

# RECREANT CRUILLES

**Recreant Cruïlles** is a citizens' platform formed by people from different professional, social and ideological backgrounds, both from our neighbourhood and beyond it. This community comes together to do its work in and around the revived plot of land known as L'espai Germanetes.

**L'espai Germanetes** is located in the Eixample district of Barcelona and is collectively managed as a meeting point for the community at large to be involved in the social and environmental transformation of our city. Germanetes represents an opportunity for our local community to reappropriate urban public space and engage in collective and non-mercantile self-management.



Barcelona

The people involved in Germanetes try to rethink the notion of public space as the common ground on which we can all interact, fostering a sense of community spirit that is sorely lacking in the rest of the Eixample district's urban grid. L'espai Germanetes acts as a neighbourhood observatory, demanding the reversal of the ongoing privatization that is threatening Barcelona's public spaces. At the same time, we also want to cross the physical boundaries of Germanetes to achieve a more humane style of city planning, channelling collective community initiatives towards democratic improvements in physical and social urban issues and exercising our "right to the city".



**L'Esquerra de l'Eixample**, the area of the Eixample district in which Germanetes is located, is a highly populated neighbourhood. Despite its central location, there is a serious dearth of public amenities and green areas. The neighbourhood also faces intense levels of environmental pollution.



2001

The convent housing members of the order of the Little Sisters of the Poor was acquired by Barcelona's general hospital, Hospital Clínic.

2004

The convent was torn down.

2006

An amendment in Barcelona's town planning laws led to an exchange of land between Hospital Clínic and the City Council of Barcelona, the latter becoming the new owner of l'espai Germanetes.

2007

The Council's town planning programme pledged to build a series of public amenities on the 5,000-sqm site of l'espai Germanetes, including a nursery school and primary school, and also an affordable housing plan for young adults and the elderly.

2011



ASSEMBLEA DE L'ESQUERRA DE L'EIXAMPLE

proposed to occupy the public space of l'espai Germanetes in an act of protest. Part of this protest involved pointing to the City Council's failure to build the public amenities they had promised the local community.



was established as a workgroup environment lot Germanetes.

It gathered for weekly meetings in a bar opposite the empty site.

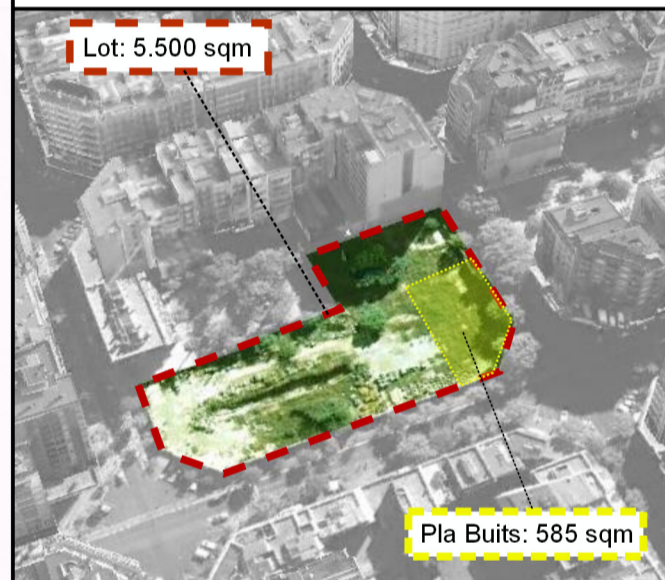
2012

An extension of this project was initiated through various participatory processes, including four workshops at Golferichs Civic Centre, sessions for reflection for the Recreant Cruïlles platform and the organization of a series of events to involve the community in the generalized protest against the Council's inaction. These included a 24-hour walk around l'espai Germanetes, Saint John's night, Carnival and activities coinciding with public holidays and feast days. Often, these events concluded with the preparation and celebration of a giant paella lunch for all the neighbourhood!

All these events were integrated with local initiatives such as Cami Amic (a pressure platform demanding a more pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood, especially for the children who travel to and from school each day) and the neighbourhood's various PTAs or parent teacher associations (AMPES in Catalan), in which parents, carers and teachers work in community initiatives of different kinds.

Barcelona City Council published its **Pla de Buïts** call, which invited nonprofit community associations to propose a plan to use and manage 585 sqm of the total 5,000 sqm constituting l'espai Germanetes until the end of 2016.

Recreant Cruïlles decided to submit a proposal with the support of various organizations and individuals, under the aegis of the official neighbours' association the Association of Neighbours of l'Esquerra de l'Eixample (AVVEE).



2013

Pending the Council's cession of the 550-sqm portion of l'espai Germanetes to whichever association was considered to fulfil the call requirements, the Recreant Cruïlles assemblies, struggles and protest celebrations continued.

In October, during the neighbourhood's annual feast day, we finally celebrated the day on which the City Council ceded this smaller plot to us.

Meetings began with the Council's town planning department to condition the site, lay the foundations for the community vegetable garden and build the dome and shed (in partnership with Straddle3).



2014

On 24 January 2014, this 550-sqm portion of l'espai Germanetes finally opened its doors to the public, managed and maintained by the Recreant Cruïlles general assembly and by smaller committees who approached specific areas of the work at hand.

