

The transition to a sustainable community, the case of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana

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Resumen– El trabajo analizará desde un punto de vista político y social las claves para la transición del pueblo de Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana (Barcelona, 7000 habitantes) hacia una comunidad más sostenible a nivel social, empezando por las medidas ya implementadas por el gobierno y proponiendo a partir de la situación actual un nuevo escenario con posibles innovaciones y mejoras.

Palabras clave– Administración Pública Deliberativa, Sostenibilidad, Cuádruple Hélice, Comunidad.

Abstract– The project will analyse the keys for the transition of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana (Barcelona, 7000 inhabitants) to a more socially sustainable community from a political and social point of view, starting from the already implemented measures by the government and proposing a new scenario with possible innovations and improvements.

Keywords– Deliberative Public Administration, Sustainability, Quadruple Helix, Community.

1 INTRODUCTION

This research study aims to comprehensively investigate the progress achieved by the present government of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana in critical areas that have been the subject of controversies within the local community. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the village's ongoing journey towards sustainability, with a particular emphasis on its social component, aiming to shed light on the advancements made and the challenges that still persist.

The paper will delve into an examination of five distinct areas that wield a significant impact on the daily lives of the inhabitants of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana. By scrutinizing these specific fields, a comprehensive understanding of the current state of affairs can be obtained, facilitating the identification of areas that require immediate attention and improvement. The key areas to be explored in this research include infrastructure, mobility, education, support for individuals with dependency, and youth-related concerns. Each of these areas plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of life experienced by the residents.

To provide a comprehensive analysis, each topic will be contextualized within the unique socio-political landscape of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana. By examining the interplay between these topics and the prevailing governance methods employed by the town council, a

deeper understanding of the underlying factors that have influenced progress, or lack thereof, can be gained.

Moreover, this research aims to address various related issues within each topic area to raise awareness of the challenges faced by the community. By critically evaluating these challenges, it becomes possible to formulate effective and feasible proposals that have the potential to address the identified issues and foster sustainable development within Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana.

Ultimately, this research tries to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding governance, sustainability, and social progress in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana. By conducting an in-depth analysis of the village's progress in the aforementioned key areas, this study aspires to provide valuable insights and recommendations to both policymakers and stakeholders, facilitating informed decision-making processes and contributing to the advancement of the community's well-being.

2 METHODOLOGY

Over the first two months of this project the goal was to gather as much information as possible about the current stance of the major local actors involved in these six topics, as well as visiting key areas in Santa Eulàlia to see the developments made by the government first hand.

The councilor of mobility was interviewed in depth about the current measures enforced by the government to benefit pedestrians, facilitate commuting, and reduce air and noise pollution. This interview also extended into a debate where these measures were analysed and a few new solutions were

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proposed.

Two of the members of the board of directors from the local entity Casal d'avis were also kind enough to voice their opinions on the current position where the elderly find themselves in a shorter interview. Research on Cooperativa APINDEP has been conducted to complete section 4.6.

The current state of the infrastructure was analysed by walking and biking around town and observing the difficulties that young kids, elders and people with reduced mobility could face when following the same paths that I did. This exercise was also an opportunity to ask questions to the people on the streets to get a general idea of what the main concerns were regarding the current government and their investments in infrastructure, youth and mobility.

A collaboration between the local high school, my classmate Jan Mollet and myself allowed us to create focus groups in order to carry out a school project guided by ourselves, that has also been used as a source to further analyze the general perception that the youth has about sustainability, governance and urban planning. The study of the group dynamics in the classroom, the questions raised during the initial lectures we gave and the end product of the projects themselves gave a whole new perspective and layer of depth to this article.

The project was initially proposed to us by our former art teacher, and we were delighted when the high school board warmly welcomed our idea. Their enthusiasm was palpable when they learned the reasons behind our visit a few years after we finished our secondary education.

