



# **BREAKING RANKS:**

*Subverting the Hierarchy  
& Manipulation Behind  
Earth Uprisings*



At this point, many anarchists in the US are already familiar with how tiqqunists destroyed the struggle at the Notre-Dame-des-Landes ZAD (Zone to Defend) occupation in France in favor of legalization and property ownership.<sup>1</sup> The narrative that this tragic conclusion to the decade-long struggle was actually a victory has been regurgitated ad nauseum by tiqqunist platforms in the US. For example, Ill Will Edition's "The Strategy of Composition" is about applying this "strategy" to the struggle against Cop City: "The territorial phase of the struggle took shape gradually over a ten year period from 2008 until its eventual victory in 2018, and has since continued to nourish collective experiments on the Zone to this day."

The next initiative of the ex-ZAD tiqqunists failed when those familiar with their methods of recuperation and authoritarianism sabotaged their attempts to take the vanguard of a ZAD located in Carnet. Comrades from the Carnet ZAD along with those from several other struggles co-authored a statement outlining the attempts at cooptation and centralization, which we included as an appendix in this zine as an inspiring example of anti-authoritarians making a struggle inhospitable to authoritarian power plays.

After this failed attempt at bringing autonomous and decentralized struggles under their control, the tiqqunists of the ex-ZAD moved on to their most recent initiative: Soulèvements de la Terre (which translates to "Earth Uprisings," aka SDT). Exploiting the momentum of groups like Extinction Rebellion, and the broader youth climate movement, SDT offers activists a militant alternative to civil disobedience: mass demo-actions against ecologically destructive targets. While these have included some notable acts of sabotage, it is important to notice that their actions are often just as limited to symbolic engagement as those of the non-violent environmentalists, designed to promote the organization through sensationalism aimed at capturing the attention of the mass media. A recent mass action against a water basin on March 25<sup>th</sup> resulted in serious injuries, prompting anarchists to more broadly articulate warnings about this

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1 See *The Mohawked Salamanders Burn Down the Salamander's School: Why We Attacked the ZAD*

organization's political foundations and motivations. The authors of these texts are careful to critique the centralized forces behind SDT and not the participants, clarifying that they are not telling anyone to stop attending SDT actions, but rather encouraging them to maintain a critical eye towards how the actions are organized and what they are being asked to do.

Predictably, the two primary tiqqunist platforms in the US have championed *Soulèvements de la Terre*: Ill Will Editions republishes their propaganda, and Inhabit does the same while proclaiming that their actions are “an exhilarating example of all that has gone well in the movement up until this point and chart a path forward we hope others can imagine walking themselves.”<sup>2</sup> The following three critiques from anti-authoritarians in France are therefore also relevant to our context. These texts focus on manipulative and vanguardist practices, the spectacularization of the struggle, and the use of radicals as shock-troops. The goal of these texts, and our translation effort, is to increase familiarity with these deceptive practices and strategies, an essential first step towards sabotaging the influence and control of any similar attempts in our own neck of the woods.

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2 *To Those Who Marched at Sainte-Soline* (Ill Will Editions) and *Sabotage: Beyond the mega-basin, the horizon* (Inhabit).

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\* In French, “The Call” (L’Appel) rhymes with shovel (la pelle).

# AGAINST THE APPROPRIATION OF STRUGGLES BY SOULÈVEMENTS DE LA TERRE

*April, 2023*

The aim of this text is to warn against the practices, objectives and political line of Soulèvements de la Terre. It is based on direct knowledge of the struggles at the Notre-Dame-des-Landes ZAD until 2018, where the future leaders of Soulèvements made a name for themselves, and on several recent experiences of people who attended events organized by them. It is not intended to discourage anyone from going to these events, but rather aims to share some concerns and distrust, particularly from an anti-authoritarian point of view.

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The leaders of Soulèvements de la Terre (“Benôit Feuillu” or “Basile Dutertre,” for example) are the very same people who, at the ZAD, managed to transform and control the struggle to their own ends, often using brutal or even violent methods. At the head of a group called CMDO (“Committee for the Maintenance and Defense of Occupations”), they gradually presented themselves as representatives of the occupation movement as a whole, while refusing to take part in struggle meetings and assemblies. They promoted “unity” with reformist organizations in the name of a political pragmatism they called “strategy.” After the official cancellation of the airport project in January 2018 — the result of a decades-long struggle — they proclaimed “victory” and ultimately organized the liquidation of the ZAD as a movement. They agreed to negotiate with the state, not on their own behalf but on behalf of all, which enabled them to obtain houses and land for themselves legally, even including a clause in which they pledged to report any illegal occupation to the state and to not oppose their eviction. Those who resisted were intimidated, threatened and beaten. On this whole chain of events, and the struggle that preceded it, we recommend you read the excellent text “Reflections on the ZAD: Another History” (reference at the end of the text).<sup>3</sup>

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3 Translator’s note: Unfortunately, this article is the exception to the rule concerning this subject; Crimethinc’s main source of analysis from France over the years has been *Lundi Matin* (the primary tiqqunist platform in France), they’ve closely collaborated with Ill Will Editions, and their coverage of the struggle to defend the forest in Atlanta has been predominantly solicited from people with a tiqqunist perspective.

Over the past two years, *Soulèvements de la Terre* (SDT) have been in the news often, especially since the Sainte-Soline demonstration in March 2023, when some 30,000 people were subjected to an appalling outburst of police violence. SDT are not — for the moment at least — waging an occupation struggle, but are instead organizing events all over the place, more or less in tandem with pre-existing groups. The SDT's role since then largely consists of **directing and coordinating** struggles, absorbing local groups, defining strategies and controlling communication.

The transition between the CMDO and the SDT (via the organization “NDDL – poursuivre ensemble”) can be illustrated by the attempt to take control of the struggle against an industrial park at Le Carnet, a few dozen kilometers from Notre-Dame-des-Landes, in 2020-2021. The leaders of the CMDO, armed with their “victory,” used every means at their disposal to pass off this struggle as an “extension” of the ZAD, claiming responsibility for its actions, attempting to decide by themselves which methods to use — exclusively spectacular ones — and imposing their objectives. As those involved in the struggle at Le Carnet refused to accept this takeover, the CMDO leaders soon decided, without consulting them, to hold “meetings to organize the struggle at Le Carnet,” at Notre-Dame-des-Landes. The idea was not to support their struggle by respecting its autonomy, but to **organize it for them**, in other words, to take control of it.

At SDT events and demonstrations, don't expect assemblies to build a struggle together: everything is decided in advance, and we have to content ourselves with participating. Would discussions jeopardize SDT control? Be that as it may, this control is almost total, and the accounts agree unanimously: SDT doesn't organize open meetings (apart from “briefs” on the Internet), either during events or between them. They are characterized by total **verticality**. It seems to us that, if you're going to take part in a struggle, it's essential to be able to discuss the political foundations as well as the methods, strategies and consequences.

What's more, SDT is characterized by total **opacity**: in the name, no doubt, of the security required to organize “dynamic” actions, we can't know anything in advance, nor even while the action is taking place. But this “security” cannot be a blank check for “using” people. At Sainte-Soline, “sous-chefs” equipped with megaphones were content to transmit orders to the “troops”: “forward,” “hold the line,” “backward.”

Basically, SDT is not a “movement”: it's an organization. Of course, they claim the opposite (by declaring, with a straight face, their “imaginary” nature), but, whether they like it or not, they have the characteristics of an organization. In this respect, we have to acknowledge that we attend

demonstrations called by “classic” organizations like the CGT or others. In this case, however, we’re not being deceived — we know in advance that we won’t be able to discuss the methods of action, the objectives or the political foundation.

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And yet, “it” works. One of the obvious reasons for the success of SDT is the profound sense of despair in light of the permanent reorganization of capitalism, which in this particular period was around the themes of land and resources. At last, we were offered a struggle full of enthusiasm and sure of its success in the context of permanent dispossession and passivity. Despair mixes with anger, energized by the social movement: we welcome a desire to converge struggles and even to broaden anger beyond the question of pensions and work. But this is never mentioned in the SDT’s communications: not once do the words “pensions” or even “capitalism” appear on their website. So what is their political line, to which so many thousands of people are supposed to adhere (without, let’s not forget, ever having the opportunity to discuss it)?

When it comes to political thinking, they mainly dish out **strategic** thinking: “building broad alliances,” “establishing effective resistance strategies”; the SDT go so far as to proudly quote the DGSİ (General Directorate for Internal Security, a French security agency): “a movement transcending affiliations and divergences of strategy,” “federating the greatest possible number of militants and groups from different ideological horizons” (*Appel à la saison 5*,<sup>4</sup> “Call for Season 5”). What counts here is numbers, the mass, which obviously has no other point of view than a naive “defense of the earth.” Above all, they’re careful not to define a political line that might harm “**broad alliances**”; see the bewildering list of signatories of the We are the Earth’s Uprisings (“*Nous sommes les SDT*”) appeal, from Mélenchon (presidential candidate) to former minister Yves Cochet, as well as the infamous Yannick Jadot (member of European Parliament). Returning to the topic of the ZAD, the CMDO had distinguished itself by writing “Principles on fire, the purists in the middle” on the road: the “purists” were those who stubbornly proposed alternatives to unity at any price, with anybody. By rejecting “principles” in the name of alliances with bourgeois parties, the SDT has shown itself to be an **opportunist** group. Unity at any price strengthens the positions of the most reformist and bourgeois factions, serves their interests, and hinders the possibility of overtaking them in the struggle.