In order to foster a sense of permeability between this smaller space with l'espai Germanetes, its immediate surroundings and the community at large, the following street activities were initiated:

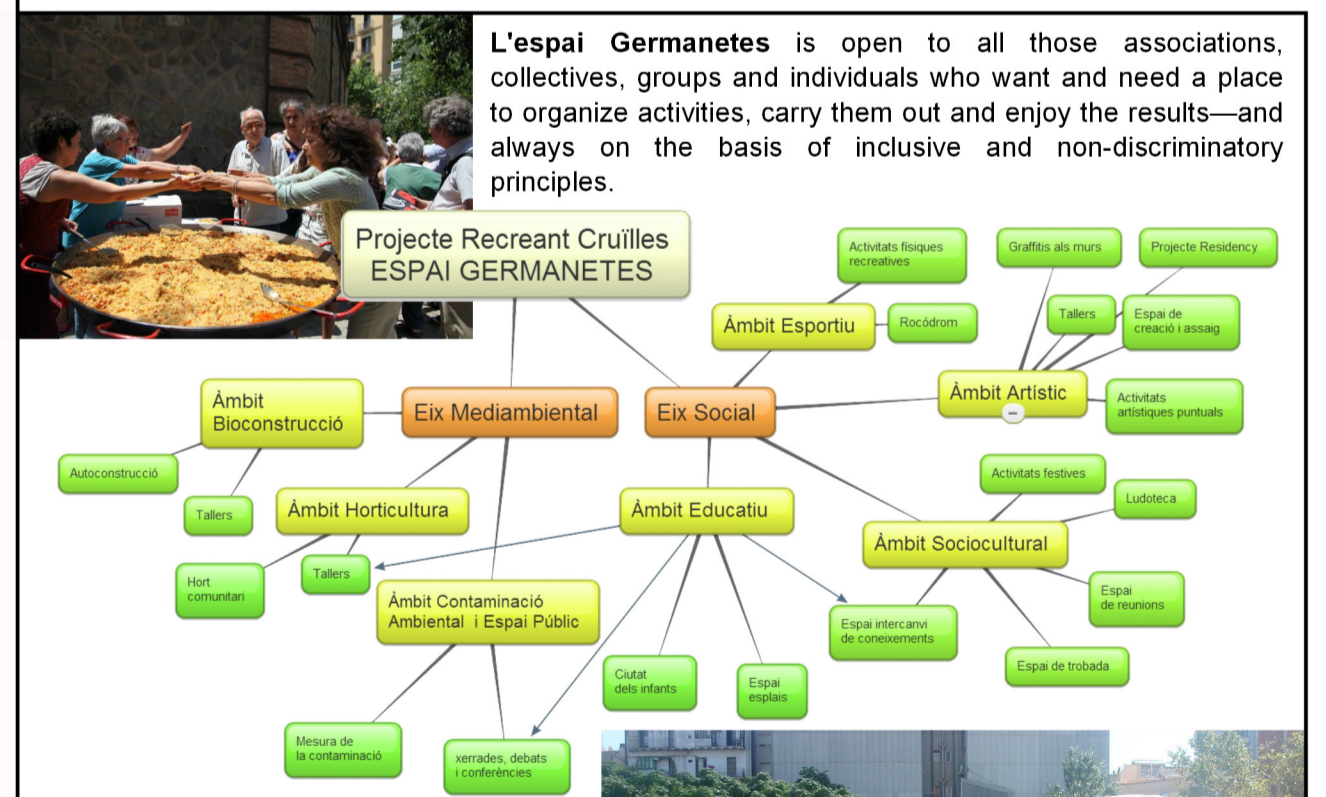
The farmers' markets organized by the Group de Consum Responsable de l'Esquerra de l'Eixample (Group for Responsible Consumption) in conjunction with Barcelona's Xarxa de Consum Solidari (XSC) every second Saturday of each month on the pavement and in the street just outside l'espai Germanetes.

An art project organized in part by Idensitat (ID), an arts organization that considers how artistic practices and public spaces can interact and inform one another

Projecte Respira, a watchdog association that informs on environmental pollution.

L'Esquerra de l'Eixample's First Square, an initiative in which members of Recreant Cruïlles and other organizations ideated the neighbourhood's first "people's square" on the corner of the streets carrer de Consell de Cent and carrer del Comte Borrell, thus recalling the abandoned plans of the nineteenth-century Catalan town planner Ildefons Cerdà to build gardens inside each block in the Eixample district.

The City Council announced the government's decision to commission a new secondary school for the Eixample district, to be opened at the beginning of the academic year 2015-16, which many considered a victory after years of neighbourhood activism. It also announced the forthcoming construction of council flats on part of the 5,000 sqm Germanetes site, which we in Recreant Cruïlles totally oppose, convinced that this plan can only jeopardize the already uncertain future of the neighbourhood's much-needed green areas. Recreant Cruïlles is also participating in community initiatives to design the Eixample district's superilla project, an urban planning initiative that, amongst other things, seeks to improve Barcelona's green design in areas that are bigger than single city block (an illa) but stay within the current design of the city's neighbourhoods. At a meeting between the City Council and Recreant Cruïlles, the Council agreed to let Recreant Cruïlles participate in the decision making process for developing the 5,000 sqm of l'espai Germanetes. Fifteen days later, the same Council unilaterally presented its draft public park. A participatory process organized by Recreant Cruïlles was produced demanding the self-management of public spaces, which the city authorities promptly rejected.



L'espai Germanetes is open to all those associations, collectives, groups and individuals who want and need a place to organize activities, carry them out and enjoy the results—and always on the basis of inclusive and non-discriminatory principles.

2015

On 14 February 2015 during Carnival and the monthly farmers' market, the doors to the 5,000 sqm portion of l'espai Germanetes were opened for the first time, allowing the local community to enter the space and celebrate this as an occasion on which to protest about the actions of the City Council.

Around the same time, the City Council's 2015 City of Barcelona Awards gave a special mention to L'espai Germanetes...

In collaboration with the University of Barcelona, Recreant Cruïlles initiated its artist residency project.

...And the struggle continues!

