

La Ortiga





Constellation
of the Commons

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Name of the interviewees
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Who are you and what is your relationship to the La Ortiga project?

Mónica: My name is Mónica and I'm from here in Valladolid, from a village in Tudela de Duero. I've been a part of La Ortiga since the beginning, there was a short time during which I was not a part of the assembly, and now I'm a part of the meetings again.

David: My name is David and I participate in the La Ortiga assembly. I didn't participate from the start of the foundation, but La Ortiga was formed on May 3, I believe, and by May 7 I was participating.

When, where, and why was La Ortiga started?

David: Two and a half years ago, activists from different groups throughout the city met and thought that it was necessary to create a space to carry out activities, get together, be political in the city, so then they decided to found La Ortiga.

Mónica: And so, La Ortiga during the first stage was in the Plaza Batallas, and that was a good location because there was a park. Now we're here in the Delicias neighborhood. La Ortiga was formed like how David said, and from the need to have a meeting space for the different groups; Valladolid is a city that has a lot of social movements, so a meeting point was needed, a place to get together and do activities. We're in the Delicias neighborhood.

What kind of neighborhood is it?

David: Well, Las Delicias is a working-class neighborhood where people with average economic capacity live, and it has a large number of migrants, not only from other countries, but Valladolid is the capital of the city of Castilla y Leon and there are many people from towns that, because of the issue of lack of resources, decide to come here. In Valladolid, it's much easier to end up in a neighborhood like this than to be in the center or in other places of the city that are much more lucrative in the sense that the land is much more expensive. So this site seemed perfect for us to educate others or to seek a common ground with people who are more like us than those of other neighborhoods.

Have you managed to involve the neighborhood residents?

Mónica: La Ortiga took a year to get going in this neighborhood, and it's a complicated process. One of our objectives is to hold meetings from time to time to rethink the objectives of the Social Center because, sometimes, we start doing things and forget what still has to be done. I wouldn't fully

say yes, but there are certain activities that we see people are more drawn to. Not all activities are done here on-site; we've done activities in parks, in plazas, wherever. But I would not fully say yes, because in the end a door is a door, even if it's open.

Why the name La Ortiga?

David: We asked our partners because we joined when the name already existed, and they told us that it had been proposed because it was a plant that is beneficial because it can be used to make tea and skin cream and such, but if you don't know how to hold it, it can sting.

Mónica: In addition, the ortiga plant is something very characteristic of Valladolid, from Castilla, you find it in many places. We are a "self-managed social center."

Can you explain to us what that means?

Mónica: So a self-managed social center is, as the name states, a center where people do activities or have social gatherings. And when we talk about "self-managed", we're referring to the fact that we have no interest in receiving any type of subsidy or help because we believe in collective management and that we can carry out our projects with our own resources.

How does a self-managed social center sustain itself?

David: Through fees contributed by people who participate in the assembly, through the vegan get togethers, donations, and from talks that are free. We always remind people before and after each activity that this is a self-managed social center and that it exists from voluntary individual contributions. No one is ever forced to pay to participate.

Mónica: Of course, in the end we manage to rely on the responsibility of the people. In the assembly nobody reviews who has paid fees or who hasn't paid fees, each person gives according to their financial abilities. We think that if you get involved with a project and you're dedicating your time to it, then we know that you're committed to that project. With the activities it's the same, one thing that we clearly wanted is that a person will never be charged for an activity because it seems to us that this is a space that has to be for everyone in the world, and not everyone can pay. So, when an activity happens or someone wants to give money for that activity, the money goes to the space, it never goes to the person who has organized it and managed it because this is a non-profit space.

Why not ask for specific grants to cover the operation of some activities?

Mónica: Fundamentally, I would say that the reason why we don't ask for subsidies is autonomy. To have the autonomy of not having to account for what we do, because this is something that we build and that we believe is perfectly legitimized by itself. And also because the institution is there and many people from the group could generate enough attention to collaborate possibly with certain institutions.

David: Apart from that, ideologically, like Monica said, there are many people who are not in favor of participating directly with a state organization. As we said, that money belongs to everyone but it isn't available to everyone where they need it.