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4 All quotations come from the SDT website.



**Sensationalism** is a central element: they call for “seasons” which are broken down into “acts,” i.e. one-off actions, coordinated and decided on by sDT leaders. A local struggle being elevated to an official “act” of a “season” (i.e., sDT calling for people to attend, according to their terms and plans) seems to be the supreme ambition: “Local committees can give support to these struggles, even when it’s not yet time to include them in the national acts of sDT” (*Des dizaines de comités locaux fleurissent dans toute la France*, “Dozens of Local Committees Spring Up All Over France”). Patience, it will come, we’ll give you our blessing when we deem it necessary. So, in addition to their vertical, authoritarian character, they also have a clear tendency towards paternalism.

But what’s it all about, politically speaking? We don’t know. Emphasis is placed on the “ecological” aspect of struggles, without details (no doubt in order to appeal to a wide audience): “fighting against concrete, against megabasins, against those who poison life”; “the defense of land and water as a common good in the face of monopolization by the agro-industrial complex and concrete by the metropolitan mega-machine.” When we have been able to see, alas, the relationship of sDT leaders to the “common good” at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, there is cause for concern.

Nowhere is the political underpinning of these struggles more precisely defined; the empty way of speaking makes it possible to bring together diverse tendencies (from the Anarchist Federation to the Green Party). Why oppose megabasins? To “defend water” — but what does that mean? We’ve been looking in vain for any kind of in-depth political analysis of the issue, one that goes beyond the “monopolization by the agro-industrial complex” (what’s at stake? for what profit? to whose detriment?) and explains in concrete terms the processes at work and the reasons to oppose them. As for the mishmash of the “metropolitan mega-machine,” we’ll have to come up with our own definition. In fact, what they’re doing is setting **vague** ideas against **abstract** concepts, when what we really need to do is produce a material analysis of what’s at stake with honesty, transparency and an indispensable touch of humility.

But to do that, you’d have to get your feet a bit wet,<sup>5</sup> questioning capitalist relations and property — something sDT never does, and it’s easy to see why. If they did, the Greens and other deeply bourgeois organizations would be more reluctant to lend their support. What’s more, given the sDT leaders’ relationship with land ownership and agriculture, it’s easy to see why they don’t want to be too specific about what “victory” would mean for them and the masses they aspire to command.

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5 But the basin was empty...

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The SDT's way of speaking literally comes from the military. Over and over again, we are called to "battle"; over and over again, we are promised "victory." "Victory is at hand" (*Appel à la saison 5*); it must be achieved at all costs. And so, their website unabashedly describes the weekend of March 25 as "joyous" (*La base arrière fait un récap*, "Rear base reportback"); the masses are praised for their "creativity" and "audacity" in the face of repressive forces (*30 000 personnes manifestent à Sainte-Soline malgré la brutalité policière*, "30,000 People Demonstrate in Sainte-Soline Despite Police Brutality"). It should be remembered that this "joyous" weekend left at least 200 people injured, at least 40 of them seriously, and one of them is still in a coma, three weeks later.

Similarly, at the ZAD, "victory" meant the acquisition of a few plots of land, but also the eviction of dozens of residents, and the end of the movement of struggle. The ZAD is now a zone of legal, conventional, market-integrated agriculture and artisans. Yet, this end to the struggle was celebrated as a "victory," and continues to be. At Sainte-Soline, as at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, "victory" pays little heed to those who must be sacrificed to achieve it.

If, after the carnage at Sainte-Soline, "priority must be given to care [for the injured]" (*30 000 personnes manifestent à Sainte-Soline malgré la brutalité policière*), that doesn't stop an obscene "victory party" being held that same evening, despite the hundreds of injured, with "shows for all" and "concerts." Does this "victory" consist in having succeeded in "excavating and disarming a pump and a pipe"? Who could call such an achievement even a strategic success (let alone a "victory")? No, clearly, the "victory" being celebrated is that of having succeeded in federating thousands of people, of feeling their strength, of being able to get them to come and throw them into the "battle" (*Appel à la saison 5*), without the leaders' decisions being questioned. Better still, the "victory" will enable the "movement" to expand still further, by the addition of thousands of people who are "world famous" (too bad for those who are only non-world "famous," or not famous at all). SDT sees itself as the **generals** of a somewhat obscene war; as such, they don't detail their objectives, strategies or political foundations.

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As anti-authoritarians, we want to ask questions and discuss, but not submit to decisions made elsewhere and by others. We want to fight, including against the dispossession of land and resources, against the stran-

glehold of capital on even the smallest aspects of our lives, against the brutality of the state. But it's a question of knowing with whom to fight, why to fight, how to fight. For us, the end does not justify the means. We'd rather not have Yannick Jadot's "support" if it means we can't hold horizontal assemblies in the struggle where we can discuss our political objectives and the means to achieve them. We believe it's more important to build a struggle together, even when it's difficult, even when we make mistakes, than to passively contribute to an organization's "victory." And we consider SDT to be a vertical, opaque and authoritarian organization.

The enthusiasm, let's repeat, is quite understandable: the SDT proposal is seductive, full of promise, full of strength, and hints at the possibilities of overtaking capitalist existence. In a terrible period when social movements are repressed without restraint and we watch helplessly as the bourgeoisie destroys the planet, such a proposal seems like an answer to despair — especially when we're guaranteed "victory."

This text is not intended to discourage you from going to the SDT operations, but it does encourage you, if you do go, to do so at least with a certain amount of suspicion, continually observing the mechanisms at work, seeking to question what is at stake, and even to challenge the way the SDT operates. Let it be known that we're dealing with strategists, authoritarians and opportunists; knowing this, perhaps it's possible to avoid abandoning the struggles to them, and to force Soulèvements de la Terre into horizontality, discussion, political honesty, decency and solidarity.

—*Two fools from Ariège, April 2023*

## References:

*An account of the Sainte-Soline demonstration in October 2022: Playing at war, playing pawns (Un témoignage de la manifestation de Sainte-Soline d'octobre 2022 : Jouer à la guerre, jouer au pion)*, nantes.indymedia.org

Text from occupiers of Carnet: *When NDDL Sees Itself as the Father of Struggles — Between Recuperation and Authoritarianism* (see: appendix)

*Reflections on the ZAD: Another History*, crimethinc.com

"*Outside supporters*" take the floor at the ZAD's "assembly of uses." (*Prise de parole des « soutiens de l'extérieur » à « l'assemblée des usages » de la ZAD.*), mars-infos.org

# MANIPULATORS & ASSASSINS

*April, 2023*

Assassins murder. They often miss. And the broken bones today and yesterday are innumerable. But they don't always miss. Assassins sometimes kill. All the wounded, the tortured and the murdered must be avenged. And we will take revenge.

Of course, nothing is being said against those who decided to confront the assassins with the means they saw fit. But we will say that people who plan an offensive without being physically present on the front line are manipulators.

The plan was scripted in advance. For example, on the media page of a movement that called for a gathering on March 25, 2023: “concretely impact basin projects and their construction.” Manipulative communication. Here, there's nothing to sabotage, not even a construction machine. Only an empty hole, closed off with fencing. And do you have to gather a few thousand people at the same time in the same place to sever a pipe? In fact, the Newspeak says: “disarming a pipe.” (If it were just idle chatter with no real consequences, we'd find it funny). Of course, the conditions for engaging in sabotage in a way that doesn't damage those who act are exactly the opposite — when neither the cops nor the cameras are on the scene. Under the light of the moon, at a time chosen for stealth. So, schedule an offensive against the cops in the field to breach their line. And then? Plant a flag in the empty hole? Make the assassins flee, pitch our tents, bring in wood and build huts and palisades? ... A party was also scheduled for Saturday evening, upon the return from the offensive. Some dared to say “We're celebrating victory!” and put on some music, but the party didn't go ahead.

**Launching an offensive, breaching the police line, celebrating victory:** these are all words that have been around for years. Their function is to rally crowds, large and small, under a military command that is imagined if not always realized, but also to aggregate ideas in order to confuse them.

Two examples among many. In June 2016, a text called for the social movement against the Labor Law to be given “organizational consistency” and to “produce its own war machine.” A simple matter of verbose words, no doubt. But words that aimed to polarize all the ideas and destructive forces present. As if they couldn't distinguish themselves from each other and aim for autonomous goals.

