

# Centre Cruilla

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Centre Cruïlla is a traditional nonprofit third sector organization tied to a religious community – Salesians Sant Jordi – operating through the church of Sant Bernat de Claravall. It began during the 1980s as a leisure-time educational project and has evolved into a second chance classroom. Since 1993 it operates as a youth-oriented centre devoted to offer leisure-time educational opportunities to low-income youths. In addition, since 1988 it has also been recognised as a Shared Educational Unit [*Unitat d’Escolarització Compartida – UEC*]; that is, a service that offers an alternative space for 14 to 18 year olds that have been expelled from or refuse formal education can temporarily follow Compulsory Middle and High School (ESO). As the centre has developed, many kinds of social and pre-workforce projects (focused on 18 to 28 year olds) have also been implemented. The centre aims to facilitate employability through courses in culinary techniques, beginner courses in various skilled trades, or promoting the learning of occupational skills. It has also launched courses oriented toward teenagers in order to develop concrete skills and personal education as sports instructors and leisure-time monitors.

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*The center has opened 72 places for children from 6 to 16 years old. There are three age groups; little ones, a middle age group, and older children. And then there is the UEC, those are ESO<sup>1</sup> students from 14 to 16 [years old], (...) with 18 seats. Finally there is the whole issue of labour market insertion, the pre-work [module] where we deal with between 25 and 30 young people each year. They are specialized projects. We don’t work all together. Then we have the PFI<sup>2</sup> which works with 15 young people and is also part of the school curriculum. The ‘Cruïna’ project, in which we work with 25 [young people], this is more permanent (Centre Cruïlla, Director).*

Centre Cruïlla’s professionals are highly informed regarding what is happening in the community and what are the basic needs of the neighbourhood. From 2008 onwards, they clearly identified the youth of Nou Barris Nord as being dramatically hit by the recession as their access to the labour market became blocked. The young people that had followed Centre Cruïlla’s programs became deprived of opportunities to enter into the labour market upon finishing their educational programs. To address this situation, in 2012 Centre Cruïlla launched an innovative program creating a new organization called ‘Associació Xiula’, which acts as a nonprofit temporary employment agency. The purpose of this new organization is to hire young people that are following or have been completed educational and training programs in Centre Cruïlla to do small amounts of paid work. These jobs are found in the catering sector or in other areas, such as removals or small jobs in maintenance and restoration. Thus, through this new program, Centre Cruïlla is going beyond its traditional educational focus and expanding into employment.

*We do caterings, removals, we also do screen-printing, home maintenance. We hire people, in a nonprofit scheme, doing contracts without profit margins. To be competitive, we ‘swallow’ the margin. We also carry out some services, such as carpentry, to change the doors of an apartment [for example]. [In such cases] we hire a professional carpenter from the neighbourhood, and a young person as an assistant. We buy the materials. And the cost of all*

*that – plus a bit extra to cover administrative costs – is what we charge to the customer, along with the corresponding VAT. It's a way of gaining information (Centre Cruïlla, Manager of Employment Projects).*

This experience has been very well received by other centres of the Salesian community working in similar situations in other deprived neighbourhoods. As a result, the initiative is being replicated in other social centres of the Salesian community under the umbrella of a common foundation (Fundació Jovent). Thus, the initiative is travelling geographically to other communities in a clear process of scaling-up. The diffusion of the tested model of job insertion developed by Centre Cruïlla across the network of second-chance school-centres of the Salesian community can be considered as proof of the scalability and originality of the project.

For now at least, the aim of the initiative is not framed as a workforce placement enterprise; however it cannot be ruled out as a future possibility, considering the potential for the project's evolution and that demand for its services is growing by the day. The social impact in the area of successful job placement has not yet been studied with quantitative data. It is, however, estimated that around 150 young people per year follow Centre Cruïlla's educational activities. With respect to social impact, the representatives of the initiative interviewed also stressed the infrastructure developed by the Centre over the years; the Centre has a set of spacious rooms suitably equipped for implementing educational programmes. A further indicator of social impact that was commonly highlighted was the attention garnered from external sources of investment, such as socially inclusive projects that became interested in the initiative as part of their philanthropic programmes (for example, Fundació La Caixa and Pro-infancia). Finally, the existence of ambitious projects for the future, such as the development of a school-restaurant for the experimentation of the students framed on the culinary module, could be also an important issue to assess the vitality and social impact of the initiative.

