

La Troca





Constellation
of the Commons

Date of the interview
March 7, 2018

Location
Barcelona, Spain

Collective's name
La Troca

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What is your name and what is your relation to this project?

My name is Elena Zamora and I'm part of the La Troca project, which is the community school for continuing professional training in the Sants neighborhoods.

In your particular case, what has prepared you to take charge of this project?

I believe that it's a little of everything: the grassroot movements really provide a good base of preparation. We should put it in the curriculum. Along with many friends who've been career counselors, we said that really, the activist curriculum is almost the one that gives you the most competency, because you work in a team, you're constantly in connection with social spaces, and because it helps you constantly question what you're doing individually and collectively and plan new goals and objectives. So I do think it's an important part of what we've done in social movements, and another important part is educational training for adults and for new pedagogies (to constantly be informing yourself of what new and interesting pedagogic models there are).

Why did you abandon your previous job as a career counselor to join this project?

I'd been working for five years doing career counseling. Before, I worked with young children, and I really got tripped up a little because of those things that life throws at you, and it really is an area that has always seemed very hostile. I wasn't content doing career counseling either. I was kind of overwhelmed because it's kind of like you're defending a job market that's horrible, so antisocial, and you find yourself around people that need to find work so badly that they will do anything. You have to live with this reality every day, which I did not enjoy. It was easy for us to quit our jobs, that is to say, the three of us working here now knew that we were leaving our jobs to jump into a pool without knowing how much water was in it. But I also believe that just knowing that it's a powerful project that we like, that doesn't make us contradict ourselves, but on the contrary lets us grow a ton, working with other people and learning so much together. We have an advisory team that we're learning a lot from.

Where is this project located?

Right now La Troca is located at the Lleialtat Santsenca, which is a fairly new setup that is managed by a platform of entities with a model of civic management. It's owned by the Barcelona Town Hall, but it's granted to these entities with this model of civic management.

We're temporarily here, but we plan to make our permanent location in Can Batlló which is a local, self managed space. We plan to relocate there because we think it's a place where lots of synergies can be created with different projects that are currently being developed in this space alongside this project. La Troca is in the Sants neighborhoods, which is traditionally a working-class area, and we put ourselves here because the people that have driven this organization are from these neighborhoods. There's a rich social fabric in this neighborhood, but there's also a lack of certain resources, such as adult schools (there are no adult schools in the neighborhoods). There was one some years ago, but it ended up disappearing, and there are currently very few adult education projects. There are actually plenty of adult education projects, but they are very poorly articulated, with basically nothing in terms of academic training. We believe that it's a necessity for adults that live here.

When and how did this project start?

La Troca started in 2015 when a group of people working in different areas of adult education began to notice the need for such a project in the poorer neighborhoods. It was a new idea that helped us to try and innovate a bit, and include both participation as well as pedagogy. That was when we started to create the project, and from there we began to present our idea to the administration, to present it in the neighborhoods, and to push forward. In 2016, we received a democratic quality prize from the city hall of Barcelona that helped us make the first part of the project, which was a participative process. Although we had our basic idea, we wanted it to be the members of the community who specified their needs and how the project should be. So, we started a participatory process throughout 2017, diagnosing the people's needs and using a combination of statistics, interviews, and participatory sessions throughout October. These sessions covered four distinct categories: diagnosis of needs, necessary skills adults should know, pedagogy, and managing/networking in the area. At these sessions, everyone from the neighborhoods were called, as much neighbors as people working in socio-educational entities, in human resources, in administration, etc. With these sessions, we hoped to finish the project in November, and we finished it by December, after all groups had been heard. It was December because we realized that immigrants, for example, weren't coming to the session, so we held special focus groups to hear the needs of those specific groups. Then, in January, we began the first test run of the project, and asked for another grant to help carry out the pilot test, and the doors opened on January 15 offering basic education in new and early literacy, and we currently have a group of 21 people. We have two levels of initial Castilian Spanish, with another group of 20 people in the second level. We also have two levels of computer classes where we go over domestic economy, social networks, technological devices, and anything that came out of the participatory process that seemed innovative and important. It's a network of knowledge exchange, with topics proposed by some people who wanted to receive certain types of training.

Why did you choose the name "La Troca"?

