



THE LIBRARY AS A REFLECTION OF THE CITY'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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To talk about cultural diversity and dialogue between cultures is a very current issue, and precisely 2008 has been chosen by the European Commission as the year for holding the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. To promote interculturality, as a model of relation based on equality between people, signifies a commitment for the right to live in an environment of cultural wealth, of reciprocated knowledge and mutual respect between people and groups from different backgrounds, languages, religions and cultures.

However the reality is that not everyone believes in the fact that the coexistence of members of cultures and diverse beliefs in the same territory constitutes a positive element that can be a source of mutual enrichment and learning, but that many times this fact is perceived as negative and dangerous and can lead to confrontations and problems. Some political interests foster this perception and take advantage of it.

On the other hand, faced with an increase of pluri-cultural communities around the world, as a consequence of the migratory fluxes that currently take place, we are also attending antagonistic process, globalizing in character, that would promote a homogenization of culture, influencing the creation of standard cultural models while at the same time dominant in the various fields of culture – language, fashion, cinema, music, and it would therefore counter pose the concepts of plurality and singularity.

Given that one of the missions that is entrusted to the public libraries, as outlined in the *UNESCO Manifest for Public Libraries* is to ensure equal access for everyone, and also to encourage intercultural dialogue and to foster cultural diversity, we have the opportunity (and at the same time the responsibility) of promoting diversity as a value in itself, so that it helps us to open up horizons, to understand that the world is rich and full of subtleties, and that it is neither good or feasible to want to make it

uniform based on cultural globalizations. The task of making known that all the cultures are valuable and that there are many things to know, is important.

As a deposit, and at the same time, creator and promoter of culture, the public library is an extraordinary instrument for fostering plurality and the opening up of society and boosting the value of diversity, while highlighting its most positive aspects.

In this sense, the aim of this talk is to outline a number of ideas and actions generated from the practice of years dedicated to this topic in the Sant Pau – Santa Creu Library of the district of Ciutat Vella in Barcelona, and from the conviction of believing in the possibilities of the public library as an active agent in the promotion of values of peace and coexistence in diversity.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LIBRARY

The Sant Pau- Santa Creu Library is located in Barcelona, capital of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, which itself constitutes the region that currently gathers together the greatest number of immigrants in the whole of Spain (1,065,996 in absolute numbers, that represents 20.3% of the total number of foreign citizens in Spain¹).

It should be remembered that Spain has only recently become a receiving country of immigrants, basically since the decade of the 90s, given the fact that many years before it had been a provider of emigrants or had been considered a country of transit towards other richer and more industrialised European countries. Since the year 2000, it has had one of the highest rates of immigration in the world and the percentage of the foreign population has gone from representing 2.28% of the total population in the year 2000 to 9.93% in 2007.

This intense migratory flux to which Spain has been submitted in recent years has generated a major transformation of its society, that has gone from being strongly homogenous ethnically and culturally, to receiving a racial, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity it had never previously experienced in its history.

In the specific case of Catalonia, it had for some time undergone an important migratory pressure, given that during the 1960s the first internal waves of the population began (that is to say, coming from other parts of Spain), a fact that had already provoked the first visible differences between the autochthonous population and the newly arrived citizens, above all in terms of cultural and linguistic elements, given that Catalonia has its own language, Catalan.

Focusing on the surrounding area the library, it is located in one of the neighbourhoods of the old city of Barcelona, called *el Raval*, which forms part of the historic, cultural and tourist centre of the city that now is rather run down. Recently it has been the object of different urban planning reforms, and it has become the

¹ Figures taken from the census of the Spanish state on 1/1/2007. Source: National Institute of Statistics [<http://www.ine.es>].

destination of major cultural and educational facilities: The Modern Art Museum of Barcelona (Macba), The Contemporary Culture Centre of Barcelona (CCCB), the National Library of Catalonia, the future *Filmoteca* of Catalonia, the Institute of Catalan Studies, and some faculties from the University of Barcelona (Geography, History and Philosophy) and the Ramon Llull University (Faculty of Audiovisual Communication), that live side by side with a population with a low social and cultural level (the majority of whom have only completed their primary education), and little purchasing power. As you can see it is a neighbourhood of contrasts.

Furthermore, the Raval is the most densely populated neighbourhood of the whole of the city (45,283 inhabitants per km²) and the one with the highest percentage of immigrant population, this making up almost half the number of inhabitants, 47% (while for the whole of the city the foreign population represents 17%)². The arrival of these new citizens has led to an increase in the birth rate that sets against a strongly ageing local population.