In April 2018, in the forest of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, those calling for an offensive against the cops to fight the squatters from being evicted reached a high point of duplicity. Because offensives against the cops in this context are clearly bullshit! Except for those who don't know. Those who don't know that in order to get out of the struggle by agreeing to sign occupation forms with the authorities, which are required for those who want to live there in peace, you have to look like you're still fighting. Look like. For those who have been fooled: to the offensive! Give all or part of your body! For the callers:<sup>6</sup> *the land and the buildings are ours!* Since then, there's been a stunned silence on the subject of this manipulation, for example in the online left-wing cultural magazine. And with good reason, since it is among the vague left that the callers are trying to fundraise for the purchase of the zone.

It's now possible to send children to summer camps — for a fee, of course — and order Christmas lamb. And in a deliberate confusion of ideas, the callers celebrate victory: the renouncement of the struggle, collectively owning a zone, and treating those who do not give up the fight against this world like sore losers.

So this latest manipulation was not the only one.

Such manipulations are more easily repeated when they are kept under wraps. Rage against the assassins is a good glue to keep them under wraps. The trick, then, is to build a front against repression. And to call on people to join this front of struggle without discord. But will we still see autonomous groups adhering to this? And renouncing their own ideas? Against assassins and in all struggles, these manipulators are false friends.

To destroy all the arms of domination — police forces, courthouses, data centers — and to fight against the ravages of this world, many ideas are luminous and many gestures are possible.

And the sadness will end.

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6 Translator's note: This phrasing is making reference to appelists, with is synonymous with tiqqunist. This political tendency is named after the Invisible Committee text titled *L'Appel* (The Call), which "the callers" is playing on.

# STRUGGLING AND/OR BEING MANIPULATED IN THE NAME OF THE STRUGGLE?

## Earth Uprisings vs. the State: Same Struggle

April, 2023

It is imperative and essential to root ourselves in the protection of life, water, and land, to fight against the commodification of the world and of our human relationships, to fight against all forms of domination, to support international struggles that are in line with these perspectives, and to welcome all those who have long been paying the price of neoliberal warfare around the world. We are all grappling with anxiety-inducing situations linked to the accelerating drive to subdue our lives by rulers who are ever more greedy for power and money. So we're desperate to create and/or contribute to dynamics of struggle that can halt the prevailing destructive madness. And so, how can we not lose track of our judgment a little bit, carried along by the momentum of our burning desire to live, when siren songs flatter our need to act on this world and our wounded pride?

We're here to talk about the methods used by political enemies: inhabitants of the former ZAD of Notre dame des Landes (NDDL) who have become generals of Soulèvements de la terre (SDT), and who are affiliated with tiqunism, at least in their practices.

**Those** very same who worked and/or contributed to the destruction of the cabins on the *route des chicanes*.<sup>7</sup>

**Those** who signed papers with the authorities while others fought the police on the paths, barricades and in the fields to keep the zone out of the state's hands.

**Those** who were carrying out propaganda on the ZAD website in April 2018, calling for people to come and defend the ZAD... all the while concealing all information on the negotiations underway that aimed to take over the squatted land. The result: people come out, exposing themselves to the State's weapons, are arrested, mutilated, and subjected to other delights typical of confrontations with state terrorists.

**Those** who, in April, May and June 2018, kept a watchful eye on the RD 281 and 81 to ensure that no barricades were blocking traffic... including the movements of the cops!

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<sup>7</sup> Translator's note: the *route des chicanes* was the name given to the main road passing through the ZAD that tiqunists cleared for the police to aid their negotiations with the State.

**Those** who dismantled their neighbors' barricades, without their knowledge, endangering the squatters, and arguing that "barricades attract cops" (sic)!

**Those** who mapped out all the sites that agreed to officially declare themselves for an agricultural or cultural project for the authorities, thereby establishing a map of the unyielding ones who refused to negotiate with the state (many thanks to them for this audacious collaboration, we would have preferred them to put their audacity elsewhere), which facilitated the work of identifying the sites where it was necessary to repress!

**Those** who enacted and/or approved of the beating of a comrade who, rightly judging that asphalt doesn't make for good food, had the impudence to rip up a stretch of it during the asphaltting of the d281 route in March 2018.

**Those** who, while calling for donations for the purchase of land in the area to turn it into common land, have never stopped privatizing cultivated areas and community life for the exclusive use of those who claim their political allegiance (tiqqunists and other authoritarians) or those who pledge their allegiance to them.

**Those** who censured any attempt to question their rush to acquire land at the expense of those who wished to maintain an occupation outside institutional and market rules.

The list of their deceptions is too long for us to be exhaustive; the links at the end of the text are more comprehensive.

SDT includes these individuals, comfortably installed in an imagined position of professionals of struggle as they brandish their resumes that mention the ZAD of NDDL, which unfortunately is synonymous with, in many people's imaginations, glorious struggle.

That's forgetting a bit quickly that on the ZAD, we fought against the airport... AND ITS WORLD, until some individuals, measuring the spoils of war they were coveting, joined forces with citizens, farmers' unions and other political parties to build a return to the abnormal: the re-establishment and development of farms with a commercial vision, animal exploitation everywhere, the end of illegal occupations, the re-establishment of commercial activities in the area well before evictions, the privatization of spaces, the legalization of buildings....

If there was any glory at the ZAD, it was in being able to live there for more than 5 years outside institutional control, and in being able to develop, for those who wished to do so, human relationships devoid of commercial interests, a place where it was possible to organize, live, eat and take care of oneself, free of charge.

The sDT generals are working today as they did on the ZAD: welcome to the zadosphere... authoritarian and dangerous for all those who are unaware of its inner workings.

*Some of their methods:*

### **Seductive revolutionary propaganda**

To reach a wide audience, e.g.: “common lands” which are common in name only — go take a walk on their common lands and see how you’ll be welcomed! They had no intention of collectivizing these lands. Even before the 2018 evictions, many of these legalists had already registered agricultural activities including squatted plots, without informing the squatters living on these plots...oops. Today, these residents are legalized and properly registered with the MSA and other coercive bodies. And as a reminder, the precarious occupation agreements signed by these ZAD residents in 2018 stipulated that they authorized the State to evict anyone whose presence was unrelated to the legalized activities on these plots of land, and would willingly report any activity not listed in the agreements.

And on the sDT website: “Thousands of people invaded infrastructure that is emblematic of the privatization of our most precious common good.” Water has been privatized and paid for for a long time, hasn’t it? And as for invading, this military vocabulary says a lot about their megalomaniac masculinity.

### **Marketing**

Telling a hyped-up story, to give a sugarcoated vision of reality. It has been, and still is, very common to hear the ex-ZAD referred to as a place where people developed horizontal relationships. Yet from 2012 to 2018, when we were among the squatters, there was no horizontality in interactions. While some of us wanted to move away from relationships of domination, particularly the anti-authoritarians, a large proportion of the occupants did little or nothing to question their ways of interacting; it’s not easy to let go of one’s privileges!





To make people believe that the relationships are devoid of hierarchies, as conveyed by the myth of the ZAD promoted by Mauvaise Troupe or by texts that were circulated on the ZAD website (which has long been controlled by authoritarians) is to present a (false) willingness to move away from relationships of domination. At best, this is a misunderstanding of what relations of domination are. At worst, it's a manipulative means of seduction, aiming to amass people who come to consume seltzer thinking that it's top shelf whiskey... Unless it's a denial of reality, though reality speaks for itself. Since the beginning of the occupations at the ZAD and up until today, classist, sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ageist, speciesist and ableist relations are a daily occurrence, especially as the ex-squatters who are still present quickly positioned themselves in authoritarian, power-grabbing positions, with all the contempt required for this kind of behavior.

— selling the dream, using a whole variety of revolutionary, megalomaniac and flattering vocabulary: snatching victories, holding banquets (no picnics, that's for the proles!),

— joining forces with people from the worlds of entertainment, “culture,” politics and trade unions, to gain prestige, even if these individuals or groups don't share the same political outlook.

## **Hierarchy**

— At the ZAD, these authoritarians seized power in countless ways: imposing demonstrations and demonstration locations, taking over the ZAD website, taking over assemblies locked down by them, taking over spaces, imposing marked paths, beating up and using violence against people who dissent from them, showing contempt for those who do not pledge allegiance to them...

— Pyramid-like organization of events: SDT generals don't get a scratch during demonstrations; they hide out at rear bases, commenting and disseminating spectacular information in order to legitimize their methods of action, while concealing the human costs required for results that are often highly questionable.

— building up central powers, by giving lessons in struggle in accordance with the experience and know-how that comes with a diploma in ZADistology.

— join forces with power-holding structures: unions, informal groups, citizens' collectives to use their power and networks.

## **Mass manipulation**

Manipulate: to act on people in such a way as to get them to do and/or think what you want...but is it what they want?

