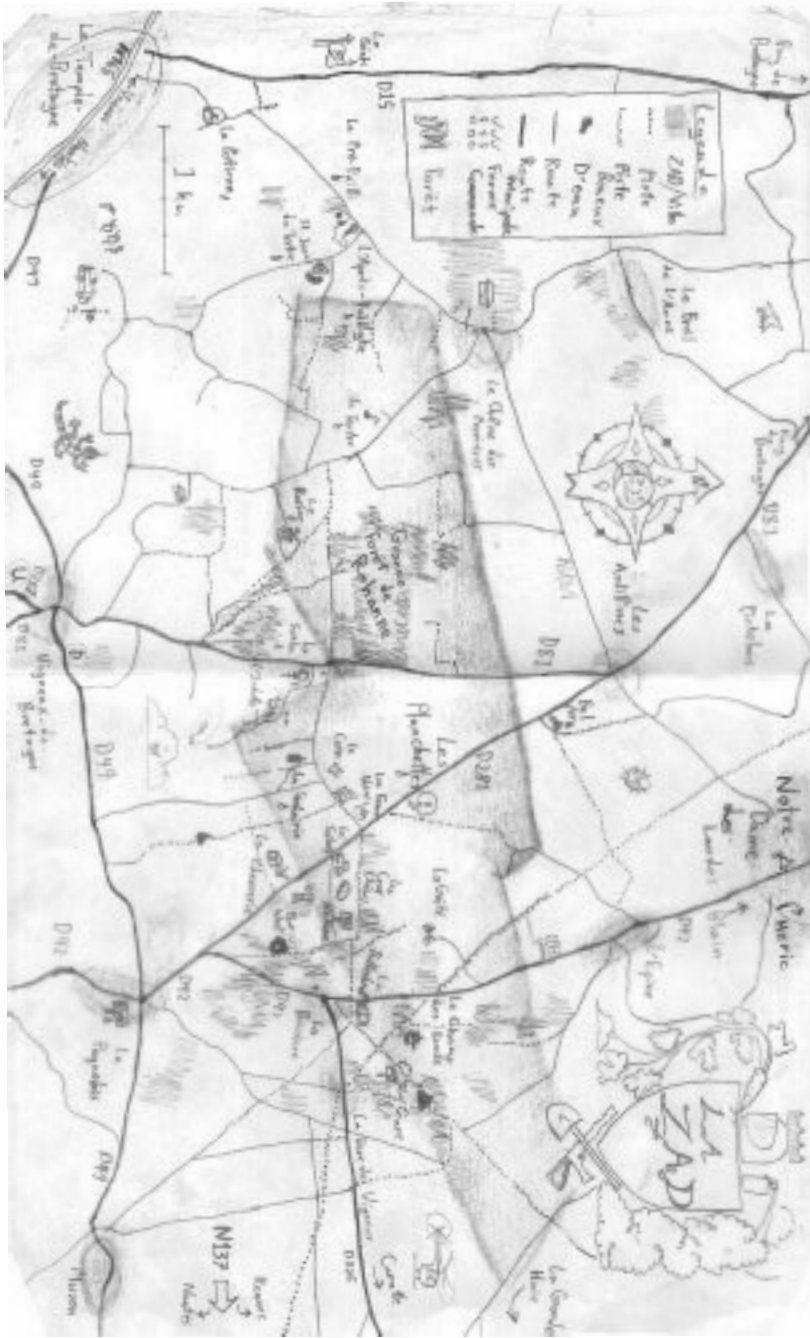


Breaking Concrete

Against the Airport and its World



*Selected texts
translated
from Lèse
Béton*

*A publication
from the ZAD,
2010-2012*

*Exploring the
history and
context of
Europe's
largest land
defense
struggle*

For those who don't know...

Translators introduction

The Zone à Défendre, or the ZAD, is an area of about 2000 hectares in western France, near Nantes, in the town of Notre-Dame-Des-Landes. Since the 1970's, elites in the area have been trying to transform it into an airport, though this project was held at bay by the opposition of local residents.

However, in about 2008, a new round of political will emerged to push the airport project forward again. To prevent the fields and forests from being destroyed, a diverse group of people began squatting abandoned houses in the zone.

These ZADists planted gardens and larger scale farming projects, built dozens of structures, opened bakeries, operated a pirate radio station, and published several papers to communicate primarily with the residents of surrounding towns, but also with the world at large. This networking became especially important in October 2012, when the state began a massive campaign to clear the ZAD by force. The ZADists rallied thousands of people to retake the site, and a formally local struggle suddenly had an international profile.

Perhaps the most well-known of the pre-eviction ZADist publications the most well known of these is *Lèse-Béton*. I have translated *Lèse-Béton* as *Breaking Concrete*, but that misses most of the connotations of the French verb *léser*, which, when hyphenated, also occurs in such contexts as "crimes lèse-humanité", meaning crimes against humanity. It has a sense of to wrong, injure, or harm, which directed against concrete could maybe be understood as to undermine.

Lèse-Béton published its last issue in January 2012, before the evictions were seriously underway. There have been some translations of ZADists texts written since October 2012, and there has been original writing in English by anglophones who are now participating on the ground. My hope in releasing these older texts in English is to provide a sense of the ideas and motivations of some of the people in the ZAD before the struggle became focussed around resisting the evictions.

More than half the *Lèse-Béton* texts are included here. In the interest of length, I omitted the reportbacks on international campaigns against large infrastructural projects. There was also a crossword puzzle in every issue that is totally worth downloading the originals for -- find them on <http://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?rubrique12>.

Crooked Atoms: Vinci and Nuclear Power

The company that wants to destroy our forest to make some cash is in fact a multi-national composed of thousands of subsidiaries and who exploits the world over. One of its chief domains is nuclear power.

