



Interview with Joan Micó ▶ The coordinator of the sociology area of the ARI analyzes the evolution of society

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After presenting the latest Observatory in which housing is once again the record concern of citizens, and a few weeks before announcing the political survey, in the run-up to the elections, Joan Micó, with more than 20 years in office, analyzes the evolution of society and future prospects.

–As coordinator of the sociology area of the ARI, what are your goals?

–We have been working for 22 years. On the one hand, we create indicators to better understand what Andorran society is like and, in addition, we analyze them based on the dynamics and how they evolve. When we started working, there were far fewer indicators than now and studies about what Andorra was. There were people who had done interesting things, but a lot of information and creating indicators was missing. Currently, we provide more, and also Statistics. In the first years we focused on doing studies and creating indicators, while now the more qualitative part of trying to understand dynamics is more important.

–What x-ray would you make of Andorran society?

–Above all, it is a complex and urban society that comes from a more rural history, but now we live the relationships between us as if we were a city with village components. In addition to being complex, it is dualized, there is a division between Andorrans and residents or between people who work in the most prosperous sectors, administration, finance or liberal professions, and then this other world, such as hospitality workers.

–Is it dualized but doesn't generate too many conflicts?

–There have been several cohesion factors. The main thing is that economic growth means that there are opportunities and that many people who are in the less well-off sector have been able to have better conditions, especially compared to the country of origin. In addition, people who born here have enjoyed good opportunities and the social elevator has worked relatively well.

–Do you see a risk of fracture?

– Yes, there are. For example, if this elevator stopped working or slowed down. In addition, we have some differences that can potentially be a danger, such as political dualism. There are demands that are not as well served as they would be if everyone voted. All these are elements that can lead to more serious problems.

–Do you appreciate that residents fight too much to be able to vote?

– You can't see that they don't fight too much, but it's a situation that could bring problems. Andorra is a small place where everyone has more or less assumed the situation.



ARI
Joan Micó, in his office in Sant Julià de Lòria.

Joan Micó

Coordinator of the sociology area of Andorra Research and Innovation (ARI)

«Identity must be opened to the contributions of all the people who have come»

When we ask non-Andorrans if they would like to vote, there is a very large majority who say yes.

–Perhaps everyone doesn't realize that if he did it here, he wouldn't be able to vote in his country?

– Of course, then things get complicated, especially because there is no dual nationality. It's one thing for you to like doing it and another for you to ask for it. We are poorly organized and the organizations we have are not strong. A paradox is trade unionism. At the USdA they work hard and what they do has a lot of merit, but its base is the administration workers, who are the wealthy

people. On the other hand, those who are in worse conditions have not been able to organize themselves, but this does not mean that these people do not have needs.

–You said that «everyone has accepted their situation». This can be read negatively and positively. How do you see it?

–There is a little bit of everything. We are in a kind of pyramid, where there are people in better or worse conditions. Economic growth means that many people can move up, with children as conditions. So everyone assumes that there is this pyramid and that there can be chan-

ges. It must also be said that those who are in worse conditions are usually not born here and eventually leave. Who does not feel comfortable, must leave.

–Ideally, if there are people who don't feel comfortable, we should try to make them feel comfortable, and not that they have to leave?

– I'm not justifying it, I'm simply saying how the system works. In Spain there were at one time up to 4 million unemployed. There were people who left, but not everyone could. Besides, it's their country. Here we are in another dimension and for those who don't like it, the easi-



«The social elevator has worked relatively well, but there would be a risk of fracture if it stopped working or slowed down»

est thing is to leave.

–At the Observatory you ask about the main problems, some of which, like housing or traffic, have risen a lot. Could they become more than just a problem over time?

–In addition to the problems, we also ask for the aspects to be improved. One of the things that I am most happy about the Observatory is to see the evolution of the twenty years that we have already had and just by analyzing what people say about the main problems, you appreciate the economic and social development of the country in a reliable way. The current situation, in part, also occurred between 2005 and 2007, with an overheating of the economy that resulted in a crisis. Does this mean that these problems are unsolvable? We have to see if the difficulty of housing is here to stay or what solutions are available. Now, we have to keep in mind that we are talking about what people think is a problem. When you assume that a situation is normal, it may cease to be a difficulty. In the case of the environment, people perceive it more when there is change or when you are more aware that it is a situation that needs to be improved. Or the other way around, you can consider economic growth to be more relevant, as happened in 2008.

–In other words, is there a risk that we resign ourselves and normalize what should not be normal?

– Yes, it can happen. The rules of the game are these. For example, we could talk about the representativeness of residents in the political market. It hardly appears in the polls, but if an outside analyst came it would be a very relevant fact. Instead, the problem does not come up because we have assumed that this is the case.