With regard to where this new population comes from, the main countries of origin are: Pakistan, the Philippines, Morocco, Bangladesh and Ecuador. Many of these inhabitants find themselves in a transitory situation, received in family homes, waiting to leave for other neighbourhoods, towns or cities of Catalonia and Spain.

The child population are all schooled given that, irrespective of their legal situation, education is obligatory for all children until 16 years old.

For many years, when the neighbourhood was a run-down area of marginalized and poverty, a network of social entities and centres has become established, both public and private, that work at different levels to improve conditions of inequality and at risk of exclusion in which many families find themselves. This characteristic of the neighbourhood is very important as, given the migratory pressure that they suffer from, the reception and support of these centres for infants, youths, and families has contributed to reducing a potentially explosive situation, while avoiding that fact that serious conflicts and confrontations are produced.

This is therefore, in an overall sense, the mosaic of the population that the library serves. .

² Figures from the population register of the City Council of Barcelona 2007
[<http://www.bcn.cat/estadistica/catala/dades/tpob/pad/pad07/nacio/nacio02.htm>]

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING AND BASIC FIGURES ABOUT THE LIBRARY

At an institutional level, the library forms part of the network of public libraries of the city, run by the municipality, that currently comprises 32 libraries that at the same time are included in the Public Reading System of Catalonia.

Sant Pau- Santa Creu is an average-sized library with 950 m2 spread over two rooms with independent Access, where 8 people work: 3 librarians (one of them as director) 4 library auxiliary staff and one administrative support, as well as a security guard. It has a collection of 55,000 volumes, around 800 visits daily, and we have average daily loans of around 500 documents.

The total number of registered users is 56,638, amongst whom 44% (25,252 people) are foreigners, keeping practically the same proportion of autochthonous and foreign population as in the overall population of the neighbourhood. Once again we find that the most numerous groups of non-autochthonous registered users clearly come from Pakistan (8,293 – 14%), followed by India, Morocco and Argentina.

As we can therefore see, the same mosaic of cultures that exists in the neighbourhood is also reproduced in an overall way amongst the users of the library, and we can state that this therefore constitutes a reflection of the multi-cultural aspect of its nearby surrounding area.

SOME PROPOSALS RELATED TO IMMIGRATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Our approach at the library is that we see the attention of immigrants as part of the attention of the population we serve. A population that we can divide up so as to know and attend in a better way their needs: by age groups, interests, needs, hobbies, etc. The citizens who come from migratory movements have some peculiarities that the library has to take into account and they also require some specific services beyond the common offer. Therefore it is necessary to know how to find out about these needs and produce useful proposals. Based on this premise we can establish different target actions and observe these specific interests.

Taking into account that the most immediate needs of the immigrant population are related to the legalization of their situation in the country of reception, the search for work, housing, the education of the children and health, the information service, a basic service of the library, can be very useful for them and can orientate them in the resolving these requirements. It will be necessary to see which if the informative resources we can develop, as well as knowing how to pass these on to other public or private services of reception, training, leisure, etc that exist in the territory.

Other interests in terms of information refer to the maintaining of links with their country of origin, and the maintenance of their own culture. In addition to the communication with those they have left behind.

To facilitate their integration in the society that receives them also forms part of the possibilities of the library to smooth the way of these new citizens. The most important offer relates to the teaching of the language of the country, in the case of Catalonia there are two, but there are many more proposals that need to be worked on.

We should not forget either the need of these collectives to find their space and feel recognised within the framework of the library, and in this sense it is important that the collection of the library reflects the diversity of cultures that live there, in the languages of these new minorities; resources that can help them to strengthen their identity, as it is not a question of renouncing their own origins, but of integrating in the new society, and to maintain links with their country, as mentioned above.

In fact, apart from being useful for the immigrant, we think that all the collections should be impregnated with multicultural contents and be a mirror of diversity from all over the world, giving logical preference to the cultures of those closest to ours, that of the autochthonous population, and the groups of preeminent immigrant citizens in the immediate surroundings.

An interesting aspect to take into account is the existence of the library as a space for social cohesion. Precisely, the library is a space open to everybody, with free access and free of charge, which therefore fosters the free circulation of people. It is necessary that the people see each other, get to know each other, meet up, and coincide in at least one place, so as to start making contact, and little by little normalise the difference. If the new citizens come because they find something of interest, they will initially share the space and services with autochthonous citizens, and the latter little by little will get used to having people from different origins close to them – this is thus the first step to advance in terms of mutual knowledge and integration.