It's money from the state and their ideology is very far from ours and allows and enables cases of oppression that many companions suffer under or that we suffer under within the current system. So, we don't want to participate even indirectly, even if that money belongs to everyone. On the other hand, although we think that it's ours, public money is not because it's from the state, we pay into it and the state is the one that decides who receives the money and who doesn't. So, we don't want to have to owe anything to people that are responsible, directly or indirectly, for what happens to us. But above all, we opt for self-management to create an alternative to ideological thinking that things must function in a specific way and that everything has to do with the state. We offer functioning ideological alternatives so that people come and participate. We can't think that we are the solution for future politics, because I don't think that's our goal either, but we should at least create reasonable doubt in the people that other options, perhaps developed in another way, are really possible, in some activity that is worth having to participate in.

Mónica: And also that we need to trust the capacity of the people, that we need to think that this can be carried out as a collective. Together, projects can be carried out. 15M has meant for many groups a moment of reorganization, reinvention, strength or birth.

What has 15M meant for La Ortiga?

David: As a collective, so to speak, we don't have a direct relationship because La Ortiga is two years old and 15M, which seems like it was yesterday, happened 11 years ago. But there's the studying that each of us can do about what 15M could mean for collective ideology or for politicizing the streets, de-bureaucratizing politics and making it so that politics cease to be only for politicians, making people of this country begin to understand that politics are everything and that you have to participate in politics even in order to not be a taxable person within it.

Mónica: The truth is that 15M happened when I was very young, you know? But I do believe that both here in the city and in many other places, it created a foundation for assemblies that, I can't quite say for sure, but I would say didn't exist before.

So what legal entity was chosen for this project and why?

David: Legal?

Mónica: Legal? None. We aren't considered as an official association, and this space is rented. It was previously rented for a bar and now it's rented as a social center.

David: It's rented by a person, not an association or organization.

Mónica: Right.

David: A person puts it in this name and others, and then the collective group of La Ortiga pays for the space, the bills, and the rest, but we have nothing to do with having an official status of association or whatever.

Mónica: Yeah, there was a debate about the issue of registering as an association or not. We had some doubts thinking about whether or not it would help facilitate the work that we're doing or not. The truth is that we agreed that we didn't think it was necessary. As we said before, it's a self-managed project, and we have no

intention of receiving any kind of subsidy or help. So, we think that it's a collective space that people have, so we don't need legal representation or legal status.

Why is a social center necessary in a city like Valladolid?

Mónica: Social centers, in my opinion, are like pockets of resistance in the community. At the end of the day, we are immersed in a capitalist, patriarchal, colonial society, which drags us down a lot of the time, so it's necessary to have a space to stop briefly, even if it's just to reflect on what we want to build and how we want to grow. A social center is a place to start building, I think.

David: And then, it's a space that's very different from a traditional formula where you are going to propose a talk or want to do a workshop, and you would have to ask for authorization from a City Council or go through a bureaucratic process, or you have to go to a business, but they would make a profit. So, it's important that there are places where you can create growth or entertainment activities in a different way without involving an economic or government body, and that it's done simply so that people can grow as individuals.

Mónica: That's it. In the end, it's a place to come together, isn't it? I think that a social center, regardless of all the work it does to create a social fabric, to raise awareness, in the end is a place to come together to put aside productive values and focus on other values, right? For coming together and building.

On the web page, you talk about your horizontal structure and the use of a general assembly for decision making. Can you tell us about your experience with the assembly? What problems have you had so far and how have you been solving them?

David: I think it's important to eliminate this "mythological shadow" that the assembly is something that works on its own because it's a structure that can only do good. It's not like that. The people who make it up are individual people and if certain types of protocols or common ground are not established, that assembly will create friction and bad feelings. For example, I think that the things that make me most proud of this assembly is that we have been a group for a little over two years and have had debates, but no one has ever raised their voice. At first I didn't realize it, but we have installed care as something essential in the assembly. There's a part at the beginning of the assembly where everyone shares how they're going to integrate care when talking and discussing important matters, keeping in mind the situation of each person. In fact, I think that it's something that makes the assembly unique and alive and that people take care of each other because, after all, the assembly is just that: interpersonal relationships of people united in ways outside of politics. Privacy is also something political that you have to keep in mind and take care of with the people you share the space with.

