



**BULLETIN#9**

ENGLISH VERSION



# CONTENT BULLETIN # 9

## **3 . Editorial**

## **5 . Who we are**

### **News from the Network . 6**

News from RtF Scotland . 6

A bief history of RtF UK . 8

RtF UK gathering summary . 11

Report from the german speaking RtF-Network . 17

The last European Assembly . 20

*Feedback from the European Assembly in Nikitsch . 20*

Invitation for the next European meeting . 40

## **45 . News from the stars**

45 . Coverage of the occupation in Can Piella

47 . Yorkley Court Siege

50 . Network of agricultural companionship

52 . SoliLa! Good food for everyone

55 . Nyeleni Austria\*

## **Questions and reflections . 58**

You didn't content with us . 58

Agroecology . 60

*Collective for a peasant agroecology . 61*

The relations to animals and livestock keeping . 64

Niéléni youth and foodsovereignty . 70

## **73 . RtF Tools**

73 . meeting organization

74 . RtF communication tools

76 . Kuwataka

# EDITORIAL

## **Why a RtF bulletin?**

Since its first edition the “Reclaim the Fields” (RtF) bulletin is a way to exchange and circulate information within the RtF network and to make RtF and its ideas visible where it’s still less known.

It’s usually published after each assembly meeting: it contains feedback from the last assembly and an invitation to the next one (the assemblies are the only decision making moments within RtF). It is also a means for the stars of the RtF constellation to share their news: to present projects, share information about actions, spread call-outs and publicise events to come.

The bulletin has neither a team nor a fixed editorial line; texts are proposed by whoever wants to contribute and every number is compiled by a team formed during the European assemblies. The texts published in the bulletins reveal the diversity of the considerations and opinions that meet within RtF, and aim to feed reflection and mutual debate. The texts are the author’s responsibility, and don’t represent any position of RtF as a whole.

## **Bulletin n°9**

In the meantime, the team of Bulletin n°9 is happy to present you an issue full of readings:

- news of the constellation: the assemblies and the meetings followed one another this year on various scales: European, German-speaking, and British;
- news of places linked to RtF (Can Piella, the farm of Yorkley Court), of projects and dynamics (SoLila, Nyeleni, the french farms network);
- reflections on topics which interest us and which are discussed in the network: relationship with animals, place of women in a period when Spain questions the right to abortion, and peasant agroecology; or which are discussed somewhere else but which resonated with us, such as the declaration on the youth of Nyeleni;
- and a surprise: a RtF flyer you can reproduce, spread widely and hand out when someone asks you: “... but actually, what is RtF?”

During the last European assembly, we decided to only have one functional assembly a year. Will this bulletin also follow this rhythm? If yes, it means that the information relative to the network will almost be one year old when the bulletin appears (which is already the case today, let us admit, but it is involuntary). If the bulletin will not follow the assembly's rhythm, what rhythm and which functioning do we have to find so that the bulletin fills its functions? Do we want to continue to have the same support for information about "functioning" and space for reflections on the world about which we dream? Can the local groups participate more actively in the realization of this bulletin than the people who have found each other to edit Bulletin 9? By the way, who reads this bulletin? These are some questions which it will be necessary to answer quickly, for example during the next European assembly in January.

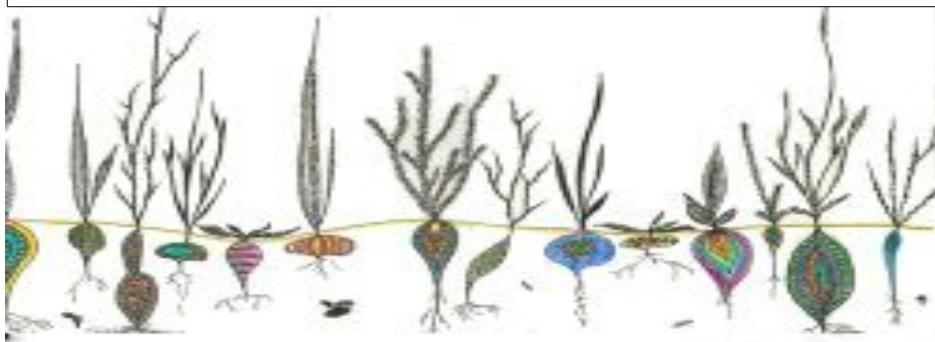
### **Join the bulletin group!!**

To have a bulletin n°10 (!) we need more people to join the bulletin group. We need editors, translators, people who want to work on layout and of course we always want you to send articles, drawings, notes, invitations to actions etc.!