From the outset, the main objective of Centre Cruïlla has been working with young people with the aim of fostering youth community development. The success of the initiatives of job placement developed by the centre has prompted a number of actors to suggest the extension of the programme to a wider group of beneficiaries, i.e. adults. The possibility has, however, been rejected and the position of the Centre has been to reinforce their commitment to young people. As described above, in addition to its specific work with young people from the community, the Centre Cruïlla also plays a central and key role coordinating Nou Barris Nord's Community Development Plan. The Centre Cruïlla has assumed the financial management of the subvention associated with this plan and is coordinating the engagement of the staff responsible for its implementation. This leading role is a reflection of the level of professionalization of Centre Cruïlla, which is clearly higher than the neighbourhood's community-based organizations. The Community Development Plan is based on fostering networks among all the stakeholders, neighbours and projects in the area.

Centre Cruïlla is a traditional community development nonprofit that has a formal and professionalized organizational structure: one director (CEO), three project managers and 25 social educators. All of its staff are paid and they do not have volunteers. Hence, even though it works in the community through using a networked leadership style (the Community

Development Plan is a clear example of that), internally it displays a traditional organizational structure.

The linkage between Centre Cruïlla and the rest of projects and community based organizations working in the area could be described as a facilitating and collaborative relation. The fact that Centre Cruïlla is characterized by the professionalization of the actors that are leading the initiative enables it to steer clear of the personal conflicts typical of the neighbourhood associations and other community-based organizations which operate on a voluntary basis. Even though some of Centre Cruïlla's social educators live in Nou Barris Nord, most of them do not. What we found among these social workers is a profile of a committed educator, highly engaged and rooted in the neighbourhood, with direct knowledge and a participative attitude with respect to the grassroots movements in the area. Moreover, most of Centre Cruïlla social educators play an important communicative and informative role not only through Centre Cruïlla informal channels but also having an active role in the neighbourhood's social life. Thus, although Centre Cruïlla fulfils an important task working with young people through its programs, it also has an important role at the broader community level, networking different stakeholders and having good relations with all of them, including public bodies.

Relationships between Centre Cruïlla and the public administration are good and dynamic. There is a constant communication with the District authorities, which recognize the important role carried out by the Centre. By contrast, from the point of view of the Centre, the public administration in Nou Barris Nord is criticised for the absence of a comprehensive approach to the creation of public policies. The Centre stresses that various municipal governments have acted in the area without having an overall perspective, promoting isolated policies resulting from a fragmented approach. The recent application of an urban renewal project has been perceived by the Centre in the same way. It claims that the project has been highly focused on the built environment and has neglected socio-communitarian issues. Even though the Centre is essentially a service provider and uses a very pragmatic approach, it is also producing a general discourse based on integrated approaches and specific discourses focused on youth development through both education and labour market opportunities.

The way in which Centre Cruïlla lobbies to gain influence on the public administration and its policies is based on the principle that claiming and protesting is always needed to achieve direct effects and public investment in the neighbourhood. One of the main principles invoked to justify the need for essential investment in Nou Barris Nord is the need to achieve equality with the rest of the city of Barcelona with respect to living standards and human development.

Finally, assessing the change in social relationships that are promoted through the Centre, we should highlight the empowering effects that its educational activities have for the youth that use them. In the same vein, those contracts launched by the initiative are also considered as empowering their recipients. The clearest dimensions of the changes in social relations that the initiative produces relate to the empowerment of its users. Thus, Centre Cruïlla programs clearly try to unlock the energy of young people through their human development and their empowerment through real labour opportunities.

*This work experience – of a small labour contract, a few hours of doing tutorials, some hours working in a bar one weekend evening – these things give a small wage, in a regulated, formal and legal way, moreover, paying taxes, with a social security number... It is a project that encompasses all these things. It gives you your personal dignity and you take a salary back home. For that reason, in a family with socioeconomic difficulties, the fact that young family members can themselves bring a salary home, it is very important. And it is self-esteem for the youngsters as well. And it makes a big difference. These young people, after signing a contract and working, how they see life changes a lot. And their motivation too. Because they know it has purpose; we do things for a reason, not for nothing (Centre Cruïlla, Manager of Employment Projects).*

To sum up, Centre Cruïlla is a long-established community-development organization, working in Nou Barris Nord since the 1980s, that has recently launched a socially innovative program to cope with youth unemployment following the recession. It works through external funding which is sought for each project carried out. Even though it is state-dependent – most of its funding comes from different levels of public administration (regional government, City Council, etc.)– it also receives philanthropic and private funding. The Centre does not use new forms of leadership, but rather achieves things through a traditional professionalized model. It is more pragmatic than transformative, although it is reframing some discourses in claiming for a comprehensive approach to social problems in Nou Barris Nord. Its members bridge differences by networking at a community level. Probably the most important aspect of the Centre's work is that it is unleashing the energy of young people in the neighbourhood, empowering them through training and labour opportunities. The professionalization of its staff and their proactive role with the public administration explain the relative success of the initiative, which has been replicated through other social centres of the broader Salesian religious community.

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1 Middle School [*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*].

2 Employment and Training Program [*Programa de Formació i Inserció*].