Over the course of two weeks, we delivered a series of four lectures encompassing various topics, including the circular economy, sustainable architecture, eco-friendly urban planning, renewable energy, urban crops, sustainable urban drainage systems, last mile delivery, and good political practices. Following these informative sessions, the students were tasked with the challenge of designing a mixed-use skyscraper that incorporated a residential park alongside a public or private service area, while also incorporating a micro-hub specifically designed for bicycle deliveries. In order to infuse authenticity into their creations, we encouraged them to build narratives and stories that brought their buildings to life and allowed them to genuinely empathize with all potential users and seek alternative ways of making their lives less challenging through small but meaningful changes.

After a span of approximately six weeks, we revisited the students to observe the outcomes, and we were quite surprised by the wide range of ideas they had developed. Their designs effectively integrated the concepts and principles we had mentioned in the previous lectures, resulting in the creation of an entire city where they could envision themselves residing.

These methods were chosen because of the proximity that the community in Santa Eulàlia allows. A quantitative approach was discarded because in order to achieve a 90% confidence level in the results, a total of 261 people had to be surveyed, with the number raising to 365 people for a 95% confidence level. This number of responses was way too high to ensure that the results could be trusted, seeing as no more than 100 responses were realistically expected.

3 WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY?

A sustainable community is a community that can meet the needs of its present citizens without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainability involves balancing economic, environmental, and social factors in a way that ensures the long-term well-being of a community and its surrounding ecosystem.

Environmental sustainability is a concept that has gained increased attention in recent years. It is defined as the ability to maintain and improve the natural environment to meet the needs of our generation, without forgetting that we need to preserve our planet so that future generations can thrive. Environmental sustainability involves the conservation of natural resources, reduction of pollution and waste, and the development of sustainable practices to ensure the long-term health and well-being of the planet. It is a crucial aspect for the preservation of natural resources and the prevention of ecological harm. Failure to prioritize environmental sustainability can lead to the depletion of natural resources, increased pollution and waste, and negative impacts on human health and the environment. On the other hand, promoting environmental sustainability can improve the environmental quality, reduce the carbon footprint, and help maintain a healthier planet for current and future generations.

There are several strategies for promoting environmental sustainability. These include reducing waste and pollution, conserving natural resources, and promoting sustainable practices. Examples of sustainable practices include the use of renewable energy sources, reducing energy consumption, and sustainable transportation options such as biking, walking, and public transportation. Additionally, sustainable agriculture practices, such as crop rotation and soil conservation, can promote environmental sustainability.

Social sustainability is an important yet often overlooked aspect of sustainable development. It is defined as the ability of a community to promote social equity, inclusion, and cohesion. Social sustainability involves providing equal access to resources and services for all members of the community, promoting social justice and fairness. Social sustainability ensures that all members of the community have access to everything necessary to increase their quality of life and maintain it at a high standard, and it is absolutely essential for a thriving and inclusive community. Additionally, social sustainability fosters a sense of community belonging, which can improve social cohesion and reduce social isolation. A community lacking acceptable levels of social sustainability is more prone to social inequalities such as segregation, large socioeconomic disparities, or bias against certain social groups whether it be because of racial, age or gender factors amongst others.

Promoting social equity and inclusion, investing in community resources and services, and actively working to develop a sense of community belonging are necessary and vital things that a sustainable community must actively work for. Examples of strategies to achieve these goals include affordable housing, accessible transportation, and community centers that provide educational and social opportunities. Additionally, promoting diversity and

inclusion in hiring and business practices can also promote social sustainability.

Economic sustainability is the last, but just as important aspect of sustainable development. It is defined as the ability of a community to promote economic viability and stability while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and social well-being. A sustainable community's economic activities are not detrimental whatsoever to the environment or social well-being while also allowing for a sustainable economic growth, which can improve the standard of living for members of the community. Additionally, supporting local businesses can create jobs and promote economic vitality within the community.

As we can see, the three branches of sustainability that define a sustainable community are closely related and often work interdependently, so in order to achieve the status of a true sustainable community, none of these aspects can be overlooked or ignored.