Mónica: Yes. I totally agree that the assembly is a super powerful tool, but we also have to take into account that here, we meet in a horizontal way but it's a type of relationship that we aren't used to in our day-to-day lives. In fact, I think that our logic as a society is to delegate representatives, to delegate functions, and we aren't used to speaking or being active subjects, which is what David was saying before. So, the assembly is a very powerful instrument but it's an instrument that must also be taken care of. We always make a point to address the assembly itself and whether it's functioning and on schedule. It also leads us to debates. It's important to have a

person that mediates to speed up the operation. The assembly is something that must be worked on and, without a doubt, without care the assembly could not function because we need to be able to speak... Being able to express ourselves but also taking ourselves into account. If there is no care or no love there is no understanding, I think.

How do you make decisions?

Mónica: Well, the decisions here in La Ortiga are by consensus, not by vote. There are certain points that we have that are pretty clear, which are the ideological bases or foundations of the organization, but then we might debate and try to reach agreements and understandings, and the truth is that in all this time we haven't had any problems making decisions

David: The case of veganism or the issue of alcohol, for example, not all the people here are vegan, nor are all the people who participate non-drinkers. But after several debates, they are considered to be ideas that the people in this space must accept. I can defend alcohol consumption, but I can also understand the group's reasoning as to why La Ortiga should be an alcohol-free space. I understand that it's applicable, and that it must be carried out in the space, so I have to make a division between my individual reality and what I consider to be beneficial for the entire space, for the benefit of its own environment and the context, so I can accept it.

Mónica: Right. Generally, in La Ortiga we are people, more or less, of like-minded ideas and contexts. Obviously there is some disparity, but I do believe that there have been people who may have approached this space, but they didn't follow through and join officially because they didn't agree with the ideology that we have here. But yes, debates do take place here. And yes, I think that reaching a consensus does work, and the individual and collective need to converge here, which might mean that you have different backgrounds or ideologies as an individual, like not being vegan or using drugs, but we also understand that this is a space that we're trying to build and it has to be consistent with our ideological positions. In the end, through debating, we continue to build the space. I think that we can't talk about the individual without talking about the collective and vice versa.

I see that you offer a series of monthly activities. How do you organize them? Who takes care of the coordination?

Mónica: In general, these activities are managed by people from the assembly because it can be hard for us to find time, but we do see that these activities can happen. There are many activities that we don't manage that are proposed by other groups or people, so we simply offer our space.

Online it says that you have a "social library" that you describe as "a space to consult books, magazines, newspapers, and other written materials. Some publications that people of power don't want you to know about." What materials might we find in this "social library"?

Mónica: When we talk about a "social library", we mean a library that has a social position and resources of a certain ideological perspective. We have materials about a lot of topics that we consider to have the ability to generate conversation or change in the system; for example, talking about feminism, anti-racism, self-management, and other types of topics, because they are all very powerful and relevant.

What are the ideas that you have in the library that “power doesn’t want you to know about”?

David: The system responds to a form a hegemonic thinking that extends its tentacles in society and this implies an ideology of oppression toward certain groups. We live in a society that, after all is said and done, is vertical and that assumes that someone is under another person and that a part of the common collective, the smallest part normally or in other situations the broader part, oppresses another one that is weaker. What we try to do with the social library is to provide content that flies against that hegemonic way of thinking. These topics are not normally the subject of books or publications that you would find in your local bookstore or public library.

Mónica: Right, and we also find it necessary to collect and represent the voices and stories of prisoners, migrants, and women. Collect fanzines and project protocols. All of that seems very important to us.

Why not collaborate with the public library?

Mónica: In my personal opinion, I believe that public libraries fulfill a function that is very beneficial, but it’s like a civic center, not a social center. In the end, and this is what we’ve been saying, a public library is a state institution managed in a vertical way, and here we believe in a space that we want to be for everyone, so that everyone can build it. We want to be able to talk about the books we want and bring the books that we want. There are certain ideas in our library that I don’t know would be welcome in a public library.

David: It’s very good for people to think about changing the institution, but let’s think about this: Why is it important to take over the institution and not the streets? Why do we have to go to the top when we have the neighborhood, which is ours, is very close, and we’ve abandoned it? Do I have to go to the public? Can’t I have cooperation with the people that are around me and get the same result? We don’t have to think that we have to get involved in the institution, so we give alternatives, in a different way, that don’t have to do with the state.

Mónica: I think that there are different ways to go about it. In reality I don’t think that they’re incompatible, but our position is to create something public as an alternative to the state and to create it with the people. If tomorrow the public libraries were more horizontal and were managed by the people of the neighborhood, great, I would be the first person to support it. But, at the moment, our objective is something else. Also on the website it says that the first Wednesday of every month there is coffee talk and debate of a text previously approved in assembly.