Nuclear power isn't developed to respond to our needs, it doesn't progress because of the "irresponsible ones" who forget to turn out their lights. On the contrary, it comes from a system where the biggest players are also the primary (or even only) beneficiaries.

Vinci is involved in the whole chain of nuclear power: it starts in Africa with the exploitation of uranium mines, along with Areva, and this is accompanied by a large French military presence (gotta defend our interests!). The ore is then transported to France by way of infrastructure built by Vinci. Also built by Vinci are four-fifths of nuclear power stations in France and 60% of those in England, as well as the new Extended Producer Responsibility program that would export itself all over the world. The contracts don't end with construction, but also include maintenance and work to extend the life of the stations. Some subsidiaries take care of the transformation of the electricity and its distribution to industry, others handle dismantlement and waste management.

In short, nuclear power is a scheme that runs smoothly. So well that every now and then there's a catastrophe. Catastrophes (industrial, natural, wars...), in the capitalist economy, are also called jackpots. Jackpot because they require cleanup, reconstruction, finding solutions, innovation, new technology... growth! So of course we find Vinci at Chernobyl to make the confinement tomb and in Fukushima to land even more contracts.

And as if all this wasn't enough, Vinci boasts of being ready for even crazier experiments: storing nuclear waste in clay, developing fusion reactors, building the first nuclear plant on a seismic fault line... Gotta ensure the future of profit...

November

- On the 5th, a house in Poitiers threatened with demolition by a viaduct project managed by Vinci is squatted. A banner reading “Vinci out of our lives” is dropped. The squat is immediately expelled, 47 people are arrested. 5 are charged.
- From the 6th to the 12th, the tractor-bike event, organized by the Opposition Committee, travels from Notre-Dame to Paris. Between 150 and 200 cyclists and 23 tractors are there for the first leg. In spite of a ministerial prohibition, the tractors enter Paris.
- On the 12th, “in order to weigh in on the negotiations between the parties” and to remind them of “the absurdity of the project”, a demonstration is organized in Paris by the Opposition Committee, bringing out 3000 to 4000 demonstrators.
- On the 19th, fifty people respond to an invitation to stroll through the fields and pull out the surveyor stakes that mark the route of the highway. The zone is militarized in response, however that just results in a postponement. The same day, the local chapter of Ecology-Europe is rebaptised Ecology-Liars (Escrocs-Ecologie) to celebrate their deal with the Socialist Party.

December

- December 1st at 6:30, a whole pile of cops show up at the homes of 6 people in the vicinity of Nantes and take them to different police stations. These raids are in response to the action at the Headquarters of Vinci Construction Grand Ouest on the 20th of last October. Four of them will answer to charges of “Wilful destruction of Property” or “Complicity with...” and “Refusing to provide a DNA sample” in court on the 13th of February, 2012.
- On the 7th, ten banners are dropped from bridges around Nantes to support the accused in Poitiers and against the Vinci, the Socialist Party, and their world.

An Introduction from the creators of Lèse-Béton

The idea for this humble journal sprouted three autumns ago from the acknowledgment of our own isolation. Many bonds have formed since the beginning of the occupations of the fields and houses on the ZAD, bonds that today have resulted in an extraordinary solidarity movement as the state and its army tries to kick out the recalcitrants who inhabit this woodland.

But these meetings seldom went beyond the border of the ZAD. This is what motivated some of the occupants to write and distribute this journal in order to tell why some came to live and struggle in this zone following a call from the collective known as “The Residents who Resist” in 2009. Because a struggle isn't just a fight against identifiable enemies and projects. It also involves building community and changing our lives. It starts with social relations.

The form taken by the occupation was quite unfamiliar in the local area, so it was necessary to conceive of some sort of newsletter to go between the occupiers and the inhabitants of the towns around the ZAD.

Lèse-Béton was conceived and designed as a collection of analysis and reflections about this fight and also about struggles elsewhere. All the occupants of the ZAD were not involved in the writing. This journal is intended to be the voice of one fringe from among them. These texts reflect their authors limitations; we had to shrink several articles to save space, and we didn't always all hold the same positions. Each issue was an excuse to meet over drinks. Each distribution bike ride was a chance for sometimes passionate conversations with the locals.

The pages of Lèse-Béton are not for political parties, unions, or not-for-profit organizations to express themselves. Instead, you will find in them words from occupiers who have decided to self-organize and to describe their political vision and their opposition to the airport and its world.

The texts in this journal, suspended for the time being at the fourth issue, are only one of the publications released in this struggle. The websites zad.nadir.org and nantes.indymedia.org offer others.

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wait for reinforcements to be able to leave. The whole operation takes three hours.

September

- Perched in the tree branches... On the 2nd, ten people climb up into the trees of Mercoeur square in Nantes to call out to the passersby about the airport and the resistance to it. While supporters on the ground shared soup and distributed leaflets, the police struck and arrested fifteen people, using tear gas, batons, and tasers on the resisters.
- “They are VINCIBLE”. On the 15th, to mark the eviction proceedings in Nantes, a morning demo was organized, bringing out about a hundred people... and at least as many cops, enclosing the demonstrators in a line of riot police along the whole route.