4 SANTA EULÀLIA DE RONÇANA

Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana is a village situated in the province of Barcelona, in close proximity to the city of Granollers. It is conveniently connected to Barcelona through a bus line that traverses La Vall del Tenes, the region where the village is located. The commuting time from Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana to Barcelona is usually between half an hour and fifty minutes using either a private vehicle or bus. As of 2018, the village had a population of 7,192 inhabitants. Spanning an area of approximately 14.25 square kilometers, Santa Eulàlia has a modest land area, but it still has a low population density relative to the neighboring towns.

Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana is structured around a main road that connects Bigues i Riells, another town nestled within the Vall del Tenes region, all the way to Parets del Vallès, situated at the midpoint towards Barcelona. The road serves as the lifeline of the village, hosting most essential services and amenities, as well as the vast majority of leisure facilities. Meanwhile, the remaining expanse of land in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana is predominantly characterized by verdant fields, lush mediterranean forests, and residential urbanizations, where most of the population lives.

Within the community of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana, the population composition reveals significant demographic nuances. Specifically, the demographic distribution highlights that approximately 16% of the town's inhabitants are children under the age of fourteen, while 17% constitute the elderly population aged sixty-five and above. These statistics underscore the importance of addressing the needs and challenges associated with both ends of the age spectrum within the context of the town's governance and social development.

The presence of a considerable proportion of children in the community necessitates focused attention on matters related to education, healthcare, and overall well-being. As an integral part of society, children represent the future of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana and investing in their growth and development is crucial. Promoting inclusive and quality education, and fostering opportunities for skill development

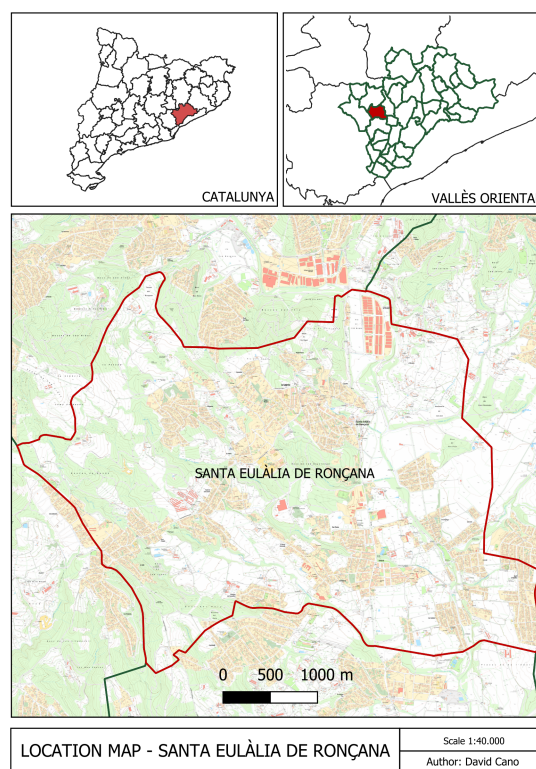


Fig. 1: Location Map

and out of the box thinking are vital steps towards nurturing a generation capable of contributing to the town's future prosperity.

Simultaneously, the sizable elderly population in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana calls for measures that address the specific needs and concerns of this demographic segment. Providing accessible healthcare services, implementing social welfare programs, and establishing support systems for the elderly are essential components of a comprehensive approach to ensuring their well-being and quality of life. Additionally, promoting social inclusion, combating loneliness and isolation, and offering recreational activities tailored to their interests can help foster a sense of belonging and fulfillment among the elderly residents.

Effectively addressing the needs of both children and the elderly within the governance framework of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana requires a multifaceted approach that recognizes the diverse challenges and opportunities associated with each group. It necessitates collaboration between relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and community organizations, to devise and implement tailored strategies and policies.

From a political point of view, the ruling party in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana for the past eight years has been a local group known as Poble Unit. Under their governance, the village has made significant strides in adopting sustainable practices. Notably, their most notorious achievement occurred during the latter part of 2020 and early 2021 when Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana secured the first position in Catalonia for the highest number of solar panels for self-consumption per 1000 inhabitants.