What does the coffee talk consist of?

Mónica: It’s like an everyday coffee conversation, getting together over coffee to chat. Talk as a tool to give life to the library. We pick a text to talk about and have a chat with a hot beverage. Another activity of La Ortiga is social mapping.

Could you explain what a social mapping consists of? Why is it a necessary tool?

David: We start with the people that participate in La Ortiga or don’t participate directly in life in this neighborhood or are not from Valladolid. So, a partner of

ours, Julian, was the one who taught us how to use this tool. In Colombia they use it like a super powerful and active tool, so he showed us and showed us how to think. We came to this neighborhood that we didn't know and we can't tell people what their needs are. We have to know, first hand, what the people who live in the neighborhood consider to be their needs and their daily problems and the areas where we can do some teaching. And this weapon that Julian gave us was very enriching to have a global view of the context in which we act.

Mónica: And social mapping I think has a very powerful aspect, and it's that it's built by people. We're the people affected that are going to decide the necessities of our neighborhood. Here the social cartography, for example, could not have been understood if it weren't for meeting with the people of the neighborhood. And when we talk about getting together with the people in the neighborhood, it's meeting with very diverse people but also diverse opinions, to see what the situation of the neighborhood is and what the needs are. You have in your space a project of vegan get togethers, and you're mediators of anti-commercial distribution.

Can you explain what both activities consist of?

Mónica: Well, the vegan get together is a form of self-management. It's about coming together for dinner. Anti-specism is one of the bases of the social center, so we make dinners periodically to make money for the space and we also get together here for dinner, it's a beautiful thing. And the anti-commercial distribution might be better explained by David.

David: The first thing I must mention is that the distributor doesn't belong to La Ortiga. There are people close to the assembly that have a distributor with books that are unable, because of their content, to be able to be marketed in a bookstore. So, we have them here, so they're visible and people that are close, if they are interested, can get them here. And besides that, we buy some of our publications and they end up in our social library.

Do your activities have any relation to the implementation of socialism as an economy? If so, can you explain this concept and how it relates to the sustainable life you explore?

Mónica: Sure, we try to collaborate with projects that seem sustainable and reasonable to us, for example, we're working with an energy cooperative and there's a consumer group that collaborates a lot with La Ortiga. In fact, La Ortiga has been in talks to be a distribution point for different organizations, if necessary. The truth is that now certain people's space are a big part of the group, so we try to be a part of it. It might have nothing to do with us, but we think it's important. We want to break the logic of "You scratch my back I scratch yours" or the vertical logic of charity. Here, if we make a free store, it's free for everyone, and if we make a dining room that requires prices or contribution it's the same for everyone.

Are there any other tools that you've used that have been especially useful for carrying out your work as agents of social change?

Mónica: Yes, now we've started to make the store free, and we want to do it with the dining room or gazebo and more activities continue to come to us. One thing that seems important to me is mutual support, which is a super powerful co-

listening tool that serves both to deconstruct the patterns we have of the dominant ideology in society as well as to learn to listen and understand each other. Co-listening workshops are held one day a week. As a tool focused specifically on men, it serves to deconstruct toxic masculinity and involve men in the role of feminism and that seems very interesting to me. We have also started with a protocol against harassments and aggressions because there were several instances that touched us indirectly, but we felt it was important to have a protocol in place.

David: And conflicts.

Mónica: Yes, and in the assembly we make a point of having conflict resolution at the beginning because, in the end, we focus on productive logics and resolving conflicts because emotions are almost always behind it. In addition, it seems important to us to hang posters for the space saying that if you feel uncomfortable, we don't talk about assault, but rather resources that you can turn to to talk to someone.

Thinking about all the activities you mentioned, would you say that La Ortiga is, in some way, an informal education project?

Mónica: I think about it a lot because, in the end, on the whole issue of education and universal education, the Institution is far-off; I'm no longer talking about social reality but about everyday reality. What you study in your academic track and what you will later find outside, I think we all agree that it will be quite disconnected. With respect to whether we do informal education, I consider that we do, in the end La Ortiga has educational purposes because this is a space to educate and teach everyone.