On several occasions on the ZAD, we've seen techniques used to manipulate meetings, demonstrations, individuals and groups; the January 9, 2016 demonstration on the Chevire bridge in Nantes is just one example, but let's stay with more recent burning issues.

*How do they do it?*

— blurring political lines: mixing the lexicons of anarchist sympathizers with those of communist sympathizers, without omitting the jargon of citizenists, to cast a wide net and give the illusion that all these people could do well together in the struggles.

— nurturing the myth of unity: the recent call to sign a text entitled “We Are the SDT” bids everyone to line up behind them, as if all those in revolt today were operating identically and could not act outside of this political apparatus,

— calling for demonstrations by saturating the networks of ecologists, alternativists, trade unionists, in short, of the “respectable” Left, in order to get as many people as possible to come and add to the count. In short, attempting to demonstrate a fighting force to the State, amounting to a symmetrical position against a government whose bellicose intentions against civilian populations no longer needs to be demonstrated. The problem is that they don't have weapons as harmful as those of the State.



How does the call to demonstrate on March 25, 2023 constitute mass manipulation? “The aim of this demonstration will once again be to have a concrete impact on the basin projects,” and, from “On October 29-30, 2022, all of France learned of the existence of megabasins thanks to the mobilization of thousands of people. After a few days’ pause, work on France’s biggest basin continues. But, for how long?”

This was the challenge issued to the demonstrators on March 25, to try and bring the worksite to a definitive halt? With covid masks, scarves, a few molotov cocktails, fireworks and stones? Against 3200 police armed with explosive grenades, stun grenades, rubber bullets, assault rifles, some mounted on quads to chase down people who were on foot?

*Isn't that both arrogant and terribly dangerous?*

How could a half-day demonstration, even if sabotage took place, put a definitive stop to such a project, when we know that the FNSEA (National Federation of Agriculture Union) lobby, which is at the helm, is largely endorsed by the government, which goes so far as to speak of water reservoirs that are beneficial to ecosystems (their bad faith knows no bounds).

If it hadn't been for all these cops, what would the demonstrators have done? They would have ransacked the gates and the pump, because that's all there was to ransack, which obviously wouldn't have put a stop to the project.

How well informed were those present on Saturday morning about the militarization of the site and the weapons which they were facing? Who knew about the site well in advance of the action? How could people assess the appropriateness of going to the central locations on the 25<sup>th</sup>, given the state of the site at the time? Who was in charge of the big game? Who drew up an action plan, including 3 processions that were supposed to gather around this basin? Who knew that, apart from an empty hole and a pump, there would be no possibility to impact this gigantic structure, only an armada of State terrorists? The staff.

The people who hide away in their rear base and observe, out of harms way, the police charges against all these civilians. How to manipulate the masses?

— by exploiting existential inactivity and making people believe that they have tried and true methods of operation; these authoritarians never cease to tell a romanticized story of the struggle at the ZAD, colonizing imaginations with beliefs that are totally disconnected from what actually happened there.

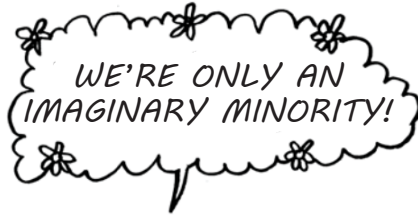
— by giving essential information at the last moment, notably by hiding what repression to expect; this is the hallmark of a commanding, manipulative leadership. People went to Sainte Soline partly unaware of what was planned, and for good reason. Information concerning the detailed organization of the day was given piecemeal, leaving out everything about the police mobilization they were going to face, exposing people to risk of injury beyond what they'd ever imagined.

Many people returned from the Sainte Soline rally in October 2022 traumatized by police repression they hadn't expected. Of those who came back wounded, few spoke out and questioned not only the State practices, but also the organizational practices at work in this situation.

How do you gather a lot of people together and silence any criticism? By providing those planning to come with a ready-made program: starter, main course, dessert guaranteed!

In the rear base booklet you'll find this:

- a ready-made team to monitor sexist/sexual violence... but not other forms of violence?
- a day-care center to be available,
- care and legal rear bases,
- a “general organization” entity... by the generals, no doubt.



WE'RE ONLY AN  
IMAGINARY MINORITY!



Very seductive. A ready-to-struggle kit, giving the illusion of total control over what might happen at this event, with festivities to complete the program that invites us to a militant-tourist weekend: thrills to scare us a little, and comfort to celebrate a hypothetical victory, but which ends up with so many injured that the organizers and the State blame each other for the endless carnage...

In their recruitment propaganda in the run-up to the weekend, there's nothing about the formidable weaponry of the state terrorists, which will inevitably be used against the demonstrators in abundance? Though these events have been widely documented, nothing is mentioned about their dramatic consequences, known only to those who have lived them; forgot the carnage inflicted on the ZAD in 2018? Forgot the carnage inflicted on the Yellow-vests? Have you not seen the current carnage inflicted on demonstrators against the pension reform?

The program is presented in such a way that as many people as possible agree with the event, perceiving it as reassuringly comprehensive, as if the medics were going to tape up mutilated limbs and torn flesh, and remove shrapnel lodged in bodies with their tweezers! These major risks are silently passed over.

The concealment of part of the information, combined with propaganda that saturates their information channels, annihilates all critical thinking. This is the hallmark of the manipulative techniques usually employed by governments and authoritarian structures.

Why are the organizers of the March 25 rally railing against the unbridled repression, counting the injured: "we're outraged by the violence of the cops in defense of an empty mega-basin.." "the government only knows excess and brutal repression"? Aren't they outraged to have sent so many people to be bruised and beaten in front of an empty crater? The SDT generals can't be unaware that, while they're organizing a mass movement that's well publicized in the media, the government is also planning a repressive response commensurate with the mobilization it fears.... So the police are pulling out all the stops, just as they pulled out all the stops for us at the ZAD for the evictions in 2018, where serious injuries and mutilations punctuated our days for several weeks... But these generals were no doubt at home reading Damasio, or at the mayor's office groveling in front of "officials" to obtain a few acres of land?

The perfectly legitimate condemnation of this outrageous monopolization of privatized water does not mean that we shouldn't give ourselves the means to try to assess what we are up against, be it lobbies, the state

and its unrestrained militias... This is required in order to build effective responses that also minimize the risk of paying dearly for our search to regain a horizon.

Hating one's enemies is one thing, but underestimating them is a big mistake that the ZAD collaborationists make while pretending to be experts in ecological struggles. And what would be their interest in being manipulative like this? It's quite clear, take for example Basile the traitor, spokesman for the SDT, who's been wagging his tail in the media lately, whether right or left, because the show must go on. At the ZAD, he showed himself to be particularly thirsty for power and quick to make any move that feeds his reputation. We'll soon be seeing him as an MP, with his SDT acolytes as parliamentary attachés lol!

But entering the political arena through careerism requires... human sacrifices, because without the sensational images that followed the carnage of March 25, our dreadful Basile wouldn't have been able, once again, to come and display his empty words woven from the politics of politicians. Diversion by not answering questions, lies: "SDT is an imaginary minority." Just like his enemies, whom he dreams of supplanting, another lie won't make much difference.

If we are part of those who take action to counter this destructive system, it seems to us much wiser, in view of the many forms repression takes and the human cost of our actions, which we hope will be as low as possible, to align our practices in the direction of greater autonomy through self-determination. What if we took care of everyone at all times, and anticipated the state violence that we know has been and will continue to be at the locations of our revolts? What if we fought on terrain we could explore, where we could assess the challenges, the ins and outs? What if we didn't wait for a mass gathering, for instructions to do what we have to do: whether it's the agro-industry or any other deadly production, the opportunities for sabotage are innumerable, because they're everywhere. What if we shared operational methods that enabled us to act while circumventing repressive measures, because any comrade who becomes targeted by repression is much less available to put their ideas into action. Seeing comrades terrorized by beatings, surveillance, trials, injuries, mutilations and deaths, brings us pain and undermines our joy of fighting. The less we are affected by state violence, the more effective and available we are to pursue and nourish our dynamic struggles.

This doesn't mean that we can master the outcome of everything, but that we must, at the very least, give ourselves the means to share our information. Acts of revolt are not more effective just by nature of being more

visible. Claiming (or not) our actions by self-organized means allows us to be visible and does not feed the debauchery of sensational images typical of the entertainment world. What if we left behind the masculinist cult of visible performance and the hysteria of sensationalism? What if we decolonized our imaginations, impoverished by heroic romances, and refused all allegiance to so-called stars? Let's not lose sight of the fact that a dominant narrative most often belongs to the dominant. And what if we were to accept the fact that we don't know everything, and take the time to learn, so as to build up resistance wherever we are? Do we need to travel hundreds of miles to sabotage these crazy projects as they emerge just about everywhere? Let's be curious, let's learn.

During the evictions, the ZAD collaborationists deemed that we don't fight where we live....because of cowardice, so they let rotten things happen where they live... they accept compromises so they can play war leaders a few miles away?