4.1 Deliberative public administration

Before the emergence of the Poble Unit party and their assumption of power, the town of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana was struggling with a sense of uncertainty and discontent due to the questionable state left by the former mayor, Joaquim Brustenga. The legacy of Brustenga's administration had left many residents disillusioned and dissatisfied, prompting a widespread call for a transformation in the governance of the town. It was in response to these pressing concerns that the Poble Unit party came to the forefront, bringing with them a vision of deliberative public administration.

Deliberative public administration encapsulates a governance method that emphasizes rational and inclusive decision-making processes to address societal challenges [Levin and Trost, 2012]. At its core, this form of public administration is centered around the application of deliberative democracy, wherein public representatives, experts, and citizens engage in informed discussions to reach consensus-based decisions. One of the main advantages this approach presents compared to its predecessors is that it recognizes the importance of diverse perspectives, encouraging active participation from all stakeholders to foster a more inclusive and democratic governance framework.

This approach entails structured deliberative processes that prioritize transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Public administrators, acting as facilitators, create environments that enable meaningful dialogue, exchange of ideas, and critical analysis. It encourages robust deliberation that considers the interests and values of all affected parties, striving for fairness and equity in the decision-making process. By engaging in inclusive deliberation, administrators aim to mitigate power imbalances, reduce inequalities, and foster public trust in governance institutions.

Moreover, deliberative public administration recognizes the significance of procedural justice. It underscores the importance of fair and transparent procedures in reaching decisions, ensuring that stakeholders perceive the process as legitimate and credible. This approach promotes procedural safeguards, such as equal opportunity for participation, respectful discourse, and consideration of dissenting opinions.

By adopting deliberative public administration, the local government in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana has proved to its citizens that they are trustworthy, and that they are willing to compromise part of their political power in benefit of a more collectively intelligent and democratic society. The proof that deliberative public administration is the best approach to governance in a sustainable community of these characteristics has been overwhelming. In their first reelection, Poble Unit went from a simple majority to an absolute majority. In their second reelection in May 2023, they obtained nearly 70% of the votes, obtaining 11 out of 13 available seats in the town council, only 3 votes shy of securing the 12th seat.

The most relevant examples of deliberative public administration techniques put in practice by the government in the last 4 years have primarily been citizen assemblies, participatory forums, and referendums.

Citizen assemblies are hosted by different public entities to allocate their yearly budgets, and to plan and propose activities. Casal d'avis hosts meetings weekly, and has a board of directors elected by the community in charge of executing and managing their activities. La Taka is a resource for the youth that the government provides which actively works in different dimensions to ensure a thriving community for teenagers and young adults. They offer job counseling services, they are the middle man between the government and the people who want to use public funds to organize events and activities in town, and most importantly they host a yearly assembly where anyone between the ages of 14 and 25 can vote how to spend the budget, and which of the aforementioned activities and events will take place the following year.

Participatory forums and referendums have gone hand in hand for the last few years. This deliberative approach was first tested to decide the new design of one of the main plazas in Santa Eulàlia which was in dire need of a renovation, and its success led to the process being repeated to reach a consensus on what to do with a failed kindergarten that had been abandoned for over a decade, which will soon become the new office for La Taka as a result of the voting.

These deliberative mechanisms have immensely helped strengthen democratic governance, transparency, accountability and fairness. After a clear erosion of the relationship between citizens and government in past legislatures, opting for innovative and open-minded political practices has been instrumental in recovering public satisfaction and trust in the administrative process.

4.2 The quadruple helix approach and citizen engagement

The concept of the quadruple helix refers to a collaborative approach to innovation and governance, encompassing four key stakeholders: government, academia, private companies, and civil society. This framework recognizes that active involvement and collaboration among these sectors can foster innovation, promote economic development, and advance societal progress [Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000].

Within the context of Poble Unit, their deliberative approach to governance has played a pivotal role in establishing a strong sense of community. By fostering an environment where all four stakeholders can work together towards shared objectives, Poble Unit has successfully cultivated a closer bond within the community.

An exemplary public entity that perfectly depicts the quadruple helix in action is Ronçana Comerç Actiu. Representing a significant portion of local businesses, this organization serves as a platform for two-way communication between the town hall and the economic engine of the village.

