

From Awareness to Action The Tot Raval Climate journey



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Interview with Meré Garet

Programme Coordinator at Fundacio Tot Raval

The climate journey is not one we bought the ticket for. We are all in it, and we better be equipped. Mercé Garet, Programme Coordinator at Fundació Tot Raval (Tot Raval Community Foundation), strongly advocates that her community foundation would meaningfully and effectively integrate the climate lens and priorities it, intersecting with other issues. In this interview, she shares the steps taken in the climate journey, the challenges encountered, and the goals for the future.

Why did the Tot Raval Community Foundation start this journey?

We must understand that we are all already on the climate journey, willing or not. Whether we want to build and travel, as people and organisations, on a proper boat is up to us. At our community foundation, we know the climate issue is critical, but it is yet to be our key priority: always more urgent matters overshadow it. But in the past few years, we have started slowly moving in this direction.

What were those first steps, and what were the triggering factors?

All issues and topics become a priority if the organisations and community members consider so. In this sense, lately, climate has been addressed in existing activities.

For instance, our famous annual festival, which has been running for 20 years and involving over 100 organisations, included sustainability and climate among its three pillars, from both an organisational and a content point of view, raising awareness through theatre and art performances. Furthermore, we discovered what the hottest summer of our lives would mean for the neighborhood's people last summer. To tackle this and relieve those who cannot afford to leave, the Community Education Group created a map of "cooling down places" in different languages, offering activities for kids and their parents.

Moreover, the philanthropic field around us also gave, and we hope will continue, an opportunity to work on the issue. Indeed, for instance, the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation opened a call for proposals on arts and climate: even though, in the end, we did not receive the money, it forced us to think and develop initiatives at the intersection of these two realms.

However, one relevant step forward for me was participating in the ECFI Cohort of the Climate Learning Journey. Until then, we thought that our organisation and projects' only contribution could be to minimise our impact by reducing the use of printed materials and carrying out recycling activities. The course and the possibility to exchange with others gave us the tools to be more strategic and concrete around our work. Our first step was to put sustainability and climate into our statute. And we also intersected the climate with some existing activities.

How do you feel about these first changes? And what do you see as a challenge and hope for the future?

They are necessary first steps, but much more is needed! We are a community-led organisation, with 53 entities in governance and more than 300 involved in coordination teams. It means that the decision-making process is highly participatory, which is a challenge because you must make an issue a priority for many people before moving forward. However, it is also an opportunity: when you have the most onboard and changes happen, they long permeate the community and are hard to dismantle.

However, we cannot escape reality and face the struggles and challenges of climate change. For instance, the severe droughts affecting the Catalonia region in the past two weeks hit the community hard. They prevented us from continuing our socio-education activities around the community garden due to a lack of water. On the one hand, we are leveraging this situation to rethink how we can make these crops more sustainable using reclaimed water. On the other hand, we are working with people in the community to make sense of the situation, understand and learn more about climate change, how it affects us, and how we can adapt.

We are entering a very delicate and exciting phase for the organisation: we must be able to grasp every opportunity to intersect the climate issue and continue learning from our practices and those in other territories.

Francesca Mereta, ECFI

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