What if we weighed up the meaning of words and left behind the sheep-like behavior we've been trained to adopt? What if we dispensed with all these self-proclaimed or instituted leaders? Let's not confuse urgency with haste, let's refuse the urgency that the purported thinkers would like to impose on us. Speed and the imposition of a rhythm are among the weapons of the authoritarian. Let's be the experts of our lives and our

desires: nobody knows better than each of us, in our innermost secrets, what we aspire to.

Let's not delegate our ability to reflect on our needs and ways of fighting to anyone, let's be creative and unpredictable. Police aren't everywhere all of the time. Let's find the weaknesses in this deadly system — they exist, and are countless.

And when it comes to knowing how each and every one of us wants to go about putting meaning back into our existence and regaining some control over the course of our lives, blind obedience to instructions from supposedly super competent warriors is not going to bring us the Holy Grail!

These people's governance techniques are dangerously statist. This is what motivated us to write this text, because we are appalled to see so many people being trapped by these purveyors of dreams!

A word to the wise!

## **And for the curious:**

*Dynamics Inherent to Protest Movements, I.M.* (The Anarchist Library)

*Notre-Dame-des-Landes: lettre ouverte au comité de rédaction de la revue Z*

*Déclaration lue le 8 novembre 2022 devant l'Assemblée dite Générale des Usages au sujet de l'agression du 19 octobre et de ses suites*



# APPENDIX: WHEN NDDL SEES ITSELF AS THE FATHER OF STRUGGLES<sup>8</sup> —

## Between Recuperation and Authoritarianism

September, 2021

*This text is a collective response from people who have struggled at the ZAD du Carnet, the ZAD de la Dune, and against the Surf Park of Saint-Père-en-Retz following attempts of political recuperation from the residents of the ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes (NDDL). We wanted to clarify how the practices of some groups currently living in the ZAD of NDDL weaken us collectively in our horizontal and anti-authoritarian struggles and why we don't want them in our struggles.*

### Introduction

This text emerged from numerous meetings between ZADists, militants, and locals living near the imposed bullshit projects in the west of France and elsewhere.

During our meetings, we realized that the tensions we had separately or collectively with the residents of the ex-ZAD of Notre-Dame-Des-Landes (NDDL) were often not understood. We had to take the time to explain the history of these tensions, the reasons for these conflicts. It was almost impossible for people discovering all these stories to process so much information and this could collectively hinder us.

We wrote this text to present our collective history, to facilitate the transmission of information and analysis about the practices of some inhabitants of the ex-ZAD of NDDL.

This story begins with our recent collective experience: that of the ZAD du Carnet and the numerous tensions we had with the inhabitants of the ex-ZAD of NDDL. We then understood that far from being isolated or without reason, these conflicts had a history, they had structural reasons to exist.

Since the legalization process, the residents of the ex-ZAD have entered into a process of integration into the capitalist world. They use the media image of the NDDL ZAD for their own personal profit: to help them in the

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8 Translator's note: the Soviet propaganda machine conferred upon Stalin the title of "Father of Nations."

balance of power that is necessary for the legalization process and to accumulate money. But in addition to using the image of the ex-ZAD, they are monopolizing the image of our own ongoing struggles: those of the ZAD de la Dune, the struggle against the Surf Park, or the ZAD du Carnet.

By doing this, they weaken our struggles because they monopolize our imaginary, our struggles, and our experiences for commercial purposes. They put us in danger by relaying only their communication about our struggles and not our own communication. They do not relay our calls for support against the repression that we face, while simultaneously congratulating themselves on our victories as we can see during the recent intergalactic gathering of July 2021.

In light of these attempts at political recuperation for personal gain, we call for continuing to struggle in horizontal and anarchist ways. We call to connect through interpersonal ties and not at a vertical and centralized organizational level. We call to mutually support each other between struggles by lending a hand, not by trying to sponsor each other. We call for sharing our collective experiences, sharing our differences and mutually enriching our practices. All this in order to strengthen our anti-capitalist, anti-racist, feminist, ecologist, anarchist and radical struggles.

## **1. The latest attempts at political recuperation by the people of NDDL**

This text does not see all the current inhabitants of the ex-ZAD of NDDL in the same way.

We believe that currently groups like the CMDO (Comité de Maintien Des Occupations) have considerable power over the ex-ZAD and it is mainly their practices that we denounce. Many current residents of the ex-ZAD continue to organize with the CMDO or remain silent in the face of the authoritarian practices that we denounce, which makes them de facto accomplices. Individual residents have supported the struggle at Carnet by lending a hand and skills, and we are grateful to them. Other residents of the ex-ZAD of NDDL continue to fight against the influence of the CMDO and suffer the consequences, and we wish to give them our support.

Moving forward, we will no longer make distinctions between people living in the ex-ZAD of NDDL in order to avoid cluttering the text, even if we do not necessarily wish to lump them all together.

We will call the people living in NDDL with whom we are in conflict the authoritarians of the ex-ZAD, the legalists of the ex-ZAD, the appellists of the ex-ZAD or the appelo-authoritarians of the ex-ZAD. These residents of the ex-ZAD are linked to an organization called NDDL Poursuivre Ensemble.

### 1.1. Why we distrust the people currently living in the ZAD of NDDL

#### ***A “brief” history since 2018 of the sometimes violent conflicts on the ZAD of NDDL***

Before talking about more recent attempts at political recuperation on the part of the residents of NDDL, it seems important to us to recall the broader context. We have selected a few significant facts, referring to more precise sources.

— At the end of January 2018, 200 people removed the barricades located on one of the roads of the ZAD, the D281 known as the road of the chicanes, by pushing out the uncooperative rebels.<sup>9</sup>

— On March 20, 2018, five masked people armed with baseball bats and pepper-spray beat up people in a squat of the ZAD of NDDL (one person was locked in the trunk of a car, with his legs and arms broken!). Following this, the legal team of the ZAD denounced “militia actions at the ZAD” in a statement published on Indymedia Nantes<sup>10</sup> on March 30, 2018.

Afterwards, in order to recuperate the land and places that could be legalized but also to silence and break the last anarchist friends wishing to resist the gentrification of NDDL, the appelo-authoritarians of NDDL did not hesitate to use means worthy of a militia: beatings and attempts to evict and arson places out of the appelos’ control.

— In April/May 2018, the evictions on the ZAD of NDDL revealed deep divisions between people defending legalistic strategies and other people on the ZAD. These divisions would be hard to synthesize in a few lines. For more details, we invite you to consult “Reflections on the ZAD: Another History” which denounces many authoritarian practices that took place on the ZAD of NDDL by people defending legalistic strategies.

— On March 21, 2020, a shack in Le Rosier used for sleeping was set on fire.<sup>11</sup>

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9 See the text *When Lama Fâché, Llama Spit!*

10 See the text *Legal team’s position on the militia actions at the ZAD*

11 See the text *Attacks on the inhabitants of the Rosier continue, and The Rosi-*

We denounce these violent practices on the ZAD of NDDL. The list of practices worthy of militias, of a summary justice just as violent as the statist justice that we wish to abolish is long. The list of compromises with the State is also long, even if it meant betraying and imposing their will on the hundreds of friends who gave part of their lives (and sometimes paid the price with serious injuries or imprisonment) to defend the anarchist utopia of the ZAD of NDDL. Many of these people were left traumatized by the seizure of power and the betrayal of the NDDL appelos!

If this is their new world, we don't want it!

To this violent and summary "justice," serving their interests (class justice that isn't acknowledged), even if we are far from having found the solutions and know that it is difficult to apply them, we affirm the necessity of trying to discuss in groups, of finding solutions before exclusion, of listening to the various parties engaged in a conflict and trying to find a solution through dialogue and means other than exclusion. And above all not to resort to violent and authoritarian methods such as beatings and kidnappings, practices that the STASI would be very proud of!

1.2. The very strained contacts between the ZAD du Carnet and the ex-ZAD of NDDL

### ***When the ex-ZAD proposes to pull up plants by hand while we struggle to find food***

The tensions between the ZAD of Carnet and the ex-ZAD of NDDL began at the very beginning of the ZAD of Carnet, in early September 2020. On September 11, 2020, people from the ex-ZAD asked to organize a ready-made action on the ZAD of Carnet. This action planned to remove a so-called invasive plant, the Baccharis, by hand for the purpose of communication. As a matter of fact, during the establishment of the ZAD, we had prevented the arrival of excavators that would have removed the Baccharis as well as 30cm of earth all along the banks. This would have completely destroyed the flora and fauna of a considerable area.<sup>12</sup> The ex-zadists of NDDL wanted to do this action in order to gain local support. The communication plan was the following: we prevent the excavators from removing the Baccharis in a brutal and violent way and instead, we remove it by hand.