Academia also plays a crucial role in the decision-making processes in Santa Eulàlia. Not only does the government benefit from the expertise of their own professionals in various fields, but the opposition also includes highly qualified experts. Moreover, the deliberative public administration demonstrated by the government allows external experts to actively participate and give their points

of view in relevant issues.

Citizen engagement, a core component of the quadruple helix, emphasizes the involvement of individuals in shaping policies, projects, and initiatives that impact their lives and communities. This engagement aims to enhance democracy, transparency, and accountability by amplifying diverse perspectives and ensuring that decisions are made with the input and consent of the affected individuals and communities. Civil society, as a stakeholder within the quadruple helix framework, works hand in hand with citizen engagement to promote inclusive and participatory governance.

4.3 Infrastructure

One persistent issue voiced by the residents of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana has been the lack of investment in infrastructure development and repair, specifically in urbanizations far away from the town's heart. This concern has resonated amongst the community, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure to address their needs effectively.

Numerous grievances have been raised regarding the state of roads, which often exhibit signs of wear and tear, potholes, and insufficient maintenance. Some roads are occasionally patched, but only temporarily. This not only poses challenges for smooth transportation but also compromises the safety of drivers and pedestrians alike.

The lack of properly maintained recreational facilities and green spaces has also been a source of discontent among the residents. The football pitch and the sports center remain in a good state, but there are countless parks across Santa Eulàlia which are only kept alive by the community. Residents in different urbanizations have raised complaints about the state of the tables and benches in parks, fountains not working properly, unattractive and old environments, the poor state of the concrete and grass, amongst others.

On the other hand, the more central areas of the village have been worked on over the last few years. As mentioned, Plaça Onze de Setembre was given a complete remodeling, and a few parks have received updates in their infrastructure. A small pedestrian area was put in place of a parking lot alongside the main road for bars to have a terrace area. The roads in that area have also been maintained, and in some cases redesigned to meet more strict safety standards imposed by the local authorities.

Addressing the disparity in investments across different areas of the village should be one of the first challenges for the new government of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana. To rectify these issues, the government must adopt an equitable and inclusive approach that takes into account the perspectives and priorities of the community. By leveraging the power of public participation, the government can actively engage residents in the decision-making processes regarding infrastructure investments, ensuring that their voices are heard and their preferences are considered.

Implementing a participatory approach to infrastructure investment entails creating platforms for meaningful dialogue and consultation with the community. This can be achieved through town hall meetings, surveys, focus groups, or online platforms, allowing residents to express their opinions, identify infrastructure needs, and propose



Fig. 2: Roots breaking through the asphalt



Fig. 3: Pothole



Fig. 4: Plants in a bench



Fig. 5: Basketball hoop

potential projects. By involving the people in the decision-making process, the government can tap into their local knowledge and gain insights that might otherwise be overlooked. This collaborative approach not only fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among the residents but also ensures that infrastructure investments align with the genuine needs and aspirations of the community [Bryson, 2003].

Moreover, the government should prioritize the renewal and maintenance of existing parks rather than focusing solely on the creation of new ones. Consolidating efforts and resources into a select number of parks ensures that these public spaces remain attractive, safe, and inviting for all residents. By investing in the revitalization of parks, including refurbishing play areas, improving green spaces, and enhancing amenities, the government can create vibrant communal spaces and show a commitment to preserving the town's cultural and recreational heritage. Upgraded parks serve as focal points for community gatherings, celebrations, and various outdoor activities, therefore uniting the residents. Furthermore, well-maintained parks can have a positive impact on property values, attract visitors, and enhance the overall image of Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana as an attractive and livable town.

To ensure the successful implementation of park renewal initiatives, the government should consider conducting surveys or hosting public consultations specifically focused on park improvements. This collaborative approach will contribute to a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among the community, ultimately leading to more sustainable and enjoyable public spaces.

