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## Activists set up model sustainable village in Martyrs' Square



### Summary

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Abby Sewell | The Daily Star

BEIRUT: Before Lebanon's "October Revolution" began, Recycle Lebanon founder Joslin Kehdy had been searching for a space to launch a pilot project of a model sustainable community. With the political uprising bringing masses of people to Downtown Beirut, Kehdy and a group of likeminded partners found that space.

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garbage sorting area, a volunteer-run zero-waste kitchen where volunteers prepare meals for the protesters using produce donated by supermarkets that would have otherwise thrown it away, a co-working space with Wi-Fi and charging stations, and spaces for meetings and projects -- all powered by solar panels bolted to the pavement.

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"I felt like it was waiting for a revolution for us to open the concept of what is Regenerate Lebanon," Kehdy said. And she said now the complex is here to stay for the long haul. The space is run by a group of eight to 10 organizers, with a rotating cast of volunteers coming from the protesters, particularly those camping in the

"This is the first time for me - I'm 34 years old - that we are actually occupying and claiming and engaging in our public space, especially in downtown," she said. "It was important for us to shift this into a very productive space long-term and to tackle the issues of what we are fighting against, which are the financial corruption, economic and environmental collapse that we are in."

In particular, given Lebanon's current economic crisis, she said that it was important to tackle the issue of food waste.

"We have families that can't feed their households, and we have food that is being thrown away," she said.

Adib Dada, founder of theOtherDada architecture lab and one of the organizers of Regenerate Lebanon, said the kitchen fed about 500 people during Sunday's large protests Downtown and about 200 people on other days since it opened. Dada has also been heading up guerilla tree-planting sessions along a stretch of sidewalk near the square.

Like Kehdy, he said the idea of the space was to create a model of the kind of society people want to see in Lebanon. "A lot of the revolution has been about bringing down the government and all of that, and we want to go toward a change, a radical change," he said. "But we also, with Regenerate Lebanon, are focusing on the positive changes we can make that we want to see in the postrevolution."

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