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**LA RECONSTRUCTION  
ZAD**

**RECONSTRUIRE**



# Zone À Défendre

‘There is nothing more heinous and cold than this acronym – Deferred Development Zone – plastered on a field’

Friday 13th arptil 2018

This week, the State decided to brutally destroy the collective experiment in the ZAD. We are resisting every day – residents, supporters, farmers, neighbours, young people, older people. We do it with our hearts, our bodies, our connections, with all the strengths that have become rooted in the countryside here over 50 years of struggles and accumulated hopes. But the State continues to destroy our houses, farms and other agricultural spaces, and workshops, to trample gardens, to raze everything that is beautiful. We need you here on the ground!

To all of you who have been here even once, to everyone who could have come here and will be able to come in the future.

To all of you who believe that spaces for collective experiments are necessary and that we must continue to invent lives that are magical to resist these barbarians.

To all of you who believe that it is still possible to resist the juggernaut of the mercantilization and commodification of the world and the destruction of living things.

on this date there are three days left to organize a massive presence here in the bocage on Sunday. Tell everyone around you; bring your friends. The time has come to join us and proclaim that the ZAD must live, bind its wounds, and rebuild.

for the continuation of the cause come and rebuild at this time or after. information at

**[www.//zad.nadir.org/](http://www.zad.nadir.org/)**

The text of this booklet is based on the words of zadists and their supporters.



**“This exceptional place,  
torn  
from the madness of today’s world,  
is  
full of hope.”**

La ZAD of Notre-Damme-Des-Landes

For over 50 years, farmers and local people have resisted the building of a new international airport to serve the west of France, near the city of Nantes. The airport was to be built on an area of forest, farmland and wetlands containing many protected species of plants and animals including crested newts and fire salamanders.

The construction project “Grand Ouest” was intended to be an economic platform of international importance stretching from Nantes to Saint-Nazaire, forming a singular, huge metropolis. Fulfilling this development would include enlarging the port at Saint-Nazaire, constructing new roads and highways and replacing the current airport in Nantes with a new one at Notre-Dame-des-Landes (NDDL).

Over the years, the issue of the NDDL airport construction has become a defining topic for French politics, splitting the government and public opinion and garnering regular mass protests against it.

The designated area for construction has become known as the ZAD. To the developers, it is the Zone d’Aménagement Différé’: the deferred development zone; and for those who have occupied the land – ‘the zadists’ – it’s a Zone À Défendre: a zone to be defended.