4.4 Transportation

One of the prominent challenges in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana is its large area combined with a relatively low population density of 544 inhabitants per square kilometer. Both the elderly and the youngest residents encounter difficulties in navigating the town due to its multiple dispersed urban cores. The distances between these cores are too far for comfortable walking or biking, and the terrain features and elevation changes can even pose dangers to individuals using wheelchairs. The limited availability of public transport alternatives exacerbates the issue since the village is only properly connected to Granollers, Barcelona, Caldes de Montbui, and a few nearby villages. Consequently, owning a car becomes almost mandatory for individuals commuting to work outside the city center of these three locations.

In recent years, the government has invested considerable efforts in optimizing traffic flow at specific critical points with high traffic volumes. Notably, significant improvements were made in the sports center - high school area, where traffic has been redirected to facilitate a smoother exit from the high school, which had been a recurring complaint amongst parents who got stuck in traffic for up to half an hour when they went to pick up their kids.

Another measure aimed at enhancing the lives of young citizens was the introduction of a bus line connecting La Vall del Tenes and the UAB. Additionally, the capacity of school buses has been doubled to accommodate the

growing demand, resulting in a notable reduction of traffic congestions near schools during rush hours.

In recent times, there has been much discussion about the necessity of reducing car usage to foster a more sustainable society. However, the approach taken by the local authorities has had adverse effects on daily private vehicle users. It seems that rather than promoting alternative modes of transportation, the focus has primarily been on transitioning from internal combustion engine cars to electric and hybrid models, often at the expense of inconveniencing car users in general [Brandt, 2019].

An electric vehicle charging point was installed alongside the main road, which is a positive development in promoting sustainable transportation. However, there are some concerns regarding the increasing number of speed bumps throughout the village. These speed bumps seem excessive and unnecessary, as many of the roads already have conditions that naturally require drivers to reduce their speed. Consequently, these bumps become an inconvenience for daily drivers without offering significant benefits. The councilor of mobility confirmed to me that some of these speed bumps were installed in response to noise complaints from residents, but unfortunately, this issue has not been addressed.

The councilor of mobility has also brought forth proposals that have been deliberated upon during government meetings. One prominent proposal involves the replacement of two regular traffic lights for an alternative model that would turn red if drivers exceed the speed limits of 30 and 50 kilometers per hour, respectively. These traffic lights would be positioned at different points along the main road. It is worth noting that a similar technology has been implemented in Lliçà d'Amunt, one of the neighboring villages, albeit with a lukewarm reception.

After thorough discussion and careful consideration, we managed to find common ground and concluded that this measure may not be necessary, at least in the specific locations where its implementation was planned. Instead, the focus shifted towards the reconditioning of roads to enhance accessibility and safety for pedestrians. A concept test of this nature was already executed two years ago with relative success. This alternative approach was deemed more sensible when compared to attempting to prevent car-on-car collisions in areas where no such accidents have occurred, and where the existing risk is relatively low, particularly considering the presence of regular traffic lights.

It is important for local authorities to consider a balanced approach when implementing traffic calming measures. While it is crucial to ensure the safety and well-being of residents, it is equally important to assess the necessity and effectiveness of measures such as the aforementioned speed bumps. Unjustified or excessive use of restrictive road safety methods can lead to frustrations among drivers, negatively impacting the overall driving experience without addressing the core concerns of noise and air pollution [Rodríguez-Balboa et al., 2017].

4.5 Education

Up and coming generations are growing up in an ever changing unpredictable world, where new technologies

go from futuristic concepts to necessary goods overnight. The truth is that none of us was prepared for such a quick evolution of technology, which has created huge inequalities in modern society, and we must prepare the youth for the challenges they will be facing once they grow older.

The biggest challenge our current system will face may well be the race to achieve sustainability, therefore it is of paramount importance that we educate children so that they can be aware of the state of our planet and hope that they can bring a change for the better during their life.

For this reason, myself and my classmate Jan Mollet embarked upon a journey to raise awareness of these issues to the local youths, in partnership with the local high school INS la Vall del Tenes. The goal was to have all students in 3^o ESO design and build a sustainable building fundamented in the principles of economic, social and environmental society.

What struck me the most throughout this project was the transformative power of a simple lecture in broadening their perspectives and making them question and analyze pertinent issues that were previously disregarded or unknown to them. This experience led me and Jan to a resolute conclusion: properly educating the younger generations about the challenges of our contemporary society is of paramount importance if we are going to progress toward a more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive world.