Sants is a neighborhood whose past is strongly related to the textile industry, so we were looking for a name that would represent this. We always imagined that it would be a project very ingrained in the territory, operating within the community network, because we didn't want it to be isolated like a lot of other adult schools. Instead, we wanted the people to come to get training but also introduce them to other options, like in Can Batlló, they are doing a dressmaking workshop, and maybe the people are interested in that, it could build these kinds of bridges, and the

school won't have to be the only educational place, the entire neighborhood network would be one. In this sense, we wanted a name that would represent all of this, everything woven together. La Troca means a ball of wool, something that could be tangled, unraveled, something very versatile and we loved this idea from the start.

Can you explain how your participatory process has been so far, and what have you done to ensure the inclusion of all types of people?

In fact, one of the objectives that we had with the participatory process was to include a more diverse variety of people. It's often the case that we do a participatory process, but in reality the type of people who come are already at a higher academic level, part of the administration, with sufficient resources and access to the social network. In contrast, often the people you want to come don't, as in our case, we want to reach out to people who needed basic educational training. However, for these types of people who could really benefit from basic academic training, it's much more difficult to come and get involved in the participatory process. So we imagined that it would be harder to reach these people, but we still tried to achieve it with different methods. One of our strategies was to reach out at the start of the year to different entities and socio-educational resources that are often linked to these kinds of people. Then, we contacted them individually by mail and by telephone and we asked them for individual interviews that would help us with the beginning of the process. The other day, we met with a total of thirty-something different socio-educational projects from the area (around the Sants neighborhood district) and we asked for their help in this process. How did this manifest in the participative process? Well, some professionals really pushed the people who came to them to visit us, and others came when we did the participative process. We asked everyone who had come how they found out about the event, and some people put, "my career counselor told me about it," or "my social services reference person." People in some projects even accompanied their clients here. For example, a group of counselors accompanied 15 or 20 people per day to the participative process sessions. That's how it went.

When you see the profile, we had a ton of diverse attendance, but not many immigrants. For example, in a territory that should have had a lot of immigrants, there were not that many. There were certain profiles that were still missing, so what we did was make focus groups searching for people whose profile wasn't being represented. In these groups, which came after the participatory process, we were kind of investigating what these people needed. This is very interesting, because when we did a participatory process session on "what skills do adults need," what came up the most was the desire to learn more about the world around us (such as history, geography, politics, economics...), and skills more related to emotional management, communication, assertiveness, etc. And there was actually very little interest in learning basic academic skills, like literacy. However, this is likely because the type of people that need such skills did not attend the session, in contrast to the focal groups, where the most requested categories were in fact these basic educational needs. We think that in this way, we have actually achieved a lot, although it's still a challenge to reach out to this population of people. Something else that we often notice is that many people simply don't feel capable or empowered enough to attend. The fact of having a weaker academic background or having less experience with discussions and talks and places like this makes many people feel as though their personal opinion isn't important. We think that this is one of the factors that makes it much more difficult for some people to come to events like this. The vocabulary that we use is a bit more advanced, which makes some

people less likely to join in, and makes them feel uncomfortable or unwelcomed. We understand that we haven't been able to reach everyone, but we believe that we've been able to more or less solve this by interviewing professionals who act as a sort of filter, passing on the needs of their clients, in addition to the focus groups.

How have you organized the decision making within the participatory process?

We were advised by a cooperative called Raons Públiques for the sessions and at the beginning we were really overwhelmed with all of that -- "It's three hours, how are we going to do it, how are we going to decide, what tools should we find" -- and in the end, with them, we ended up seeing that we really already had an idea of how to do it. It was easy to put this idea on the table in a completely simple way that any person could understand and, from there, could make suggestions to improve it, what they like, what they don't like, and what they think, and make decisions in that way. So throughout those four days, each element was carried out in a different way, but what we did was, in some sessions, bring a small proposal and seek to make decisions based on elements that anyone could point out, for example starting to put tags on what someone most liked and from that point trying to make smaller groups where it's easier to talk, starting to make decisions there, and finishing making the decisions in the larger group. If you start with a really big group, few people will get involved in change, but if you start with smaller groups and there even was some sessions that we started in pairs, it's easier later to participate as the group grows. We did the last session in November where we gathered and presented the conclusions from the four sessions. We had four tables and four groups, and you could stop by the four spots and for people who weren't in the process, it let them see what was being worked out, and for the people who were there, it let us check in with them to say, "is this good?" and ratify the results and see who wanted to get involved... in fact, this led us to incorporate various things that we had forgotten to gather.