The bulletin is also asking for texts from the stars! Realize that it will be online and spread in many countries. Articles should be max. 2 pages A4 (Times New Roman, font size 10). You can write in the language you prefer. We'd be even happier if you could send it in several languages.

Thank you for the numerous articles and contributions!  
Happy reading!

The team of bulletin n°9  
[bulletin@lists.reclaimthefields.org](mailto:bulletin@lists.reclaimthefields.org)



# WHO WE ARE

**We are** a group of peasants, landless and prospective peasants, as well as people who are taking back control over food production.

We understand “peasants” as people who produce food on a small scale, for themselves or for the community, possibly selling a part of it. This also includes agricultural workers.

We support and encourage people to stay on the land and go back to the countryside. We promote food sovereignty (as defined in the Nyéléni declaration) and peasant agriculture, particularly among young people and urban dwellers, as well as alternative ways of life.

In Europe, the concept ‘food sovereignty’ is not very common and could be clarified with ideas such as ‘food autonomy’ and control over food systems by inclusive communities, not only nations or states. We are determined to create alternatives to capitalism through cooperative, collective, autonomous, real needs oriented, small scale production and initiatives. We are putting theory into practice and linking local practical action with global political struggles.

In order to achieve this, we participate in local actions through activist groups and cooperate with existing initiatives. This is why we choose not to be a homogeneous group, but to open up to the diversity of actors fighting the capitalist food production model. We address the issues of access to land, collective farming, seed rights and seed exchange. We strengthen the impact of our work through cooperation with activists who focus on different tasks but who share the same vision.

Nevertheless, our openness has some limits. We are determined to take back control over our lives and refuse any form of authoritarianism and hierarchy. We respect nature and living beings, but will neither accept nor tolerate any form of discrimination, be it based on race, religion, gender, nationality, sexual orientation or social status. We refuse and will actively oppose every form of exploitation of other people. With the same force and energy, we act with kindness and conviviality, making solidarity a concrete practice of our daily life.

We support the struggles and visions of la Via Campesina, and work to strengthen them in Europe. We wish to share the knowledge and the experience from years of struggle and peasant life and enrich it with the perspectives and strength of those of us who are not peasants, or not yet peasants. We all suffer the consequences of the same policies, and are all part of the same fight.

# NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

## News from RTF-Scotland



Hi from the bonny north-west. In Scotland we have been building an RTF network over the past 3 years focusing on a few projects. One that is near to completion is a community garden in an area which has been damaged heavily by open-cast coal mining. The project came out of an action camp where a mass walk-on stopped mining for the day. The aim for the garden was to create a positive community space

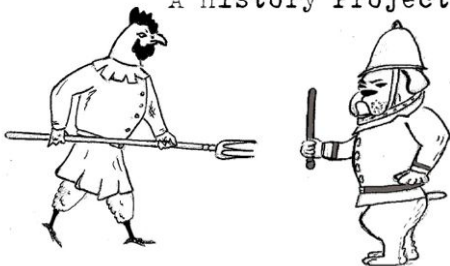
in a place which has only seen health problems, poverty and house demolitions. It looks great now and we are handing it over to the community.

Then there was a rebel clown army action against fracking. We took to the headquarters of the Scottish Government planning department to make a mockery of the fracking companies and raise awareness around this issue in a comical way. The clowns then went into town to make more noise about fracking.

We have also been investigating our radical past, looking at events in history when people resisted abuse from landowners, removal for the land and other injustices. This has been called “The fight for the land” and is taking us to places of current struggle and

success. We hope that the discussions will enable us to build on a strong heritage of resistance and see ways forward for land justice in Scotland, where land ownership is concentrated in the hands of the few (50% of the land is owned by less than 500 families).