By facilitating interactions between children and adults external to their schools, such as working professionals and college students, the government can create valuable opportunities for intergenerational learning and mentorship [Márquez, 2018]. These interactions can take the form of workshops, seminars, panel discussions, or collaborative projects that allow children to engage directly with role models who can share their experiences, insights, and expertise.

Working professionals can offer real-life perspectives on various fields and industries, highlighting the importance of hard work, dedication, and ethics. Their experiences can help children develop a broader understanding of different careers, as well as the challenges and responsibilities associated with them. By showcasing the value of education, professional development, and community involvement, working professionals can inspire children to aspire to excellence and contribute meaningfully to society.

Similarly, college students can serve as relatable mentors who can share their journeys, academic pursuits, and social engagement experiences. Their proximity in age can make it easier for children to connect and relate to them, fostering a sense of aspiration and motivation. College students can share insights on the importance of education, personal growth, and civic engagement, while also imparting skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication.

To implement these activities effectively, the government can collaborate with educational institutions, local organizations, and community centers to facilitate these interactions. Workshops, seminars, or mentoring programs can be organized within schools or community spaces to provide a structured environment for engagement. Additionally, the government can establish partnerships

with local businesses and universities to connect children with professionals and college students who are willing to volunteer their time and expertise.

4.6 People with dependency

In Spain, individuals with dependency face significant challenges that have a profound impact on their lives. Dependency refers to a condition where individuals require assistance or support from others to carry out daily activities due to physical, mental, or cognitive impairments.

One of the most relevant challenges faced by people with dependency is the availability and accessibility of care services. Waiting lists for services such as home care, day centers, or residential facilities can be long, leading to delayed support and care for individuals in need. Moreover, the funding allocated to dependency care services may not always be sufficient to meet the growing demand. This can result in limited resources, understaffed facilities, and inadequate support systems, negatively impacting the quality and availability of care.

Stigma and discrimination are also major issues which may lead people to social exclusion and limited opportunities for participation in society. This can contribute to feelings of isolation, reduced self-esteem, and a lack of community support.

Informal caregivers, often family members, bear a significant burden in providing care for individuals with dependency. This places considerable emotional, physical, and financial strain on them, who may require additional support systems and services to alleviate their responsibilities.

Fortunately, in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana, the community has demonstrated a commitment to addressing these challenges and integrating people with dependency into society. Entities such as APINDEP and Casal d'avis have played crucial roles in advocating for the rights of people with disabilities and providing support services to those who need them the most.

APINDEP, a cooperative entity founded in 1993, offers a range of services such as counseling for families, job integration programs, therapeutic assistance, and leisure activities. The immense amount of work and sacrifice put by the members of APINDEP is truly admirable, and has lead to the organization becoming one of the most important cooperatives fighting for people with dependency in a national context. They now operate in a modern building located near the public library in Santa Eulàlia, where they have the space to perform multiple activities ranging from group meetings to gardening and growing crops [Cooperativa APINDEP Ronçana, 1993].

Casal d'avis provides leisure services for the elderly, offering social activities and fostering community engagement. This entity has made a positive impact not only in Santa Eulàlia but also in the broader region. They are also very close to certain groups of young people, offering them jobs as waiters in their events.

Moreover, Santa Eulàlia has a well-located residence situated near the forest, providing a tranquil environment away from noise and air pollution while remaining accessible for residents.

By addressing the challenges faced by people with

dependency, Santa Eulàlia has taken significant steps towards creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all members of the community. There will always be room for improvement but the current situation is more than satisfactory, and compared to the other aspects presented in this paper it is the least urgent matter.

4.7 Youth

Despite the evident improvement in the quality of life for the younger generation resulting from the deliberative governance methods used by the government, the annual assembly organized by La Taka still presents a significant concern for some individuals. The primary issue lies in the limited budget of 15,000€, which often limits ambitious plans that require a substantial portion of those funds. The prevailing consensus is that it is preferable to have more activities with lower expenses rather than a single large-scale event that exhausts the entire budget, thereby impeding initiatives with large potential to succeed.