October

- At the start of October, in Switzerland, parking lots run by the multinationale Vinci are sabotaged. The action is signed “Vinci Clear Off!”.
- The 5th: surprise excavations. In the early morning, two backhoes arrived on the ZAD, accompanied by at least a hundred cops to dig the holes for the northern runway. The next day, a group of resisters try to break through to disrupt this work.
- In the night of the 10th and 11th, the door of the Socialist Party of Haute-Garonne's offices in Toulouse was broken down and the interior was decorated with anti-airport slogans.
- On the 11th, in the Basque country, the offices of Vinci Construction were tagged in solidarity with the resistance to the airport and its world.
- Also on the 11th, a farmer refuses a bailiff access to his fields during a visit preceding a survey dig. Twenty resisters formed a welcoming committee. The same day, an assembly was held against the rezoning of rural lands in Notre-Dame-des-Landes.
- On the 13th, a fake bomb is found on the site of an archeological survey.
- On the 20th, fifty people pay a visit to the executives of Vinci Construction in their offices at Coueron. A group tries to discuss with them while others dump manure at the entrance to the building and repaint the outside using paint-filled eggs.

prevented by the cops) after having distributed leaflets against the airport downtown.

- On the 28th, a demonstration at the airport Nantes-Atlantic caused a commotion. Between 150 and 200 people turned out. Some took it upon themselves to paint the building with anti-airport and anti-AGO slogans with green paint. The police attacked the demonstrators after they nearly reached the offices of AGO.
- At the end of July, several bailiffs offices that collaborated with the AGO in expelling the occupants of the ZA were targeted (tags, defacement, glued locks).
- On the 31st, we learn that two of Vinci's machines on a construction site in Sautron were blown up. This is without doubt a contribution to the struggle against the airport and its world.

August

- “PS-Vinci accomplices!”. In the night of 3-4 August, the facade of Socialist Party's offices is tagged and splashed with paint in La Roche-sur-Yon.
- In Vendé again, on the 13th, a toll-free action is held on a Vinci highway in solidarity with the struggle against the airport in NDDL.
- On August 15th, the same action was held in Montpellier, where for thirty minutes, fifty people allowed numerous vacationers not to enrich Vinci.
- “No Judges, No Leaders”. On the 17th, during the court proceedings for the expulsion, the streets of Saint-Nazaire host a demonstration to remind us that “Our lives belong to us, we will not leave!”.
- On the 22nd, in Nantes, the campaign bus of the Socialist Party is trashed by thirty people. On the 24th, the Committee of Airport Opponents condemns this action.
- On the 24th, a picnic and leafleting was held in downtown Nantes, in solidarity with the four people still in custody accused of taking part in the attack on the Socialist campaign bus two days earlier.
- On the 26th, an action against Vinci is held in Paris in solidarity with the Khmiki forest defenders in Russia.
- On the 28th, Biotope and some accompanying police were prevented from leaving the ZAD at the end of the day by a barricade. They had to



Editorial

“Alright then, who’s this writing?”

Resistors to the airport project who chose to come live on the site to do their part (and their cooking!) for this struggle. We will try to say more about our mission a few pages down...

“But why a newspaper?”

We are among those who have observed that we lack connections with the residents of surrounding towns, that there is often mistrust, or at least mutual ignorance. We would like to be able to meet each other, debate, and explain what we're here to do. Hence a newspaper, for spreading information, proposing reflections, and to create encounters with people and ideas. Because we think that it's possible for us, together, to push back these development projects (the airport and the highway). Because in spite of the triumphalist discourse that describes the opposition to this airport as a thing of the past and of this project as a done deal, we believe it's possible to come together around a simple refusal and to constitute a collective force.

This paper is just a beginning then, born a bit laboriously because it's not always easy to find time to write collectively between meetings, working on shelters, taking actions against the surveys, or having awesome

discussions around the fire... We hope other issues will follow, and until then, come meet us on the land!

Why we are here

Over the past two years, there's been no lack of chances to join the struggle against the airport. For many of us, we mobilized against the geological surveys, and we participated in the climate camp and in the creation of the Épine collective garden. The construction of an international airport in Notre-Dame-des-Landes is unfortunately not the only thing we see as being important to struggle against. But there resistance that has built here is inspiring to us. Everywhere, the capitalist machine is set in motion, crushing everything in its path. Everywhere, the people are pushed around at the whim of politicians and the desires of profit. But here, the people of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, like those of Carnet, Pellerin, or Plogoff, organized to become obstacles to this machine. However, we've observed that after forty years of struggle against a seemingly invincible system, determination has sometimes given way to resignation. It's understandable: it's definitely exhausting to live with the perpetual menace of such a project.

For ourselves, we're convinced that it's still possible to prevent this project. We do not base our hopes in a last-minute funding short-fall or on a lucky change of political opinion, but on the possibility of organizing a real opposing power. We aren't commodities, a workforce to be used until 62 years of age or displaced for the interests of the day. We want to choose our own lives, build solidarity, and develop projects together, rather than just suffer the projects of capitalists.

Over the course of the climate camp, a callout was released to occupy the ZAD. We chose to come live here in order to better understand the local context and to get to know the other

series of articles wasn't enough, if solidarity stays strong in the face of repression, don't be surprised if we hear talk of terrorists before too long!

All news articles mentioned in this piece are available on ACIPA's website, acipa.free.fr

It happened nearby

Presse-Ocean usually didn't talk about these stories, even to discredit them. And yet, there were lots of acts of rebellion against this project and the world that gives birth to it. A non-exhaustive list follows...

July

- On the 6th, AGO (Aéroports du Grand Ouest) began the court proceedings for a demolition permit against structures on the ZAD.
- The 8, 9, and 10th were days of resistance against the airport organized by the Committee of Airport Opponents, bringing out more than 15 000 people in total. A giant human fresco formed the message "Vinci Clear Off" (Vinci dégage)
- Starting on the 8th, a camp against the G20 and G8 set up on the ZAD. It would last three weeks and would be the starting point for meetings, discussions, and actions against the airport and its world and of new occupations on the ZAD.
- On the 16th, in Meze near Sète, the head office of Biotope had its locks glued and its facade tagged with "Vinci paves, Biotope advises, stop eco-collaboration". On the same street, the doorstep of one of the owners of this environmental assessment business bore the inscription, "We found you!"
- During the night of the 18th to 19th, Biotope, the company in charge of the biological surveys of the zone affected by the project, and FIT Conseil, a real estate company subcontracted to buy the last of the unsold houses on the zone, were attacked: tags, flat tires, glued locks.
- On the 20th, about forty people participated in a critical mass ride from the ZAD to Nantes, then tried to block the ring road (though were

To put forward this notion of “ultras” is to make a separation between the good and the bad resisters; it's an attempt to divide the diverse parts of this struggle; it's an attempt to limit the struggle to symbolic or awareness-raising actions. It's a way to tell the neighbourhood associations that they keep bad company and that they're playing with fire if they keep up those connections, that the democratic sphere won't support initiatives coming from such an alliance.

