



ZEN SUR TERRE*

Ecofarm project to collectively
experience a simple existence, in
resonance with the laws of
natural living

* ZEN ON EARTH

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1. THE PLACE



1.1 What we are looking for

We are seeking a farmhouse with outbuildings and land:

- Presence of natural water (river or pond fed by spring water)
- At least 10 ha of land, with at least 4 ha of agricultural land
- A main building with at least one large room
- A silent environment with the possibility of a social town nearby
- The presence of forestry either on the property or nearby
- Public transportation at less than 30 km away

Research area: Entire France except for areas that already experience excessive heat waves and droughts.

1.2 Mission statement

SIMPLICITY AND HARMONY

We wish to create a collective life and work place in which we experiment with new ways of living together, in particular new ways of producing our food; a place of research and transmission that actively participates in building our collective resilience. Our individual and common buildings will be integrated into a nurturing landscape. We will work to develop an agricultural model that draws its inspiration from methods such as permaculture and gardening on living soil ("*maraîchage sur sol vivant*"). Thus, we want to be a part of a local food chain that could withstand climatic shocks and ensure territorial autonomy. We will also rely on practices of peasant knowledge that favour user-friendly tools at the service of people and the community, which means reducing our current energy extravagance. To step out of the mad race for endless profit, nothing is more natural than returning to everyday presence, to the simple joys of human relationships and the connexions with other life forms. We have a duty to leave future generations with a liveable and desirable world. For this, it is time to return to the basics.

1.3 What we have in common

- The practice of seated meditation

For us, "zen" is more than a buzzword. Our group was formed around the practice of meditation in the sōtō zen tradition. Even if we draw on this ancient wisdom, we are not currently affiliated with any institution or religion. Our place will be open to all, in acceptance of the diversity of human beliefs.

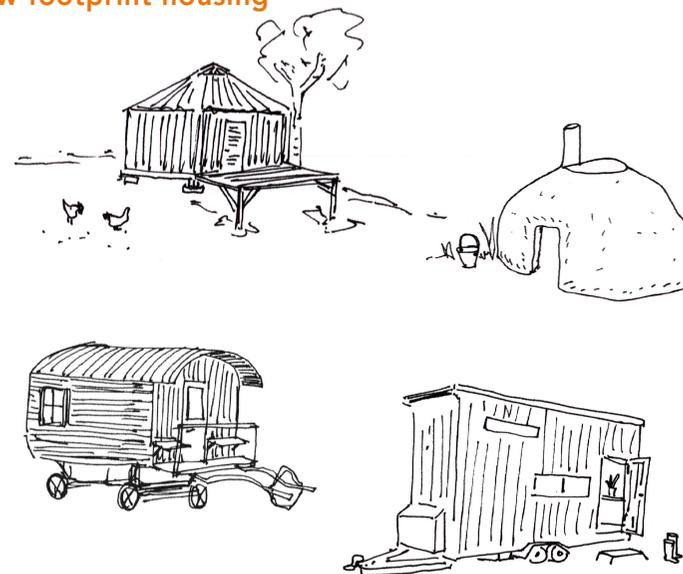
We start each day with an optional group meditation. This creates an atmosphere of calm and concentration that continues in every daily activity: cleaning, cooking, working in the vegetable garden, etc. Concentrating on the natural state of the body contributes to paying particular attention to the consequences of our most trivial gestures, which are often ignored.

Our shared **values** are related to this practice :

- Respect for the living
- Autonomy
- Peace, non-violence
- Mutual care, solidarity
- Right, conscious action
- Taste for effort, commitment
- Self-discipline
- Harmony, collective sense
- Deep joy
- Inner silence



1.4 Low footprint housing



Our project includes the installation of a few "light habitats" spread over the future property, around the already existing buildings which will be the common spaces. This will be subject to acceptance by the mayor and the town council, which we consider to be partners in the project. We are therefore looking for officials willing to respond in a sustainable way to the demand for access to housing from households sensitive to ecology.

Definition Light habitats, or in French official terms "dismountable residences", are small main dwellings, without foundations and which can be easily dismantled or moved at any time. The impact on the environment is minimal: no soil sealing and use of biodegradable building materials. Ex: tiny house (wooden chalet on trailer), kerterre (house in lime, hemp), house in earth and straw, etc.

Regulations Installation on non-constructible land (natural or agricultural) is possible, with the strong support of the town hall.