David: I think that it's super important. All the people who come here grow and participate equally. For example, in the masculinity workshop. People who identify as men and who participated didn't come here knowing everything. There was a deconstruction of what masculinity is and we all found it very powerful to see. We do it for everyone because here nobody is omnipotent and knows everything. Just as there are some areas in which I have a little more knowledge about, but others that I don't. People who come from the outside come here to participate. In addition, what we always say about breaking the ghetto a little is very important; it seems that people who already have a job do not come to the Social Center. The interesting thing is that neighbors come from the neighborhood because we are doing crochet or yoga and then have different conversations about things like animal liberation or the prison system and have a debate and coffee. Pedagogy is not sitting at a table with another person in a chair; it's having a talk and making points and through interpersonal relationships creating ties from nothing so that you can reach a point where people question new things.

Mónica: And it's very important to talk about those ties. If there are no ties and no connections, the process doesn't work, so there's no care for the space to remain open. Opening yourself up to the neighborhood means that a person can enter and talk about something that might be unpleasant. Having a caring space means that when I can't respond to the comment, there will be a mediator that checks in with people who might be uncomfortable and respond on my behalf.

Speaking from your own personal experience, what's your opinion of current education policy?

Mónica: To me, the truth is that the educational model we have is garbage. Of course, that's what we were talking about. If I believe in a horizontal and self-managed model, then how can I defend a school system that's totally the opposite? There should be other types of school that represent my beliefs more, but the current truth is that it seems quite functional. In the end, the Institution is one more entity of the entire system and the aims of the educational Institution are often the ends of the social system. So, from that perspective, it works, of course, because it works for the system.

David: As a philosophy in the sense of education, we must understand that at the top, there is an economic ideology. The purpose of education is to generate labor, to be able to be qualified and cheap, to carry out the production. So, it seems out of place to say, "I want to study this, but then I work in something else that's totally different." No, the general idea is that you study something because you want to work in something related to that. It's something that shocks people and that the system doesn't understand, that knowledge is to improve the person so everyone can grow. My goal doesn't have to be to participate so that other people can benefit from my hard work.

Thinking about your life path, how have you come to question the current system and participate in this group?

Mónica: From La Ortiga, I don't know, but I started questioning how to get in La Ortiga in the assembly thanks to feminism. Fortunately, in adolescence, I began to fool around with feminism and one thing led to the other.

David: In my case, and thinking about my generation, many people came mainly because of a cultural reason, for example, to book a music group. You can find your own niche within the system, so you end up finding this space; at the moment when you already have an ideology formed or understand that you want to change something then you have to participate and you have to start getting involved with bigger groups and assemblies, political organizations, and then you might end up in your field. In my case, it was Valladolid and I discovered that I was born in a social center, I read a little about it, and I decided to go see it and participate in it to see if it was for me. When you feel you're at ease, you might choose to stay there.

Mónica: Or maybe you have not read any book that has any political theory behind it, or you're one of those people who listen to commercial music, but you know a person or two who catch your attention by the way they think and their ideas, and you start talking, and one thing leads to another...

Are there people over 50 years old in your group?

Mónica: In the assembly we are young people above all, and people who are close to the space, if we're honest, they're also mostly young people.

David: Yes, people in their 40s and 50s are approaching us, but we don't know what the next step is. We do not know if it's because we fail to attract them, or if they see that they think they are a bit out of place. It's similar to if you entered a space of very old people, you still feel a bit out of place to function properly. It's something we have to look at how we can get politicized and unpoliticized people, especially from that age sector, to feel comfortable within La Ortiga.

Mónica: Right, and it takes a lot to get there to make it known what a social center

is. When we were in Las Batallas, after one year, one day we were serving paella around the neighborhood because we had leftovers; everyone thought we were part of a political party. Then we had to start putting up posters explaining that this is not a political party space, nor does it have to do with the City Council or anything like that. And this has been a bar for a long time, I also think that that has its influence. I think that the few older people who come in order something.

David: Thinking you're going to serve them some wine.

Mónica: Or they think that this is a "rock" (social space), so I think it takes more time to show up in the neighborhood. But it's that we have a relationship with several associations, entities or groups in the neighborhood, and when they have parties we're usually there. And yes, we do see older people who come to certain talks or documentaries, and they are people with a very strong ideology. What's harder for us is to reach the neighborhood in general.

What does La Ortiga mean by "the social", "the common", and "the public"?

Mónica: When we talk about the public, we make it very clear that we're not referring to the State. We refer to the public, to the common, to what is of the people, whether it's something physical or a collective imaginary. And I think that when we talk about the common we mean another way of doing things, breaking the individualistic logic that we have marketed in this capitalist system and abandoning the values of competition, perhaps because of cooperative values and talking about the common from that perspective.