This is clearly what played out during the demo at the Nantes-Atlantic airport: it was the first action jointly called by the neighbourhood associations and the squatters. The atmosphere was friendly until the police very lawfully beat of a whole bunch of people. In shock and anger, some people retaliated: by holding their ground, by yelling, and also by throwing whatever came to hand. The police intervention was justified by “the presence of ultras”. The same day, Auxiette declared, on the subject of the “attack on the airport”, “that it's important that those who oppose this project in the legal and democratic spheres denounce these acts of violence,” going so far as to demand “the purging of the struggle's radical fringe”. This is a clear call for repression: if the media relays the police's version of events, then the role of the politician is obvious. Politicians, journalists, and the police/courts form a triangle of repression, fabricating their enemies to fabricate fear.

The consequences of this work by the media, in collaboration with the police, it to prepare the public for massive repression against the movement. Isolating the “radical element” facilitates the repressive project: who would stand in solidarity with such monsters? But this repression affects the whole struggle. When J-P Magnen declares that “the risk is that the forces of order attack people at random” he was wrong – inventing “ultras” allows the justification of repression against all those who resist. And in case this

people who struggle against this airport. We chose to live in the middle of the zone they want to destroy in order to monitor the work's progress and to obstruct them physically. We have chosen to occupy the lands and structures abandoned by the regional council because if we'd asked them, they wouldn't have allowed us to come, because we didn't want to give them money, because houses are made to be inhabited. The logic that is at play in the construction of the airport is that of economic growth. This is the same logic that pushes industrialists and politicians to destroy old buildings to make way for new ones, to leave perfectly good homes empty for property speculation. Material and human resources are thus sacrificed on the alter of growth. By using the abandoned houses, we are acting directly against this logic.

Our society depends on individualism. We are each alone in ensuring our survival and confronting our challenges. The choices we have made have helped us to escape this isolation and to build things together, to organize ourselves so that our existence cannot be denied. Together, we seek the means to meet out needs collectively, rather than paying people to work for us.

The airport project is the end-point of a system where the few decide for the many. If we ask these few to abandon this project, we are attacking the symptoms without attacking the causes. The airport project is a simple consequence of a system that relies on an enormous delegation of power. For this reason, we will act in our own names and speak in our own names. For this same reason, this paper represents the views only of those who wrote it, not the opinions of all those resisting the airport, not even all of those who choose to occupy the lands and houses of the regional council and the state.

We refuse to be little gears in a big machine over which we have no control.

History of the Occupations

In 2007, the first building was squatted. Today, more than fifteen spaces (houses, fields, and forest) are occupied. How did this come to be?

It all started in 2007 when a house was a risk of being destroyed. The neighbourhood associations were looking for people to live there and a group moved in. Le Rosier was thus the first building to be occupied. Vigneux's city hall, which was the building's administrator, prevaricated, then refused to grant a lease. The neighbourhood associations dropped their claim and the occupants continued on as squatters.

In August 2009, several hundred people arrived in the zone for a climate action camp (a self-governing encampment that develops direct action around issues of climate change) and for a “week of resistance”, with concerts and conferences, and with associations, organizations, and political parties. Over the course of the week, after the residents of Rosier came to speak about their situation, some people from the area released a callout to come occupy the uncultivated land and empty houses. Discussion of this callout continued each day, and at the end of the climate camp a group decided to stay: a week later, a new house, La Gaieté, was opened.

In October, the land of the Planchettes began to quietly be occupied: at first, a construction project to build a “cabin of resistance” that would become our information and meeting spot, and then another structure to live in. The winter was marked by building: construction, repairs, and also mobilization around the occupants of the Planchettes' house, who were living in a real hovel. This is because, with the precarious leases people have had, the upkeep of the buildings fell to the tenants, who did not have the money or the ability to do the work. They wanted to leave and were

The discourse at play in the article “Who are the ultras” creates an entity with a life of its own, one that's hidden, violent, dangerous: there's talk of “guerillas”, “cells”, “commandos”, “battle hardened”, “trained”. People we absolutely must be scared of. This is in the realm of pure fantasy, the creation of furious social monsters, rootless and marginal, parasites on the legitimate struggles of “good citizens”. It's hard for the reader to understand an individual's anger when it's depicted in this way: and yet the rage against this project is widespread. When someone comes to tell you that the land where you live is going to end up beneath the pavement, when a few decrees and democratic decisions put the life of a whole area on hold, when you're cleared away for the needs of the economy, with the pretext of progress and democracy, this anger is not only understandable, but absolutely necessary.

Furthermore, “the media” decontextualizes and depoliticizes the actions of one section of the opposition to the airport: “The majority are professional protestors who have nothing to do with the political goals of the historical opposition.” Le Monde adds another layer, speaking of “outsiders who have transplanted themselves into this conflict and who pollute the big demonstrations and who are only looking for a fight”. And so they become outside of political consideration, those dissidents, and they are not individuals in struggle against a project, against a system, against the management and control of our lives by capitalism. They are nothing but opportunistic vandals.