More information (in French):

<https://hameaux-legers.org/nos-actions/accompagnement/collectivites>



A RESILIENT AGRICULTURAL PROJECT

Considering the generalised decrease of non-renewable resources, the loss of biodiversity and the impoverishment of agricultural land, it is vital to create and multiply different forms of being and inhabiting our world according to the principle of interdependence. We wish to develop material autonomy at the scale of the territory taking into account available resources and human needs. Plants will be produced under conditions favorable to their growth and quality without polluting or consuming large quantities of energy. The land will no longer be exploited but regenerated.

2. THE ACTIVITIES

2.1 The farm

Vegetable gardening

Based on an experience of more than 30 years in organic vegetable growing, permaculture, and MSV (gardening on living soil), we wish to continue to produce by hand a wide variety of excellent quality vegetables. This production will be used to feed the inhabitants of the place and can also be distributed within a local food cooperative, school canteen, local association, etc.

Animals

We will integrate animals in a spirit of respect for their needs. We will start with a diversified barnyard that we can complete with a few ruminants. Cohabitation with animals has several roles such as maintaining the biodiversity of the place, fertilising the vegetable garden and pushing us to question our place within the living.

Picking

Finally, as the seasons go by, we will pick wild plants and fruits (wild garlic, nettles, comfrets, chestnuts, etc.) to complete what we cultivate and value traditional know-how.

Cereals

At the same time, we want to experiment with less intrusive methods of growing some basic cereals in collaboration with the farmers of the region.

Food processing

The farm will have a space dedicated to processing part of our plant production for the inhabitants as well as the people we will welcome. This space will also be a place of hospitality and sharing for neighbours wishing to promote their surpluses, pickings or to experiment with recipes.

2.2 Hosting and transmission

We also intend to host specific events on site or organise them in the neighbourhood :

- Vegetable gardening training
- Permaculture workshops
- Baking training
- Eco-building workshops
- Sewing and clothing repair workshops
- Vegetable gardening workshops for children
- Social support for women and children in difficulty, to be studied in partnership with local organisations
- Summer camps for children, immersed in an ecological place
- Seasonal celebrations according to the agrarian calendar
- Debates, film screenings, meetings, discussion evenings, reading circles, etc.
- Solidarity meals

3. FAVOURING LOCAL ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

Supporting local initiatives is at the heart of our concerns. We want to promote exchanges by collaborating on existing initiatives. The establishment of this new place should make it possible to open up new social perspectives :

- Attractive project for **families with children**
- Collaboration with the **local school**
- Collective **food processing** activity, in collaboration with neighbouring farms
- Support for **meeting spaces** such as cafés and associative grocery stores
- **Repair workshop**, including bicycles and textiles
- Access to literature via an **itinerant mobile bookstore** present in local markets
- **Involvement in social action** to the extent of our abilities, through a partnership with dedicated organisations (integration of the unemployed, child protection, reception of women victims of violence, etc.)
- Accompaniment to the **ecological transition** for the interested members of the local scene
- Initiation or participation in a democratic dialogue on the **resilience of the bioregion** in terms of energy, food and water management.

4. HOW WE WORK

4.1 Shared governance

We're learning to evolve in a non-hierarchical shared governance system that has proven itself in other communities. A professional will accompany us in adapting this model to our situation. This means that we're trying to find a dynamic balance between :

- The freedom to take initiatives
- The place of each individual inside the collective
- The need to have time for group discussions on important subjects, relying on collective intelligence
- Group decision-making by the method of consent
- Specific roles attributed together to individuals that can move forward independently
- A system of rotating roles allowing each person to gain legitimate experience in all areas

4.2 Property as commons

We strongly defend peasant agriculture and seek to stop land speculation. We have therefore made the legal choice of a cooperative simplified joint-stock company (SAS "société par actions simplifiée") whose specificity is to defend the collective interest rather than that of the individual.

The inhabitants are both tenants of their accommodation and partners holding shares. In addition, investors can support the project by contributing capital that they can recover through the procedure established by the SAS.

Eventually, the inhabitants will be able to change without impact on the initial ambition of the project, according to the rules previously defined by the group. Our intention is to overcome social injustice by integrating new members without discrimination related to the financial contributions that each can make upon joining. By permanently removing the property from the financial market, it is the general interest vocation of the project that we will guarantee.

4.3 Legal setup

- The SAS buys the land and invests in the renovation of the place and the construction of fixed individual light housing. Light mobile habitats are the responsibility of their users.
- An association manages our activities on site (food processing, educational transmission, events, hosting, etc.)
- A SCEA (Civil Farming Company) carries out the collective agricultural activity.

