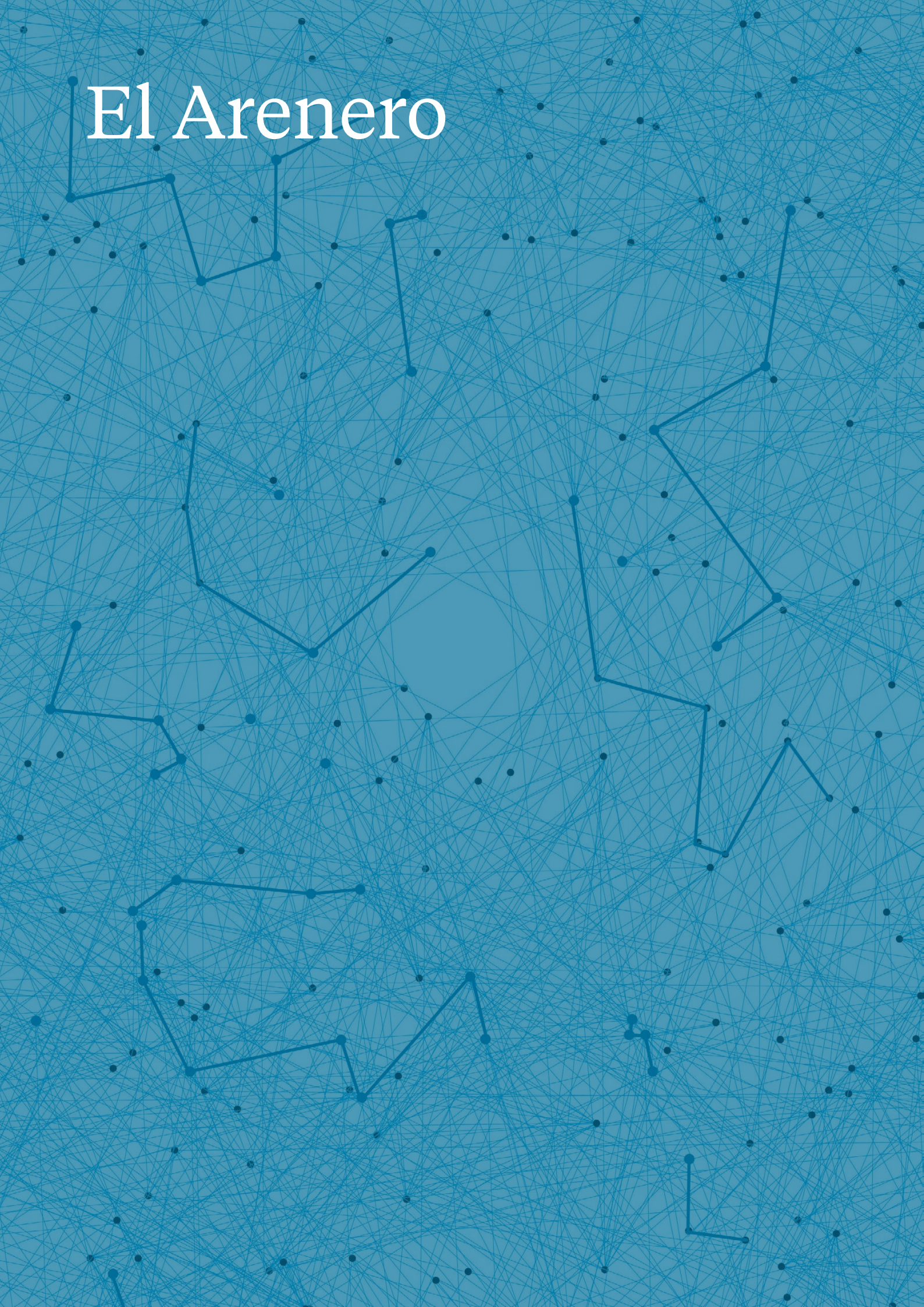


# El Arenero





Constellation  
of the Commons

Date of the interview  
**June 24, 2017**

Location  
**Madrid, Spain**

Collective's name  
**El Arenero**

Name of the interviewees  
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### **Who are you, and how are you involved with this project?**

**Pablo:** My name is Pablo, and I work in social education. Before working on the El Arenero ('The Sandbox') project, I had always worked with adolescents, specifically related to social exclusion. I've worked on the project as a partner for the past four years, since the project started.

