The Josaphat site in Schaerbeek (Brussels) is an open space of 25ha. The planning process to transform this ‘vacant land into a ‘sustainable and mixed neighbourhood’ starts from a blank page. Though, today this wasteland hosts a rich biodiversity and is the subject of varying citizen initiatives that illustrate the need for more participation in making city.

Locals and diverse Brussels associations[1] highlight the use value of the Josaphat site. With their improvised constructions and creative appropriations, they (un)consciously load this public land with identity, (hi)story and relational values. A tangible and small-scale place-making takes place on-site.

In parallel, a both strongly related and yet often disconnected process of visioning is emerging. An autonomous citizen collective[2] critically reflects on the way our cities are being shaped and plea for more participation in the design, construction and governance of urban space. The Josaphat site is envisioned as a field of opportunity for a critical alternative.

Both processes aim to design and govern the city in a more inclusive and resilient manner. However, a more strongly intertwined civic driven process of place-making and visioning seems to be desired to unfold a performative urbanism. In this way an alternative pathway for city-making can be manifested –imagined, explored and constructed- in the urban realm.

In order to further bridge the explicitly articulated values of the collective vision with the more spontaneous and tangible actions on-site, a more considered collective design process has been taking off. The RECUP’KITCHEN concept has been serendipitously unfolding throughout the on-site temporary use –emerging from
concrete needs- and overtly embraces the ideology, formulated in the visioning process.

At this moment a crowdfunding campaign has been set up, explicitly chosen to maintain autonomy and expand the participation of citizens, as well as to further enlarge the debate on the values citizens aim to inscribe in the socio-spatial development of the city. The idea for a mobile kitchen prioritises food recuperation, reuse of (waste)materials, auto construction, self-governance, transparency, social economy, connecting and sharing. Already the collective articulation of an applied vision in a concrete and local design -even still open and not realised- manifests the need for a more emancipated and ‘care-taking’ way of city making.

More info about RECUP’KITCHEN and support: https://www.growfunding.be/bxl/recup-kitchen-en


[2] Commons Josaphat