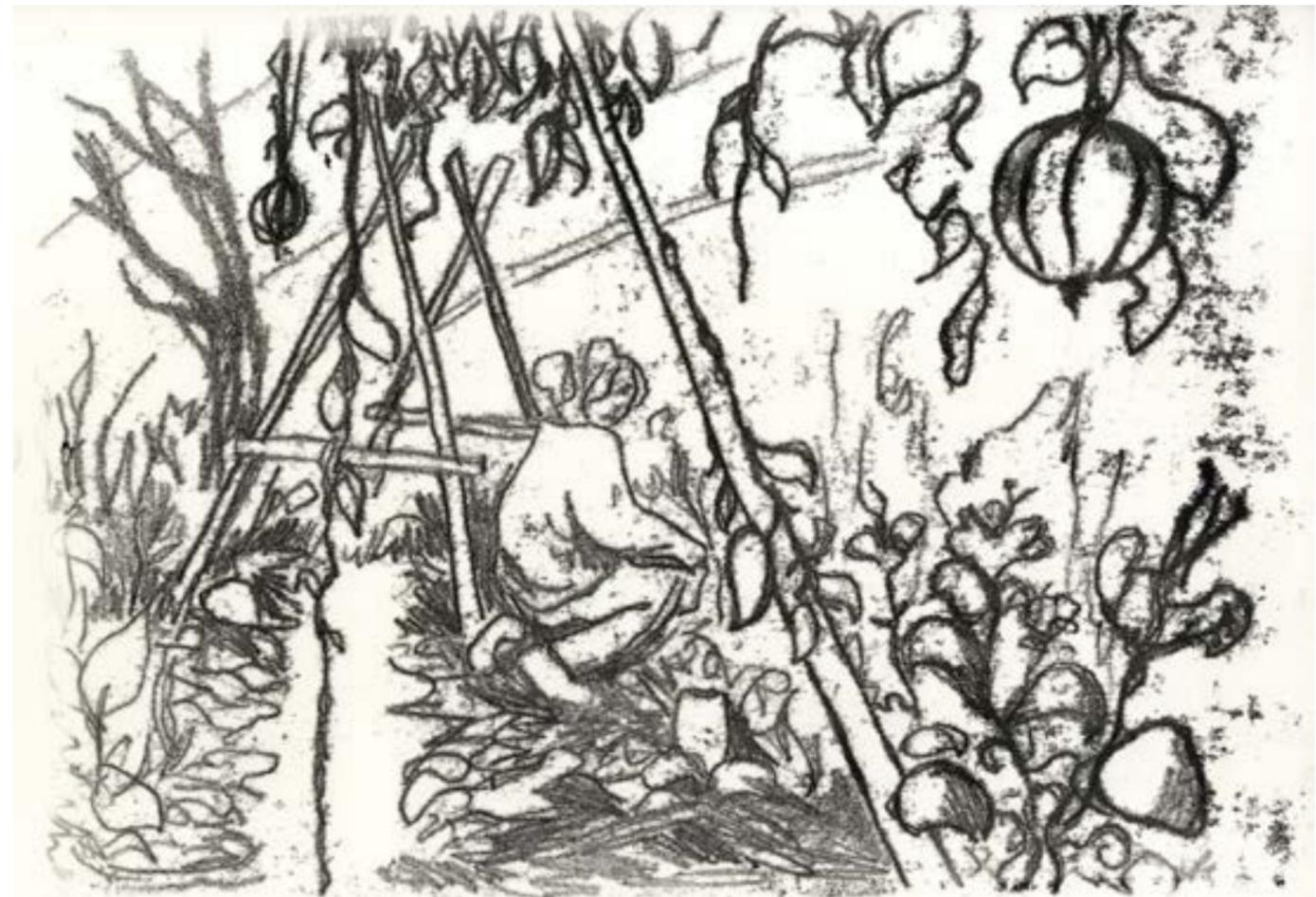
The goals of the zadists, in coming to live on the proposed site are:

- to live on a protest site, where we can be close to those who’ve opposed the project for 40 years;
- to have the power to act when construction happens;
- to make use of abandoned spaces to learn to live together;
- to cultivate the land and to be more autonomous from the capitalist system.

The ZAD community is not a singular entity and does not speak with a single voice. It is inherently diverse and heterogeneous. Its members share several common ideas and have the common goal of protecting the ZAD.

Many believe that the airport project is a symptom of a society in deep crisis: economic, political and social. They see a world full of oppressions and inequalities, and they wish to bring about deep and radical changes, calling for change at the root. Hence the zadist slogan:

‘Against the airport and its world’.



## THE PEOPLE

We are variously described as 'a bunch of gentle neo-rurals in wonderland' 'utopians', 'convinced activists', 'illegal occupants', 'radicalists', 'extremists', 'ultra-violent irreducibles' and 'terrorists like the others'.



The NDDL ZAD has been characterised in the French media as 'an entrenched camp of dangerous idiots', 'a lawless territory lost to the republic', 'similar to the ISIS enclaves of Syria' and 'as dangerous to visit as Iraq's Mosul'.

It seems that autonomy and tangible material examples of postcapitalism frighten the state more than anything! We have organised our lives without the state. That's what they do not like.

**"This is the  
first time  
I'm at a place I can call  
home."**

**I've found solidarity and  
friendship."**

In reality, we are radicals from around the world, local farmers and villagers, citizens groups, trade unionists and naturalists, climate justice activists, environmentalists, postcapitalists, refugees and runaways, squatters and many others. We are bakers, artisans, animal breeders, brewers, carpenters, backpackers, tree lovers and tree climbers - inhabitants and visitors, supporters and sympathizers.

We live in different parts of the ZAD, but often move. We do not always have the same viewpoints, but often meet on the common ground that the ZAD retains. Living here is an experience of collective self-organization where everyone can find their place in what is happening.

## THE PLACE

"It might be a bit difficult  
- the way that we live  
- sometimes,  
but I think it's really wonderful.  
Living more simply is just  
so important  
... I wish I could find a way of  
communicating  
how satisfying and nice it is."