To address this issue, I propose the revival of a historic organization known as "La Timba." La Timba was a club that catered to young adults, aged 18 to 27, and hosted parties two to three times a year. However, it closed approximately five years ago. Given the current political stability and the willingness of Poble Unit to engage with the community, an opportunity arises to foster stronger bonds among the youth of Santa Eulàlia. A reimagined La Timba could serve as the ideal platform for this purpose, focusing not only on organizing parties but also on cultivating a culturally rich, sustainable, and inclusive community.

Moreover, La Timba would fulfill an important void in the overall dynamics of Santa Eulàlia. Currently, there is no public entity in town exclusively dedicated to and managed by young people, with a primary focus on cultural activities. Such an organization would have the potential to generate revenue for future endeavors, and establish direct communication with the town hall, thus creating a space for the youth to execute those initiatives that La Taka can't fully finance.

The project is still in its early stages of development, and the official inauguration is scheduled for July 8th. However, news of this new entity for young people are already spreading rapidly, and the community as a whole appears to be welcoming it with open arms. Many local artists are already in contact with La Timba and ready to start collaborating in future concerts, art expositions or workshops.

While this organization will maintain an apolitical stance, great emphasis is being placed on ensuring it operates as a fully democratic entity, adhering to the same principles of deliberative public administration and citizen engagement that we expect from our local government. This will be facilitated through the use of the Discord platform, connecting all individuals willing to participate and enabling role assignments to suit their specific needs. Thanks to this system participants can actively contribute to organizing their preferred activities while opting out of other aspects they may not be interested in.

The organization will be officially managed by an assembly where every member can voice their opinions

and propose new activities. Additionally, all members will have voting rights in significant decisions pertaining to the organization itself. The board, consisting of the director, secretary, and accountant, will possess the authority to veto any proposals if it can be demonstrated factually that they are economically unviable or if they are deemed to compromise the apolitical nature of the organization.

Other concerns raised by the youth revolve around the state of infrastructure in Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana, particularly regarding public spaces related to sport such as basketball courts and football pitches. It is crucial to address these concerns as they directly impact the well-being and recreational opportunities available to the youth in the community.

The dilapidated condition of these spaces, characterized by broken concrete, rusty metals, and debris, not only poses safety risks but also hinders the youth's ability to engage in healthy and enjoyable physical activities. Recognizing the significance of providing well-maintained and safe spaces for leisure and sports, the government should prioritize the renovation and enhancement of these facilities according to the methods and guidelines discussed in point 4.3.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on this experience, I have drawn two main conclusions.

Firstly, Santa Eulàlia de Ronçana has made remarkable strides in its journey toward becoming a sustainable community in recent years. The implementation of deliberative public administration methods, and the importance given to citizen engagement and the quadruple helix approach has played a pivotal role in fostering a trustworthy and transparent relationship between the citizens and the government. This foundation of trust has laid the groundwork for a thriving society that values the active involvement of its members and will be the basis of most of the proposed innovations and solutions in this article.

The government's investments in infrastructure and mobility have generally been adequate and have addressed the needs of the broader public in the center of Santa Eulàlia. However, it is worth noting that these investments have been concentrated almost exclusively in this specific area of the town. To truly achieve sustainability in this aspect, it is crucial to diversify the areas where interventions are made, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities across the entire community, to finally comply with the demands and needs of the general public all across the village.

Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, what truly sustains a community is a sense of belonging. Without the willingness of individuals to collaborate, engage in the democratic processes by voting on referendums, contribute innovative ideas in citizen assemblies, and participate in collective activities, the concept of sustainability would be meaningless. It is the active involvement and commitment of the community members themselves that ultimately drives the sustainability of a community.

While the strides taken by Santa Eulàlia towards sustainability are commendable, it is essential to continue diversifying interventions across the town and nurturing

the sentiment of belonging and cooperation among its residents. By further enhancing citizen engagement, promoting inclusivity, and promoting a culture of collaboration, Santa Eulàlia can continue on its path towards becoming a truly sustainable and thriving community.

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