



***The Mohawked Salamanders Burn
Down the Salamander's School:***

Why We Attacked the Zad

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"I simply didn't see where the inevitable reformism was coming from this time, discreetly but surely, from those who speak of insurrection and autonomy by the thousands of copies."

"The movement is dead... Long live reform." 2017

The Zad was our pirate ship, the mother of all Zads. It emerged in a time with no way out and it was as if the world became a little more bearable. Like a brief glimmer of light, a possibility breaking through the thick, sticky fog of our future. For those of us who lead full and busy lives, off the beaten track, it was the knowledge that there would always be a place to welcome us if we were on the run. A place where the state would never come for us. A place where we would always find allies to feed us, to clothe us, to hide us in the folds of its hedges.

And this very state, which crushes us, kills us, hunts us, was given the Zad three years ago by a handful of opportunists. Those who, only yesterday, claimed this territory as being in "secession".

This despicable betrayal, which took place behind the backs of those who confronted the police on the barricades, cannot be forgotten. Even less so when the local Comintern has come up with a project for an École des tritons [salamanders'¹ school], to

(1) Translator's note: The area around the Zad of Notre-Dame-des-Landes is a habitat of the crested newt, an endangered species of salamander. Over the years, the "Mohawked newts" (the French word crête is also used to mean "having a Mohawk hairstyle" and so "punk") became an ironic signature for people defending the Zad.

celebrate the three year anniversary of what they call victory.

Rebuilding on the Planchettes² then? How can we not exult in rage at this umpteenth provocation? How can we not cry vengeance for the devastated East?

And this slow slide that took place on the ZAD to land in the arms of the enemy? Once again, we have to retrace the steps of this horrible story, asking ourselves again and again what could have been done to avoid this fiasco. Since then, we can't find much in the struggles we come across, as if we had become blinded by the experience.

This is the story as we lived it.

For a long time we believed the narrative of unity and diversity of tactics, as found in the soulless pamphlets of Mauvaise Troupe. The years go by, life at the Zad is punctuated by the conflicts that tire us and the rumours of evictions that stress us. For the Zad, we visit the southern countries to train, we test recipes for molotov cocktails, we bury trunks full of equipment in the Rohanne forest.

Yes, years passed since César³, the stories of spats with the farm in Saint-Jean-Du-Tertre become more and more persistent. Little by little, the visionary nickname given to Saint-Jean become part of the common language, a way to end raging tirades. The conflicts that began around class divisions⁴ become more pronounced. On the eve of the evictions, a whole fringe of the

logic of expansion which now dominates the Zad and those who are associated with it. The construction of a School of the Earth in the heart of the East, devastated by the abandonment of the fight, deserved a clear response.

On the night of 5-6 July, between dusk and dawn, we snuck into the Planchettes, where the construction site of the future building is located. While we were expecting to find a structure that was about to be finished, we came face to face with a bare timberframe embedded in a concrete slab. Not having the possibility to burn the whole place, we attacked the main beams by sawing them, before piling up piles of timber at their feet to set them on fire. We also took care to cut up all the tents and building structures on site.

During our operation, one person was in a house some metres away. This did not prevent us from shitting in their compost toilets, nor from carrying out our revenge. We waited patiently for his headlamp to go out and lit our various fires before passing into the night.

We dedicate this action to all the people who have suffered from the noxious and repressive logic imposed by the CMDO and its world.

- Some spirits

(2) Translator's note: Les Planchettes was a historical power center of the Zad, that was destroyed in 2012 and then reoccupied. It was later part of "the East" neighborhood and directly adjacent to the route des chicanes/D281, which were the areas most devastated by the 2018 evictions.

(3) Translator's note: On the 16th october, 2012, French riot and military police, attacked the ZAD to evict it. The strong defense on site and massive mobilization across France (with a lot of solidarity attacks - see "Ave César, adieu ! Chronologie des actions en solidarité avec la ZAD sous expulsion"), succeeded in putting an end to the eviction attempt.

negotiating with the state, those who watched from afar as the cabins were razed to the ground by the police, have in their megalomania brought forth a set of signs, practices and beliefs, to continue the work of colonizing our imaginations.

Soon, our camps in the forest were replaced by forest management. Where we were trying to relearn direct relationships to inter-personal and collective conflicts, they spoke of community mediation. Land purchases became 'taking land' in their mouths. The non-utilitarianism of the living was replaced by choosing in the assemblies which trees they would cut down. The landless tribes, without property rights, were overpowered by the farmer collectives. So-called communal horizontality has shattered free individual association.