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*er squat colonized, destroyed and razed*

12 See the brochure *Arguments against the industrial project of Le Carnet* and the text *At Le Carnet we also mobilize against the lie of the ecological transition.*

At that time, the ZADists of Le Carnet were busy building cabins, barricades, finding water and food to survive from day to day! Faced with the vital needs of the ZAD, the NDDL proposal was completely out of touch and disconnected from the struggle. The way the action was proposed was almost contemptuous of the Carnet ZADists. Under the pretext of having “won” at NDDL, did the ex-zadists, from the top of their militant ivory tower, think they were omniscient and didn’t need to be on the ground to determine what to do? Moreover, the action was stamped with NDDL Poursuivre Ensemble and was designed to make positive PR — that NDDL helped the ZAD du Carnet, which in fact was not the case. In the end, the request remained unanswered and the action did not take place. Afterwards, of course, no local resident reproached us for not having removed the Baccharis...

***When the ex-zad of NDDL wants to organize the defense of the Carnet without inviting those struggling on the ground***

On September 15, NDDL Poursuivre Ensemble sent an email entitled “GENERAL CALL TO ORGANIZE THE DEFENSE OF THE DU CARNET SITE.” The email was an invitation to a meeting to counter the industrial project on the island of Carnet which would take place on October 10 at the Ambazada, a place in Notre-Dame-Des-Landes. This call is for us symbolic of the centralizing and authoritarian intentions of NDDL as well as their complete disconnection from the struggle on the ground. Moreover, let us specify that a “call to organize” is not a “call to support,” the intentions are quite different.

Indeed, neither the ZADists of Le Carnet, nor the Stop Carnet collective, which is very active in the struggle, were made aware beforehand of the existence of this meeting. The call is written as if the Carnet zadists did not exist, as if we were not capable of organizing ourselves... And why choose to hold a meeting in NDDL and not ask the Carnet zadists to hold it on the very island of Carnet, located only about an hour away, if not to gain centralizing power and to make publicity for NDDL?

The Stop Carnet collective denounced this initiative and asked that the meeting be canceled immediately. On the ZAD, no collective position was taken, even if the general tendency was to find the initiative shocking. Only a few ZADists from Le Carnet went to the meeting on October 10 in a personal capacity to observe the discussions.

The other participants in this meeting were environmental non-profits that had accompanied the Saint-Nazaire port expansion project, as well as representatives of political parties, unions and legalist associations. After long and heated debates, nothing constructive came out of this meeting

except an attempt to meet again for a “coordination of the defense of the Estuary” at the end of October at the Village du Peuple.

Following this first meeting and in particular the presence of political parties and non-profits that had accompanied the industrial project, the Stop Carnet collective and the ZAD du Carnet communicate together that they do not wish to participate in the coordination.

We think that NDDL Poursuivre Ensemble and the ex-ZAD of NDDL wanted to show the “general public of militants” that they were not just focused on themselves and financing their eco-spaces, but also active in local struggles. Yet, strangely, we hardly saw them at the fight against the Surf Park (ZAP la vague) and at the ZAD de la dune (Brétignolles sur mer)...

***Despite the explicit refusal of the ZAD du Carnet to participate in a coordination launched by NDDL, NDDL continues its attempts***

After the eviction of the Village du Peuple on October 14, the “coordination of the defense of the Estuary” found itself without a place to meet. We then discovered that NDDL Poursuivre Ensemble decided, once again in an authoritarian and vertical manner, to organize the meeting in Paimboeuf, a town located just a stone’s throw from Carnet Island. We reiterate our request to stop this coordination by telling them that if there is a coordination or a general collective to defend Le Carnet, it will start from the initiative of the people and collectives involved on the ground in Le Carnet.

The meeting still took place despite our repeated emails and phone calls, as if we didn’t have other things to put energy into like the urgent construction of cabins for the coming winter or communication with the local inhabitants... But the ex-struggle of NDDL is “all knowing”: they know what is good for us!

Members of the Stop Carnet collective and inhabitants of the Carnet ZAD then read a shared communiqué at the very beginning of the meeting specifying all the things we thought about this initiative and then left. Despite the reading of this communiqué and despite the boycott of the main actors of the struggle at this coordination of defense of the Carnet, the participants (mostly from NDDL Poursuivre Ensemble and the authoritarians of the ex-ZAD) continued the meeting as if nothing had happened...

The coordination then came to a sudden end and did not give any more news, the pandemic lock-down having certainly played a part in stopping this dynamic of attempted recuperation of the struggle of Le Carnet.

### 1.3. The latest provocation: the debate on territorial struggles during the intergalactic gathering

This summer of 2021, we learned that the victories against the Saint-Père-en-Retz Surf Park project and against the Brétignolles port project were going to be celebrated at the 2021<sup>13</sup> Intergalactic Gatherings. The same event includes a discussion on “how to stop [...] a relaunch of the machine at Le Carnet.”

We recall that the ex-zadists of NDDL have in no way participated in either the struggles against the Surf Park or the struggles against the port of Brétignolles. And that, once again, neither the zadists of the Dune who fought against the port project, nor the collectives engaged against the Surf Park, nor the zadists of Le Carnet were made aware of this meeting beforehand and that they were not invited...

And what a moment to celebrate our victories without us and before us! Indeed, at the time, following the expulsion of the ZAD du Carnet and facing the intense repression that followed, we were exhausted and could not organize the “celebration” of these recent victories. It is also strange to notice that these three struggles in which the ex-ZAD of NDDL did not participate or in which we did not want to include them were added at the last moment in an update of this workshop (about 3 days before the organization of the workshop, at the beginning it was only referenced as a discussion on the struggles in the west without mentioning these three struggles).

If we had noticed in advance that these three struggles were mentioned, we would have organized ourselves to come in large numbers to this workshop-discussion, to ask that this discussion and these celebrations of victories not take place in NDDL. But maybe the ex-ZAD of NDDL had anticipated this...

Our anger is even stronger knowing that some of our friends from the ZAD of Le Carnet, who had no housing after the eviction, have been in the East zone of NDDL since then and weren't even slightly informed about this discussion about Le Carnet! This shows more than anything the will of the ex-ZAD of NDDL to organize a discussion directed by them, to recuperate the struggle and to exclude any dissonant voices...

Our anger is even stronger because they also allow themselves to organize celebrations of victories without supporting them afterwards (and without

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13 See the program of the 2021 intergalactic gathering

having supported the struggles beforehand). Some friends are still dealing with heavy repression linked to the fight against the Surf Park project while the ex-ZAD continues not to relay this information! To celebrate a victory while not supporting the main actors of this struggle undergoing repression, what a beautiful proof of militant solidarity!

But if there is one thing that demonstrates their total disconnection from these struggles that they wish to coordinate and celebrate without supporting them, it is the mention of “celebrating the victory against the expansion of the port of Bretignolles!” Sic! The struggle in Bretignolles was won in particular thanks to the ZAD de la Dune which prevented the destruction of the Normandelière dune. It was not against the enlargement of a port... since there is no port in Bretignolles! It was precisely to fight against the senseless creation of an artificial port!

Celebrating a victory without even knowing the basis of it... bravo to the ex-ZAD for this beautiful proof of their close ties with local struggles!

#### 1.4 It is not only a question of being invited, we refuse these people's help

But the problem is not limited to a question of invitations, we refuse the paternalistic help of the ex-ZAD of NDDL, because we want a horizontal relationship between the struggles. We are not interested in being led by a “natural” authority; whether it is benevolent or not is not the question. More precisely, we refuse the help of the institution that the ex-ZAD of NDDL has become. This does not prevent us from building relationships and solidarity with some of the inhabitants of NDDL.

## **2. Our differences in relation to practice are irreconcilable.**

### 2.1. The ZAD communicates to support the balance of power in its legalization process

After the evictions of 2018 and the willingness of the NDDL authoritarians to negotiate with the state to legally recover land,<sup>14</sup> the ex-ZAD of NDDL is focusing all its energy on mobilizing people to engage in a relation of force with the institutions to recover legal leases on NDDL land. The mobilizations in Nantes are gradually running out of steam, gathering only a

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14 The famous televised tea taken between the prefect Nicole Klein and certain “leaders” of the ZAD...



hundred people. The balance of power is pretty insignificant and support for the struggle is less and less present...

The movement *Agir contre la réintoxication du monde* (“Act against the pollution of the world”) and the *Soulèvements de la terre* (“Earth Uprisings”), ultra-centralized around NDDL, as well as the relaunch of the militant festival *ZAD Envies* from 2020, allow the ex-ZAD of NDDL to put itself back in the spotlight... But in order for these movements not to escape the ex-ZAD and its desire to remain the center of attention and to oversee the struggles, the organization of these movements must remain centralized in NDDL.

This strategic intention on the part of the ex-ZAD to remain at the center of the struggles also requires it to oversee the struggles, to constantly network. This is not a horizontal network, but rather a network centralized towards NDDL (the principle of “convergence”). Even if it means using authoritarian or dirty means, as you could read at the beginning of this text.