We're in Barcelona, and in this city there's a tradition of working class universities and athenaeum lay workers, libertarians and revolutionaries that arose throughout the country and that challenged the established order. Would you place this project in that tradition?

Yes, in fact I think that the first manifesto that was made in 2015 already already stated that. We see that, with the level of adult education, right now it needs a transformation, and it's true that these are things that have been done already. For example, the aspect of changing the roles isn't new. A professor isn't just a professor that teaches and a student can't just learn, rather all the adults have a need to learn new things and we can teach things simply from having lived, because we already have a 'backpack' of accumulated experience. This idea captivated us from the beginning and we thought that we had to work a lot more on it and we were inspired in part by these spaces, also by this change in roles that we're trying, by the way people come to the class to learn and we always ask them, "and what can you teach?" And a lot of the people are like "What am I going to teach if I came to learn?" ... We believe that it's a source of empowerment too, the ability to say, "Well, not right now, but think about it and if at any point you can lend a hand with something or you can offer training, maybe in cooking from your country or maybe... let us know." In fact, this is already starting to materialize, because someone who's coming for computer classes and works as a dressmaker is offering a class in basic sewing. We're already starting to break through this, and we believed that it was really important as much as a tool to empower ourselves as to change

these roles that we don't think make any sense, and also to make this a more social space. I don't just come to class and leave, we do a little bit of social cohesion among various types of people, and we enrich each other; that's why we're trying to create spaces between the classes that can serve to generate relationships.

Are we in a collective, an association, a cooperative? What legal structure have you chosen for this space and why?

Right now we're an association because it was what we needed to be to ask for grants and it was the most practical, so of course... The thing is that we're in a pilot program for everything, so we're an association because it was the best solution in the moment. What we asked for from the beginning was for this project to be municipal but managed by the community, that is to say, for there to be an agreement with the administration and that from this district, the IMEB or whoever it is from the council, to make an agreement where annually, or every three years or every five years, they dedicate how ever much money to this project, but the management of the project is still community-run. That is, that the core group -- the team of professionals who are like the human structure of the project -- is made of people engaged in the community, of the network of resources, like for example social services, which has a lot to say because they support many people and note many needs, just as the district and the council are also spaces where technical experts gather a lot of information about prevalent needs. So we believe that the management has to be done by the whole community. On a legal level, we believe we'd have to build a cooperative that would let the people who participate in it form part in it just as much as the people who are part of the structure, who are contracted.

How does the establishment perceive a project like La Troca?

Normally there's a kind of "I'll pass the ball from one department to the other," when a project doesn't fit clearly within established structures, nobody knows who is responsible. There are various areas, and this is an opportunity to pass the ball around. Additionally, the fact that it's a project that doesn't come from them but rather from the people of the neighborhood, their first reaction isn't, "Oh how great, we live in a neighborhood where a demand is made and a plan is also made and they are asking us for help," which is what we have done from the start, we've always looked for ways for them to give us their opinions. No, the first reaction is, "I feel attacked because this was supposed to come from me," so it's hard to get them to recognize the project. They don't recognize it. We have spent more than a year talking and talking, even demonstrating the need for this project, and we still need to continue demonstrating and demonstrating and demonstrating. And after that, there's the quantitative part. We normally want La Troca to be valued in a qualitative way, but we know that the thing that carries the most weight tends to be numbers. If, after the pilot trial, I assist 500 people, then people will surely see me in a better light than if I assist 100.

Why do you think the establishment doesn't embrace this type of project?

I think that there's a policy aspect that doesn't interest them, that it's understood that some people make policies and others accept them. It's very clear that there's an aspect of their philosophy of not wanting things to function like this. On the other hand, there's also a structural aspect; you say that you want a more participative neighborhood, but you make very few participative structures taking into account the community demographics. If you have a large Moroccan population in a specific part

of the neighborhood, maybe you have to get closer to them, to look for someone who can translate, look for a schedule that is best for starting to get acquainted with the community and look for structures that encourage participation. You can't view us as something isolated, like, "how strange that they have come to ask our opinion," but rather as something feeding a participative culture for everyone. Really, we always say that we have a responsibility to create "the culture of learning to participate." Either they generate mechanisms from the institution themselves, or they aren't going to change anything. Where mechanisms really come from is social movements, and they always see that as an attack. And it's also kind of about changing this mentality; don't go against all the proposals that come up, but try to collect them and see how they can be directed, recognizing that you are working for the people, not the other way around.

We're in a city which has a "city council for change." Are these circumstances that favor the inception of this project?

