

Brief chronology about the struggle in Notre-Dame-des-Landes

The 60's and 70's – Peasants against the politics of the desert.

Born at the start of the 60's, the project to build an airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes immediately faces opposition from the agricultural world. L'ADECA [\[1\]](#), the Defence Association of farmers Concerned by the Airport Project, fight so that the zone remains cultivated and does not become deserted. In parallel action committees are formed in the surrounding villages. The ZAD, the official Zone of Deferred Planning is decreed in 1974 and covers 4000 acres. The project is put under wraps during the 80's and 90's .

The year 2000's "Not here, not anywhere !"

The relaunch of the project in 2000 gives rise to the creation of ACIPA, the Intercommunal Citizens Association of People Concerned by the Airport (Association Citoyenne Intercommunale des Populations concernées par le projet d'Aéroport) The ACIPA leads a series of meticulous alternative studies and information sharing. In 2004 the Coordination of the opponents of Notre-Dame-des-Landes is born, today it brings together over 50 organisations, associations, political movements and trade unions. The ACIPA and the Coordination file several law suits against the project and mobilise people to participate in the debates and public enquiry ; but in February 2008 the project is given planning permission and the go ahead.

2008 / 2010 – Zone À Défendre (Zone to defend) against the airport and it's world !

In 2008 the “Residents in Resistance” a group of people living on the zad decide to go beyond the purely legal strategies of ACIPA, and launch an invitation for people to come and “occupy the zad”. In the spring of 2009 the Climate Camp2 marks a stronger involvement of the radical ecology and anticapitalist currents in the movement. Little by little, new groups move into farms or build cabins, or join those at the Rosier which was the first squat to be opened on the zone in 2007.

2011 / 2012 – Vinci dégage [2], résistance et sabotage...(Vinci get out ! Resistance and sabotage !)

In May 2011 a thousand people parade through the zad armed with pitch forks and clear a plot to install the market garden le Sabot [3]. The contract to build the airport is given to the multinational Vinci. With the permanent presence of the occupiers on the zad, resistance and acts of sabotage proliferate against preliminary works and the companies attempting to undertake them. In the spring of 2012, there are numerous court cases to evict the occupiers and their homes. Compulsory purchase orders and financial offers are made to land owners, tenants and farmers who either crack under the pressure or hold on. On the 24th of March over 10,000 people and more than 200 tractors parade through Nantes bringing with it a bit of the bocage. A few weeks later protesters initiate a hunger strike that keeps going right up to the Presidential elections. As a result the government promises not to evict the legal inhabitants and farmers before a certain number of court cases have been resolved.

October / November 2012 – Cesar's defeat.

On the 16th of October Operation Cesar begins, involving up to 2000 police officers for several weeks. A dozen houses and cabins are knocked down, but the occupants resist and remain in place, bolstered by the surge of solidarity in the region and across the whole of France. Over 200 support committees are set up. On the 17th of November a reoccupation demonstration attracts over 40,000 people and results in the construction in two days of new

buildings for the struggle : The Chat-teigne hamlet. The 23rd and 24th of November hundreds of police try to take back the Chat-teigne and evict the tree houses. The region's major highways are blocked and thousands of people fight in the streets of Nantes and the forest of Rohanne. On the night of the 24th , the government calls off Operation Cesar and sets up a dialogue commission. The following day, 40 tractors chain themselves together encircling the Chat-teigne. Simultaneously the police begin their permanent presence at the zad's crossroads that lasts 5 months. Dozens of new people move to the zone and a spirited period of construction begins.

2013 – Free Zone

In January, COPAIN, which brings together farmers engaged in the struggle, occupies Bellevue farm and its lands. In April, unsurprisingly the commission of dialogue announces that the airport will happen notwithstanding a few improvements. Two days later, the police occupation that has become unbearable ends and several thousand people come to help set up dozens of new agricultural projects during the “Sow your zad” (“Sème ta zad”) action. Mass events : the festizad, huge picnics and a human chain succeed one another. Life on the ground and the relationships with the neighbours changes with a good deal of sometimes very strained discord as well as beautiful encounters. The powerlessness of the state and Vinci on the ground is borne out by the fact that judicial decrees are systematically ignored and any attempt at works sabotaged.

2014 – zad everywhere !

During the winter the contractors take the bull by the horns and announce the relocation of protected species and the start of construction. On the 22nd of February, in response over 50,000 people and 500 tractors swamp Nantes and multiple clashes with the police who block the way into the town centre ensue. Despite the resulting mainstream media backlash and internal tensions, on the territory the movement reaffirms its togetherness. The government backs down and delays the start of works again.

The 25th of October, Remi Fraise's murder by the police during

clashes on the zad of the Testet in the Tarn, kicks off a wave of demonstrations across the country, they are severely repressed. Zads proliferate, opposing the developments of our territories into machines of the markets. On the other side and in the wake of the security measures post the Charlie Hebdo attacks of January 11th, business, the government and their accomplices in the agro-industrial farmers union the FNSEA, organise against us.

2015 – The future faced with threats

In the autumn of 2015, the prime minister stubbornly asserts his will to see through the building of the airport. The court cases begin again to speed up the eviction of farmers and tenants who have remained on the zad. On the 22nd of September barricades return to the zone, blocking all the entrances for an entire day to stop the visits from a judge and the police come to enforce the compulsory purchase orders. In November a convoy of bikes and tractors leaves Notre-dame-des-Landes and arrives in Versailles on the eve of COP21 despite bans and the state of emergency.

On the zad of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, you can count over 60 living spaces and hundreds of acres reclaimed from Vinci are now cultivated. The protesters – farmers, inhabitants and occupiers – draw up the foundations for a common future and the continuation of a free zone.

[1] Association de Défense des Exploitants Concernés par le projet d'Aéroport

[2] Get lost ! Get out of here. It was the slogan of the Tunisian revolution, similar to the Que se vayan Todos of the Argentine uprising, meaning all politicians must go.

[3] Another word game, Sabot meaning clog, but clearly referencing the origins or the word Sabotage, which meant to literally throw one's clogs into the machines to stop them.

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