This strategy also requires significant communication around NDDL, even if it means overshadowing the current struggles which face urgent human/material/financial needs in terms of militant attention! The ex-ZAD of NDDL is not in struggle and is still in the process of being legalized as a vast militant eco-village which already exist all over France...

All this is done as the very inverse of any idea of real convergence of struggles, starting from the ground to go towards horizontal organization!

2.2. The ZAD® communicates to finance its legalist eco-villages at the expense of other struggles

### ***Centralize around NDDL® to make money and gain publicity***

Our impression is that the intention to centralize the struggles of the west of NDDL® results from ex-ZAD’s need to prevail in the ongoing arm wrestling match with the prefecture and the department in the legalization process. It is also a way to give meaning to their presence on this former place of struggle through big events that gather struggles and people concerned by these struggles like *ZAD Envies®* or the *Intergalactic meetings®*, or as a rear base that sponsors other struggles, especially in Loire-Atlantique, or actions like the campaigns of *Soulèvements de la terre*.

This way of being central in the struggles is also a way to exist and to communicate on its significant financial needs for the purchase of the

land and the projects of the ZAD®, such as the Mohawked Salamanders® school.

Indeed, the NDDL® eco-village's needs in order to recuperate the land are substantial.

An endowment fund is launched with great publicity to buy land and the goals are more than ambitious: “3 million euros in the medium term and 1.5 million euros from the beginning of 2020”<sup>15</sup>...

And the problem is not so much that there was this call for donations, because many other places everywhere in France need this, but that it comes from the ex-ZAD of NDDL® which still claims to be in struggle against capitalism, the State, claiming to be close to the Zapatista struggle and other struggles in rupture with the capitalist and State system. The problem is that this Dantesque call for donations, with a lot of publicity in the ZAD 2.0® start-up version, goes against all the imaginary still conveyed by the ZAD of NDDL and the thousands of people who fought in NDDL for a space liberated precisely from private property and money!

By the way, 3 million euros captured by the NDDL struggle means that not much money goes to other struggles that are isolated and having trouble finding money to support their friends in jail or for trials! Including the struggles only a stone's throw away from their home!

But this ambitious objective requires them to constantly be at the forefront of the scene in order to get enough donations. Faced with the NDDL mobilization's loss of momentum, it was surely necessary for the ex-ZAD of NDDL to show that it was still fighting and not only focused on itself.

### **Yet it is not so complicated to support struggles without taking them over for one's own benefit**

If NDDL wants to support struggles, they are not obliged to do so by organizing things in place of the collectives and people who are involved and engaged in these struggles. And they are not obliged to do it by putting themselves before the struggles in question. There is no lack of ways to support these struggles (without asking for compensation...): relaying news, offering logistical support or sharing their big fortune, relaying calls for donations to help anti-repression funds, sharing their contacts...

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15 <https://encommun.eco/faq>

## 2.3 We do not wish to reduce struggles to the spectacle of communication

### ***Legalization and market privatization***

In fact, if we try to shift the gaze with regard to the actions of these environmentalists in the activist world, we can explain in part why NDDL is indeed in a logic of recuperation of external struggles, for individual profit (or at least on the local scale of a bunch of buddies on their legalized land).

The legalists of NDDL have jumped into the professional bureaucracy of the state by agreeing to start negotiating and then legalizing. This necessarily involved abandoning the anti-capitalist aims of the participants, in favor of a forced liberalization<sup>16</sup> of the site (perhaps we should say “privatization” instead). Really! How could the most bourgeois and scholastic fringe of the Zone’s inhabitants have started to believe that by legalizing themselves, by capitalizing from at least a minimum wage per eco-village, these people were not going to rush open-mouthed into a logic of accumulation? Of accumulation of wealth, of a reconversion of living time into salaried time, and of a departure from the predominantly non-market functioning on the ZAD?

Are these ecologists, including the illustrious future “Mohawked Salamander School” (to name but one), who propose summer camps at 500 euros a week per person with an obligation to work “[...] 15 hours a week of work time,”<sup>17</sup> really anything other than merchandise for capitalist society? Are they capable of inventing something other than making their activities part of a process of production of market value? Doubtful. In fact, it can be said that NDDL, or at least the places that have consciously worked to legalize themselves, have become integrated into the state.

### ***The struggle “against the airport,” the struggle against “its world,” and the society of the spectacle<sup>18</sup>***

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16 That old bourgeois saying that private enrichment would benefit the development of all.

17 See the description of these colonies on the Bidouillerie website

18 *The Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord (which we understood as well as we could) is a book that talks roughly about the evolution of capitalism. We have evolved from a capitalism of the transformation of the material world into marketable objects, to a capitalism of the transformation of the lived reality into marketable value through images that can be bought and sold. In the liberal society of the capitalism, everything is monetizable, as well the products coming from it as the protest that is

This set of survival strategies, framed by the prefecture, necessarily follows this logic — if the legalization enterprise is not zealous enough they risk losing the place: a profitable “salamanders school” pretending to train kids to be close to nature, Soulèvements de la terre’s laser focus on publicity, or the “ZAD envies,” whose foundation is no longer the construction of radical alternatives in a direct conflict with the state, but rather the disembodied use of tactics that define our means of struggle (sabotage, occupations...etc.), in a spectacular way. We’ll explain.

One of the characteristics of the liberalization of our struggles, is the essentialization (reduction of militancy to an image) of militancy, of turning struggles into the image of struggles. Struggles are processes, living regroupings of collectives and diverse individualities to counter determined projects, and ideally, to invent something else instead. Whether it is the composition of the Black Bloc, the political evolution of the Yellow Vests movement or even the vivacity of the political forces at the time of the real ZAD of NDDL, protest movements are always in constant evolution. It is because they are alive that they are constantly evolving and can in some cases be difficult to define.

So to link, to the point of exclusivity, a political struggle to a story of publicity, of spectacular approach of the struggle, is to reduce a struggle to an image, a spectacle. And, like all images, they have neither life nor depth, but above all, they are recuperated and even generated by the commercial society of capitalism: they are converted into merchandise.

NDDL finds itself, especially since the end of the ZAD, in this disembodied position. Since it is no longer in struggle, the people who live there today have no choice but to surf on the memory of the ZAD, constantly appealing to these past images in order to earn money to prove to the authorities that they have fallen in line. Added to this is the obligation to stay alive via state-imposed modes of organization.

In the case of NDDL, the experience of struggle (of a territory defined in and by struggle via a communism of practice with an anarchist dynamic and values), is moving further and further away from NDDL. Whether its freshly converted state agents like it or not, whether they try to manage the Soulèvements de la terre elsewhere or intergalactic meetings here doesn’t change anything. The ex-ZAD of NDDL is, through this kind of recuperation, no more than the representation of what it once was: it is no

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recuperated. Appellism draws its influences from the situationist movement of which Debord is a reference. And to think that the appellists of NDDL are wallowing in precisely what Debord denounced...!

more than a spectacle, no more than a dead and frozen image. This is why it is very serious that NDDL celebrates the victories of struggles in which it did not participate (ZAP la vague), or even tried to sabotage (Le Carnet), or tried to use in order to advertise itself (ZAD de la Dune).

In the end, is there still a radical difference between the eco-villages that are springing up all over France<sup>19</sup> and those that are actually located on the former ZAD? Doubtful. For the villages that have participated in the intergalactic meetings program, there only interest is to mimic militancy for financial purposes, because their logic is always turned towards safeguarding the grave that they themselves have dug in their own bullshit by collaborating with the institutions.

#### 2.4. We prefer to fight over the long-term and on the ground

At the level of our struggles, we may not have the PR efficiency of the NDDL authoritarian-appellists, but we prefer to focus on the long-term by creating ties between different struggles in a horizontal way. This is not to say that we reject all initiatives launched by the ex-ZAD of NDDL such as Agir contre la réintoxication du monde and the Soulèvements de la terre. We simply prefer to fight in a different way — non-centralized, networked, horizontal and on events less oriented towards spectacular communication.

This also allows us to avoid a strategic and authoritarian dogma such as that used by the ex-ZAD of NDDL and which we have been confronted with several times, notably in Le Carnet but also during the evictions of 2018 on the ex-ZAD: “we know how to struggle, we know what is good for the struggle, so listen to us and let us do it, we won in NDDL so we know how to do it” (sic!).

The victories against the Surf Park of Saint Père en Retz and against the port of Brétignolles, as well as the temporary halting of the project of Le Carnet go precisely against the dogma carried by the appels of NDDL, that is to say, composition with the legalist and citizenist structures as well as a PR smoothed of its radicalism to avoid displeasing inhabitants alongside hyper-organized, centralized events.

On the contrary, in these three zones, the struggle has been organic, sometimes unstable, but has never lost its radicality and its force,

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<sup>19</sup> In a way, it is pleasing that eco-places are flourishing if they do not have the history of compromise and of breaking the struggle of those who have established themselves in NDDL and if they are in a collectivist approach.

managing in a short time to put the projects in check without composing with more citizenist structures. These struggles do not fit the preconceived scheme of the NDDL appelos who warned us that we had to compose to win...