**María:** I'm María, and I'm the mother of two children who are a part of the program. In my professional life, I'm a biologist and a high school teacher.

### **What kind of self-managed project is El Arenero?**

**María:** We started the project a little over four years ago; we had our first son and after some time at home — after the short maternity leave and some time with an at-home caregiver— we started to look at what was going on with preschools. And we saw that there were some public schools that we liked well enough, but that we didn't have access to because they had very few spots, and there were other, more vulnerable families ahead of us, logically, so we started to look at the private ones. We only looked at ones that we were told were really good, and we were horrified at the kinds of things they did... it was a space completely cut off from family participation, you would drop your kid off at the door and pick him up at the door, but you weren't a part of that important time, those early childhood moments. So we thought, if there isn't an answer to this important need, the need to care for our children, then let's create something that will help us care for them the way we want to. Pablo is actually my sister's partner, and they had spent that year traveling around Latin America, and Pablo lived in Galicia but was about to move to Madrid, and he didn't have any work... He didn't have any idea about how to care for children, he'd never even changed a diaper, but we thought that it wasn't as important to know everything about caregiving immediately as to love the kids. Love them and want to take care of them, right? And the diaper-changing and learning other types of things, like how to resolve conflicts really it's something that you learn (and this goes for me as well, as I'm a teacher, although of a very different age group) in the classroom; you learn alongside them. And from there we got a few families who knew Pablo and a few who didn't. But that's where it started, as an attempt to satisfy a need for something that we weren't finding in any other site. So, instead of each child staying in their own houses, we decided to do childcare collectively.

**Pablo:** The first year that we started, we were based in a house. I don't think it was part of the families' idea to establish all of this for the long term; especially in the first year they were thinking it would

be only for when the kids were 1-2 years old. We started with six families but there were only five kids. So we started with 1-2 year olds, we started out with the organizational model that we still use today, as María was talking about, with the perspective that one of the most important, abrupt changes kids have to face is leaving home to go to school. And I see El Arenero as a model of this transition. I see it as a model of transition because of the involvement and participation of the families, and because by the end of the course, all of the families are caregivers for all of the kids. So we started out with five kids aged 1-2 years old, and the families really responded positively, I was delighted, and the possibility arose for us to add more families and to start to look for a new location. We found this site that we really like, it met all the requirements for space, light, and being close to the park — we go to the park every day. In the second year, I think there were seven or eight kids, and now we have ten, which we kind of see as the limit, because we go to the park every day, and it's not a kindergarten — it's not the same in terms of safety, because you're in a park, it can be pretty close to the street. And we also see ten kids as the limit because we take naps here, and we can barely manage to get ten kids to take a nap.

### **What is El Arenero's legal status?**

**Pablo:** We are represented as an association, as that was a way to give the project a legal form, and also a way to hire me legally, but this is an unregulated project. There is not an institution that regulates these types of spaces. At the beginning we lived with a little— I cannot say if it was fear or not, it's very subjective— a feeling of hoping they wouldn't find out about us, they wouldn't see us. It is true that we go to the park every day. We go with ten small children to the park, we're unregulated, they can close us down at any moment if we receive a visit, but that's the way it is. If we don't try doing things this way, we won't be able to create alternatives, because it is very difficult to create alternatives within institutions. We've operated four years, confirming that the model is viable, and it is. There's not any relation with the institutions, and at the beginning I was thinking, "Well, I wish there was a guideline that regulated this type of space". But now I think about not only my work, but everything that we've generated around the project. If they want to close it they will, so we'll be careful... So, now I don't know if I want there to be regulations, because surely we would not be able to meet any of the requirements even if they were very flexible.