Anyway, for us, fire is better than their false peace.

Their museum-style ecology is a lie. Some of the liberated lives have learned more among the hedges and groves of the zone than will ever be taught on the self-built benches of their school. The real learning spaces, they have condemned. Your school, like everything else, is just another cog in the wheel of making the world in your image.

For our part, we have learned that many pitfalls and difficulties can lurk in the path of emancipation, that what faces us can take many forms, and that it is never too late to fight back. Protective runes on the timberframes won't change that.

Zapatista compas, listen and look at those who welcome you. You will undoubtedly be able to read, beyond the hypocritical masks, the coldness and calculation of those who claim to have emerged from the arbitrary terror of domination only to renew it on their own terms.

Like during the wars of colonization, some tribes ally themselves with the invader. Even if the survival of a people circumstantially imposes such a choice, and it would be complicated here to debate it, it was only a question of a little land.

No path is perfect. But some have a heart. Others are just a breath of arrogance and calculation.

For all these reasons we decided to strike at the heart of this

most privileged squatters distance themselves from "zadism"⁵ and leave the residents' GA to create the GA of usage/uses⁶: this new decision-making body claims the right to determine the future of the land and integrate into the citizen groups and associations that had nothing to do with the occupation.

At the beginning of 2018, the government announced the abandonment of the airport project. On TV, we can see a few well-known squatters getting drunk at the Vacherie meeting house and posing for the cameras. These same faces that we saw in such and such a newspaper with a CGT union cap, in such and such a riot in a black hoodie. These are the same people who will arbitrarily commit themselves in the name of the movement to reopen the D281⁷, the crux of the war of attrition that led to the victory against the Caesar operation.

The day after the government's announcement, we witnessed the simulacrum of a GA where the fate of the route des chicanes (D281) was decided. One of the recently installed chief bureaucrats laid down the basis for dialogue: people who did not live in the area would not have a say. All those who had been coming to the Zad for the last ten years at the slightest hint of things heating up are now, from the outset of this phase, denied any right to influence the fate and protection of the mother ship.

When the assembly failed to reach a consensus on the question of the route des chicanes, it was the odious Julien Durand who decided to dismantle the cabins and barricades by

(4) « A propos de mépris de classe » :

<https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1798>

(5) "The Movement is Dead, Long Live... Reform!":

<https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5804>

(6) Translator's note: the French word 'usages' means all the people using the land. In opposition to "the squatters", the word "usages" implies an economic use of the land.

(7) Conférence de Presse sur la ZAD - 17 janvier 2018:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlaQJLe8BQI>

force, with the support of the CMDO⁸ and the entire privileged wing of the movement⁹. In this distressing video¹⁰ shot by the group G.R.O.I.X, we can see (5'29) the CMDO evicting a cabin, doing the police's work for them. In the preceding seconds, the despicable Julien Durand explains the current strategy.

On 26 January, the nice Camille tells the cameras that the dismantling of the D281 is a decision that was taken collectively by the whole movement¹¹. A few months later she was seen toasting with the prefect (regional police chief who oversaw the eviction operation) Nicole Klein on a visit to triumph over reconquering the land¹², accompanied by her friends from La Riotière and Saint-Jean-Du-Traitre.

It is a whole apparatus of coercion and normalisation that the government then reveals in broad daylight, without even having lined up a single pawn in the area.

This progressive takeover of the Zad leaves us with a feeling of déjà vu: the construction of a founding mythology based on past victories (Plogoff, Larzac), the incarnation of a movement

(8) Definition of Zadissidences 2: "Comité pour le Maintien De l'Occupation" is a group of occupiers from various places in the Zad, whose initiatives are mainly focused on organising with the "composition of the movement" for spectacular events against the airport and to imagine a "future without an airport". This initially secretive group gradually became "autonomous" from the rest of the occupation, not accepting the criticism that could, once its existence was known, be made of their methods which privatised the decisions of the movement with the other "composers".

(9) Zadissidences 1, see the article « Contre l'aéroport – et pour son monde, ou quoi ? »:

https://infokiosques.net/lire.php?id_article=1549

(10) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMw1dpEeSEE>

(11) NDDL: the ex-"chicanes road", cleared:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spU17OGsGtK>

(12) France 3 TV, « Notre Dame des Landes : La reconquête » :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTDygyO5jBU>

and materialistic planning got the better of the poetic and sensitive dimension, which makes a revolt not just a heap of techniques to oppose to the world, but a way of life.

