While we usually understand cooking as part of the domestic environment – and therefore, private – this research shows that this is not always the case. Throughout a journey to different parts of the world, we see that collective kitchens have a massive dimension that we tend to overlook. Anna Puigjaner’s photographs allow us to appreciate that what we consider private can be public, acquiring thus a new potential for transformation.
From the Frankfurt kitchen (1926) to the well-known Kitchen Debate starring Nixon and Khrushchev in 1959 Moscow – where the kitchen was merely a backdrop capable of exemplifying two antagonistic ideologies – the last century has understood kitchens as a tool capable of linking macroeconomics with microeconomics, especially through the redefinition of domestic work and gender roles. Household tasks were reaffirmed in what Silvia Federici called “Labour of Love” and have neither managed to legitimize their status of regulated work, nor to transform or quantify their economic or wage value, following a process where consequences are still evident and in which we are still immersed.

We can thus hardly think of the kitchen in isolation, as separated from an extensive network of urban, social and political relations. Faced with the institutionalization of “Labour of Love,” a series of proposals for the construction of the kitchen from a collective standpoint have tried, in different contexts, to reformulate pre-established working and social conditions.

Two years ago, I started a journey around the world to document some paradigmatic examples of shared or collective kitchens. Despite their different origins and natures, they all have a common denominator. Pushing the kitchen beyond the pre-established boundaries of the house extends the domestic outside the private...

5 Cocina urbana para gente de la tercera edad en Singapur, 2017. / Seniors’ urban kitchen in Singapore, 2017. © Anna Puigjaner
6 Cocina urbana en Ciudad de México, 2017. / Urban kitchen in Mexico City, 2017. © Anna Puigjaner

7 Cocina urbana en Montreal, 2017. / Urban kitchen in Montreal, 2017. © Anna Puigjaner
sphere. A gesture that allows not only expanding the domestic – the domestication of urban space – but, at the same time, exposes the increasingly blurred boundaries between the public and the private, between the house and the city.

Following extraordinarily different cases and motivations, through that expansion of the domestic beyond the house, the private becomes public, since, what until now was limited to the immediate or the familiar, accentuates its political and potentially transformative features. **ARQ**