The ZAD itself is 1650 hectares of rich fields, forests and wetlands, which the multinational development company, Vinci, wants to cover in concrete. For us, for the last few years, the ZAD has been an extraordinary laboratory of new ways of living, rooted in collaborations between all those who make up the diversity of the movement. It is an experiment in reinventing everyday life in struggle. The ZAD in NDDL is a living example of how co-existence is possible with other means than money, waged labour and jails.

"The squatters and the farmers here are building something extraordinary, something that goes back to the simple life of our grandparents." "We are able to produce what we need, and we don't need a lot."



The invention of a social model in constant experimentation is sometimes chaotic and inevitably imperfect, but it is a legitimate attempt even if it jars with established frames and norms. This collective experience, lived, sustained and joined by thousands of people over the last decade, gives hope and meaning in a time when capitalism ravages the world.

As everywhere, there are conflicts of usages, confusions and slippages. We are trying to deal with these issues collectively, without the use of police, judges, prison guards or psychologists. We put a lot of energy into it because we believe it is possible. Our structures are thought out, discussed and questioned daily, subjected to the test of different views of reality. Our strength has always been this complementary diversity, which infuriates those who want to separate the good protesters from the bad.

We would not trade it for anything in the world. People live and struggle here, have developed different practices over the years, and intend to continue.

We honour the farmers' struggles from the past. We want to freeze the land situation once some of the local historical rights are restored, in order to create an entity resulting from the movement that will support our common goals.

We also want to continue to invent other ways of sharing and exchanging outside the singular capitalist market structure, to be less dependent on the state and the market, but also to live for our neighbours and to support other struggles. We want to continue to define our own rules and manage our conflicts.

We want the ZAD to remain diverse and surprising, with people with different practices cohabiting because they are attached to different political ideas. We have defended this area together, we will continue to live together. We want everyone to stay, without exception. Some may leave, others will come, others will just pass, like it always has been the case.



We hope to succeed in preserving together the spaces of freedom that make the ZAD an area that is a little bit more breathable than the rest of the world.

VIVE LA COMMUNE - VIVE LA ZAD.

"What I've learnt is

that **everyone** can do something

and whatever it **is** that **you**  
happen to be good at

**you can** use it to

**fight for** what **you**

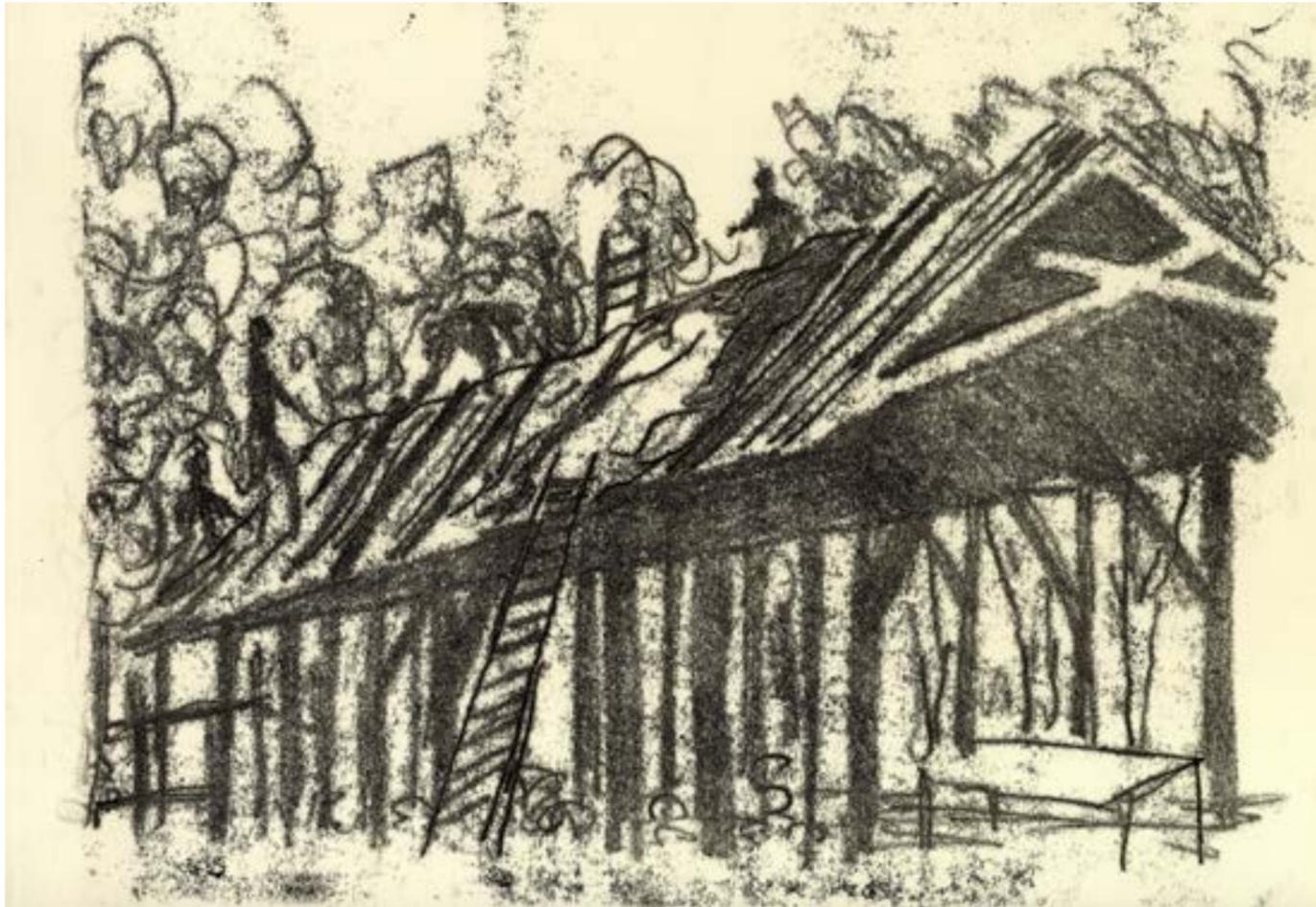
**believe** in."