Those who coldly strategize and plan struggles for us will always be able to talk to us about sensitivity, about alliances and the recomposition of worlds. Their view of nature is only the best of mainstream ecology: a reformist point of view that resonates sufficiently with the zeitgeist to take up space and impose itself as a new system of governmentality.

It's true that in the era of anti-globalization, domination has not ceased to progress by recomposing itself. This quiet little battle, under the guise of inclusiveness, mutual recognition, mediation and dialogue, appears to be the contemporary strategy for getting closer to what was, until then, perfectly different, in order to better reach and assimilate it. Alliances benefit each side, while recomposition absorbs and erodes the most fragile.

Rapidly, the dominant fringe of the Zad, embodied by the politics of the CMDO, faithful to the partisan logic of its most eminent members, has become a political steamroller. This reality, like the various systems of domination, has never ceased to want to absorb, devour, digest and dissolve what was not similar to it.

When a world strategises its development at all costs, optimises and directs its growth without taking into account the ethics that were the ferment of its revolt, it joins the procession of worlds of death and annihilation to be fought.

You can always tell us about black-capped chickadees and Japanese knotweed. You expect plants and birds to carry out your own plans, convinced of the legitimacy of your enterprise. In this way, you take the materialist alienation of social and labour struggles into the wilderness, lending common intentions to what is not like you in order to better assimilate it. But there are things that neither you nor the governmental control freaks will ever control. All for the better.

Everything has been done so that - from the incredible diversity of relationships to the world present at the Zad - only the triumphant showcase of the winners remains.

Those who organized the monopoly of their presence by

feminist and environmentalist veneer to increase its attractiveness for recruitment in recent years.

For the 3 year anniversary of its victory, the CMDO announces, for the highlight of the genuine fiasco that is the defence of the Zad, the construction of the Salamander School in one of the historic places destroyed during the evictions: the Planchettes.

In the battle that was played out there and that is played out elsewhere at every moment of our lives, we try to weave a reality to be able to live. While capitalism and all the systems of domination, on every side, shape and impose a common framework forcing us to act from their reality, the Zad appeared as a welcoming island. It's true, in order to get rid of the tyranny of this beast that eats other realities, we must undoubtedly shape a universe of our own, that with the help of our cunning and determination, will not be swallowed up.

In the first place, what we rediscovered at the Zad, on the Zads, is the forest. Where some people saw only "uses" and money as resources to build autonomy, we rediscovered the possibility of a radically different life. For us, this life was an apprenticeship of freedom. The Zad is above all, for us, the story of a part of the Western world rediscovering the possibility of a life outside the principles of civilisation.

A little further away from the city, away from family imperatives, activist obligations, and productivist logics that can be found even in our so-called liberated zones, with its parades of fantasies and messianic figures, we began again to live a more full and complex life.

There, we glimpsed possibilities for taking refuge and relearning, humbly reinventing our little cabin worlds, shaping the beginnings of a new magic, which hid us from the eyes of those who impose their laws, the better to resurface and attack.

Others, on the other hand, saw in it, above all, the possibility of new spaces to be redeveloped, of calories to be extracted from the ground. The struggle was soon translated into an accounting logic of places to save and land to cultivate. Once again, militant

through an "Us" that directs the narrative, since it only involves the most reformist and palatable fringes of the movement, the use of a newspeak that extends broadly: squats have become commons, the icy "comrade" has replaced copain(e)¹³. A whole literature of euphemisms unfolds in which people talk about "use" rather than property, about freeing the land rather than land ownership.

Then, this cold and authoritarian face, which suddenly seems familiar to us, allows itself a few rude gestures, perhaps to let people know that coercion will not only take the detours of politics and can also be more threatening: in October, a squatter who was opposed to the dismantling of the D281 and who had destroyed a piece of the road was beaten up, put in the trunk of a car and left hogtied on the sidewalk in front of a psychiatric hospital¹⁴. At the beginning of November, the CMDO censored a text explaining the departure of Radio Klaxon¹⁵ from the Zad.

