Recup’Kitchen is a temporal architectural intervention that is created by engaged citizens to manifest their aspired, community-based values in the public space of Brussels. Although the kitchen is far from being finished, Recup’Kitchen is functioning. It is an open and multi-layered design concept. It has been collectively imagined, explored, designed, questioned, rethought, communicated, appropriated, funded, constructed, activated, loved, etcetera. Its self-organized participatory design process is on-going.

Since spring 2015, when the initial idea for a kitchen at Josaphat arose, the design process has been through a continuative explorative journey.

More than a year ago three enthusiasts meet each other on the Josaphat site that is lying bare as the wasteland had recently been cleared. Wild imaginations and naïve aspirations are expressed in a spontaneous brainstorm.

// A take off for a collective voyage of discovery.

The basic design concept (a kitchen in a shipping container) gets further developed and articulated. It goes through various appropriations by other participants. The focus changes, its form becomes rearranged, ...

// Wandering. To continue the road without a map. To linger. To meet strangers and go on together.

The Creativity Call for Brussels (May 2015) ’Urban Food 2025’ triggered the first written conception of Recup’Kitchen. Short and long-term ambitions get articulated.

// Like a compass, it offers a sense of direction. To know what to head for, yet without guide.

The idea for a sustainable kitchen project gets appreciated. However, it appears to be tricky to actual realize the project. For a couple of months it gets abandoned. Once in while participants bring it up again and share their ideas.
// Take up a slow pace. To recuperate. To gaze and let go for a while as to find renewed energy.
November that year, a rearranged group of actors decided to take the leap and start a crowdfunding campaign. The collective goes to an intense process of conceptualization and communication of the idea.
February 2016, over 150 people help to fund Recup’Kitchen. The collective dream can be realized.
// To reach the top. Gratitude. Empowerment. United as a group. To oversee the road to come.

The citizen collective starts to organize and plan how to continue. The process becomes more structured, new volunteers join, while others drop off. In April, the Kitchen opens with a big celebration to thank all those that contributed one way or another. The administrative organization shows to be more complicated.
// Not even halfway. Fueled up. Fatigue. To hit boundaries. To firmly go on.

Today the Recup’Kitchen team organizes minimum two events per month, with several additional events and many more request.
// The moments in-between to cherish. To see clear again. To find / create your own world.
// You would not have even been able to imagine it, if you wouldn’t have come from so far.

The Recup’Kitchen team: http://www.recupkitchen.be/nos-chefkoks/
and its on-line community: https://www.facebook.com/recupkitchen

Part of the doctoral research of Hanne Van Reusel (KU Leuven) and Incubators of Public Spaces, a JPI Urban Europe research project. Funded through Innoviris.

http://www.kuleuven.be/onderzoek/onderzoeksdatabase/project/3E15/3E150026.htm
DISCUSSION

RECUP’KITCHEN // AN ON-GOING EXPLORATION

PABLO CALDERÓN SALAZAR
Thank you for your reflective contribution Hanne. How important it is to not only read the objective information of the project, but your personal feelings and reflections to it. In these types of projects, we (as designers, researchers, etc.) are not mere workers, but we involve all the aspects of our being; we participate as human beings, not as designers. Beyond the reflections on what you have already done (reflecting on the past from the present), what would be the ideal direction that the Recup’Kitchen should take (proposing on the future from the present)? What would it grow to become? How would your role change?

05.07.2016 — 15:49 YES (0) NO (0)

HANNE
Ha, definitely true! As to refer to Lucien Kroll’s words; participatory design is not only a way of making, it is a way of living, an attitude toward society. We have plenty of dreams for our kitchen. And like the kitchen itself was only a wild idea in the beginning, we don’t know where our current ambitions will take us. On the short term we have some clear goals; finishing the interior, visit other places, involve more people, etcetera. We hope we can grow bit-by-bit and one day manage to employ people, to offer a job with value. It is our aim to make Recup’Kitchen self-sufficient and autonomous, so we could give it out of hands if we would be up to it. Who knows one day, as the Josaphat site on which the kitchen is installed now will be developed into a new neighborhood, we could integrate Recup’Kitchen in this future. It could become a neighborhood restaurant, a place to meet, an incubator for more dreams and debates... Mainly we aim to anchor our values into our city, to show there are also other ways to handle our public spaces, that a more community-oriented economic model can function, a more sustainable food model can work. We act small, but our dreams are big :) // One day the road will split and we will take a different turn. We both might feel lost, need to look for a reorientation. But we both know it will be just fine. As for me, and my role. I’ll be gone for a while soon and I am quite convinced I will be the one suffering the most :) I think soon, it will be my role to not be there, to leave some space, to let go a bit.. What are your experiences in letting go? How do you ’design‘ your exit? Can you do that?

09.08.2016 — 13:32 YES (0) NO (0)

PABLO CALDERÓN SALAZAR
Oh dear, that must be one of the key issues of ‘socially engaged practices‘; when -and most importantly, HOW, do you take a step to the side? I don’t have a real experience in it, but I am facing the exact same question in my project, as I have to design my exit in the next year. I would not only say that ‘you can‘, but I would go further to state that ‘you must‘, as it will allow the project to evolve. Is like undergoing yourself to an ostracism from your own project, for its own good.

01.09.2016 — 10:52 YES (0) NO (0)
BY
HANNE VAN REUSEL

CATEGORY
PUBLIC SPACE

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AGENCY, BRUSSELS,
PARTICIPATION,
PERFORMATIVE URBANISM,
PUBLICSPACE, URBAN
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