



**PARTI POÉTIQUE -  
ZONE SENSIBLE  
RESEARCH-CREATION  
EVALUATION**

## **Research–Creation and Territorial Impacts**

### **Transformative Territories Programme (2024–2025)**

#### **Case study: Autel Humus**

#### **Artist: Stéphanie Sagot**

#### **Host site: Zone Sensible (Parti Poétique), Seine–Saint–Denis, France**

## **1. Project Overview and Context**

*Autel Humus* is a research-creation project developed by artist and researcher Stéphanie Sagot during a year-long residency at Zone Sensible, an urban farm and artistic laboratory operated by Parti Poétique in Seine-Saint-Denis. The project forms part of Sagot's long-term research-creation cycle *Terres Amoureuses*, which explores relationships between soil, food systems, ecological care, and symbolic practices through ecofeminist and material-spiritual perspectives.

Conceived as both an ecological instrument and a collective ritual space, *Autel Humus* did not aim at producing a discrete artwork but at activating a situated process of inquiry and care. The project addressed soil vitality, composting, and regeneration as both ecological and cultural issues, making normally invisible processes perceptible and collectively shared.

The project was developed within the framework of the European *Transformative Territories* programme and took place between January and September 2025. It involved a broad range of stakeholders: local residents, volunteers, gardeners, artists, chefs, students, institutional partners, and non-human actors (soil organisms, plants, pollinators), explicitly considered as part of the territorial assemblage.

Zone Sensible provided a particularly relevant context for this research-creation. As a long-standing site combining permaculture, artistic experimentation, gastronomy, and public engagement, it already functioned as a living laboratory for socio-ecological practices. Sagot's intervention worked with this existing ecology, reinforcing and extending it rather than introducing an external or extractive artistic logic.

## **2. Timeline, Methodology, and Territorial Anchoring**

The project unfolded over a full year, structured according to ecological and seasonal rhythms rather than administrative milestones. The timeline included winter soil observation and exploration, early spring willow propagation, late spring planting rituals, and a final collective performance (*Procession Humus*) in September.

This extended and paced timeframe was a determining factor in the project's impact. It allowed for slow observation, material transformation, and the gradual constitution of a shared relationship between participants and the territory. The alignment of artistic gestures with natural cycles enabled continuity between phases and supported long-term appropriation by participants.

Methodologically, the project was grounded in a sensitive and situated territorial diagnosis, consistent with Transformative Territories principles. Rather than relying primarily on pre-existing technical documents, the artist conducted an embodied inquiry through soil study, gardening practices, conversations with gardeners and residents, and participatory workshops involving diverse publics.

This diagnosis identified several key territorial needs and potentials:

- the reinforcement of soil vitality in a dense urban environment,
- the recognition of non-human life as an active agent,
- the need for collective frameworks capable of holding eco-grief, hospitality, and care.

Compost emerged as a central lever, both materially and symbolically, linking waste, food, regeneration, and ritual.

### **3. Transformative Intention and Artistic Intervention (R / P / S)**

The project's transformative intention operated simultaneously across representations, practices, and structures.

#### **Transforming representations:**

*Autel Humus* reframed compost from an invisible or marginal residue into a central, visible, and meaningful element of the territory. Through ritual gestures, storytelling, and performative moments, the project shifted imaginaries around decay and renewal, enabling participants to perceive soil as a living, relational entity rather than inert matter.

#### **Transforming practices:**

The residency generated shared and repeatable gestures aligned with ecological cycles: soil exploration, propagation, planting melliferous species, compost handling, and collective meals. These practices were concrete acts of care that participants could appropriate and continue beyond the project's duration. The Procession Humus crystallised these gestures into a collective ritual reinforcing attention, slowness, and reciprocity.