### The Fight for the Land A History Project





Our next event is a gathering this summer at a cooperative housing project. This is a UK-wide event where the aim is to bring together people interested in food, land justice, low-impact living and other issues relating to the land for a weekend of sharing and discovery. RTF Scotland is a small group and this will be an opportunity to reach out to people and take the issues forward.

There is also a zine produced by the group called "Take back the land #1" which explores the history of land ownership, why land matters and some ideas of what we can do. It can be found on the UK site

[www.reclaimthefields.org.uk](http://www.reclaimthefields.org.uk).



Come and say hi if you are ever in Scotland! Email [reclaimthefieldsscotland@gmail.com](mailto:reclaimthefieldsscotland@gmail.com)



## A brief history of RTF-UK

In March 2011, a small gathering took place at Grow Heathrow, a land squat set up to resist the expansion of Heathrow Airport. The site has remained a pioneering example of an RTF attitude and approach to politics. The European Assembly brought together 30 people to discuss RTF and if there was the energy to make the UK into a star of the RTF constellation.

The 'who we are' statement resonated with many that had been engaged in food and land struggles. A small group stepped up to then organise the next gathering, which took place in Bristol in August 2011. Bristol is a vibrant city with a strong anarchist culture and many growing projects. These networks came together over two days at the Factory, a squatted social-centre in the city centre. There were organised workshops, visits to local projects, an open space, and facilitated discussions, which explored about next steps for the constellation. Around 80 people participated over the weekend.

Following the gathering, the UK website was born, more Land & Farm projects were identified and added to the website. A small group formed that began squatting abandoned farm buildings over the river, who would soon occupy 'Yorkley Court', a 60 acre farm in the Forest Dean, where the land ownership is contested and where the soil is abused by industrial agriculture.

In October 2011, RTF met together at The Land is Ours Gathering, an existing network of people working on land rights in the UK. A strong connection with the old guard and the new school was formed in the land rights movement in the UK.

In the Winter 2011, Grow Heathrow became a 'winter base'. From this gathering emerged the WOOLF network. This is called 'woofing with teeth' and was started to create learning opportunities at radical projects, where skills not only relating to food growing, but also political struggle, can be shared. A reclaim the fields group also began living in the woods squatting 'The Wilderness Centre', an environmental education centre owned by the local authority and closed due to austerity cuts, in the Forest of Dean, in the South West of England. The site received much media attention and local support.

A RTF UK Spring Gathering was organised in March 2012. Two days before the gathering was to begin the Council gained a possession order from the courts and so during the gathering the site was under threat of eviction. This meant that the workshops focussed on building barricades, resisting arrests along with other more usual workshops. However many from around the country still came and did their best to learn and share together.

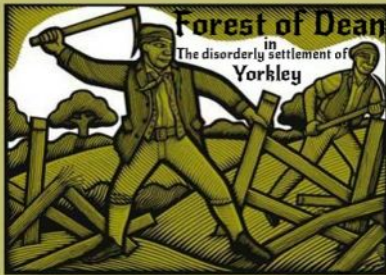


With an awareness that most activities were in the south, in the Summer of 2012,

organisers in the constellation arranged a gathering that took place in Darlington, Durham, in the north of the country. More than 70 people travelled to the biodynamic farm that hosted us. There were numerous

workshops, moving conversations and ideas for action.

## Reclaim the Fields Spring into Action Gathering!



**TAKE NOTICE** that Reclaim the Fields intend to meet in the said Forest on Saturday 16th of March instant for the purpose of Reclaiming Fields, and their RIGHT of COMMON to the same, so long deprived of and All those Persons who may chance to further remove the Rights and Privileges of the Peasants; *resistance is FERTILE* are hereby warned that we shall dig forthwith and without further notice. [rtfspring2013.wordpress.com](http://rtfspring2013.wordpress.com)

In a cold Spring 2013 another gathering was organised in the Forest of Dean, this time at Yorkley Court. The gathering had a different format, and become more of an action camp, with a DIY or die ethos, where people could learn practical skills to support the land occupation, such as building structures and stoves.