We think that in another city this project already has probably been carried out because Barcelona is one of the few places where adult schools aren't supported by the city but by the Generalitat (Catalonia's regional government). We believe that an educational project has to be municipal and in a lot of towns that's how it is. The projects being municipal, means that it permits a lot more versatility, you can adapt the enrollment much more to the realities of the municipality. In other places it's already happening, in fact in the majority of places it's like that, it's true that we're trying to give it one more try, but there are projects that are already bringing it to a close.

How many people are salaried workers on this project and on who do the salaries of these people depend on?

Right now, three, two full time and one halftime. From the beginning we started to talk with the administration with that idea of the public project with community management, they told us "Yes, okay, but first you'll have to prove that this is a need." We did the participatory process and now we're in the pilot program. For the participatory process, they gave us a grant from the participation sector, and for the pilot test they've given us a grant from Active Barcelona (from the area of the social and solidarity-based economy). So we're doing a pilot test with that money and the people working are covered by that grant. The thing is, we don't know what is going to happen come September. I imagine we'll stay open for now... we haven't been open two months yet, one and a half months, in fact, and already two hundred and thirty people have signed up. They've come to enroll in one course or another or to ask for information or they've been directed here by other resources. So we think that we can't close right now, and the money will come from somewhere.

What does it mean to 'work' in this project?

It's a project that in some way you have created. And apart from the many more hours than you would spend anywhere else, there's an emotional part too, that you likely wouldn't have as much at any other job. Either way, everyone who works with people usually has that stronger link because you're seeing how what you're doing is impacting other people. The people aren't numbers, so that emotional link is already there, and in the project La Troca it's even more prevalent. We see that it's something that, it's not just impacting the quality of life of the people of this neighborhood, it's something transformative that can replicate itself in other places and is really very powerful.

For many collectives and projects (previous and subsequent to the movement), 15M has signified a moment of reorganization, of reinvention, of strengthening, etc. How is La Troca connected to 15M?

I lived abroad during this time. In this neighborhood for example, 15M carried a lot of weight and I think that I would compare it to La Troca because it was a very transversal movement with the goal of taking politics from the bottom up. To the neighbors, La Troca is that too, it's saying, "Hey, education doesn't have to be something elitist, it needs to be within the reach of everyone." Because any neighbor knows how they want to receive this education, they know what they need. They need to have a voice and to be able to go somewhere and say, "Hey, I need a training in computer use, and there aren't any anywhere else, so let's figure out how to make this happen." I think that this parallel is real, this idea of horizontality, of becoming more and more horizontal.

In a way, it seems like La Troca is supplying the function of a public service. Can you talk about how you perceive this reality?

Our reading is that, for example, the training that we do the most right now is the basic education training, very basic; it's an invisible population, a population that has many people in irregular situations. What does this mean? Well, that economically they aren't of interest, it's as if they didn't exist. When we started with diagnosing the educational needs, one of the things that we saw was that in the field of adult education there really is a lot offered in civic centers and associations. Above all, there are a ton of associations (like what we were talking about before about supplying the public sphere). But the institutions aren't taking note of these offers, so we said, "How can it be that the district of Sants doesn't know what training opportunities for adults there are in that very district?"

Palmar: There's a total disconnection between the needs of the population and the public structure.

Yes, so that's what we see, in the field of adult support it's the organizations that are doing the most work. And the administration, what does it do? Well, give subsidies to these entities. Why? Because it's a way to not commit long term, that is to say if there's a need for career guidance in Sants, and the Càritas neighborhood is doing it, I give a grant to Càritas to do this training. I'll give it this year, I won't bind myself to them for future years. In contrast, if a project is put forward by the administration, the connection is already there to do it longer term.

Then there's another issue, which is that there's no importance placed on continued training. It's like we only teach from ages 0 to 16. With luck, the people who go into a professional training or go to college will be taught until they finish, then that's it. It's like we have up to age 30 to develop ourselves. After that, it's like adults don't need to continue with professional training, which is odd because what companies are most asking for from the labor market is for people to be continually trained and well... it's not given importance. One of the jobs that we that we want to do from La Troca is give it importance that it deserves, that absolutely everyone needs to continue training.

Why do you think this type of informal education isn't promoted in school or in public universities?