All in all, we believe that the public library, being as it is a facility of proximity, can act as a **reception point for immigration; a space of integration** for the new reality; **promoter of the necessary cultural diversity** and enriching for all; and **facilitator of social cohesion**.

As follows we describe these four key ideas and how they have been carried out in our library.

1. As a reception point, the library can respond to the cultural and information needs of the immigrants through its services.

- **Information service**

To ensure access to all types of information of the community for the citizens is the way we understand one of the main missions of the public library, but to achieve this objective it is first necessary that the administrations recognise and promote the role of these as the local information centres that they are, and that they are included in the circuit of citizen information. This which can be seen to be so necessary, doesn't always happen in our country and often the city councils and government do not count on the library as an information point, particularly in the process of receiving

new foreign citizens. (Curiously, in some cities such as Barcelona, the accreditation of the registration in a public library is a document that is accepted in the processes of regularizing foreigners. This brings many people to the library and we can take advantage of this to let them know about our services).

The information service of the library can be a good instrument for **orientation in the new society that receives them**. The specific offer can be wide and diverse according to our capacity to generate products of interest.

Examples of this would be the publication of **information resource guides**, or to offer a **specific space for newly arrived foreigners** within the library, which has information from various backgrounds and of diverse types (resource guides, local information, legislation, the latest news, advertisements and announcements, and informative leaflets published by entities of the neighbourhood or by the library itself). This can also be in different formats: paper, electronic, audiovisual, and in different languages so as to facilitate their comprehension.

At Sant Pau –Santa Creu, we are trying to work on this section but we recognise that here we lack resources so as to be able to provide a more elaborated offer. In addition to a small information space and for the production of leaflets of interest, we are beginning a section in the website of the library as a **portal of information for newly arrived foreigners**³ which gives access to electronic addresses and resources, and up until now has reference sections for legal and administrative procedures, health, education, language learning, job search, and a directory of facilities and entities of the neighbourhood.

- **With regard to the collection**

As you know, one of the main recommendations of the guidelines of IFLA for multicultural communities is that the library has a **documentary collection for infants and adults in their mother tongue**, as well as having the biggest amount possible of material (films, multimedia, music, maps, etc.) of the cultures existing in the area of influence of the library.

A good idea is to also include national authors, as well as authors internationally recognised translated into their languages, something which is often requested in our library.

This section of the documentary collection is one in which we have been able to work on most in our library. Already, since the beginning of the 90s, and confirming the reality of the new non-community immigration, the purchasing began of collections from other languages, specifically children's stories in Arab, the main minority group in that moment, and with the subscription of a newspaper and magazine in that language. Since 2001, the biggest collective of immigrants of neighbourhood has become the Pakistani, and as we have seen, other immigrant communities have become important in the territory, in such a way that we have tried to adapt our collection to this reality by acquiring books aimed at different types of publics (adult, infant, youth, etc.) in Urdu, Bengali, Hindu, Panjabi, Tagalog, Russian, etc, always

³ Portal of information for newly arrived foreigners:

http://w3.bcn.es/V51/Home/V51HomeLinkPI/0,3989,171935332_331792705_1,00.html

working in collaboration with the immigrant associations of the neighbourhood, and especially motivated users, both in terms of the process of acquisition, as well as translation, and often diffusion, of these collections.

Out of a total collection of 55,000 copies, the current percentage of the collection of books from different languages from Catalan and Spanish in our library is 13%; a percentage which is still low and that still doesn't cover the needs of the newly arrived foreigners but we are continuing to increase this little by little, depending on our possibilities.

Non community languages	Nº of copies
Arab	1148
Urdu	517
Hindu	331
Bengali	156
Panjabi	155
Russian	151
Tagalog	17

Community languages	Nº of copies
English	2300
French	784
German	196
Italian	248
Galician	141
Basque	125
Portuguese	103

Special attention has also been paid to the purchasing of **music and cinema** from various countries, incorporating films in Arab and Russian, as well as Indian (Bollywood), and the number of **subscriptions and periodical publications** has also increased. Currently we receive 2 newspapers and 2 magazines in Arab (one of them for children), 1 newspaper in Urdu and 1 children's magazine in Bengali. Since 2006, the service, *Newspapers of the World* has been offered, allowing access to the printed edition of 200 newspapers from 60 different countries thanks to satellite technology.