**María:** Within that debate and understanding all of the concerns, I believe that it's necessary to go for it. It's necessary to understand and see that this is possible and that if in a given moment there is a problem, we are not alone. There are the families that were there before, there's the Institute, there's the retirement center, there are the people from the orchard, there are the people that go to the park every day and see us... and that grows, and it makes us strong and it lets us believe that there are alternatives.

### **What age of children is the project designed for?**

**Pablo:** Here in Spain, education isn't obligatory until six years old, but of course starting at age three — and María knows this better than I do— the lines to get a spot in the public schools get long. We've always had kids from 1-3 years old, (well, 1-2 the first year, then 1-3), but of course every year some family says, "I don't know why you don't continue up to four years old," and it seemed a little complicated. But

this year there were two families that suggested it, that wanted their kids to stay in the project until they were 4, and I said “Look, this is a challenge for me, I would really like to do it.” And in the coming year, we’re going to have kids 1-4 years old.

### **How do families participate?**

**María:** The truth is that the project has been evolving as we do, in this four-year journey, but since the beginning, one of the important pillars was that the families were really active participants in the process, including in logistical matters. For example, it’s us families that cook and bring food for all the kids, Pablo, and his aide. We take turns with this throughout the year. We also help Pablo with the daily cleaning and, once a week, a deeper cleaning. The families have the option, if both work in the mornings and can’t take their turn, to pay a little more. But there are families that can take a turn – taking a turn means being with the kids and with Pablo, who’s always there as an educational and emotional supervisor. And this is important because although Pablo can handle ten kids, obviously if there’s a problem or something... the idea isn’t to help them play – Pablo can explain this better – but to watch them; there’s so many moments of the day in which it’s important to be there, watching just in case something happens. So what we, the families, do, is have participatory roles in logistical matters and how we organize the space. We’ve had educational debates, methodological ones about how we want to solve the conflicts that arise, and this has all been a process of learning together, in which our perspectives as parents complement Pablo’s as a caregiver, who is greatly involved with the kids but in a different way.

So El Arenero has become a fundamental space, not only for the kids but also for the families. At 4:00, we come to pick them up, although it’s a flexible schedule, and many afternoons we stay there and have a snack, without Pablo since his workday’s over, although sometimes he stays to chat. So there’s a network outside of what happens here every morning 9:00-4:00. And this network is important because it’s how we share how we parents manage the tantrums that start around year two, we give each other strategies, we help each other, and we comfort each other when we think that we’re being terrible parents. And we realize that losing your temper happens to everyone. It’s a space that transcends these four walls and that has created really strong emotional connections that we’ve kept up with families whose children left the school two or three years ago.

### **How does this community make decisions?**

**Pablo:** From the beginning, it has been private and self-managed. It’s the families who built the community, who pulled it together, and decisions have always been made in an assembly form. We have a monthly meeting, we also have additional meetings when necessary, and all the decisions are made in that form – on pedagogical issues, as well. Obviously the weight falls on me because I’m there every day, and I’m the children’s supervisor, but sometimes we have workshops for the families, and the families in the meetings participate in the pedagogical part. All the decisions we make are made in an assembly.

**María:** And as Pablo has been learning, we’ve been changing as well; I always remember the year before starting school, I said, in those methodological debates, “Perhaps we should start doing an activity that’s more guided, right?” because I was worried about my kid jumping into formal education, but now with my littlest one I

say, "Please, no guides!" I want him to go through the same types of processes that are being done here. As Pablo's noted, this is how they grow more and learn more.

**Pablo:** I feel like it's a project that we've worked together to build since the beginning, at an organizational level. We see that there's been super important progress, and I'm okay with the fact that I didn't know any more than the kids at the beginning. I see how we've all evolved, and I'm really content with the process. And even if we say that I carry the weight of the pedagogy, that doesn't mean that the families can't have opinions, of course. And it doesn't mean I feel questioned, either. This is not a project where I feel like I'm being told, "This is how things are done, don't do it that way." I've also been growing — this year we hired an early education teacher with many years' experience working with young kids, I meet with her twice a week.