## WHY ARE WE FIGHTING?

We are fighting against the airport and its world. States and multinationals are not all powerful. We do not have to accept and suffer all their desires. We can say 'No' if we organize to push them back. Our struggles can be victorious. And even now the NDDL airport project is abandoned, its world will continue to exist, and we will continue to fight it in any way we think is relevant. We will continue to fight against infrastructure and major useless land projects; against migration policies and state racism, alongside those who suffer more than us from systemic violence.

We will also continue to work for the deconstruction of oppressions that cross our society: sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism, disablism, speciesism ... by highlighting and fighting them, on the ZAD and outside. We have to fight together to preserve and maintain margins of freedom, here and elsewhere, as zones to be defended.



We will continue to take to the streets, to occupy buildings and public places with the workers, the unemployed, the students and the poor against the capitalist policies that put us more and more at the mercy of the economy.

We would not trade it  
for anything in  
the world  
with a boxed-in  
life.

## A VICTORY?

The cancellation of the Grand Ouest airport development in January 2018, is an historical victory against a destructive project. It has been made possible thanks to a long, diverse and determined mobilisation of concerned individuals.

## The government position

After announcing the cancellation of the project, the French Government announced its intention to divide the zadists between peaceful agriculturalists and militants. They required that any occupant who wished to register a parcel of land in which they were carrying out a valid, individual agricultural project should do so within the official framework. Prime Minister Eduoarde Philippe warned: "all those who do not register within the legal framework will have to leave the grounds quickly."

Following the winter break, from April 1st onwards, the government stated its intention to remove the 'most radical, illegal occupants' from the site through police operations.

The government's claim was that: "The future of the lands of NDDL is a modern agricultural project, in accordance with the wish of N. Hulot (Minister for Ecology). We are on a grove that has always been agricultural. After the operations, we will write a new project around energy transition and agroecology."



Everywhere in the world we are destroying everything that we need to live and that cannot continue.

People only think about money and growth but what we need is oxygen and food.

## The zadist's response

Almost all of the estimated 250 zadists did not register for individual agricultural projects, preferring collective land management and retaining the possibility of conducting non-agricultural projects.

"We cannot accept a partitioned vision and let the lands we fought for be taken over by the classical agricultural model whose consequences are known everywhere: rural desertification, the disappearance of small farms, the continuing degradation of soils and the biodiversity.