- **Training of the users**

Making the existence of the library known is the first step for incorporating this sector of the population in the use of its resources and services. With this aim in mind, it is necessary to put into practice different strategies, the first of which is the **presence of the library within the network of entities and facilities of the neighbourhood**. Offering the different centres (Reception centres, schools for adults, immigrant associations) 'tailor-made' visits for 'discovering' the library we think is particularly recommendable.

We consider it to be especially interesting to maintain continual links with the various educational centres, carrying out visits and other ways of for the infants to use the services of the library. It is necessary to adapt to the needs of the foreign children, with elementary knowledge of our language, offering visits at a basic level and essentially practical, to make known the existence of the library and how to use it. One step further is to organise visits with groups of children who have just arrived from other countries (“Reception classrooms”), as well as with the social services of the neighbourhood, who can pass on recently arrived families to the library. Getting all of these users to go to the library also means the fact of helping them to integrate into the new community.

- **Lifelong learning**

From the library we aim to provide tools for lifelong learning for all the members of the community to whom we offer the service, but given the fact that most of the people who emigrate to other countries do so in search of work, we are aware that these tools can be especially useful when helping with labour insertion.

We have therefore created an interest centre format for a **documentary collection of vocational and skills training**, that we want to continue updating by taking into account the needs of the users and teachers of the different adult training and labour insertion centres, which are very numerous in our neighbourhood.

Furthermore, a commitment of the library that we would like to highlight is the fact of counting on the collaboration of a technical promoter, who comes from an association of the neighbourhood, who gives **support in the research and use of information technologies** both in the children’s room (two afternoons a week) as well as in the adults’ room (two afternoons a week), giving individual advice to users in the use of computers and Internet (searching for information, producing curriculums, the use of e-mail, etc.); a service which is very popular among the foreigners. In the case of the children’s room, the aim is also to promote the ludic and non-violent use of Internet, boost the use of Catalan (the autochthonous language of Catalonia) by means of multimedia tools, and orientate them in the search and access to information on the web.

WW also offer **basic workshops office computer skills and Internet** that, although they are not specifically aimed at immigrants, in practice, these and the elderly end up being the main users, given the high level of IT illiteracy to be found amongst these two sectors of the population.

2. As a space of integration, the library can help in the adaptation of new citizens to the society that receives them.

- **Resources for the language learning of the society that receives them.**

This is one of the key aspects in receiving foreigners and that receives an enormous demand amongst the users from this collective.

As well as the collection for **learning and self-access learning of Catalan and Spanish** in various formats, it is also necessary to have collections of resources in

Internet for the learning of languages, directories of centres in the neighbourhood that offer classes, and easy reading material, etc.

Faced with the avalanche of requests that we receive with regard to language learning of the country, our option, apart from having self-access learning materials, has been to pass on the users to the many entities in the area that offer Catalan and Spanish classes. In this way, as well as offering information about these centres, the library forms part of the Reception Coordinator for the Language, which allows us to know about the reality of the territory in this aspect. We believe that in places where nobody offers the possibility of doing these language course, the libraries could offer this service.

There are other possible proposals to carry out in this field of languages, such as, for example, reading clubs or current affairs talks.

As a recent experience we have set in motion some **talks in Catalan for non-Catalan speakers** moderated by a conversation animator, that enables Catalan practice for foreigners as well as giving them the resources for getting to know the culture and customs of the country, getting up to date on the latest news, finding out about the neighbourhood and the city, and sharing experiences with other people who find themselves in a similar situation as theirs.

- **Other possible actions**

It is necessary to think about proposals that facilitate the knowledge about the habits, rights and duties of the citizens, customs and traditions, and history, etc, about the society that receives them. In this way, depending on the needs and offer of each territory, training sessions can be organised, giving legal advice, as well as publishing specific materials, both in book and audiovisual format, with this aim in mind.

One initiative that has emerged from the coordinator of the language centres and promoted by the library has been the publication of a book for diffusion about the neighbourhood, produced by a local author, and that can be considered **easy reading**. It is a book thought for group reading in educational centres, adult schools, etc., and facilitates the knowledge of the history of the neighbourhood in which we live.

3. As a promoter of cultural diversity, the library can make known to the local community, the cultural origins of the foreign citizens.