**María:** Yes, we'll say that Pablo is largely responsible for coming up with plans because he is the one who directs instruction the most. And he's gone from knowing almost nothing to knowing a lot of things, from training here and external training in other, similar spaces, which he's been soaking up. But he comments on what we should do and the families are so happy to learn how those processes are happening and that they have the possibility to think about them. There have been debates of whether or not we see something as doable, and those debates have been a very interesting and enriching learning process because, in reality, education is not usually like that. You propose one thing, and then something happens, and then something happens after that. But this is something that we're building as we go, and to have a guiding reference in this process like Pablo... I always say, Pablo always thinks about what is best for the kids and then what's best for the families or others. His focus is always on them and that's like a guarantee that, although we might make mistakes sometimes, or things could sometimes be done in a different way, it's okay because we keep sight of what's important-- caring for and respecting these children and treating them as people, so that they are not seen as creatures that cannot do anything for themselves, but rather as being super autonomous in a variety of ways.

**Pablo:** I think that for any educational project, it is important that the pedagogical programming is shared. Otherwise, I don't know if this would be a viable pedagogical project. So, this project has programming that's collaborative. But I also see a richness in the variety of adult figures that kids have in their everyday lives-- other ways to be. This doesn't mean that we are going to do things totally differently, but that we live with more adults and all relate to the children in a different way; in the end, everyone has their own personality and relates to children in their own way. And I see this as a richness. And in a big city, which tends toward individualism and has very few collective spaces (as if raising kids only happens in the house), I see a lot of strength and richness in the kids having tons of adult figures as references.

### **To what extent did 15M help jump start this Project?**

**María:** Of the families that initiated El Arenero, many of us have participated very actively in *Ecologistas en Acción* (Environmentalists in Action) for many years. I think that this has nourished the project in many ways. To start with, everything you see, we've made, including the kitchen; we've put in work as a collective to get comfortable with this space and make it our own.

**Pablo:** More or less.

**María:** I think that saturated our organizational model, that the decisions should be collective and assembly style. That's not to say that we haven't learned that there are decisions in which Pablo's opinion is more relevant, because he has a different perspective than we do. But I think that all this experience of participating in social movements made us believe that we're capable of creating something like this. Although it's been four years, when it was created we didn't think that four years later we would have to be kind of dramatically saying which families could join and which couldn't, because we'd love to let everyone in. At the beginning there was a bit of wondering, "But what about next year?" and right away we saw that this works.

Another thing that has fostered participation in this project is that, for example, the food that we consume here is environmentally friendly. We don't just mean this as the kids and staff eating healthily, but also on a global level, having a food model based in local production, without participating in the industrial agriculture that depends on fossil fuels. This is essential, too, for trying to change this destructive, predatory model of food production. It's a small thing, feeding a few kids, but what we've noticed is that there were families who didn't eat ecologically before and have adopted this model not only as a matter of individual health, but as a link with the earth, with the planet, and the rest of the people who participate in the food chain. These things also go spreading throughout families, and that's important; in that vein, we've also had debates about energy. Do we get hot water -- because there isn't any here -- or do we continue washing with cold water? Do we keep the living room warm or can we have it cooler, and have the kids wear more coats in the winter? These are profoundly political issues, and here they've had a practical dimension. And you have to decide with little kids, they've made us rethink things, not only in this space but in the spaces of our individual homes.