David: I think we use them as synonyms so that people understand that when we talk about the public, social or common, we do it as a derivative of "that which belongs to people" or has an end in the people, but not only in people who participate in the space, but all people who are within the framework of the neighborhood or the city.

We're discussing a political project, but what policy are we talking about?

Mónica: La Ortiga doesn't have a political ideology as such. We don't say "we are an anarchist space" or "we are a socialist space". In fact, in the assembly there are people from all different perspectives, although it's true that some ideologies...

David:...are relatively close.

Mónica: Right, so we don't have an ideology specifically, but we do have certain positions such as assembly, horizontality, self-management, anti-specism, anti-racist struggles, feminism; There are a lot of positions that already seem like ideological positions to us.

What do you mean by an "antispecist" struggle?

Mónica: When we talk about antispecism, we talk about veganism, about the oppression of other species.

David: Veganism is the culinary part, and antispecism works to end all kinds of oppression that animals suffer from our productive network or simply from our leisure. It's to go against the idea that we're above everything because we have

been educated that the human being has superior rational capabilities because he can do whatever he wants with whatever. Then, in the end, the superiority can end up being reflected in an idea of superiority towards other people.

Mónica: Right, in the end it's all very related. The oppression of animals, the oppression of the land, of rational values over emotional ones, over women... It's all connected.

From your experience with the collective, what does our model of society need?

David: Maybe the visibility of oppressed sectors, of La Ortiga.

Mónica: Of course, awareness of these issues. And I would start a little too by starting to get involved with the issues that affect us. Beginning to make decisions and be active people in matters that influence us and having awareness.

David: Empathy, a break with individualism.

Mónica: Solidarity and mutual support.

Do you work in a network with other groups and Social Centers?

Mónica: Well, here in the neighborhood, for example, when the collective mapping was done, we were in contact with different groups, with parishes.

David: With the collective of racialized people.

Mónica: Yes, also with religious groups and with Roma associations and with NGOs and associations in general. Then, with respect to the city, we're also in contact with different movements that exist, the feminist movement for example. There are different places in the city with which we are in contact as well. When a conference is done, things are organized from different places and La Ortiga is usually a place where they're organized. Outside the city..

David: ...outside the city, the meeting of social centers is held. More or less twice a year we meet with other social centers about 200 kilometers from us, and what we do is follow an agenda where we analyze things that we consider important, and where it's not only relevant to meet, but also to share ideas. Problems are shared in common and strategies or ideas arise that had never occurred to us in any way.

Mónica: Each meeting takes place in a social center, then we take turns and the center that hosts organizes a little each meeting. Last time there were eight centers, I think.

David: Some were missing.

Mónica: Yeah, and when there are conferences we try to invite groups and stay in touch with these groups. It's very important because you don't know each other and start cutting ties. We also collaborated with unions and with more private entities, such as bars.

What social movements would be the most important in this city of Valladolid?

Mónica: Well, it seems to me that there is a movement regarding the labor

movement and a strong or at least coherent union action. The feminist movement also seems to be quite strong. LGBTQ and diverse movements also seem to be gaining strength. What else...anarchist and autonomous movements. And I've seen a lot of movement especially with the issue of feminist gypsies.

Do you think that the migrant population is represented in the social movement of the city?

Mónica: Perhaps here in the neighborhood we've seen that when we've collaborated with associations that may be more religious or that deal with issues of migrants, but it may seem to be something that's yet to come because, like all of us, when we turn to the typical feminist group or the typical antispecism group, it's true that we don't have a reference of migrants. That doesn't mean that there isn't space for people to safely come though.

What does La Ortiga think about the re-politization of younger people?

Mónica: Well, I think the way to re-politicize is to reach common interests. For example, why didn't feminism reach people before? Because reading certain authors is great, or talking about what feminism has been traditionally, but perhaps what really makes kids move is that they talk about jealousy, of peer pressure, if I shave, if I don't shave, maybe that's what hurts me daily and that's what connects to me. So, on any other subject I think it would be about the same thing, we can't talk about reaching young people perhaps with a speech that isn't connected at all with their reality. Let's see what needs young people have, what gets them fired up, and from there we go to work, I think.

