



Rosa Gili

Consul General
of Escaldes-Engordany

«The other consuls have crossed the boundaries of institutional loyalty with the management of the Madriu valley»

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Rosa Gili's term will be remembered by the people of Escaldes-Engordany, among others, for having reactivated the upper part of the parish with Caldes, an ambitious project that aims to enhance its heritage and for having set up the first social flats that, beyond of having an affordable price, they aspire to be an affective coexistence between neighbors of different generations. On the other hand, the controversy that arose as a result of the management of the Madriu valley with the other consuls should be forgotten, as in her opinion «it has been a disaster» and lacks real meaning and problem.

-At what point is the Escaldes-Engordany municipality currently located?

-We are at a key point because we have already defined all the big projects, such as the church car park, the retirement home or Caldes, which are reaching their administrative end and we will soon see

which companies will carry them out. If it hadn't been for the covid, we probably would have done them sooner, but things have gone that way and we've done the best we could.

-What is the most important project?

-All these, together with the social flats, are very important. But Caldes, for us, is fundamental because we believe that the appearance of Escaldes must change in the sense that it is the renewal of an ugly and abandoned area, which must become a point of attraction and interest that bring more value to the parish and the country. In addition, we need an economic boost, because in recent years the whole commercial part has been going down and it is essential to have something cool and interesting that keeps the flow of people and makes life come alive.

-Could we say that Caldes is your star project?

-I think so, because it is the differentiator. It is an atypical and daring work in which we believe and we are sure that it will have an impact and

will make the area metamorphose with the rest of the parish. Without wanting to underestimate the rest of the work, I do think that it will be for everyone.

-Why has the municipality decided to take a shortcut with its social flats?

-I wouldn't say to take a shortcut, because we have been aware for a long time that there is a problem with housing. In fact, I come from the General Council and by then we were tired of talking about it, but the situation has gotten worse. In 2019 I ran in the general and municipal elections and we always talked about housing, so the first day we got to the municipalities we set to work to come up with solutions. The government has gone at its own pace and, at first, did not rely heavily on the municipalities. I remember that at the first housing table I attended as a consul there was a minister who did not tell me to shut up, but almost ... So what did the Escaldes-Engordany Municipality think? Because we had a land in the center and quite well qualified, the staff needed to study the project and the fi-

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«Urban competition is of the municipality and I am not saying that the government cannot think about it, but it must do it with us»

nancial capacity to carry it out. Although we initially proposed it as a concession, because we believe that if a private individual contributed the money, the municipality could do other things, the opposition asked us to finance it publicly and this is what we have finished to decide in the coming days or weeks.

-Then you take the shortcut

-We've been moving forward and I don't think it's a common problem for the public to get involved. In fact, the Government itself calls for the involvement of the municipalities and that is what we are doing. I don't think people understand that a municipality, being able to help people, doesn't help him.

-Just last week the head of government urged the municipalities to do more. Can they do more?

-I don't know what it means to do more. Let's talk about it, which is what I've been claiming since day one. If the Government and the municipal people sit down and see how we can complement each other, we will get rich. What certainly doesn't

work is unilateralism. Just last week, we talked about one of the urgent measures that provided that all those buildings that were not intended to be flats could make the change of use. I don't know if it's a good idea or not, but we weren't asked by the municipalitis and now we find that in some buildings or areas it can be accepted and in others it can't. For example, by this law, it has been allowed to make apartments of 15 square meters that have a curtain between the bathroom and the kitchen when our regulations say that a flat must have at least 60 square meters. In the end, urban competition is common and I am not saying that the government cannot think about it, but it has to think about it with us. So we're not doing well.

-And do you have, or do you think they have, any relationship with the National Housing Institute?

-Today we didn't think about it, simply because our social housing project goes beyond housing. They are not just flats, but have a spirit of community with an open space for the enjoyment of all citizens, with common spaces and intergenerational cohabitation putting solidarity into practice. I understand it has nothing to do with what the National Housing Institute is working on, but we don't stop talking to anyone.

-Do you have the feeling that the Government and the rest of the municipalities believe that you are always an obstacle?

-I don't know if they think so, I'd like to believe not. I don't have a bad relationship with anyone, but the day to day is very complicated and relationships depend on people. We have a frank relationship with the head of government, in which I always tell him what I think and he tells me. Then there are ministers with whom we also work very well and others with whom it costs more. But really, I have no problem talking to anyone and I am very clear that what I want is not only the well-being of the people of Escaldes, but of the whole country. It is absurd that, as children, we are fighting among ourselves.

-And with the minority, what is the relationship like?

-I dare say it's good. We tell them everything we do, even though they sometimes complain about some-

thing, but it's because the pace is so frantic that we may forget to pass on information, and they have to play their opposing role. I am very clear that they enrich us and I always listen to the advice and opinions, above all, of Miquel Aleix.

-What are the most demanded aids for the people of Escaldes-Engordany?

-We have a lot of exemptions for children's activities, accommodation, food, fire and place... This shows the panorama we have and that we are living in an era that we did not know until now, because before everyone working could reach the end of the month. We will soon give the overall figures, although I already say that the sum is not very high, because we only give what is essential, but I think it is very important that the aid is there and that we have a faster reaction capacity than the Government.