- **Having collections that reflect cultural diversity**

It is important to have a collection of quality that contributes a **wide and varied vision of culture** in its different aspects of literary, musical and cinematographic creation as a consequence of the will to reflect and foster a varied cultural expression, and, moreover, putting special emphasis on making known the minority cultures of our community.

In this way, at the Sant Pau-Santa Creu we are working on having **sufficient collections about the cultures of origin of the most important collectives of our**

surroundings especially about the Arab world and the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan, India and Bangladesh).

With regard to the **Arab culture** (given the important weight in the neighbourhood of citizens from this culture, and our historic links as the Mediterranean cultures that we are) having books of history, social studies, art, gastronomy, philosophy and religion, as well as a wide selection of novels by Arab authors, poetry and literary criticism. We also have a small subsection about the *Amazigh* (Berber) cultures situated geographically within the Arab area of influence.

Moreover, once again in collaboration with an association of the neighbourhood, a **specific section has been developed in the website of the library about the Arab world**⁴ which up so far includes a database with information about the main authors of its literature, resource guides and related links, as well as an agenda of cultural events which are carried out in the surrounding area of the city. We shortly hope to extend this proposal with other sections dedicated to music and cinema.

It is also worth mentioning the existence of a **centre of interest in cultural diversity and immigration** both with regard to adults and children. In the case of the children's room, we can find in this centre stories about very varied countries, books which talk about customs and traditions of the different countries, and even recipes from all over the world. You can also find books about the topic of immigration explained to the smallest ones and in general those that can contribute a positive vision of diversity.

- **Promoting activities that reflect the cultural wealth of the neighbourhood.**

So as to contribute to offering a multi-cultural vision of the society, the most frequent is to programme conferences related to the cultures of origin of the immigrants established in our city. These are interesting actions that allow us to make known other realities, above all if they are organised jointly with immigrant entities and associations; a good excuse to work with these associations and with other municipal entities.

Other examples are the publication of reading guides, the production of thematic exhibitions, presentations of books by authors coming from the above-mentioned minority cultures, the choice of books for the reading clubs, and the selection for "story-time", etc. The possibilities are many.

A factor to take into account is the organisation of projects that facilitate the inter-relation between the users from different backgrounds, with the choice of universal topics that can interest both the local citizens as well as the foreigners: contests of recipes from all over the world, photographs of the neighbourhood, etc.

We have done the majority of these proposals on a regular basis at our library, but in terms of singularity and acceptance, we would like to mention the **Days of stories in**

⁴ Section of the Arab world in the website of the library:

http://w3.bcn.es/V51/Home/V51HomeLinkPI/0,3989,171935332_182419193_1,00.html

two languages. So far, two sessions have been organised in Urdu and Bengali and Catalan.

4. To act as an instrument for improving social cohesion

As we have seen with some examples, when offering the service to newly arrived foreigners the library aims to foster social cohesion, something which also implies a strong link between the library and the social and association fabric. In this way, networking and the collaboration with other services and entities of the neighbourhood is present in the majority of the activities and projects carried out by the library, but at the same time, it also participates in collective events and projects at a neighbourhood level, promoted by other entities and coordination networks about various topics: language, schools, cultural promotion, etc.

The result of these collaborations is that many dynamic collectives emerge, where the library is present in an active way. As a result of this coordination we have the Cultural Days of the Neighbourhood (Raval(s)), the exhibition in the street of, the Book Day – *Sant Jordi*, the Annual Local Festivities, and the literary event called the *Jocs Florals*. Stable forums have also been constituted such as the Local Education Plan, that brings together the educational centres and the pastime entities; The Reception Coordinator for Languages, comprising entities that offer attention for immigrants on the topic of language learning; the Reading Network, between children's and youth centres. With regard to the latter, it is worth mentioning that it was born out of the need to generate proposals for improving reading as a low level of reading was detected, and in general a lack of reading comprehension amongst children and youths. An association of associations is the promoter of many of these initiatives: The Social Foundation of the Raval.

Other dynamics have been created, based on bilateral relations between the library and some of the centres in the area. One interesting experience has been the collaboration with a nursery school, with whom a work has been carried out with the families at risk of social exclusion (within which are included newly arrived foreign families of the neighbourhood). Periodically workshops are held that aim to orientate these families in themes of health, eating habits and hygiene, and leisure, etc. of the children, as well as initiating with them the use of the library, which at the same time contributes both to training these "new users" as well as helping them in their process of social integration.

EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE

It is difficult to statistically evaluate the combination of actions carried out so far, given the fact that they only have some quantifiable aspects, but what can be said easily is the habitual presence of people of all origins in the daily life of the library. As we have seen the number of registered foreign users is quite high, even though it is difficult to know how many of them usually use the library or only register so as to be able to have one more document for settling into the new community (with the aim of legalising their situation). In any case, the library effectively reflects the existing diversity of the neighbourhood.

In the services section we can especially highlight the success of the consultations of periodical publications in non-autochthonous languages; music from various countries (or world music), which is very well received both by the immigrants and by the locals, as well as the case of Indian cinema, Bollywood, that is such a social phenomenon.

As we have commented above, the self-access learning collection for Catalan and Spanish are very highly requested, as well as the use of Internet as the usual means of communication of the people with those they have left behind and to access various types of information about their countries of origin. We also rate positively the individualized advice in information technologies, and we hope to be able to extend the timetable of this service in the future, both in the area dedicated to adults and also the children's room.

On the other hand, there is evidence of certain lacks with regard to the collection, as for example, the need to enlarge and renew more often the collections of other languages that, despite the effort made, still continue to be insufficient, and given their high level of use they are very often damaged. In fact, we do not have statistical data about their use, but the fact that the shelves where these collections are to be found are often too empty gives us a good idea of their high level of demand.

The difficulties that exist at various levels when acquiring these types of collections should also be mentioned: in the selection process, in locating suppliers and in the acquisition; and in their bibliographical treatment. Furthermore, as we have stated before, there are many aspects in terms of information that could be improved, resources such as the website or new information leaflets could be examples of these.

In terms of the future, we consider it important to continue boosting networking with entities and other facilities of the neighbourhood despite the dedication that this aspect demands, given that the coordination between all the agents involved in the field of integration and diversity (mediators, street educators, learning centres, people and associations linked with immigration, etc.) is essential to ensure the continuity of the projects.

Working on serving ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities is a complex theme which is not only the responsibility of each library, but so far the previously mentioned actions have been carried out in quite an isolated way, thanks above all to the effort of a motivated and sensitised staff, taking into account, moreover, the fact that ours is a relatively small library and counts on somewhat limited human and economic resources.

It is, however, worth mentioning that currently work is beginning in a coordinated way throughout the city from the whole of the network of libraries of Barcelona on the acquisition of collections of the main foreign cultural communities. These collections will be distributed to the different libraries according to the proximity of each one to these communities, and joint network programmes will be produced. This could be a first step in working in greater depth on library policies aimed at immigration in the different neighbourhoods of the city.

We would also like to express our worry in terms of the potential danger that Sant Pau –Santa Creu becomes a sort of ghetto for immigrants, a situation that already exists in the schools of the neighbourhood in which 90% of the students are sons or daughters of foreigners which doesn't match at all our will to provide spaces of cultural interrelation. The solution in this sense would probably mean dignifying the library, given that it currently is totally obsolete in terms of installations (we have to close for two months in the summer due to a lack of air conditioning), and collapsed in terms of services. The plan announced some time ago of enlargement and new premises is not considered for the forthcoming years.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this final section we would like to highlight once more the importance of working based on the singularity of each specific territory. In our case the neighbourhood of the Raval in Barcelona. We need to know where we are, to find out what the expectations are of us, and what we can offer. This can only be known by working side by side with the other centres: associations of immigrants, support for the newly arrived foreigners, educational centres, children's centres, social services, etc. As a result of this work there will emerge the programmes, services, and actions of collaboration and exchange. We can think about things for the immigrants, but we need above all to know what they want of us, and without working together it is difficult to know.

To finish, it is also worth highlighting the need for spaces for citizen coexistence such as the library, which are essential so as to be able to overcome present prejudices in intercultural relations. It is not a simple and easy aspect given that conflicts are assured due to the many existing stereotypes on all sides.

Therefore, in places where the two cultures coincide they become a key element. Practice teaches us that, if spaces and situations are not promoted in which intercultural contact is constant and fluid, this can lead to a tendency to create isolation between cultures, that is to say, a type of ghetto, (places closed together for living, their own shops, bars, squares, hairdressers, etc.) The public library is a space in which anybody can go, and from which a very clear proposal is made: the possibility to share.

All these proposals that we have outlined here are oriented towards adapting the public library to the current reality, to the presence of people from different parts of the world. A plural and diverse citizenship in multiple aspects, especially interesting from the point of view of cultural diversity.