We always say, there are the kinds of people who are more autonomous and

have higher academic levels that go to some places like universities or spaces of ongoing training, where education is regulated. At the political level, all of that is what's of interest, to have people with a high academic level. In the universities, they aren't offering other kinds of professional training because it's a completely hierarchical institution, although that is trying to be changed (many collectives are trying to change it). Access requirements are in place not only at the academic level but also for enrollment, and each time they are having to pay higher fees. This is to say that it's already a harsh filter: they're saying, "People will be able to attend with an academic level of X, but only people with X economic status." They are perpetuating a hierarchical role that has been going on for years.

When you talk about collective intelligence in La Troca, what are we talking about?

We're talking about, as you mentioned at the beginning, who our references are, what the movements of popular universities are, what the movements of athenaeums are... We want La Troca to have a very strong community aspect. We believe that I can't just decide to mark out the pedagogical path or whichever path, but instead we believe in the collective construction of knowledge, that is to say, we don't want the three of us hired with a salary at La Troca right now to decide its future, but rather we want to take into account the different points of view because, in the end, the more people join, the richer the result of what we want to create is going to be. So this is what we understand by a collective intelligence, where it's all of us who build our goals for the future.

How do you understand the term 'active retirement'?

One of the things that we have seen in our diagnosis is that Sants is a neighborhood with very much an aging population. We were told by some social service professionals and some centers of primary attention that they were finding themselves with a very large problem of older people being more isolated, there's a huge problem of loneliness. So, they're isolated, they're people whose sons or daughters maybe have gone to live far away, they have no community in their environment, and they find themselves every time more disconnected and there's a lot of depression in this age. As we believe that education has to be ongoing in whichever stage of life, in the stage of life in which you retire it seems like when you stop being of interest to the labor market, you stop being of interest to society. And we wanted to turn that around. You stop being of interest in the labor market and you have a lot of free time, so let's see what you invest it in. Some retired people are beginning to collaborate with La Troca, and what they can offer is amazing, they have on their backs a history and life experience that's wider than we may be able to have. And actually there are many groups that are making training for adults, but, like we said, they aren't well known, and we believe that once retired it's important to have a space where you can talk about this stage but also continue addressing concerns and continue educating ourselves. Learning how to find resources, how to learn more, where to find social spaces where maybe they can collaborate on a project... we want to talk about all of this a little and be able to provide resources.

And what are you referring to with the terms transversal and basic instrumental competencies?

When we did the session asking about competencies necessary, we said, "Well, this issue of needed competencies depends on everyone's individual career path, everyone

will understand it differently." As we understand, it's that the transversal competencies that are common for every person, the ones requested in work like taking care of your kids. And the basic academic competences are like the base of academic training, like reading, writing, and language because if I've migrated from another country I'm not going to know the language of my destination country very well, and I'll need to know it. Computer literacy, too, and some basic mathematics. A basic general sense of culture as well. Transversals for example would be communication, not only the more linguistic part but also the "knowing how to be," so if I arrive at a site, I don't just say "hmmm" but "Hello, how are you?" Knowing how to enter into a conversation with another person, knowing to say no if I don't want to do something. Organizing my time, that's a transversal competence. And management of emotions, as much understanding my own as understanding the emotions of others.

How do you understand the term 'the reproductive economy'?

Right now we aren't involved in that. We're making up a part of the domestic economy, but we aren't a part of the reproductive economy. What we did do was a session where we talked about the social economy and also we spoke about the different economic roles every person plays. There's one that is this role of caregiving, reproduction, which doesn't usually have an impact in the labor market. It's as if it didn't have any type of value, and we have to give it value because it really is a sustaining pillar of society. This is really linked to the idea of competencies. For example, women come who have never worked in the job market, instead they've followed a trajectory of caregiving with parents, the house, the children, which leads to a variety of competencies that can later serve you if you want to enter the job market. And it's important to give value to that because many times people tell you, "I've never worked," and I say, "You've worked maybe more hours than I do in my work day!"

What is the profile of the people who come to La Troca?