Most of these articles specify that the “ultras” are mostly “outsiders”, people who came from elsewhere. By fixating on their geographic provenance, they also convey that these people don't have much legitimacy here, that this project has nothing to do with them, that this struggle is really just a matter of angry locals without any challenge to the social order.

They make and unmake the world, expel those who aren't of proper birth, they fire us calmly, they imprison us and build ever more jails. They displace, sweep away, destroy lives. And there must be nothing left. We must forget, deny. Nothing existed. Social negation.

Those who are nostalgic weep, the partisans of reason applaud ever louder.

Here like elsewhere, they're expecting fury, for us to hit back.

The Journalistic Purge

Is the pen stronger than the sword? That question need not be asked when they aren't clashing, but are rather working together. This is an analysis of how the media accompanies repression.

At the end of July 2011, in Grand-Champ-des-Fontaines, a house was broken into, probably to take the copper, as this happens quite frequently. France West reports this news item and uses the opportunity to go on at length about squatters who, not content to inhabit empty houses, are pillaging them. This article initiated a long media campaign in the local – and thus national – press about the struggle against the airport (about actions, squatters, etc). It reached its peak in September with an article in Presse Océan bringing to light a mysterious cell – the “ultras” -- who act in shadow, “battle-hardened”, and ready to fight the police. Alongside this media campaign, police repression intensified against those who resist the airport: from the beating of ten demonstrators at Nantes-Atlantic to the mass arrest in Mercoeur square, with arrests, surveillance, and early morning police visits in between. Fifteen people have court dates in the next month.

waiting for the regional government to rehouse them... which never happened. While we waited, we continued with more construction: repair the roof, the windows, clean the chimney, paint, restore the hot water, chop wood... These folks only obtained new housing in May.

May was the big month for occupations: six new places were taken, houses and also fields occupied with trailers and yurts. Le Tertre, a small house, had been sabotaged by the DGAC (the Directorate General for Civil Aviation): a hole in the roof, window and door frames torn out. In a single day, it was repaired and inhabited. Once the old occupants were gone, the Planchettes' house was transformed into a welcome centre, with a kitchen, a second-hand free store, and a dormitory. It is also home to our grocery store: it's where we keep our leftover food, our garden surplus, or other gifts to which anyone can help themselves.

The occupations began serenely: we heard nothing from cops or landowners. The neighbours generally received us well: they offered handshakes, drinks, and also the occasional angry rant. Our time was spent building a self-governing village, as if nothing would ever trouble our tranquillity. In addition to construction, the gardens demanded our attention: each house had its own garden, and we leaped into a big collective cultivation of potatoes. As our numbers grew, we needed to be better co-ordinated: spreading information, seeking updates, lending a hand, projects, hardware... Whew, we try to get better organized, but it's not easy!

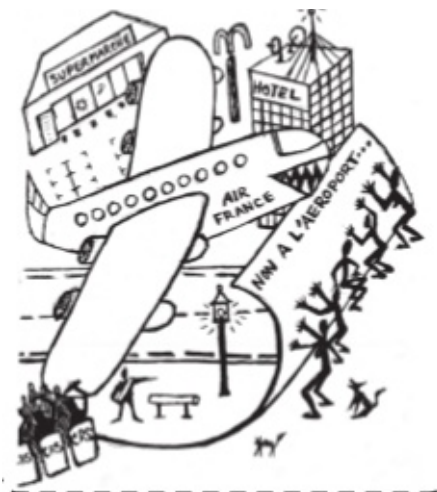
At the start of summer 2010, two new houses were occupied. And then, July 15, in an unhappy surprise, a bailif came to five dwellings to give notice for folks to get out before the 30th or face an eviction process. We must admit, with everything so lovely and peaceful, this was that last thing we were expecting. The ZAD stepped up to the rapid pace of battle: between emergency meetings and the discussion and

re-discussion of dozens of questions, we occupied the regional government offices and held our first general assembly in the town of Notre-Dame-Des-Landes. The GA brought out eighty people from surrounding towns, from Nantes, and from further afield, and it was all very chaotic, which is just what a first AG should be – from this emerged the idea to organize into local committees and to meet again. And so we gather every fifteen days, at Planchettes, and when it's not an AG, it's a party.

The bailiff came back at the start of August to take the names of the occupiers... And then more news (but good news this time). August 2010, the atmosphere of the ZAD is feverish: a new occupation, building cabins up in the trees to better resist in case of eviction.

Fall once again brought new people and new projects: construction of a cabin on another uncultivated field to house a bakery, the opening of a house to live in, but also to serve food food and house a library, and another as a hostel (free of course) with the intention to welcome groups who want to take a look at this struggle.

The call to occupy this threatened territory continues to spread, further reinforcing the struggle...



Editorial

Everything must go! The demolition permits for four houses in Landes that are poorly situated have already been granted. Justice has begun to condemn, in the order of things, to expulsion. Nothing stops progress...

Everywhere, the feelings are the same, a combination of powerlessness and rage: whether it's this woodland and its inhabitants sacrificed on the alter of progress; the chronic expulsion of Roma encampments; neighbourhoods destroyed, victims of renovations and modernizations; whole shanty-towns into which they send the bulldozer under the pretext of security; or cities that are cleansed before they become uncontrollable.

In any case, it's not just the scenery that's being demolished. It's also relationships, points of reference, solidarity. It's the history of a place and its inhabitants that is destroyed. As if "here" was the same as "elsewhere". As if we could move our lives away in silence.

When those who make decision are confronted by resistance, they're astonished, scandalized, they condemn the violence they provoked, they denounce the irresponsibility of the resisters and would like to purge them.