### **Are we witnessing a burgeoning political project?**

**María:** I think that it's a project that is profoundly political, and it is profoundly political because it promotes a different way of approaching caregiving, which is confined to an invisible social sphere. As everything related to caregiving is traditionally done by us women, to suddenly put this on the table -- that there are families who want to raise our kids in a big city and don't want to do it alone, that we want to do it with other people and that we believe that there's strength in this, not only for the sake of learning but for our way of understanding the world and acting within it. Reaching consensus takes time, making the food takes time, cleaning takes time, debating over how we resolve conflict takes time, but this is how we want to construct it because it seems to us that this is a unique way to fight -- although it's in a small space -- against a predatory system of life, of resources. These projects are a way not just to resist but to propose an alternative. We don't just talk about resisting the battering of capitalism, which proposes a homogenized, boring, and memorization-based education with zero creativity. This project is not just a form of resistance against that, but is also a way of building something different. And when we build different relationships with our kids, they've already learned here that you have to come to agreements, you have to wait if someone else has something, and you have to ask, you can't push. And they quickly learn the phrase "Let me borrow it when you finish," or "I'll wait until then," or "Right now it's not my turn," or "I'm getting angry and I have to deal with my frustration." But they learn with the others, they learn with Pablo, they learn with the other parents because we all know we have to say something even when it is not our kid, and we have learned to do this in a communal way. And the families learn that these collective projects require effort, but they make us capable of constructing

something new. We may encounter difficulties and things that don't work, but, without a doubt, they have an inspiring potential in this situation of civil crisis, something hopeful that makes us think: *well, when climate change forces us to restructure our society, because energetically speaking we're not going to be able to continue living like this, we've had a rehearsal of how to do it, understanding ourselves in a different way.*

Now I'm not limited to my own experience, my house, where I leave and go to the park alone with my two kids-- no. I'm part of an experience that has enriched me with a ton of things and has made me stronger. I have also been able to help others and I have constructed a model of thinking in which we don't feel burdened and alone in a big city because if I leave from work late and I can't get back, I know that my kid will be alright. Everything will be alright and nobody will give me a dirty look for arriving late once again, but rather the opposite. There are families that have had their second child and there's both a celebration for everyone and the reminder, "When you give birth, give us a call," because the other nine families will happily stay with your kid, and your kid will be happy because they have another model figure in their lives. So, it's a way to fight against individualism and to create collectively from the hope that we can really create new things.

**Pablo:** The concept of caregiving is a political issue. The concept of caring for the children, but also the concept of caring regarding adults, as well; how they're supported, but also how I am supported. I imagine that workers in private schools for young kids would very much like to have the conditions of salary and vacation time that I have.

### **Has this experience redefined the way you understand your work?**

**Pablo:** Very much so. I come from that background, I studied social education. I practically always worked with adolescents in a situation of social exclusion, whatever you want to call it, but with private contracts (that still take public money) that put a project out to tender every year. The businesses are presented and then they hire you. There was a while where I was very tired, not just from the labor conditions, which were bad, but from the relationship with the people I was working with, whether it was families or adolescents. These are projects that, depending on the money that the administration wants to allocate for that given year, are put out to tender. So, every year, there's tons of social projects put out to tender and you don't know which will continue, or whether you are going to have a job in January... you don't know if you will be able to have a job with that family. I very much remember talking with kids and explaining many times "Well, before you there were who knows how many, and after you there will be who knows how many..." This means that the relationships that you establish with the families you work with are commercialized by the model of hiring with public money but private management. Now I find myself in a project that is completely the opposite, that, independent of the labor conditions (which are really good), is built through a collective and through continuous human relationships. For the first time, you can see progress in the project, and how solid it is.

### **What happens in the community when children turn four?**

**María:** It's our turn to go through that now, since after four years our time here is coming to an end. And El Arenero continues to be a place where families that aren't here anymore still come visit some afternoons. It's a space that the kids can recognize as their own. Within this group we have formed emotional connections so

that we see each other not just here, but in other spaces... we're going on vacation together in the summer, for example. Strong networks have already been created that are well maintained because they generate space for us adults to hang out, and for the kids, too, who are all of the same age, so it's a perfect symbiosis. They're playing, and we're also enjoying the company and the relationships stay strong...