Provisional funding for the start of the project

Investments	Contributions
350k€ property purchase	305k€ equity of future inhabitants
45k€ agency and notary fees	105k€ Oasis Cooperative loan
5k€ counselling costs	80k€ solidarity loans
20k€ 1st year renovations	5k€ donations and crowdfunding
15k€ 1st light habitat building	-
10k€ water autonomy prep.	-
5k€ initial agricultural infrastructure	-
45k€ treasury SAS	-
495k€	495k€

General financial plan in progress.

4.4 Financial setup

Each person will have an income from work or a pension. The work can be off-site, preferably part-time, or on-site, as economic activities develop in the community. We will set up a financial system based on solidarity.

Residents will pay rents to the SAS, based on loan payback, actual charges, occupied surface area and individual income. All in all, these rents will be less expensive than the rents practiced today on the real estate market. Temporary rentals of rooms, halls and spaces can supplement the SAS income.

The other collective activities mentioned above (agriculture, bakery, eco-building workshops, etc.) will be financed as much as possible by themselves, while being in solidarity with each other.

This economic model also works by the drastic reduction of current costs, on the one hand by the commitment of each person in the reduction of their ecological footprint, and on the other hand by the mutualisation of expenses (construction, food, transport, etc).

6. ABOUT US



Alina Koan Turco

37 years old, Romanian and French, studied at the Beaux-Arts in Paris and at the EHESS in anthropology, worked as a fashion producer, event organiser including a gypsy music festival in Romania, co-responsible for permaculture at the Gendronnière Zen Temple, now an apprentice vegetable gardener involved in environmental education for children. Wants to spend the rest of their life helping next generations.

Cathy Remy

55 years old, Belgian, journalist, mother of three young adults, ecofeminist activist committed to social and climate justice. Aspires to lead a simple and joyful life in the service of the living. Loves cooking, singing and drawing.



Daigaku Tosen

35 years old, Australian of Belgian origin, formerly a student of Eastern philosophy and a musician, has been working as a carpenter for ten years, seeking a natural approach to living. He practiced for a time as a monk in Japan in the sōtō zen tradition.



Kittinyani

45 years old, French and Canadian, buddhist nun of the theravada tradition, having lived in a monastic community in England for 12 years, is now inspired to participate in the experimentation of an alternative society based on material simplicity, human values and universal spirituality.



Madeleine Ehrhard

68 years old, Swiss, teacher of manual work, with several years of experience in training adolescents with learning difficulties and supporting people with mental disabilities. Lived 10 years in various communities and managed a hotel in the Swiss Alps. Co-responsible for the Zurich Zen Dojo and specialist in repairing clothes using the *sashiko* technique. Now seeks the magic of sharing that makes 1+1= more than 2.



Raimund Olbrich

70 years old, German, vegetable gardener for 40 years, among the pioneers of organic agriculture, member of a dissolute hippie community. Trainer through social integration at the Jardins de Cocagne, farmer in a Solavi structure in Switzerland, responsible for the vegetable garden and permaculture at the Gendronnière Zen Temple. Author of the book "Sol vivant, parole vivante" ("*Living soil, living words*"), he now wishes to participate in a real coherent alternative.



6. MAKE THIS PROJECT REAL

Join us

Does the adventure of participating in the creation of an eco-place tempt you and do you recognise yourself in the values of this project? We are delighted to onboard new people ready to get their hands dirty. In particular, we are looking for someone who shares the agricultural project with our vegetable gardener.

In the desire to maintain an intergenerational balance, the door is currently open to young adults, and welcome to children!

Do not hesitate to contact us by email for more details.

Make a donation

To help us go from dream to reality, you can sustainably support us by making a donation to the association carrying the project. Your money will finance the first investments for the implementation of activities and will ensure a human start full of energy.

Please go online, on this website:

<https://www.helloasso.com/associations/zen-sur-terre/formulaires/1>

Become a solidarity lender

Do you want to take your money out of the banks and put it into a project that strives for the common good? You can become a partner in the SAS according to the terms defined in the "*pacte associés*" document which specifies in particular the reimbursement procedure. Investing in an SAS is considered by many specialists as an opportune placement in the current conditions of possible financial crises. The SAS is a very safe structure because the monetary value is entirely invested in real estate, which is to be improved by the eco-place project.

Please contact us by email for more information.

Newsletter

To follow us, please send us an email with the subject "newsletter".

Contact us

contact@zen-sur-terre.org

