only considering economic aspects, but also the resources in terms of the personnel necessary to carry out the activity.

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A lot of monitoring and evaluation is also very important, and if you see that something is not working, instead of removing the activity, try to rectify and improve what is there. It is important to try to provide continuity in the offers and support being provided, rather than very one-off activities. Continuity is key.

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**BUT IN THIS CENTRE, THERE IS CONTINUOUS ACTIVITY / OFFERS, WHAT WOULD THE DAY CENTRE FOR MINORS BE LIKE, RIGHT?**

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Yes, the day centre, focused on primary and secondary school, there is continuity, they know the families, the social context.

But when it comes to community dynamisation, suddenly there is nothing in the neighbourhood, or they don't hire anyone and so no activities are organised; or they hire a person, and if that person leaves, when someone else comes in and has to get used to the functioning and dynamics of the neighbourhood, that continuity is broken. It's as if everything is starting all over again.

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**HAS THERE BEEN AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IN TERMS OF QUALITY OF LIFE, SOCIAL COHESION, SINCE THE CENTRE HAS EXISTED?**

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I wouldn't know. There is also a lot of underground economy. Maybe the people in the neighbourhood are working, but in the black economy, with precarious jobs and a lot of instability.

In addition, there is still a lot of youth unemployment. Inclusion income, in these neighbourhoods, is usually provided.

But it is necessary that these people can also work on social skills, or basic skills, so that they are prepared for the world of work, because it is no use if they get a job and in two months they find themselves on the street because they lack some basic skills.

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**IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT, WE ARE PREPARING MATERIALS TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITIES OF YOUTH ACTORS. BEYOND FINANCIAL RESOURCES, WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER USEFUL TO IMPROVE YOUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE?**

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I think that training is key, and local councils often offer training by the Diputación, which usually provides training. But it is relatively easy to be granted.

**WHAT WOULD BE, FOR YOU, THE BEST WAY TO GET THAT INFORMATION?**

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We usually inform ourselves about the activities we are going to carry out, train ourselves, but I would read a manual, because as it is a pdf, you go to the information you are really interested in. Video pills would also be good, but in my job, if I organise myself well, I do have time to look for information and research on some topics.