In La Troca now we have like 2 groups: immigrants that haven't been here for very long, or that have been here for more time but they don't know the language, they aren't literate in the latin alphabet, and there's another pretty prevalent demographic type which is older people. Also there are some people that are looking for work and, for example, they aren't computer literate or they want to improve their computer knowledge in order to be able to look for work and then there are also some people that come to the knowledge exchange network, who are locals interested in something we're doing. Although this is one of our smallest categories of people. Basically we have the profiles that I first mentioned to you, and for us this is a challenge because this is exactly what we wanted to break in La Troca, we didn't want to be a school of adults and immigrants and seniors. Instead we wanted to be a space of social cohesion that these people might come to but so would people who spent a lot of time living in the neighborhood, because we believe that an important part of the school is this social cohesion -- that they get to know the different profiles in the neighborhood and normalize the fact that there are different profiles in a neighborhood, that they understand they can share with each other. What's happening? The thing is, Sants has a strong social fabric and it's difficult to offer trainings that are attractive to all audiences. So, we've started to offer the knowledge exchange network and, really, we've offered super cool classes: an art laboratory, visual, music, and other classes but it's hard for us to bring the different profiles together, and they're pretty small groups. So what we're going to do now is work more through our network, for example if they offer an activity here in La

Lleialtat Santseca, we'll accompany other people who maybe wouldn't have otherwise gone. For example, they did one around March 8th (International Women's Day) and another about technological sovereignty, and we try to accompany people there. We try to get the people putting these events on to adapt their vocabulary level to be accessible to different demographics. We're going to start working more on this.

At the beginning, attendance was more masculine and we said, "this can't be"; the first week, we had a group of 11 people doing the language class, and they were all men. We said, "What's happening?" And once our information began to spread through word of mouth and reached the school parent associations, each woman brought a ton of women because we really do see that they're much more connected than men many times. And now we have more or less the same number of men and women. There are people with clear roles, people who've just come and aren't regulars, people who are in the process... it depends.

Do these people pay for this training?

One of the basic principles that we have is that we believe that the training has to be free, that is to say, there can't be a barrier like that you have to pay, so at the moment all the training is free. What we do want to make in the future is a system of collaborations. You can become a member of La Troca for zero euros or for 20 euros a year or for 50, to have more of an income of our own.

Is La Troca a political project, and what kind of politics are we talking about?

I do think that it's a political project. Sometimes people say that education has to be completely separate from politics. We think the opposite, that simply to educate people is a political statement, and we think that it's connected to a very basic type of education. In fact, the majority of people that are part of La Troca come from social movements or some organizations and we believe that it's a type of politics that emphasizes the points of view of people and the social sphere, in participation, in transversality, in horizontal structure, and in some way, the political project attempts to be horizontal and encourage participation. It's also hard to find someone that tells you "Look Elena, I don't like how you're doing this." But what we truly want is to encourage a horizontal structure, and that is something political, and it's what we're doing. We're trying to make everything more horizontal so that the people are more empowered, so that everyone participates more, and so that, in some way, we also have an impact on the political structure.

It seems like participation is an issue still to be resolved. What are some other unresolved matters that you observe in society?

Gender is very unresolved, also cross-cultural understanding. The economy... moving towards economic models that are really more socialist. Housing as well. In general, for all of people's basic needs, working so that the norm is that everyone has them covered. The norm can't be hearing every day in one place or another, "They've raised my rent, I can't pay it, they are going to evict me." This can't be the norm. We have to have another norm and make more socialist policies that are more for the people.

What does it mean for La Troca to grow in non-capitalist terms?

For us, to grow means to create more alliances, create synergies, get more projects to know about us so we can join forces and do things together. We need more people to learn about us so they can propose new curriculums. Above all, it's this: alliances, synergies, being well-known, being valued.

What have been the challenges and new insights of working for La Troca?

The challenge has been working with the establishment. You have to arm yourself with patience and know that it's going to be a very long road and that you're constantly going to run into "no, no, no, no." For example, I wasn't used to working with the administration, and it really is a complicated path. I think that has been the biggest challenge. Then, I think the biggest achievement has been the community that we have created. There's a boy here who is taking Castilian Spanish classes that has created a hashtag called "La Troca Familia" (La Troca Family). And it was like "Ah! How beautiful, we're really creating a collective process based on participation, on making it something very open." You end up creating emotional bonds with the people that you work with, for me it was initially the people in the core group and now it's broadening to include everyone who's coming to participate. This is amazing. And then the act of being open to what everyone can contribute, you start to have a ton more ideas than what you'd have if you weren't asking for the opinions of others.

What maintains the energy and hope of the people who work at La Troca?

I think, more than anything, seeing the doors open, seeing every day that people come to sign-up keeps us going. There has not been a day since we opened the doors when there weren't people that came to sign up or when professionals haven't called us to ask for more information. Seeing that this really is a need that's being covered, and that we have the opportunity to help this project put down roots in the neighborhood and that it's starting to change things a little bit, I think that's what gives us the most strength.