–Is there any possibility that these problems are cyclical?

–In fact, they are. We see things that, depending on the situation, are increasing or decreasing. The moment the survey is made is significant.

–Housing has reached 65% of public concern and there is a risk of reaching 100%. How can this situation be qualified?

–In 2006 traffic reached 85%. However, it is more democratic, everyo-

ne can suffer from this situation. On the other hand, housing is a problem that is more related to a population profile. The more affluent people, who already own their apartment, may consider others to have the problem, but it doesn't affect them personally so much. This means we might get to a higher percentage, but maybe not 100%. However, reaching 65% is a lot.

– Regarding the economic situation, there are people who find it difficult to make ends meet and, on the contrary, many find that their situation is not bad. It seems counterintuitive, doesn't it?

–The people who claim that it is difficult for them to make ends meet are the ones who say that the situation is bad. Some state that their condition has worsened, but that their overall economic situation is not bad. There are people who say that they have lost purchasing power or that they are in a worse situation than the previous year, but that their situation is not bad. Last year we were still under the effects of covid, so at that time there were closed establishments. And this must be taken into account when we compare it with last year, since there were people who were in Erto and were not working.

–After decades of migratory flows, has immigration stabilized and integrated?

–This is the great debate we have as a country. First of all, we have to decide what we mean by integration and, from there, what identity is, to which we must integrate. The concept of identity is a concept that has

changed on the street and that as a country we must define it. If in Andorra the identity is people who only speak Catalan and with a traditional lifestyle, this is not viable now. Now we are an open country, where 20 million tourists come, so the identity must be more open to the contributions of all the people who have come. When we ask, everyone, including people who don't speak Catalan, think that the central element would be mastering the official language. From here, it is necessary to reflect on the concept of identity, which must be more and more open, in the sense that these contributions must be valued, without denying tradition. The concept of integration must be related to this fact. In Andorra, when we talk about integration, we only do so from a cultural point of view. And what does this mean, that he adopts all the items of the country that receives him, that he mixes or that he can live in the same way as in his country of origin and that he only adopts some of them. This is a debate that is on the table in Europe as a whole. In France, the idea of assimilation was assumed and what comes next leaves the suitcase outside. Thus, there are people who adapt completely, but a refusal is also created that creates problems.

–The best formula would be to adopt the new identity without renouncing the original one?

–Exactly, the mixture. We can also look at it in the opposite direction. An Andorran who goes to Japan or Mexico, for example, must stop speaking Catalan because the good culture is the new one? It would seem



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«We must take into account the scenario with new electoral alternatives, because they could favor the biggest party»

barbaric. We have to assume that we are people who can have different cultures. If we have the consensus that Catalan is a tool for integration, everyone must put it into practice. We also have a challenge here and in other countries in the sense that all cultures are equally good and important, there cannot be a pyramid that there is a better culture, a regular one and a worse one depending on the origin, this is an error. Yes, it is true that there is one that is the country's own, with which it must adapt, but that it must also see the others as equals and, within this relationship, take each other inputs from all.

– Now that you talk about Catalan, what do you think when you hear catastrophic speeches about the official language?

–Languages such as Catalan are minority languages and, therefore, are in a weak situation. Having said that, it is also true that Catalan in Andorra has a strength that comes from the fact that it is considered to be a language of prestige and social mobility. The day that Catalan language loses this condition, it will have a problem. And this has already happened in Northern Catalonia or the Valencian Country. Everything can be seen with the glass half empty or half full, but the fact that Catalan has this strength means that catastrophist discourses have to be relativized. This does not mean that one should not be alert and in Andorra, for example, there are like two worlds, one of which is in hospitality and commerce, where mechanisms must be sought for employees to learn the language, but we have

to do it more positively than penalizing.

–The day before the campaign begins, they will present the electoral survey. Will there be any surprises?

–Once the nominations are closed, we will start doing it and see if things have changed compared to what we did last year. Objectively, the fact that there are new parties has changed and there has been a turning point.

–Do you think the housing situation, the loss of purchasing power or the latest scandals, such as the resignation of Eric Jover, can harm the ruling party?

– There could be wear, but we have to see in what proportion, although in the last poll they had a considerable advantage. However, the new alternatives must be taken into account, an interesting scenario, because they could favor the largest party.

–Considerable distances can be lost in a short time. In Andorra too?

– It can happen, especially considering that when we do the survey we have a high proportion of citizens who have not yet decided their vote or who do not want to tell us who they will vote for. However, we have been doing it for 12 years and the results are usually quite similar to the survey. There are many people who do not answer us that in the end they behave the same, although the centre-right always comes out a little underrepresented. But this scenario can now change, and this will make this survey one of the most interesting that we have done, it can be exciting. ≡

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