### **What type of people participate in the project?**

**Pablo:** The space is self-managed and private and maintained by fees paid by the families. And the fee of the families that take turns working as childcare assistant (which is a seven-hour commitment) isn't very far from the fee for public education, and much better than the fee for private. And we always knew from the start that it was a project that would come to whoever sought it out. That is, on the one hand, conscientious people came, who believe in the collective and have some connection to it, and other people came because it was affordable-- that's the objective. It's what happens with everybody who can't pay, not necessarily this kind of education but this model of child-rearing, which is not just about the pedagogical part here from 0-4, but also everything we've built around the project, everything about the collective, everything between families... I always knew there were many people stay away from this model, and yet we think it's a viable model, this experience. Although it hasn't been very long, four years tells us that it's a viable project with a lot of strengths and we've started these past few months to go over it again. We're looking at the theoretical part of how to expand this model's reach, although it wouldn't mean replicating El Arenero in its entirety, because that isn't our objective, but still having the base of families whose participation we can count on, organized as a collective, and with a pedagogical vision of childcare with respect towards the developmental processes of children. We want to come to neighborhoods and collectives and people who can't pay for this type of education. We're developing the theoretical discourse to make contact... our idea is, we don't want to come to a neighborhood, to a group and say, "Look, we have this thing, do you want to do it?" We want to take advantage of the work that organizations are already doing, some of which we've known about in various neighborhoods for a long time. Then we want to present a little bit of the idea to them, the proposal, see if there's a need and if there's an interest that stems from that need, and from that interest, build collaboratively with them.

### **What impact has the project had in this neighborhood?**

**Pablo:** This year has been an important one because we've been able to go out into the neighborhood, and not just keep it within these four walls. At the start of this course I went to speak to the Institute and I told them what we were doing here, to see if they were in any way interested in doing anything together with the teens. There was a director and teacher for PCPI, formerly known as "The Social Guarantee," a program for boys and girls who hadn't finished their ESO (obligatory secondary school), that were very interested. So, the agreement was that the teens would come once a week, just an hour. There, we planned an activity with the kids, and the teens were there, doing this activity with them. This was until December and later, in January, we changed groups to another program, which is PMAR--María knows more about that--and six teenage boys and girls came for an hour a week with an activity that we would plan or that would be planned by the Institute, and the teens would join in that activity. It's a way to leave here and generate connections, it's a way for education to transcend; it's in every moment of life, it transcends these four walls. Here we have an Institute



of I don't know how many students, and there was no type of relationship between us, and we all worked in education. Why not do something together?

The feedback was very positive; the teacher we are with now loves it so much that for the upcoming course, we're going to include her in programming, which on a symbolic level is important since it's something that's going to change the direction of the center, the project here with El Arenero... and how learning is organized by means of relationships. Learning happens in all environments, but there's also learning that's not seen and that involves relationships with others. You see how the adolescents play with the children and how the children are seeing another type of model figure. Of course, there are mothers and fathers around, but adolescents provide something else.

**María:** Yes, the children call them the big kids. The boys and girls come from the Institute...

**Pablo:** They ask, "When are the kids from the Institute coming?"

**María:** And I think that it's also very relevant because those who come are in particular educational programs. They're teens who have been kicked out of the education system and are in special schools. They're the "bad kids" of the Institute, "the ones with problems," "the biggest potheads," "the most..." you see them on the road and you say, "Ugh, those guys!" Well, those are exactly the ones who come here, who make sure that the kids don't trip, who are watching to make sure they don't choke, taking away little things they find on the ground....

**Pablo:** They write stories for the children. Their teacher has a background in linguistics and they make stories for them, they write and draw them... and later they read them, it's unbelievable...

We started all of this, I don't know, in November, October, around there -- by February, March, we were getting really positive feedback... The kids ask when the teens from the Institute are coming. We went to speak to the Retirement Center because there is a retirement center next to the park where we go every day. I went with the teacher from the Institute and we told them "Listen, this is what we're doing in El Arenero, would you be interested in us starting to plan something with the retirement home?" and they accepted, it seemed interesting to them. Our relationship with the retirement home wasn't very established, but since then we've been going there once a month. And I asked the workers and they said yes, there are grandmothers and fathers who are very excited to see the kids. You can go in and see them watching TV, and I imagine that doing that every day... I know television stupefies us; for older folks even more so. So seeing the children gives them a lot. Later, they sing some songs, traditional songs that the kids and the people at the retirement home both know... it's very sweet.

