

1. We believe that **culture is a common good** and we see culture as the **basis of societal transformation.**

RSL op Post is a place, a collection of organizations, of people looking for social contact, participation, introduction, peace and friendship. RSL op Post bundles individual initiatives and in this way makes the connection between organizations and individuals that otherwise would not have been established.

When you enter RSL on Post, you will immediately receive a warm welcome. The CULTURE is pleasant. It is hard to say who has what background, and that certainly does not matter. Here, the basis of the friendship lays in the first meeting. By treating people as equals and not by looking at their background, we create a secure basis. Opportunities are created for people with talents, whom they can hardly show in daily life.

Some examples

Activities such as "**cooking together**" provide an introduction between people. Different people with a vulnerable background start cooking together in the kitchen. There is a big difference in age, geographical origin, religion, level of education ... But whoever proposes a dish at that time is the expert. He or she knows everything about it and is seen as the chef. The cook introduces the dish, teaches others the tastes, methodologies, actions and desired preparation methods. People learn to communicate quickly through cooking. This cooking environment forms the basis of a social transformation. Appreciation of this specific knowledge is often sufficient for the basis of a friendship. The first step has been taken. Later, people often get to know each other much more personally and issues such as social background are raised.



Space has also been made for a fablab in RSL on Post. People can get creative here. This can be done through technological machines such as a laser cutter, a 3D printer or a vinyl cutter. Use can also be made of the sewing machines, or the soldering iron. Of course you can also draw / paint or do other activities that do not require any machines.

This place encourages creative people to challenge themselves. Here too people from different backgrounds get to meet with each other. Much of the material present in the lab is too expensive to purchase by a single person. By opening this space to everyone, we create a commons.

Shared ownership. 10 volunteers take responsibility for the use and maintenance of the machines. They decide who can and cannot use the machines independently and at what price. They also maintain the

machines and order material on time. Without these lab managers there was no lab, or opening hours where others can use this lab. They form the core of these commons. By defining roles, we stimulate a self-supported, autonomous system. By opening up the lab to "external parties", they can assume financial security to cover (un)expected costs and can gradually expand.



By being in RSL op Post and meeting other people you automatically start to behave differently. Step by step, you become more tolerant, you open your heart more to people with a vulnerable background. You hear stories, stories that you can't even imagine. You empathize with these situations and therefore look at the world with a different perspective.

“But here in RSL op Post I got to know another group of people. With a different attitude. I am now more understanding for people who are struggling. ”

- Quote of a vulnerable employee of RSL op Post -

One of the most visual common spaces in RSL op Post is a work of art in the entrance hall. It is a large drawing that still needs to be colored. The more people contribute coloring this wall, the more colorful and accessible the building becomes. This interactive wall also provides material for conversation and spontaneous encounter.



2. We want to stimulate the creation of economic, social and civic value around **urban commons**, as well as improving public awareness of commons as a key value for societal transformation.

RSL op Post can be seen as a commons generator. The facilitation of for example the lab, is an encouragement to stimulate commons behaviour between the users of the lab. All machines, maintenance and practical rules are shared between the citizens who take responsibility to be lab manager.

By opening the space, creativity is stimulated, and can in that way be described as a production of resources (note: resources as in terms of knowledge, prototypes, relationships...)

Also by linking the lab with the 'Kringwinkel' (2nd hand shop) can introduce circularity and so reduce waste. This could be a fundamental change in society.



Inclusion is one of the main pillars in RSL op Post. Everyone is equal, no one should be excluded. Therefore, we leave space to “be”, not necessarily participate any organised activity.

All organisations forming RSL op Post are non profit. They all focus on connecting people, community, empowerment, reduction of waste...

As RSL op Post is an initiative of the city, also the lab infrastructure is subsidised by the city. The volunteers define the rules and working method, but got a lot of help of the local government. This gives them the freedom to experiment and take time to find the best way of running the lab.

During the exploration phase of the project, we found a lot of challenges such as: how to be inclusive, how far can we go with the bottom-up vision? In what way can we learn from others? How much can citizens influence the daily activities in RSL op Post? By visiting a similar project in Aalst, all involved got inspired and surprised by noticing the same struggles. By exchanging experience, similar projects can learn from each other and start with some guidance, knowing all steps should be taken, and also all challenges will occur in one way or another.

The guidance of this project was done by using different tools and methods. By gradually offering new methods, all stakeholders got time to adapt and try the suggested methods.

The word 'commons' was never used, however the project can definitely be called a commons transition.

At the end of the coaching trajectory, a permanent expo has been designed. In here, the different tools are represented, accompanied by several practical uses and examples during the project (photo, film, completed canvas...). This material will be a guide for all people working or visiting RSL op Post in the future.

