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Construction closed down.

In Spring, halfway through the construction, we were surprised by a visit from the mayor of Arens de Lledo. She ordered us to stop the building process due to lack of a building permit. We communicated already about this on our Facebook-page. Because not all our followers have a FB-account and this is our first newsletter since then, we like to pay attention to this here too.



About 2 weeks before the start of the planned building-process we became aware that we would not get the building-permit on time. Based on a miscommunication between us and Valentina, the architect, we were firmly convinced we would get this very soon. The consequences of postponing the start of the building for us, the builders and the volunteers, were so big that we decided to take the risk. A risk we assumed to be very little. We also knew that the local government was a favorite of our project.

However, in 2015, the legislation about building changed. A regional institute, Inaga, got an important role in providing the final building. At the moment we planned the period to start building there was hardly experience about the way Inaga fulfills this regional role. Fact is that much people are leaving the small villages in this area. The vision of the regional government is that new citizens should settle in the village itself. On the contrary the local government promotes the process of settling new citizens on the finca's. Because of this difference in vision the activities around Arens de Lledo are viewed by the regional administration through a magnifying glass. That is an additional reason why the mayor absolutely had to stop our building activities immediately.

Of course the local government rejects our prematurely start of building but they are also a really promoter of projects like ours. Because of this our relationship with the local administration is not disturbed by our early start. Fortunately!

For the moment just the two of us.

In June, directly after the building period, Peter and Jacqie decided to leave this project. That was shocking news for us! Our first thoughts were: "Yeah, now the whole project is not anymore what we had in mind, so it is the end of "Finca Ubuntu". We asked ourselves: "What is Ubuntu going about if we are just the two of us". However, due to intense conversations with friends we got new insights. These friends, who are also very closely involved in the project, indicated that they are really willing to support us and help us reviving the project. They showed us that we as persons definitely behave a lot in the way of "Ubuntu", that we have a close connection with other people, that we approach other ones with respect and that we are always to share. Meanwhile the group of people who are willing to support us and participate somehow in the project is growing. We are grateful to have such friends and because of that we are getting really convinced that it is meaningful to go on with the project.

Meanwhile we were already in Spain again. Also during this short "work-holiday" we experienced support and help from several involved people like Valentina, our architect, Rafa, who wrote the Environmental Impact report, David Suarez, Matthieu our builder and people from the village.

So: we go on with the two of us but with the help and participation of many others; that gives new hope courage and energy!

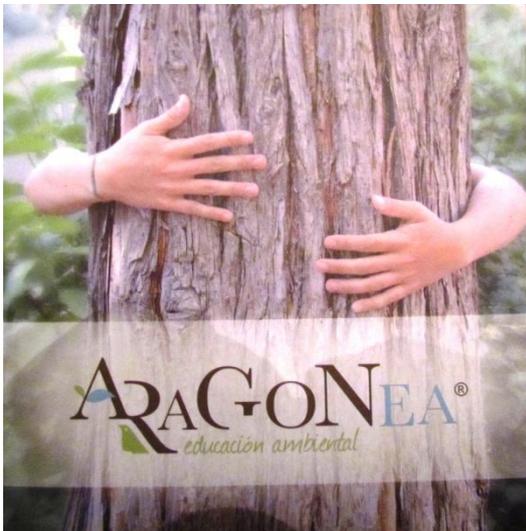


"Don't walk behind me;
I may not lead.
Don't walk in front of me;
I may not follow.
Just walk beside me
and be my friend."

The application for a license.

Mid July we received the outcome of our building request. It was no “Yes” and no “No”. They needed an additional and more extended Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to get a definitive decision. The environmental impact is about everything which has an influence on the environment. This is for instance the fact we are gonna live there, that we are gonna build there, with which materials we will build, when we build, how we will handle our waste, how about our and others safety and so on.

Let’s be clear, the fact that this additional request leads to a delay and, even more important, uncertainty is very disappointing for us. But, the fact that this report gives us a good insight in the impact of all our activities fits very well in our philosophy. Our starting point that all these issues were covered by a change of the destination plan of our finca by the local government, appears to be wrong. The destination plan includes everything we could ever dream of.



At the end July Rafael Bernal Siurana of [Aragonea](#) started with the EIR. The heart of Rafael for sure follows the importance of the environment, flora, fauna. After accepting our request to write this report for us he was very skeptical if this could end in a positive advice. After studying our plans and visiting our finca with house under construction he came to the conclusion that if we fulfill certain conditions he could give a warm hearted positive advice for further realization of our project.

Very briefly this is his conclusion and advice to Inaga. Now more in detail:

The house.

There is no need to change our choices according to the construction of the house and the used materials. For us it is obvious but our choices are quite unique and for sure unknown to most of the people who are involved in the request for the building permit. The fact we started building too early and already a part of the house is visible, supports a positive advice. The assessors can have a look at it and become aware about what and how we are really building.





Bonelli's eagle.