But, all those who were far from its intrigues nevertheless ran to the first crunch of boots on the zone. What a strange feeling to be fighting again on the Zad, 6 years after Caesar, and to find only a uniform and warlike mass akin to the 'cortège de tête' and stagnating powerlessness in front of the barricades. Where are the clowns? Where are the civil disobedience activists? And the old

(13) Translator's note: The French word for "friend" ("ami(e)") is widely used by appellists to reference themselves. Given that "camarade" has a communist background, anarchists in France generally prefer to call each other "compagnon" or "compagnonne" - some people use the gender-neutral word "compa" for two. Copain(e) is a buddy, literally someone you share bread with.

(14) ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes : Perquisitions en cours : <https://attaque.noblogs.org/post/2019/01/22/zad-de-notre-dame-des-landes-perquisitions-en-cours/>

(15) Notre-Dame-des-Landes: Radio Silence: On the End of Radio Klaxon, the ZAD's Pirate Radio [<https://itsgoingdown.org/radio-silence-on-the-end-of-radio-klaxon-the-zads-pirate-radio/>]

lady throwing turnips at the bulldozers? Aesthetically, something has been depleted.

But that's not all - the "supporters" are confined to certain sectors and kept in total ignorance of the ongoing negotiations. On the barricades, the CMDO is absent and the Mauvaise Troupe seems so preoccupied with the idea of "defending the Zad" that it is on a tourist trip to the Basque country¹⁶. From the west, we hear the rumour that a very large group of friends came to fight and were turned away by some inhabitants.

You don't need to have a masters in Political Science to realise that there's something fishy going on. On 20 April 2018, while hundreds of people from all over Europe were coming to defend the Zad, and had been subjected for a fortnight to gas and grenade shrapnel, the CMDO betrayed the struggle and handed over to the prefecture the normalisation files demanded by the state, which only included the hard buildings¹⁷.

The members of the CMDO then explain to the media that they have taken a step forward towards the state and expect a step from it in return. To this, the prefect Nicole Klein replied: "If you like, I thought they could have done this much earlier. They did a lot of work, they presented us with charts, names, projects, so they did the work. That means they were almost ready." To imagine that some places negotiated their preservation before the evictions would be a conspiracy, wouldn't it?

In this poisonous climate, where the masks are gradually falling off, the turncoat prize goes to the writer Alessi Dell'Umbria, who explained to us on 19 April through the website Lundi Matin: "the scandal that would be the zadists handing themselves over, bound hand and foot, to the same administrative services in charge of piloting the liquidation of the

small farmer existence. To submit to their ubiquitous standards and procedures, designed to allow only agribusinesses to survive"¹⁸. Then, on 1 May, he quotes a farmer from the struggle without blushing: "In any war, the enemies negotiate... It's obvious"¹⁹. Obvious?! This is a perfect illustration of the reversibility of French 'autonomy'.

On 14 May, the government announced that out of the 40 files submitted to the prefecture, 15 were eligible for the signature of a precarious lease. On 14 September, the French state made official its reconquest of the lost territory of the republic¹².

Thereafter, the CMDO and its ilk cast off the insurrectionary legacy on which they have made their money. Mauvaise troupe deploys a crude storytelling of the victory at Notre-Dame-Des-Landes, aimed at an audience composed of older environmentalists and the more affluent classes. The public is in a position to give up the money that will "liberate the land" by buying land²⁰. By chance, a photo report in a Whole Foods magazine shows squatters unabashedly posing masked up and playing violin in front of a barricade²¹. A few weeks after the expulsions, the withered "Maison de la Grève" even had the audacity to describe the zone as a "communist war machine"²².

We know that historically, the mode of organisation and thought at the origin of the compromise with the state and the economy is rooted in the "appelist" milieu. However, we believe that it is absurd to limit our understanding of these practices to this historical network. If the dominant thought within 'autonomy' is in some way profoundly oriented by the imaginary of the Invisible Committee, we have also seen it tinted with a

(16) 15 mai 2018 « Découvrir Errekaleor, Un quartier intégralement squatté au Pays basque nouvelle brochure de la Mauvaise troupe » : <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5813>

(17) Notre-Dame-Des-landes: 40 projets nominatifs ont été déposés - <https://youtu.be/XjUU1s8rKyo>

(18) <https://lundi.am/ZAD-pour-l-autodefense-et-la-communalite-par-Alessi-Dell-Umbria>

(19) <https://lundi.am/ETRE-SUR-ZONE-Par-Alessi-Dell-Umbria>

(20) <https://encommun.eco/>

(21) Magazine Kaizen n°52

(22) Lundi Matin, la Zad est morte, vive la Zad.