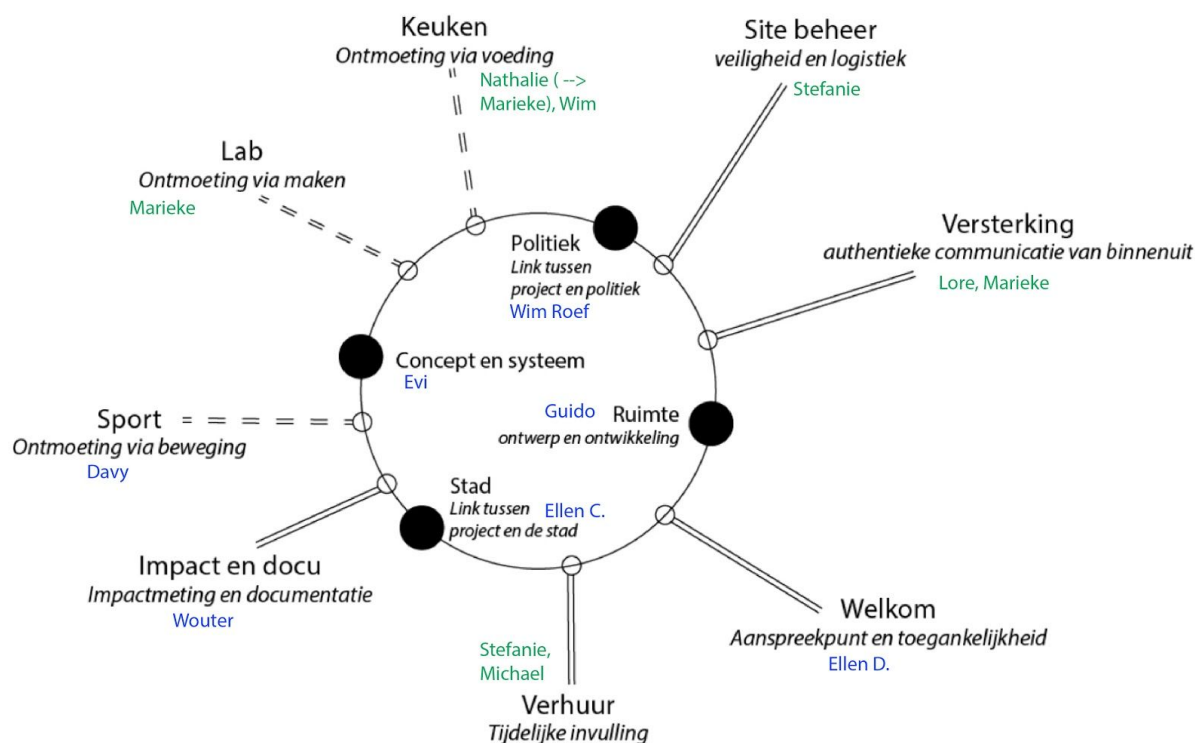


3. We believe that decision-making should be democratised. This should happen through bottom-up processes at a local level, involving citizens in co-creating important aspects of daily life.

The methodology of RSL op Post was based on circles. Different circles such as 'hand-on', 'communication', 'co-creation', 'impact & documentation' were created. Any interested person could join a circle and help to develop the project.

In RSL op Post, we tried to avoid to overrule the bottom-up initiatives. We tried to wait as long as possible to steer a direction in order to **let the people themselves decide** where to go.

RSL op Post is a place where people come by, relax, find friendships, inspiration or courage to move on. It is very important that those things remain possible and do not become artificial or obliged. By defining different themes: meeting, making and cooking, people could try to find their interest bring forward their strengths.



By using the circles, decisions were made by citizens and employees who are closely working together with their people. So overruled decision-making could be avoided.

Most important is to **mark small actions** and see the power of it. Ex. Someone using the vinyl cutter to improve the signalisation throughout the building (instead of printing papers as

she was used to do). She saw the opportunity of combining the options of the lab and make a good and useful use of it. This small action shows us, that the purpose of the lab is starting to get known and people feel comfortable enough to use the available machines in it, on an independent level.

As known participation on all social levels is not always easy. In RSL op Post, Sociocracy 3.0 was used as a method for meeting. Trying to be inclusive, this way of gathering was also introduced in one of the sessions with vulnerable citizens. The difference was clear, people who are not used to gather are less willing to try this methodology, they just want to tell their story. Even though the method was perceived as a success, and will be used in further sessions (with a few adjustments).

Although this project is very local, similar challenges are experienced in different cities. Therefore, a framework would help to accelerate the development without pushing a top-down strategy.

4. We want to make the case for a new basis for the legitimisation of the EU, based on a strong link with local democracies and practices of commoning and participation.

RSL op Post is a atypical process. During the project it was very hard to 'fight' against the existing rules of the system of the city. The bottom-up approach is hard to combine with the vision of the government. The city still wants to have overall control (as it is their money, and city). If there were new visions of policy-making within the EU, a city government could support on it to stimulate those projects.

RSL op Post is not a EU project, it is very local and funded with Flemish foundations. Although this project is small, it can serve as an example of participatory projects funded by the EU. By consulting different similar projects in different countries, a synthesis can be made. This could lead to a manual for potential projects concerning EU funding.