We prefer to take the risk of radicalism and this can pay off (we aren't saying, however, that this can work in any local struggle, we do not pretend to have the recipe for struggle like the appelists do).

## 2.5. The emergence of the Convergence of Struggles in the West, as an experiment in horizontal linking

In the fall of 2019, the idea of a “convergence of struggles in the west” was launched following the observation that :

- struggles were often isolated from each other,
- local struggles were often present in the countryside and lacked the people to fight in a radical way
- the local inhabitants fighting against the projects take the easy and most known solution when they are confronted with the low number of radically committed people. They often choose the legal way which is not necessarily most effective and which is reductive about the problems with these projects,
- the problems with the projects are often reduced to local issues whereas they concern all of us because of their cumulative impacts (plundering of water, land, pollution, extractivism, destruction of life,...) and the capitalist and state desire to control/exploit the territories which it occupies.

### ***Linking up to support and strengthen each other***

Faced with this, we have decided to launch an initiative to connect our struggles together in a horizontal way in order to build a more consistent relationship of force towards the state and capitalist machine.

A first meeting was set at the Maison du people in Nantes in December 2019 to which several friends participating in struggles in the west responded. The idea is to tour regularly in different struggles in the west by organizing discussions between us, and work parties to strengthen the struggle we are in. The idea is also to organize common events to give visibility to local struggles that are often not well known in urban militant circles and among city dwellers. A convergence of struggles in the west

was organized in February 2020 in Nantes, in which several struggles in the west will take part and 1500 people attend after several meetings (Maison du peuple in Nantes, ZAD de la dune in Rennes and Jardin des Ronces in Nantes).

However, following the first lock-down and the struggle of the Carnet, which required a lot of energy and mobilized many of the friends involved in the organization of this horizontal convergence, the convergence of struggles is running out of steam. But we have not abandoned this horizontal “dynamic” of convergence of struggles that we hope to see spread everywhere. And maybe it will finally die out to be reborn under another form with other struggles, and other people, and so much the better!

We prioritize organic solidarity between struggles based on mutual aid, spreading communication, reinforcements in hard times ... less mediatized but sustainable in the long run. Of course, some struggles will benefit more from solidarity than contribute to it, but we don't keep ledgers, and this solidarity is another way of participating in the struggles. In turn, the struggles that have benefited from solidarity will help others when their situation allows it.

### ***We want to link struggles together, not organize them***

The convergence does not have the visibility nor the strength of Soulèvements de la Terre or Agir contre la réintoxication du monde, nor the massive support of citizen or environmentalist city collectives, with which we are sometimes linked, when they share common values and respect the diversity of tactics. The people who compose it are not specialists in the coordination of struggles or in strategy, they are busy with the struggles in which they are involved, repression or the questions around the organization of collective life and the collective. All these occupations are time consuming and we sometimes have little time and energy to devote to them.

The convergence sees itself more as a tool that connects struggles more than it organizes them, it proposes a space of meetings, more or less regular, where discussions and reflections about our struggles are mixed with individuals involved in different struggles against useless projects but also anti-capitalism, feminism, anti-racism... This space aims to share our individual and collective experiences and to make collective projects of sharing or mutual aid emerge, but it has no pretension to carry this organization outside the struggles. It is not a collective of collectives aiming to adopt a global strategy of struggle. Each one keeps its autonomy and the convergence does not have the vocation to deal with the way people

organize themselves, but only to facilitate the mutual aid between the struggles as they are!

We wish to build a long-term dynamic where the means count more than the result and without aiming for quantified results.

## **Conclusion: Our struggles are not perfect models or ideals and do not wish to become so**

If we have collectively written this text to denounce and visiblize the attempts of recuperation by the eco-villages of NDDL since the end of the ZAD, if we have insisted on their authoritarianism, the internal violence thanks to which the “appelo-authoritarian” groups (or simply those who adhered to the strategy of normalization in order to save their own asses) have succeeded in infiltrating the future of the Zone after the project with lies and low blows, we must remember that we are clearly criticizable on several points.

This “we,” let’s remember, is the coagulation of zadists, militants, and locals living near the shitty projects imposed in the west of France and elsewhere, and of people around collective projects that connect different struggles.

It seems imperative to remain modest and to be vigilant on the authoritarian drifts, which appear in any group that organizes itself to accelerate the fall of the old world, drifts also present in our places of struggles and in our modes of organization. Starting from the fact that we are simply people who resist the madness of a capitalism from which we were all born, we can easily get used to the idea that our experiments are very far from being perfect.

We remind ourselves that the struggles and the zones of struggle are not a utopia but very concrete collective constructions, that there is no perfect model free of conflicts, that we don’t want to fall into the contest of militant purity nor to hide conflicts to give a good image of the struggle as one invents a registered trademark, that conflict is important and beneficial because, when it is coherent, it makes us advance.

We must also remember that, as in the old world from which we all come, at an inter-relational level our struggles still suffer from sexist violence, racist violence, speciesist violence, ableist violence, LGBTQ+phobic violence (cis-sexism) etc. The dream of ultra-radical, deconstructed, perfect militants evolving in 100% “safe” spaces does not exist.



On the other hand, we can work together, collectively, to get closer to it. By taking care to permanently keep an ethical, anti-authoritarian line against liberal individualism, against patriarchy in all its forms, against militant classism, against all forms of domination coming from the old world, whether they apply between us or towards other species, in short, an anti-capitalist (anti-patriarchal) ethical line.

What we hope above all through this text is to show that it is important to remain critical and vigilant about our movements, to denounce practices that discreetly interfere in our struggles, and from which we are never safe: practices that can harm struggles and people. It is also time to abandon the NDDL myth and to experiment with other ways of struggling and of building solidarity together, with, if possible, an ethic of struggle: horizontal, decentralized, non-authoritarian, non-spectacular.

The ZAD of NDDL is dead, emptied of all its radical substance, authoritarian and opportunistic, but it continues to capture all the attention and militant imagination. However, there are many struggles that need you right now and that do not need the support of NDDL to exist, so we count on you!

Against the authoritarians of NDDL who use the legalists and non-profits to establish their petty power and define (by an incredible internal violence) the way in which the ecological and anticapitalist struggles should be carried out, against their bureaucracy and their world, WE DO NOT FORGET, WE DO NOT FORGIVE!

THE ZAD WILL OVERCOME (you)!

## Signatories

- ZADien-nes in struggle against the project of Surf Park of Saint Père en Retz,
- ZADien-nes in struggle against the project of the Port of Bretignolles sur mer and having lived on the ZAD of the Dune,
- ZADien-nes in struggle against the project of the industrial zone of Carnet and having lived on the ZAD of Carnet.

## Co-signatories

- ZADien-nes in struggle against the project of Center Parks in Roybon and having lived on the ZAD of Roybon,
- ZADien-nes in struggle against the project of Liaison Intercantonale d'Évitement Nord de Montpellier (LIEN) and living on the ZAD du Lien,
- ZADien-nes in struggle against the project of the Grand Contournement Ouest de Strasbourg (GCO) and having lived on the ZAD du Moulin.

## Small selected bibliography

*Cicatrice: réflexion à propos de la ZAD.* This website lists many resources related to the construction of an alternative history of the ZAD of Notre-Dame-Des-Landes far from the communication of the CMDO. Of particular note is the audio reading of the translated brochure from the Crimethinc website Reflections on the ZAD: Another History.

*A propos du mépris de classe*, 2013. A 2013 text that may explain one of the origins of the conflicts that exploded during the 2018 evictions.

*The Mohawked Salamanders Burn Down the Salamander's School.* Text claiming the sabotage of the Newt School, a project that was announced by the CMDO in January 2021.

*Notre-Dame-des-Landes: colonies de vacances, bidouillerie et bizness alternatif.* Text denouncing the marketing business of the school of newts and the actions against the squat of the Rosier

*Un an après les expulsions, qu'est ce qu'on fait encore sur la ZAD?* This text presents the point of view of some inhabitants of the ZAD on the dynamics taking place on the ZAD one year after the evictions. We do not appreciate the very "neutral" tone of the text.

*Économie verte et contre-insurrection.* This text explains how the Mexican state tries to impose individual property in a logic of limitation of communal uses and counter-insurgency.

*L'impasse citoyenniste* (2001). A 2001 text warning of the dangers of citizenism that can serve as a resource for understanding the impasse in which the legalist strategies on the ZAD have put themselves.

*ZADissidences 1, 2 and 3* (January-June 2018) These three booklets compile voices from the zad, to be found on Infokiosques.net.

*Le milieu est pavé de bonnes intentions* (October 2019). This brochure talks about the mechanisms of normalization that were played out on the NDDL zad during the end of the struggle against the airport.

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