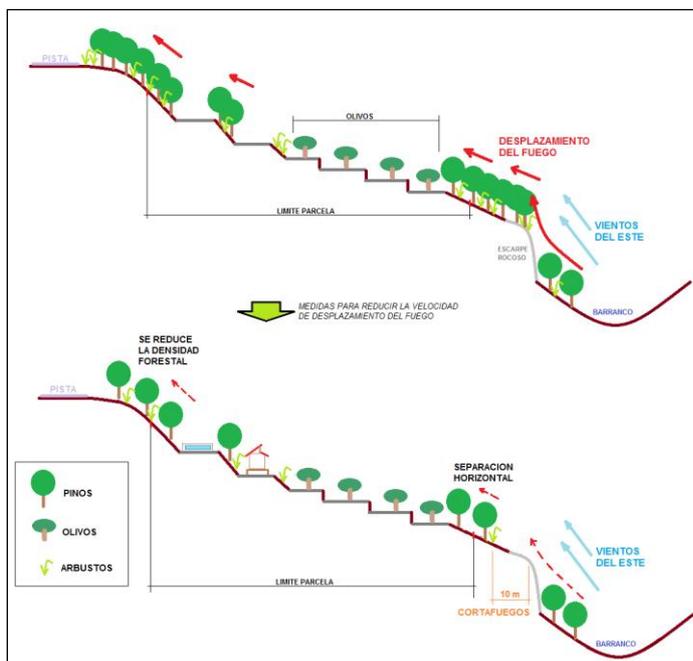
Close to our finca there is a nest of a couple bonelli's eagles. In Aragon this is a protected species. Throughout Aragon (slightly larger than the Netherlands) there are only 6 couples of them left. According to the advice of Rafael we cannot do any building activities in the first 6 months of the year.



Fire risk.

This is definitely the most important issue. The combination of drought and the fact that the finca is far from the public road, in the middle of a wooded area, is leading to an increased risk for ourselves if there is a risk in case of fire in the neighborhood. Despite this increased risk it is unlikely that we will ever be confronted with this but the consequences are so great that we certainly have to take this risk very seriously. Rafa's report includes a list of necessary conditions that make our stay there safe enough. These are the three most important ones:

1. At east wind the fire can spread rapidly through the trees in the valley and the ridge to the elevated position of our finca. So we will have to create barriers so that the fire does not or much less quickly move upwards. In other words in some places trees and low vegetation must be removed. In the overview, this is clearly shown.



The upper drawing in this figure indicates the current situation and the lower one the desired. In the lower drawing you can see clearly where trees and shrubs should be removed, the location of our house etc.

2. In the case of a starting fire in our neighborhood we need to get warned very quickly. The government has a system that detects directly starting fires. We must therefore be alerted directly from this system.
3. The path from our plot to the public road is quite long and takes about 10 minutes. This path is colored red in the picture below. It is important to have an alternative in the opposite direction. Near our finca the path has a junction in the opposite direction which leads to the river below, the Algar. This is orange colored in the picture. So, also this problem seems to be solved.



How we go on.

How we go on, of course, depends on the gain of the building-license. However, we still assume that we will receive this next Spring. Until then, we have no activities planned. Once we have the license we start with all the preparations for the further construction of our house:

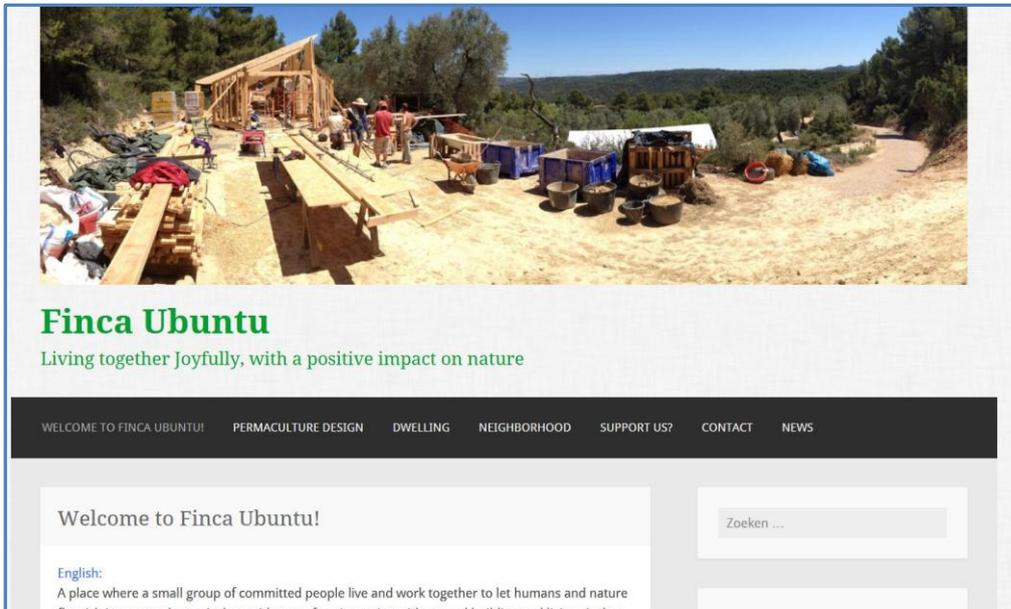
- Making appointments with the builders, the team of carpenters, the cooking-team, the architect and the technical architect.
- Recruiting volunteers.
- The ordering of missing materials.
- According to the advice of Rafa it is possible we have to make the finca already fire safe.

The restart of the building can be planned in autumn 2017.

On this moment it is our plan to build 3 hexagons instead of 4. 2 of them serve for the living for us. The third hexagon can be used by people who stay for some time and possibly help us reshaping the finca. As already experienced more often in this process, nothing is 100% sure and we'll see what further comes on our way.

Our website in the air again.

Because we now proceed just by the two of us (thanks to the support of many friends and acquaintances around us) but also because there is a lot of news, we had to adapt our website. The website is still not completely finished, but we think it is important that people who follow us or who search us, have a good idea of what we do and what we have in mind. So....we are in the air again, www.finca-ubuntu.org!



We conclude with an important principle of the ubuntu philosophy of which we realize the last months more and more that it is very good to take this as a starting point for our life but also that it regularly confronts us with dilemmas. So we look at it as a process for us to get clear how we can fulfill this.

If it's not good for everyone, it's no good at all

You can also follow us on Facebook through group Finca Ubuntu.

Warm Ubuntu greetings,

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