This summer, in the front you can see that there's a place, a coworking space; last summer the space was empty and the idea popped up, this idea of expanding the project, for the project to grow not in a quantitative way, but a qualitative way, we had this idea to make a coworking space thinking about putting caregiving first. All in all, the project reaches many families that have more autonomous, freelance jobs. Not everyone does, but many families do. That's why they can take turns, they can dedicate a morning each week to be here accompanying their kids. There are a lot of people who work from home... so why don't we start our own coworking space? And this year I think there are two families, there's a family

that was here the second year of El Arenero, and there's also a family that will come during the next course. So... since other projects keep popping up around this, centered on caregiving. If all goes well, the idea is that when we recover the investment from the fee that people pay for this space, although it won't be a lot, we will reinvest in the project or in another peripheral Arenero project.

### **How do you work with children?**

**Pablo:** My intentionality is, above all, that they experience things that might for logistical reasons not be within their reach every day. It's not so much that I offer activities as that I offer materials, and as long as there is respect towards those materials, towards the space, and towards their classmates, they can do whatever they want. There is an objective, the objective is that they experiment and that they do whatever they want to with the materials. I can put breadcrumbs, colanders, glasses, spoons... and they'll do whatever they want with that stuff, it's all about intentionality, that they explore based on their interests. There's no "this is done this way," they will have time to be told that in school, how they have to do things, and that things only have one use. One of the things that I like more than anything is watching kids use objects. Adults have a single use for objects, but for kids it's not like that. In the symbolic games that they invent, the use that they give each object is infinite. We don't want to stifle that creativity.

### **How has your experience been as a mother in El Arenero?**

**María:** It has evolved as a process, and we have changed as a family, as well in a ton of different ways. The truth is that I doubted for a long time if I could be a mother because it was nauseating to imagine myself sitting in the park alone in the afternoons with one child or with two children. It was a vision that horrified me, because I thought that it would be very boring. So, during these four years, two with my older one and two with my younger one, I believe we've learned that you learn about everything through experiencing and living. I think they're two very happy kids that laugh a lot, that don't get scared going up the stairs of the entrance, that understand how to ask for help when they need it, that know how to resolve conflicts even though they don't always get what they want, but that also know that when there's something you don't like, you say, "I don't like that, I don't want you to do this to me." So, as a result, it's a little bit easier for them to understand that you shouldn't do things to others that they don't like. I believe that this way of trying to express what they feel and seeing what the others are feeling helps them take the step to being in a group of 25 people, which is, for example, what happens when they move on from preschool.

I believe that what they have gotten here is a ton of people that love them very much, which helps their self-esteem, their learning, and helps them be people who have different strategies for resolving conflicts and additionally to feel better in many situations. For me, my biological family is very important and I know they are important models for these kids, but I believe that all of the people that have lived with them these four years and that will continue to live together are just as important as models. Affection and love can do many things. It is also a political tool, and I believe that that is made very clear for the kids, as individual children, and for us, as adults, as well.

### **Could you talk about how you perceive the current education model?**

**María:** Well, I believe that the current educational model is profoundly segregational... It removes diversity from very early ages and it's homogenizing in the worst sense

of the word. It seeks to discipline and it expels those who raise their voice even a little. It drives out those who are creative in a different way from what is supposedly established... and it's for the survivors. I believe those who make it to university are survivors of an educational model in which they have swallowed things that not only are they not interested in, but that bore them. They have learned to keep quiet and that not defending themselves is easier. I believe that it rewards silence more than words, not questioning is more rewarded than questioning. I believe it rewards memorizing more than reasoning. Recently a course finished, and one of the teens had written something that seemed marvelous to me. One of the phrases that he said was, "In this educational process that we've had in school, they valued us from zero to ten. We've been numbers between zero and ten. We understood that the closer we were to ten the more valued we were, and the more we moved away from ten the less valued we were." It then said other beautiful things, but that part seemed like it summarized a ton of things. That said, I believe there are places where they believe in adolescents much more than they believe in themselves sometimes.