The value of working hard from morning to night, 40, 50, 60 hours a week, is systematically incorporated into the narrative glorifying work. Yet, an activity so invasive that the rest of our lives must be subordinated to it usually has no more meaning for those who do it than to bring home some money at the end of the month, “because there's no other choice”. The choice to not work is made difficult, even impossible, to the point that the alternative to it is often summarized as “sink or swim”. And so we work, and at no time are we given the possibility to collectively grasp the meaning of all this rushing around. Rather, we are called upon to run ever faster. Why? To earn more: there is the limit of our world. At least, this is what those who profit from our labour want us to believe, those whose interests aren't threatened as long as each of us is condemned to the eternal command: “make your living”.

Work, by using up so much of our mental energy and occupying us with insignificant tasks, quickly and right before our eyes interferes with the manifestation of our desires, dreams, creativity, and subversive goals. In other words, it keeps us harnessed and allows few chances for our imagination to wander to the question: “what do I want to make of my living?” This question, fundamentally different from “how do I want to make my living”, involves much broader consideration. To ask this initial question is to affirm a desire to take back our lives and our ability to give it the meaning we desire, that our actions are not assessed in terms of meagre hourly wages, that we refuse to be profitable in their economic nightmare.

We see an opportunity to collectively take control of our own lives and to give them the meanings we desire in the struggle against this airport, which is a symptom of a world that can only make things worse. In the struggle against the airport and its world, we have a lot on our plates!

Ever further, ever faster

This text was adapted from an article from “A toute allure” (“At full speed”), a journal of the struggle in Val Susa against the TGV Lyon-Turin. Everywhere the capitalist system dominates, we are facing the same logic of destruction.

In this part of the world, they want to make us accept the construction of a new airport. A big beautiful one, totally ecological and job creating, an economic stimulus and pride for the “great west”. An airport! Yes, but to do what? The pleasure of travel, as in adventure and discovery, is one thing. The need to move as quickly as possible is another. Airplanes, high-speed rail, and highways are nothing other than a response to this false necessity: the need to cover the greatest distance in the least time possible.

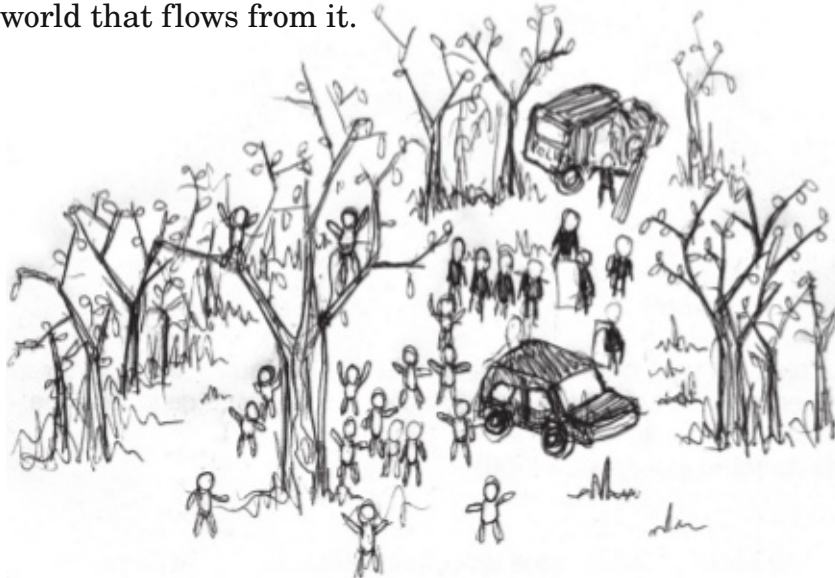
What space and what amount of time are we talking about? What's done fast is done well – from Nantes to Berlin and from Berlin to Nantes, grasping our stop watches, we'll each find upon our arrival the same cola, the same sandwich, and the same boredom as in our starting place. With air travel, it's possible to meet the same boredom, sandwich, and cola in five hours instead of in twelve, instead of in one hundred. Well then! Is this the progress that is supposed to leave us slack-jawed in admiration? They present saving time to us as a human need that each should be able to fulfil, but why and for whom do we save time? Is time a substance that can be lost or gained, and is space a neutral expanse to be conquered?

It's not just our travels but the very rhythm of our lives: an accumulation of moments glued together, a rapid and necessary race. Because we don't have time, we must work, produce, always faster, so that the capitalist machine can turn and turn. But where's the space for thoughts, desires, and actions that are not merchandise, that are not quantifiable?

Is this then our lives? It would seem to be so. Paradoxically, it seems that it was after each moment had become the same as every other, once all places had become identical, that the need to travel as rapidly as possible became a conquest. We have in fact never been so lost as we are with a GPS: we know where we're going, but we never know where we are. It's the same with an airplane or subway: we enter at one end, we come out at the other, but in between the two, nothing! Some kind of teleportation.

They'll tear down the hedgerows to be able to pave at Notre-Dame-des-Landes. They'll gut the woodlands, they'll devastate the gardens. They'll expel, they'll displace – as if one land was the same as another. They'll compensate – as if being rooted in a place can be valued in money. But there's more. High speed travel is not only an attack against the lives of a few woodlands, but an attack against the very meaning of life.

For ourselves, we will not just allow this airport to be built peacefully. Not because the abandonment of this or that obnoxious project fundamentally changes anything, but in the hope that this will obstruct the capitalist machine and the world that flows from it.



A map showing the zones intended for clearing is taken from employees of a management company working on the roadway plans.

During a nocturnal visit, the windows of Biotope's offices are tagged "Stop the eco-collaboration", the locks were glued and the windshield of their cars were tagged.

Biotope and a ten police are chased off by a group who responded to tear gas with paint-filled eggs.

To make a living losing our lives?