Finally in the summer of 2014, Reclaim the Fields Scotland organised a gathering to mobilise the movement in Scotland. RTF Scotland have been taking action

on land rights, supporting community food growing projects and creating a network of those interested in getting back to the land for the past three years. Land rights in Scotland are more in public awareness, with many learning about the Highland Clearances, or witnessing the pattern of landownership of rich billionaires and royalty that have carved up the lands of the country. However the gathering helped to raise the profile of the struggle further. People came from across Scotland and the Islands to Monimail Tower Project, who hosted the gathering, and have beautiful gardens and food production systems in place. There is now more energy to take RTF forward in Scotland.

The gatherings are obviously the most visible aspects of RTF organising in the UK, however much other work has taken place. RTFers are extremely active in their own local projects and struggles. The UK email list has served as a platform to share news and projects. Relationships and friendships have been formed that have fruited in multiple ways. RTF has had a presence each year at big food events, such as the Oxford Real Farming Conference, and the Food Sovereignty UK Gathering, as well as many local gatherings and forums on food and land.

Small numbers of RTF UK organisers have also travelled to European Gatherings and Camps, such as in Romania, Germany and Italy.

A number of RTFers have helped to start the Landworkers Alliance, a new organisation in the UK linked to Via Campesina. While its main focus is lobbying, its RTF sister helps it to stay aware of its radical roots and visible actions, for example, April 17 demonstrations, have been organised together. The difference in politics and tactics, however, has potentially diluted or at least distracted a number of people that were previously very active within RTF. We hope there can be a beneficial relationship into the future and solidarity.

The challenges in organising however, are shared by many across borders. Each gathering new people get involved and excited, yet eventually move onto other projects or priorities. A local groups network was suggested but not formalised. Sometimes the email list feels less responsive than hoped for. However we feel we can only measure our strength by our response in moments of struggle.

In June 2014, illegal bailiffs turned up to evict Yorkley Court. Call-outs went out, and people from across the country came to support and effectively kick out the bailiffs and protect the site. Emotional, material, practical and political support has come from all corners of the Island. A similar swell of support has been felt by Grow Heathrow.



Many of us turn to each other in times of need, whether its help on the land, or frustration in political projects or the subjugation of wage slavery. The fact that RTF exists gives hope to many and strengthens us all. We are very aware of our niche in the more liberal food sovereignty movements, however the 'who we are' statement acts like a mirror for the politics in our hearts and we are committed to struggling against capitalism, not fitting within it. We welcome our European comrades with open arms at the European Assembly 2015. You have sown seeds of hope in our lives!

## RTF-UK gathering summary

From 22-24th August Reclaim the Fields Scotland hosted a UK gathering at Monimail in Fife.

Monimail is a small community living in a beautiful walled garden and orchard set around a medieval tower. Those living at Monimail grow all their own fresh produce, as was evident by the huge vegetables, manage a small wood for fuel and wildlife and look after the walls and the tower. Monimail is an environmental charity which offers opportunities for people to learn about organic gardening and low-impact, sustainable, communal living. They also host WWOOFers. Monimail was a great venue for the gathering, having inside and outside spaces so that we could hold several workshops simultaneously, a covered outside kitchen space and we set up a mini cinema. We ate well all weekend from the Monimail garden and other produce people had brought along.

The gathering was self-organised. This meant that everything happened through our collective involvement. So there was a board to write up when and where someone would like to host a workshop, one for cooking/washing up and a donations box so that we could meet costs communally. Each morning we got together to discuss plans for the day and people could chip in with what they would like to do. We think that this worked well, everyone chipped in with cooking and washing up etc. making it run like a well-oiled machine. Still, this is an area to work on and make gatherings more self-organised.

We got plenty of sunshine over the weekend so we crammed in some lounging around and volley ball, then finished off the days with outside films and a fire.

**Workshops galore:** We had so many workshops! Here's a quick run-down of what went on.

**Energy, independence and land reform** – discussing the realities of our energy use, impact on climate change and the potential for a low-carbon future. Lead by folks from Biofuel Watch.