#### **Transforming structures:**

While not imposing formal institutional reforms, the project subtly reconfigured relationships within Zone Sensible. By linking composting, cooking, gardening, and collective gathering, it reinforced existing frameworks while deepening their relational and symbolic dimensions. The project contributed to operative arrangements attentive to care thresholds, listening time, and hospitality.

For the artist, the residency marked an evolution in her research-creation practice. Working with reclaimed materials and local craftspeople strengthened her commitment to low-impact creation, while the collective and ceremonial dimensions of *Autel Humus* further anchored her practice in ecological and relational forms of engagement.

### **4. Publics, Co-Construction, and Alliances**

In line with Transformative Artistic Practices, the project approached the public not as an audience but as an emerging collective of concern. Throughout 2025, several hundred participants took part in workshops, visits, performances, and open days at Zone Sensible.

Participants represented a wide diversity of profiles, including children, teenagers, retirees, gardeners, artists, chefs, students, local residents, and institutional visitors. Activities were designed to foster

co-construction rather than consumption. Workshops invited participants to produce observations, objects, and practices that directly informed the evolving project.

Alliances played a key role in anchoring the project within the territory. Collaborations were developed with Lycée François Rabelais, Paris 8 University, Sciences Po, local chefs, associations, and regional cultural programmes. These partnerships enabled educational activities, research exchanges, and participatory events, embedding research-creation within the social, ecological, and educational fabric of Seine-Saint-Denis.

In quantitative terms, Zone Sensible welcomed approximately 1400 visitors in 2025, with over 60% from the local area. Forty workshops and artistic events were organised, involving nineteen contributors and around fifty volunteers. Qualitatively, these figures reflect the emergence of a durable collective capable of sustaining practices beyond the project timeframe.

## **5. Research–Creation Effects and Evaluation**

*Autel Humus* clearly qualifies as a research-creation practice. Knowledge was generated in situ through iterative experimentation, observation, and collective reflection, rather than through predefined outputs. Evaluation was integrated into the process itself and functioned as a continuous feedback loop.

### **Symbolic effects:**

The project transformed narratives around soil, compost, and food cycles, producing a shared lexicon and ritualised gestures that re-framed ordinary practices as acts of care and regeneration.

### **Relational and organisational effects:**

New norms of cooperation emerged, opening channels between artistic, educational, ecological, and culinary actors who do not usually collaborate. Horizontal workshop formats supported shared responsibility and sustained engagement.

### **Material and ecological effects:**

Gardens were prepared and planted according to permacultural principles, compost structures were activated, and soil and plant care became visible, collective practices embedded in the territory.

These effects are diffuse and gradual but durable, as they are embedded in everyday gestures and relationships. Evaluation, in this context, focused on what continued, circulated, and was appropriated once the artist stepped back.

## **6. Legacy, Continuity, and Transferability**

After the residency, *Autel Humus* leaves a tangible and relational legacy. The altar remains an active compost structure, continuing to host waste transformation and collective care. More broadly, the practices, alliances, and shared sensibilities cultivated during the project persist within Zone Sensible's ongoing activities.

The project's methods — seasonal workshops, low-impact material strategies, ritualised care practices — are transferable to other urban or rural territories. Strengthening documentation and inter-territorial exchanges would further enhance scalability.

Looking ahead, Zone Sensible's 2026 long-term residency programme builds directly on these foundations, reinforcing the site's role as a living laboratory for Transformative Artistic Practices and socio-ecological research-creation.



# THE TRANSFORMATIVE TERRITORIES PROGRAMME

**Transformative territories: Performing Transition through the Arts** is a **European laboratory uniting a network of actors and artists who work to promote new ways of inhabiting the Earth.** Throughout the duration of the program, over a dozen field experiments combining **arts, sciences, and citizen participation, collective experiences, artistic performances, exhibitions, educational actions, training sessions, and meetings** will bring together artists, thinkers, farmers, scientists, political actors, cultural project leaders, and local and European citizens to **demonstrate the potential of culture-based solutions in transforming territories.**

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