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.

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”.

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.

Recreant Cruïlles decided to submit a proposal with the support of various organizations and individuals, under the aegis of the “official neighbors’ association the Association of Neighbours of the Eixample (AVVEE).

Pending the Council’s cession of the 550 sqm portion of l’espai Germanetes to whichever association was considered to fulfill 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 declared 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).

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 events were initiated:

The Germanettes market organized by the Group of Consumer Responsible of the Eixample (Group for Responsible Consumption) in conjunction with Barcelona’s Xarxa de Consum Solidari (XISC) 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 Identitat (ID), an arts organization that considers how artistic practices and public spaces can interact and inform one another.

Projects Respire, 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 “people’s square” on the corner of the streets Consell de Cent and carrer del Comte Borrell, thus recalling the abandoned plans of the nineteenth-century Catalan town planner Ildefons Cerdà and building inside that 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 still 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.

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

...And the struggle continues!