Recreate Cruilles 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 Geranetes.

L’espai Geranetes is located in the Elxample 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. Geranetes represents an opportunity for our local community to reappropriate urban public space and engage in collective and non-mercantile self-management.

The people involved in Geranetes 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 Elxample district’s urban grid. L’Espai Geranetes 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 Geranetes 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”.

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**2001**

The convent housing members of the order of the Little Sisters of the Poor was acquired by Barcelona’s General Hospital, Hospital Clinic.

**2004**

The convent was torn down.

**2006**

An amendment in Barcelona’s town planning laws led to an exchange of land between Hospital Clinic and the City Council of Barcelona, the latter becoming the new owner of l’Espai Geranetes.

**2007**

The Council’s town planning programme pledged to build a series of public amenities on the 5,500-sqm site of l’Espai Geranetes, including a nursery school and primary school, and also an affordable housing plan for young adults and the elderly.

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**2011**

15M — **ASSEMBLÈA DE L’ESQUERRE DE L’EXAMPLE**

proposed to occupy the public space of l’espai Geranetes 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.

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**2012**

An extension of this project was initiated through various participatory processes, including four workshops at Guelllichs Civic Centre, sessions for reflection for the Recreate Cruilles 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 Geranetes, Saint John’s night, Carnaval and events coinciding with public holidays and feast days. Often, these events concluded with the preparation and celebration of a giant paella lunch for all the neighbours!

All these events were integrated with local initiatives such as Cami Amic (a pressure platform for more pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood, especially for the children who travel to and from school each day) and the neighbourhood’s various PTAx 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 Bults call, which invited nonprofit community associations to propose a plan to use and manage 585 sqm of the total 5,500 sqm constituting l’Espai Geranetes until the end of 2016.

Recreate Cruilles 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’Exemple (AVVEE).

Pending the Council’s cession of the 550-sqm portion of l’Espai Geranetes to whichever association was considered to fulfill the call requirements, the Recreate Cruilles assembled, struggled and protest celebrations continued.

In October, during the neighbourhood’s annual feast day, we finally celebrated the day on which the City Council ended 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 Sánchez).

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**2013**

On 24 January 2014, this 550-sqm portion of l’Espai Geranetes finally opened its doors to the public, managed and maintained by the Recreate Cruilles general assembly and by smaller committees that approached specific areas of the work at hand.

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

- **The farmers’ markets organized by the Grup de Comerç Responsable de l’Esquerra de l’Exemple (Group for Responsible Consumption) in conjunction with Barcelona’s Xarxa de Consom Solidari (XSC) every second Saturday of each month on the pavement and in the street just outside l’Espai Geranetes.
- **An art project organized in part by Identitat (ID), an arts organization that considers how artistic practices and public spaces can interact and inform one another.

Proyect Recopa, a watching association that informs on environmental pollution.

L’Esquerra de l’Exemple’s First Square, an initiative in which members of Recreate Cruilles and other organizations and groups of the 5,000-sqm area’s “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 Elxample district.

The City Council announced the commission’s decision to commission a new secondary school for the Elxample 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 Geranetes site, which we in Recreate Cruilles totally oppose, convinced that this plan can only jeopardize the already uncertain future of the neighbourhood’s much-needed green areas.

Recreate Cruilles is also participating in community initiatives to design the Elxample 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 8a) but stay within the current design of the city’s neighbourhoods. At a meeting between the City Council and Recreate Cruilles, the Council agreed to let Recreate Cruilles participate in the decision making process for developing the 5,000-sqm of l’Espai Geranetes. Fifteen days later, the same Council unilaterally presented its draft public park. A participatory process organized by Recreate Cruilles was produced demanding the self-management of public spaces, which the city authorities promptly rejected.

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**2015**

On 14 February 2015 during Carnaval and the monthly farmers’ market, the doors to the 5,000 sqm portion of l’Espai Geranetes 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.

At the same time, the City Council’s 2015 City of Barcelona Awards gave a special mention to l’Espai Geranetes.

In collaboration with the University of Barcelona, Recreate Cruilles initiated its artist residency project.

...and the struggle continues!

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**Take ownership of public space!!!**