Over the course of the many conversations we have here and elsewhere, we are often asked the question, "What do you do for a living?" Because of this this question, and because of the incomprehension our confused answers sometimes elicit, we want to explain the relationship between wage labour and the reasons why we organize ourselves to toil as little as possible.

The champions of progress and the developers who target the natural world in spite of us often present all the job creation that will come out of this new airport. Jobs are presented as an absolute good, regardless of the activity or the outcomes. But are there not useless jobs? Are there not harmful jobs? And who profits from from our labour? And yet job creation remains the first argument each time our elite leaders try to persuade us of the goodness of the unhesitating march of progress.

In criticizing work, we are not celebrating laziness, although it is the cause of way less harm than work (which is the leading cause of death in the world). Freedom from work allows us to experiment with diverse days that in fact overflow with activity.

departing, leaving his work unfinished. Biotope employees have often been chased off in this way.

From that point on, Biotope employees are accompanied by private security guards.

The tires of a Biotope car are flattened before the eyes of powerless guards.

Biotope no longer comes on the land unless they're accompanied by a carload of police and of security (from Securitas).

The papers, and thus the day's work, of a Biotope employee are stolen by a resistor who quickly escapes.

A festive visit of fifty resisters to the offices of Biotope. A text is read, accompanied by music, and documents related to the airport are taken away.

Internal Biotope documents are leaked online (available at <http://nantes.indymedia.org>)

A group of twenty or so people gathered to chase off the police, Securitas, and Biotope who were venturing onto the land. The exchange was lively and resisters were thrown to the ground by angry police.

An ambush blocks police and Biotope cars on the road for more than ten minutes before police reinforcements arrive, flash balls in hand: the resisters disperse.

Two Biotope employees, accompanied by thirty police were harassed by a group of ten people while they worked in the forest, leading them to shorten their workday.



On the use of physical force

We will never write in our texts or reportbacks that we have acted nonviolently.

We aspire to live in a less violent society, one where people aren't locked up, mistreated, or numbered, where we would look after each other, where we would choose together how we want to live rather than having it imposed on us by force. We won't say that we acted nonviolently because it's really hard to determine what is violent and what is not. A person who stands before a super market with an empty stomach. An indifferent crowd that passes her by without a glance. Someone who steals from the store. A security guard who lectures two kids caught stealing candy.

Making a tag on someone's wall can sometimes cause suffering that we might not expect. Destroying a field of genetically modified crops will doubtless be perceived as violent by those who dedicated ten years of their lives to growing it. Is it violent to pay taxes that support the war in Afghanistan, that "protect French interests" in the Ivory Coast and Chad? We never hear police bragging about breaking up a demonstration nonviolently, because they feel it is legitimate for them to use force if they feel they need to.

It seems that often, the qualification of violence or nonviolence is made in reference to notions of legality or illegality, to the use of physical force, and to the legitimacy of an action. Even when we are not using our physical force, when we're acting in accordance with the law, and when we're acting in ways that to us seem legitimate, we will not claim to have acted nonviolently, so as not to break solidarity with those who the law considers illegal, those who fight to survive, and those who have nothing to lose.

Vinci Laid bare

Vinci destroys Khimkhi: A little to the east of us, between Moscow and its international airport Cheremetiev, Vinci is building a stretch of highway. The project has been accused by NGO Transparency International of corruption among bureaucrats in the Russian ministry of Transport and of ecological destruction. Since 2007, a determined opposition, under heavy repression, has struggled against this project that would destroy the forests of Khimki.

Vinci rolls along: 4500km of highways in France depend on Vinci: think about that next time you pass a toll booth. The more the tolls go up, the more Vinci benefits. If you prefer the train, know that Vinci has the contract for the Tours-Bordeaux line.

Vinci and friends: You know Cofiroute and Autoroutes du Sud de la France (Highways of Southern France), Bernard, GTIE, Cegelac, Freysinnet, Dumez, Eurovia...? All subsidiaries of Vinci!

Vinci is irradiating us: Vinci is heavily involved in the entire nuclear process. Step one: the extraction of uranium in Niger

inventory the wetlands in an idyllic landscape... Except we don't want your inventory, we don't need your expertise and we don't need you to “manage our living environment”, no matter what you or some elite leaders might think.

“It's naive to hope to awaken an ecological glimmer in the hearts of our leaders or in the boardrooms of Vinci. We want to depend only on ourselves, this is why we will oppose any advance of this project – whether it takes the hypocritical guise of an environmental assessment or whether it shows itself openly as it really is: massively rejected by the population and advanced only with the support of an army of police.”

Lots of stuff happened

Over the past few months, although it didn't draw much attention, a lot of stuff happened here! Here's a little panorama. This list of actions is far from complete. Don't hesitate to add to it!

Unexpected run-in on the land between employees of Biotope and a resister. They had a long, cordial discussion about the project and individual responsibility, and the employees were emphatically encouraged to quit.

A group of ten or so resisters stole and sabotaged the supplies of two surveyors who were doing readings to prepare for work on side-projects of the airport. Their car tires were also flattened.

A car belonging to Biotope, left unguarded, is painted with “No ecological airport”.

A small group accosts a Biotope employee in the forest and demands that he stop. He threatens to call the police before

“Maybe the compensating and attenuating measures you are proposing are enough to satisfy your conscience, are enough to make you forget that you are working under contract for the great multi-national paver, Vinci... We are here to remind you of this aberrant contradiction. To pave over 2000 hectares, to sacrifice them on the alter of progress and of Vinci shareholders profits, can never be ecological. There is no such thing as an ecological airport. A oxymoron like that is straight out of 1984. It seems like it should be unnecessary to even point out this contradiction, since the words speak so clearly for themselves. And yet still... In a tremendous effort of communication, you say the buildings are certified as being of “high environmental quality”, you announce the creation of an AMAP for the employees of the airport and of a teaching farm, and finally, thanks to the impact studies, you can talk about attenuating and compensating solutions – and thus Vinci and the public powers manage to paint the concrete green to hide the evidence of their wrong-doing.