David: Personally, I think that generationally now it seems that everything is focused on the issue of corruption. When you talk about the issue of politics, it's almost only about how the parties are all corrupt, and I think you have to stop thinking about politics only from that one area, to see beyond our nose, so to speak. But we're forgetting what we care to change, which is breaking the individualism that prevails. The biggest problem that I see today is that we have been educated in a society of "I" and in the discourse of trying to stand out. And one stand out normally by stepping on something that belongs to someone else, either at work or throughout this area of mass media, from YouTube, Instagram, or other social media platforms. We're creating individualistic creatures and even, when creating debate, a debate of growth, of respect, of positioning collaboration to help all grow is not being generated. The discourse that prevails is that of "I'm going to destroy your argument but not because I think that I'm right," because if I think about it, it's probably because I want to place myself above you. We're forgetting that the primary way to get political is to generate contexts where people feel comfortable to become politicized, but not politicized by participating in a political party or in the elections, but to worry about everything that is around me and that, after all, affects politics.

In a social moment when we seem to be living in a crisis of trust, how do you use La Ortiga to form trust?

Mónica: It hasn't been something intentional, I don't think we have ever sat down to reflect on trust, but when you build from the commons, you trust above all because you see that the rest respond, and when I have not been able to go on, someone else has gone on. When I've had a problem, I've asked for help and have been supported. And the issue of emotions is basic; if in an assembly I can share what

has happened to me and how I feel, indirectly, you're creating a climate of trust. In a context where there is support and solidarity, trust is generated on its own.

David: Yes, and what's generated is unconscious learning, that is, there are people that have more experience in these types of contexts and people that come with none. So, there are many things that are shared by the people that have more experience and you see, without asking them, you're already assimilated to them.

Keeping in mind the climate of precariousness and political unrest, what keeps the motor of hope alive in La Ortiga?"

Mónica: I think that one of the things that unites and motivates La Ortigas is care. Without care and without affection, we wouldn't accomplish anything. Because if we're working together, ideologically and rationally, but we don't agree or don't know each other emotionally or affectionately, I think that we would achieve nothing. And there are ups and downs, there are times that we're high and others that we're low. But I think that it's especially when an idea comes forward or when we see the results, or you're invited somewhere or you see activity in the neighborhood, because I believe that's what motivates you to continue with it.

David: And then, strategically, when things are bad, you only have two choices: you either normalize it or you work to change it. For example, that's what's happening now after the 2007 explosion of the housing bubble, the crisis and so on that was happening when there was a stronger vindication movement. Now it seems we have normalized that there are people being charged 800 euros and that they we should be grateful that they're being charged that when ten years ago a person who was a billionaire was being charged 1000 euros at least. When you normalize, in the end it's a political defeat because the moment you normalize precarization you will no longer fight it. The other option is to continue the fight and bring attention to the problems that you and the people in your area have; then there's that mix of what individually pushes me to participate in a certain way, which is the emotional and sentimental aspects of what I feel participating here, and that strategically it's necessary to make it clear that we are still at war because it's what we have to do, there's no other alternative, it's a duty.

Mónica: And I think it's also consistency. The debates always talk about theory of practice, which I think is one of the reasons why the Institution is very far from reality, but in the moment when you have a theory without a coherent practice there is no guarantee, you have nothing, what's the use? We're part of a system that is increasingly hostile, I would talk about social cannibalism, so, if you reveal yourself ideologically in front of that, to feel minimally coherent but you don't have a practice that supports it, you have nothing. Consistency seems like a super important aspect to carry out projects of this type, and I'm not talking about on the individual level, I'm talking about on the collective level of collective coherence.

What does it mean for La Ortiga to grow?

Mónica: Well, growing for La Ortiga is not having a bigger place or having more people. It would be to have more people sensitized in the assembly, to get more to the neighborhood, to see more involvement that allows us to do more activities because we're very limited in time and resources. So, growing is raising awareness.

David: I think that as a group we want to grow because if this is a place that has been created for the neighborhood and for the people, then growing means that more people come to feel more and more involved in our goal. And secondly, after all, all of us here are also individual people and our goal is to increase not so much our knowledge but in our sensitivity. Try to be less oppressive with certain types of people, to be able to create situations of less conflict and more comfort for other people. That, after all, is also growing because if people who create emotional ties grow, people who come from outside with greater disparity will feel less uncomfortable or more accepted or more likely to learn with us. We are the ones who participate here.