-Do you understand all the commotion that has been generated with the Madriu valley?

-No, and it has been a disaster. I think all this has exploded now, but we have been working on it for two and a half years and I have always gone head-to-head, exposing the opinion of this municipality and considering that we are the only ones who have private owners and a territory of unique administration that is very large. Then, the management plan that was made at the time speaks of unanimity and this is where I did not like how the other consuls behaved. I believe that the limits of the institutional loyalty we owe to each other have been exceeded. That is, I may or may not like what other municipalities do, but it is not my problem, they have to administer their parishes, they owe it to their citizens and we manage our share and we care about our people. Either they have become accustomed to thinking that Escaldes is a second-class municipality or they believe that our territory is not legitimate or I do not know what to think... It is not acceptable to me how they have behaved. The regulations say that decisions must be made unanimously, so if there is no unanimity, they are not made. No show needs to be put on.

-But in the last meeting, Escaldes was the only municipality that did not show up.

-It's true, but because I had an unforeseen event and these things that happen, but in no case does it justify what they said in the press, because very big things were said. Only by picking up the newspaper archive can you see how things have been said through the media that I have asked to be told in person. Everything is born because Escaldes has some doubts about the order and asks for it to be reviewed. I insist that any decision must always be made unanimously. They don't want to change anything, so who's the problem?

-And have you spoken in private?

-Unesco defines territories and cultural assets (dry stone walls and buildings that are huts) and what is essential is that these values are not lost, and that is what we are doing. In terms of planning, the most important thing was to ban vehicular traffic and this is what the Escaldes municipality has done. I don't know what the problem is. Where we really need to understand each other is in those areas where it is not defined who they are or who are in division or shared exploitation, such as the part of Claror. If that's the reflection, let's do it, but in the end it all got a little messy and ended up leading



«Once we saw the towers grow, we realized that people didn't understand them because their profit is very small»

to Escaldes having to account to others for what he was doing on his ground. And this is not what Unesco is asking for.

-How is the hotel of Caldea?

-A couple of weeks ago there was a shareholders' meeting and it was announced that we had reached an agreement, which we now have to go through the Joint Council. We understand it as another hotel in the parish, but as an infrastructure that is already a few years old, that requires maintenance and, as usual, requires investment. The idea of the hotel is that there are very few rooms, about 40, which will not hurt the other hotels -the hoteliers themselves have told us -and we believe that everyone around them will benefit. It will also be a very important investment for Caldea with which we will try not to lose its appeal.

-Will there be more towers?

-Unfortunately, yes. There is nothing we can do about it. In 2018, the urban plan was approved that gives this right to the owners and this between review and revision of the plan, which is done every six years, must be maintained, no rights can be removed. At most, small changes can be made that do not involve, as the regulations say, essential parameters. Therefore, we are tied hand and foot because the owners do not care what political color is common, but what was already approved, and in no case would be a good management to end up in the Mayor's Office. Knowing the room for maneuver we have, we have launched a reflection in which we tell them that yes, they can make towers, because they are legally allowed to do so, but once we have seen the first ones grow, we have realized that people do not understand because the benefit is very small compared to the radical change in the landscape, so now we want to improve it by thinking of all parties winning.

-How?

-Releasing space at the bottom, so that the Clot d'Emprivat continues to be a space where people will enjoy it. So, if nothing goes wrong, before the festival we should have a Municipal Council in which we clearly position ourselves and, from here, we will see what happens. In any case, this municipality will have done everything possible to improve

what could have been done, as virtually the idea was very beautiful and romantic, but the reality is more complicated; lacked planning.

-What do you think of all the tourist infrastructures that are being carried out lately and that many criticize that they are ending the natural places?

-I won't go into what other parishes do, but what we want, specifically with Caldes, is a paint job of an area that has a lot of potential, with thermal water, Romanesque bridges and a lot of history and culture behind. We do this by thinking about the people here because we understand that if the people here are happy and believe it, they will be the best ambassadors and bring the rest. It is not something that is ephemeral, but that we seek sustainability over time and that it is also a common meeting point for families, young people and the elderly.

-Why did you decide to take over the International Jazz Festival?

-My community team and I are nostalgic for this jazz festival, which had been a really important event with a lot of international repercussions. For various reasons and political and economic elections, for whatever reason, it was decided to stop doing it, but we were very sorry and we considered the option of recovering. I think the return has been very nice and we've seen some really excited citizens with the return, so we look forward to consolidating it and making it even better next year.

-Last week we were able to see you and the minor consul, at the Concordia presentation.

-Yes. We decided to go because of the esteem we have for Cerni Escalé and because we wanted to know what these young people were going to present. I am very happy that there is a movement like yours, with prepared young people, good communication and who have an idea of what they want for the country. They are worried, they love Andorra and at least Cerni, who is the one I know best, I know is honest and believes in his ideals.

-And you? What will you do in the next election?

-I am in the Escaldes-Engordany Municipality, I have many projects there and today it is the only one I am. I haven't thought of anything else. ≡

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