On the contrary, the movement will continue to claim full ownership with an entity resulting from the movement that includes all the habitats, peasant projects and other activities that have developed here."

These 1650 hectares must remain under the protection of those who fought there because they showed that they knew how to take care of it.

We therefore wish everyone to find again and again the resources, the inventiveness, the patience, the combativeness and the benevolence necessary for this place of life to continue to be a zone of struggle and of social experimentation, agricultural and cultural; in short - human.

# THE 6 POINTS

6 points for the future of the ZAD.

Once the airport project is abandoned, we want:

1. That the inhabitants, owners or tenants who are part of a compulsory purchase or eviction order can remain on the zone and regain their rights.
2. That the farmers who resisted expropriation can continue to freely cultivate the lands that they use, recover their rights and pursue their work in good conditions.
3. That the new inhabitants who came to the ZAD to take part in the struggle can remain on the zone. That everything which has been built since 2007 as part of the occupation movement, in terms of experiments in alternative agriculture, self-built homes or temporary dwellings (huts, yurts, caravans etc.) and forms of life and resistance, can stay and continue.
4. That the lands that are redistributed each year in the form of leases by the chamber of agriculture for AGO-Vinci's, are handled by a body that comes out of the resistance movement and brings together all its elements. Anti-airport movements rather than the normal institutions should decide on the uses of this land.
5. That these lands are used for new agricultural or non-agricultural projects, whether officially authorised or not, and not for the expansion of already existing farms.
6. That these agreements become a reality through our collective determination and that we carry together an intention to resolve all eventual conflicts linked to the agreements being put in place.

We are already sowing and building a future without an airport in our unity and diversity. It is up to all of us, from today, to enable it to flourish and to defend it.

As regard to the future of the ZAD, the whole movement would like to confirm the following points:

the need for the farmers and people that were expropriated to recover their rights as soon as possible

the refusal of any eviction of those who came here over the last few years to live and defend the place, and who wish to continue living here and look after the area.

the will to let the various actors of the struggle (farmers, naturalists, locals, groups, people that have lived here for a long time or have just joined us) handle the land/ fields of the ZAD in the long term.  
To implement these measures, we need to put a hold on the institutional redistribution of the land. In the future, this place must remain a place of social, environmental and agricultural experimentation.



We are writing with the smell of tear gas rising from our fingers. The springtime symphony of birdsong is punctuated by the explosive echo of concussion grenades. Our eyes are watering, less from the gas than the sadness; because our friends' homes, barns and organic farms are being destroyed. Bulldozers, supported by 2500 riot police, armored vehicles, helicopters and drones, are rampaging through these forests, pastures and wetlands to crush the future we are building here on the to the zad (The zone à defendre).

For fifty years, this unique chequerboard landscape was the site of a relentless struggle against yet another climate wrecking infrastructure - a new airport for the nearby city of Nantes. Farmers and villagers, activists and naturalists, squatters and trade unionists wove an unbreakable ecology of struggle together and three months ago on the 17th of January, the French government announced that the airport project would be abandoned. But this incredible victory, won through a diversity of creative tactics from petitions to direct action, legal challenges to sabotage, had a dark shadow. In the same breath that declared the abandonment, came the announcement that the people occupying these 4000 acres of liberated territory, the 300 of us living and farming in 80 different collectives, would be evicted because we dared not just to be against the airport, but its WORLD as well.

In 2012 the French state's attempt to evict the zone to build the airport was fiercely resisted, despite numerous demolitions 40,000 people turned up to rebuild and the government withdrew. The police have not set foot on the zad since, that is, until Monday morning, when at 3am the gendarmes pierced into the zone.

To all of you who have been here even once, to everyone who could have come here and will be able to come in the future.

To all of you who believe that spaces for collective experiments are necessary and that we must continue to invent lives that are magical to resist these barbarians.

To all of you who believe that it is still possible to resist the juggernaut of the mercantilization and commodification of the world and the destruction of living things.

We are here to defend the idea of another world. Even if they expel us, we'll come back.

REST YOUR BOOTS AND YOUR POTS, IT IS TIME TO DEFEND THE ZAD!  
A LAS BARRICADAS! TO THE BARRICADES!

for the continuation of the cause come and rebuild  
at this time and after.

information at [www.zad.nadir.org/](http://www.zad.nadir.org/)