“Biotope and its employees are playing a large role in giving, voluntarily or not, ecological legitimacy to this project and to its promoters.

“It's not too late to oppose what a handful of technocrats have decided will be our future. It's not too late for a few gears in the machine to take responsibility and refuse to be accomplices to this catastrophe. You can't prevent a project from happening while you're under contract from its promoters – pretending the opposite is cowardly and in bad faith, with no other goal than to hide your own responsibility from yourself. You conveniently forget to see the consequences: refuse to obey, refuse to play the game of these impact studies that everyone can see are inexcusable from an ecological point of view.

“It's probably fun to count the little birds, the great crested newts, and the reptiles, to wander through the forest or to

(pollution and contempt for the people). Step 2: the building of splendid nuclear facilities, all without any risk of course. Step 3, after a catastrophe: the building of a confinement tomb at Chernobyl (rest assured, the situation is taken care of!). Conclusion: Vinci is filling its pockets on nuclear power and nevermind those who deal with the consequences!



Loppsi 2: Warning, danger!

Have you heard of the law Loppsi 2? It consists of a bundle of national security laws that were recently voted in and affect many different areas.

The media and the opposition to this law have mostly discussed those articles that prevent you from living in a yurt, cabin, trailer, or other non-typical dwellings, allowing the police to kick people out within 48 hours. Even if this aspect of the law affects us personally, since many of us are directly concerned, we believe that this law, Loppsi 2, contains much more dangerous elements that lay the groundwork for a totalitarian society.

Loppsi 2 allows for the possibility of intelligence services,

their collaborators, and the sources to act with legal impunity using fake identities. And it goes further, forbidding even involuntary revelation of any information that could lead, directly or indirectly, to a false identity or false position (lawyer, insurer, an agent of your electricity company...) being revealed, or to their real identity being exposed or even their involvement with an intelligence service. In short, if someone is pretending to be the letter carrier in your neighbourhood and you know that they're not, you may not have the right to tell anyone.

Loppsi 2 also allows cops to enter private homes, whether by breaking in or with the help of a locksmith, to install spy software on computers. This could be done at night without ever informing the occupants. At first, this might only affect organized crime networks. But in the same way that mandatory DNA sampling which was supposed to only be for pedophiles now is also for driving infractions, we should be worried that these practices will soon be used in a systematic manner against people who try to illegally download the Celine Dion discography. Once such software is installed in your home, the cops could read all your emails, know what websites you visit, and document your subversive tendencies.



The general enthusiasm bodes well for further actions of this type. Heck, even the army of police nearby did nothing but observe. But the invitation to clear this plot revealed at least one possibility: to bring together diverse forces of opposition during an action, outside of the spaces sanctioned by law. We know that we won't win with just hope. We will need a broad mobilization and to create a force prepared for other situations of rebellion. While we wait, the occupations continue, and more than ever we are determined to never be expelled!

This occupation would become Le Sabot, and from this May 7th demonstration to the time this publication appeared in July, the farm had already produced enough food that they were offering two weekly drop-in times where anyone could come pick up some vegetables and see the garden.

Biotope or eco-collaborators

Perhaps you've already heard of Biotope? This environmental assessment firm gets fat (40% growth in 2010!) off big destructive projects like this airport. Biotope provides environmental expertise to infrastructural projects, with their stated goal being to limit the negative ecological effects. It's thanks to their work that the promoters of this project could keep a straight face while saying this airport will have no impact on the environment.

A group recently made a cheerful visit to their offices in Rezé. The local press tried to stigmatize this visit using military language (this visit was, according to their version, a “commando raid” using “urban guerrilla techniques”). Here's the message that was left for the employees of Biotope:

exclaimed an elderly local with a smile. Throughout the procession were little groups, each more creative than the last, propelled by samba rhythms. Songs, rowdy slogans, an amp on wheels, streamers...

Once on the plot, there were some opening remarks, then a tractor broke ground and we got to work clearing the land. At the same time, the alcohol having arrived, the logistics for the day were established and we irrigated our throats. The accordions came out, accompanied by improvised dance. The clearing moved quickly, with few injuries for how much energy was put in.



In the mid-afternoon, there were speeches from groups opposed to the airport and from groups in struggle elsewhere (the high-tension line in Catalonia, the airport expansion at Heathrow); and stories of victorious past struggles in the region (Carnet and Pellerin).

The clearing lasted until nightfall, leaving a dozen piles of uprooted brambles. Mission accomplished. We still need to cut down a few trees and prepare the soil, but impressive work has already been done. The day ended with a party that, for the most committed, lasts until dawn.



Reportback on the May 7 Occupation rally

You've probably already heard of it, but we're going to tell you about the first collective mass occupation on this land haunted by urban sprawl.

During discussion between the occupants of the ZAD and members of Reclaim the Fields, a network struggling to reconquer agricultural spaces, the idea came up to establish a market garden. This action, aiming to liberate more space in the ZAD and to breathe new life into this struggle. It permitted, in the time it took to take over a plot, many different segments of the opposition to meet each other and act together. The reclamation of this land from the decision-makers is intended to scorn the morbid politics of urbanism of Nantes Metropole and to build momentum for the re-appropriation of agricultural land, access to which is blocked by the establishment of urban areas, property speculation, and by the politics of ever-increasing exploitation.

Ten o'clock, we held a meeting at La Paquelais. In a joyful and determined atmosphere, 800 people and 5 tractors take direction from the ZAD to illegally enter the plot. Pitch forks, bill hooks, halberds, scythes, and machetes... the tools were carried high. "It's like we're going to storm the Bastille!"