WHO WE ARE
As a part of Centre for alternative and autonomous network, the socio-cultural Association Rizom seeks to introduce and adopt models, practices and paradigms that push for community-based platforms of self-sufficiency, struggling to invent grassroots models of self-sustainability and thus help communities meet their economic, social and environmental needs.

A PROBLEM
Maribor, a post-industrial city of lost opportunities, jobs and future, is faced with an alarming hardship brought about by the crisis. From December 2008 to March 2013 unemployment grew for the astonishing 60,2%, whereas the official unemployment rate in the Municipality of Maribor was 18,6% in January and February this year, 5% above national average. North-eastern region with Maribor as its centre suffered an immense wave of redundancies with masses of industrial workers practically ending up on the street from one day to another. The share of unemployed persons older than 50 grew from 19,2% in December 2003 to 35,2% in March this year, whereas the share of persons with university education or higher grew from 7,4% in December 2004 to 15,7% this March. The national media have been reporting about starving families faced with evictions, and children waiting in line for food in front of humanitarian organizations. Coming from the strong socialist background, the city stands astonished in seeing as much as one child beg for food. Maribor might never has been a home to luxurious citizens with luxurious cars or luxurious apartments, but it’s never been a home to hungry children either. Until now that is. The situation indeed seems beyond worrisome, especially given the fact that no serious recovery plan to stabilize the city has really existed so far. More and more urban residents seem to be experiencing hunger and live on the social margin in their everyday struggle for survival and the most basic of products.

THE SOLUTION
As a response to the growing crisis, poverty and shortage of basic necessities, the Association would like to establish a social kitchen, thus allowing the socially vulnerable citizens to have access to healthy daily meals. The kitchen would thus stand as a continuation of the efforts already invested in food self-supply, which has been the focal point of previous efforts, either in the form of connecting small farmers from the outskirts of the city and bringing their produce to the centre of Maribor, or in the form of newly established organic community gardens, where food is grown on municipal surfaces in a community manner. New community gardens are in the process of setting up at the moment. The social kitchen would be, in this respect, a natural step forward.

THE CHALLENGE
The challenge in establishing a social community kitchen lies in establishing a solid financial model for its functioning. In other words, if we decide to give cooked meals away for free to the vulnerable citizens,
how could we make it function as a social enterprise with sufficient profits to allow for new employment opportunities and new developmental opportunities? It should be noted that the area the Centre is located in is very low in frequency and highly industrial, which means that a regular bar or restaurant probably wouldn’t be a tremendous success. In this respect another model of financial management should be sought after, perhaps in relation with the newly emerging community gardens and small farmers growing food in the outskirts of Maribor. Perhaps an innovative concept of this kitchen should be established, adding something thrilling and interesting to it to make it function financially. Perhaps, instead of upgrading the social kitchen with something else to make it profitable, simply a good financial model should be made for it and a sustainable source of cash flow thus identified. Whichever solution to make the social kitchen work financially would be more than welcome.