### **How do you keep hope and activism alive in moments of political disaffection?**

**Pablo:** I believe that a lot of it comes from looking at the past, the present situation, but especially looking towards the future, feeling that from the beginning the project has worked, that the families and the children and I have been really content, really comfortable with the project, for me that's the best motivator, to see the children so happy in the space... how marvelous it is to be playing all morning. I'd love to remember how my life was when I was two or three, because we don't remember being able to play all morning or all day. For me, the driving force comes from feeling that the project is working and that the people and the children are content, as well as looking towards the future of the project, the more peripheral project that we told you about regarding bringing a pedagogical and organizational model to environments that don't currently allow it. For me, I hope soon to be putting time and energy into that.

**María:** For me the driving force without a doubt is the children because, although we adults may not always see eye to eye, the children are so happy here. They come in the morning, run around the space, then they tell you what they've done here. You can see that after they leave, they'll still come to this space and feel it as their own. The joy that comes from participating in this project is so great that when you come to pick them up in the evenings, they don't want to leave. This is what keeps El Arenero going. The children are the motor. And Pablo and the families grease this motor every day. But I believe that in all of this, the whole collective process has been very important. Sometimes we say "So, I guess we'll have to make another Arenero, right?" to the families, for example, if they can't get in, and we say, "Well, you can call others, we can give you the tools," but they lack Pablos to jump into things, to keep moving forward in the face of difficulties and keep focus on the children. That's what makes us all reframe things when there's something not quite right... you look at the children and they immediately reposition you so you can see what the priority is, and the priority is always that they're content and happy, so we'll have to figure out the rest of it, but that's the priority, and they bring us back to that every day.

**Pablo:** For me as well, one of the most important things is the network that is built around the project; for me that's the most beautiful part. To see the network of care and affection built through the common need of child-rearing is amazing for me, and it's not quantifiable, it's something incredible, it's really

impressive. And it seems to me that this is the engine of change, that this collective project, collectively built, with childcare as the common need, transcends the educational project. For me this is the great strength of the project.

**María:** I obviously agree with this. I would define ourselves as a network of care that understands those cares as something profoundly transformative and political. Not like a way of resolving a necessity, but as a way to transform society.

### **What would it mean for El Arenero to grow in non-capitalist terms?**

**María:** I believe that to grow means that this experience needs to be replicated in other places and, of course, adapting it to the singularities of each site... but for me growing would mean for there to be more people who, when they see that there's no way to satisfactorily resolve something with respect to childcare and other things, they can make one themselves; you can't do that alone, but surely there are other people that are thinking the same thing, it's just a matter of getting together. Keeping in mind what the purpose is, remembering that the obstacles don't block your way completely, and having a goal, which in this case is that our children would be cared for with respect and tenderness... Growing would mean for many more people to think that these things are totally attainable, for our point of view to be altered in an urgent moment of change, and for these little experiences not to change global politics, but they do prepare us for a crisis of civilization in the form of an energy collapse, when we'll have to change our way of living on the earth, and this project prepares us to do this in a way that's far more just, fair, sustainable, and at peace with our own planet.

**Pablo:** I agree completely. Often people will ask, "Do we want to grow this into another, bigger place?" I always say, "That doesn't interest me at all, to tell the truth." I'm not interested in El Arenero increasing the number of children. I want it to grow in other ways, with other people, with their contributions. To grow is to take responsibility in a collective way, not to outsource our problems. I mean, capitalism leads us to resolve everything individually, and whatever we can't solve for ourselves, we outsource. We hire a service or a retirement home or a preschool because we don't have any other solution. This is not a criticism. It's true that the society leads us to this way of living, that you have to resolve everything with your partner, and what you can't solve yourself because you don't have time, you outsource. So for me, to grow is this: that in the end, this model can spread a collective sense of responsibility for caring for our ourselves and each other.