



A practical manual of co-design for the creation of a ‘Casita Verde’

What is a Casita Verde?

Casita Verde is an ecology and education center, where we study and teach sustainable, healthy lifestyle practices through the application of Permaculture principles, the use of alternative energies, plus the reuse and recycling of waste materials.

Why is it necessary to create an ecological center in your local community?

Taking into account the situation in which we find ourselves and the great need to change our habits that are destroying the complex ecosystems keeping our world alive, we consider it essential to begin a process of transformation (socio-economical and political), which will result in a comprehensive regeneration of our common home.

What are the basic principles and values on which an experiential eco-holistic education center is based?

The basic principles are:

- **Assess your needs**, by studying the available spaces and surfaces, to minimize the environmental impact of your installations and activities.
- **Design the centre according to the local climatic conditions**, taking advantage of natural energy supplies, such as solar, biomass, geothermal, hydro, or wind power.
- **Save energy**, by taking into account the relationship between the thermal insulation of the buildings, as well as their volume and the surface, for increased efficiency and economic saving.
- **Save water** by making rational use of this vital element through the use of devices that reduce consumption and take advantage of seasonal rainfall.

- **Build high quality structures**, which are sustainable and have a greater longevity, as well as require less maintenance.
- **Choose building materials which are locally generated**, and that are manufactured with processes that use little energy, to reduce environmental impact.
- **Take advantage of recyclable materials** with the aim of reducing the consumption of raw materials and the generation of waste (upcycling).
- **Ecologically manage your waste**, by separating it into categories so as to facilitate the recovery, reuse or recycling of materials.
- **Avoid unnecessary risks**, by following safety guidelines, when building with volunteers (or unskilled workers). and use only materials that are not harmful to your health (Especially inside the buildings).

The basic values are:

- **Austerity:** is to be aware of everything we consume and the real needs we have. This value is realized with reduction and reuse.
- **Respect:** without this gesture, we could not live in peace. It is important to respect other human beings and all forms of life that exist, as well as the natural environment. Remember that the natural world is our home and we must respect it, since without its resources, our life on planet Earth would not be possible.
- **Solidarity:** seeks to protect natural resources regardless of where they are located. The southern hemisphere of planet earth has always been exploited to supply the needs of the population that lives in the northern hemisphere, thus creating great inequalities. Another objective pursued with solidarity is to conserve natural resources for future generations. Currently young people are creating large mobilizations with the slogan "There is no planet B".
- **Co-responsibility:** is to be aware and assume our individual and collective responsibility in the face of the destruction of nature. Sometimes we make excuses saying "what's the use of me doing it, if the vast majority don't." The positive changes begin in oneself and in small groups, which with the passage of time will lead to much bigger changes.
- **Empathy:** is a feeling of identification with nature. It is to understand that everything that affects nature also affects us. Surely you have heard the slogan "Save the planet" many times, but saving the planet also includes saving ourselves and future generations.
- **Coherence:** is acting accordingly with the ideas we have or with what we express. That is, if we have a thought about preserving nature, we must demonstrate it with actions which develop that idea.

What are the steps to follow while building a Casita Verde?

1. It is advisable to establish a non-profit association (NGO), including a broad description of the activities you propose to develop in the statutes. This way you can count on a legal platform recognized by local authorities, that allows you to carry out events and other lucrative activities, in order to obtain the necessary funds for the development and proper functioning of the ecological center. (see the statutes for the **Asociación Ibiza Ecológica** which is responsible for Casita Verde Ibiza)
2. Obtain land with permission for construction, easily accessible and close enough to an urban nucleus to guarantee a flow of visitors to the ecological center. In the case of not being able to buy the land and the need to rent it, the contract should cover a term of no less than 20 years in order to amortize the investment.
3. Plan well the infrastructures considering the gradual expansion of the center, using Permaculture techniques already experienced in many places. (If you don't have the necessary knowledge, we recommend that you sign up for a Permaculture Design Course (PDC) before starting!).

Below is a list of suggested infrastructures you may consider for your Casita Verde:

- Main house, with an office and suitable communication equipment (for the director / directors of the center)
- A common kitchen and dining room, for volunteers and students
- Accommodation, permanent or temporary for volunteers and students
- A covered space, or spaces, for meetings, activities and workshops
- Eco toilets, showers and clothes washing area
- Renewable energy system / s (solar voltaic panels / solar cookers / solar water heaters)
- Rainwater collection systems
- Systems to reuse gray water from showers and kitchens
- Ecological garden and edible forest, with composting area
- Ornamental gardens with plants resistant to drought
- Pond for nature
- Chicken coop and stables for animals if you want to consume their products
- Bicycles available for the use of volunteers and students
- Childrens play area
- Dog park
- Suitable car parking area for residents and visitors

4. Establish a connection with collaborating entities, to make the activity you want to develop visible, plus exchange resources and information .
5. Disseminate information on the socio-environmental activities that the ecological center will carry out through social networks and local media (TV, Radio, Press).
6. Invite educational centers and other institutions in the area to the ecological center, to raise awareness about alternative lifestyle techniques and give greater visibility to the project.

What types of resources do we recommend to start the process?

- Human resources: They are the basis of any project, so you must choose very carefully the team that will accompany you .
- Material resources: Vehicles and various tools to start the project and maintain the infrastructure.
- Economic resources: Capital and periodic income to cover initial expenses.

How is the project financed, in the short, medium and long term?

We can consider three phases of financing:

In the short term, the financing will come from the contributions of the directors of the association.

In the medium term, the financing will come from donations made by sponsors and through income from the events and courses offered by the center. These could include donations from visiting volunteers, either by private arrangement, or through the many new companies offering volunteer experiences in ecological centers around the world.

It may also be possible to obtain public or private funds, depending on the projects undertaken by the association and interest from local institutions, sponsors, or investors.

In the long term, the well-managed ecological center should be self-sustaining through the various activities and / or events that it offers.

How is the rhythm of work, discipline and order maintained in an ecological center?

For the center to function in an organized way, it is advisable to make some guidelines.

This will avoid issues that may arise about expectations among directors, permanent residents, and volunteers. (See the example of the **Casita Verde Ibiza guidelines**).

Contact:

If you are interested in joining our network of 'Casita Verde' centers, please get in touch with Chris Dews, founder of the movement.

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