**The Land Question** – an introduction to land ownership and the problems it causes.

**Garden tour** – a tour of the Monimail garden and discussion about growing.

**Intro to La via Campesina and Land Workers Alliance** – which lead to a discussion

**Bee keeping** – how to harvest wild comb

**Free software** – in introduction and discussion on free software

**Mushroom growing basics** – Monimail resident showed us how to grow oyster mushrooms.

**Scything** – created several expert scythers.

**Herbal medicine** – an introduction on how to prepare herbal remedies and a walk round the garden to discuss different plants.

**Sustaining resistance** – a quick intro to looking after ourselves in activism.

**Seed sovereignty** – a detailed introduction by a Crofting Federation member.

**Connecting children with nature** – an intro to the theory and practice of play and child-led learning

**T-shirt printing** – giving us all a great RTF t-shirt

**Communal living** – a photo tour and conversation on communal living in the UK by Diggers and Dreamers.

**Rhythms of resistance** – the protest drumming group got everyone to the beat

**Connecting with the elements** - tools for returning to what we stand for and remembering our individual and collective vision of what is possible

We also had a facilitated discussion session to bring out the issues people attending the gathering felt were important for the movement which includes RTF. The first session was a discussion split into groups covering the topics of ‘where are we now?’ ‘what do we want to do?’ and ‘what is the RTF context?’ We split into three groups in the second session to discuss the main points from the first, falling broadly into three categories:

Networking (RTF and wider) – what’s there and how to improve our networks

Community – organising, ownership and action

Direct action – land squat possibilities

## **Networking**

Here are the outcomes of the networking discussion:

- ✎ The RTF Scotland **email list** needs more clarity on how people can post to this list and we also need to bring new people to the list.
- ✎ RTF UK **website** needs more regular posts. We plan to get contributions from groups in the RTF network, make the website more visible and post something on the gathering.
- ✎ To contribute and promote the **EU bulletin**, write something up for this on the gathering.

- ⌘ Create a **map** of places and projects currently happening in Scotland for the website.
- ⌘ We need more **clarity** on what we want RTF Scotland to be. This will come by getting feedback from those on the list and groups/places in Scotland who are connected in some way to RTF
- ⌘ Link RTF up with other networks in Scotland, we drew up a list of networks.
- ⌘ In general we need to energise the network, bring new people and be more involved in the wider EU network.

## **Sustainable Community Organising**

The group talked about:

### Crofting

This is a system of tenure/small-scale food production unique to Scotland. A crofter is usually a tenant but some have purchased their crofts. Rent is paid only for the land, improvements are provided by the crofter. Crofting is characterised by its common working communities, or 'townships'. Individual crofts are established on the better land, and poorer hill ground is shared. In this way, the model promotes individual and collective responsibilities. The Scottish Crofting Federation is the largest association of small scale food producers in the UK.

### Food sovereignty/community food production

We discussed the Fife Diet movement and the challenges they are currently experiencing establishing a community food coop: [www.fifediet.co.uk/fife-food-coop](http://www.fifediet.co.uk/fife-food-coop)

We discussed the benefits of linking up/supporting smaller producers to increase viability/sustainability, e.g. Skye and Lochalsh Food Link Van.

### Grass roots community organising

We discussed some of the challenges faced by groups/practitioners/activists in building sustainable communities and agreed that sustainable solutions must come from communities themselves

and be based on existing needs/strengths/challenges.

The community garden project in Glespin (RTF project in South Lanarkshire) has been a positive example of engaging the local community.

Young people were identified as potentially playing an important role in helping to generate energy and resources for community projects.

Example given of ACORN, which supports low-income community struggles/movements in the UK: <http://www.acornbristol.org.uk/>

This discussion poses the question of what role RTF Scotland could play in supporting communities to organise sustainably? Where and how should our energies be directed, and to what end?

We also talked about non-ownership, new energy to support existing groups/struggles and practical food growing.

### **Info stall**

We had a zine stall set up for the weekend with RTF bulletins, the Scottish RTF zine and heaps of other zines and information people attending the gathering brought along. The info stall was a great point for people to distribute their writings and let people know about the RTF network in Europe. We have some zines left to take to the next gathering. The tea urn was also there so it naturally became a hang-out.

### **Reflections**

Feedback from the gathering in general has been that it was great overall. The atmosphere was very social and relaxed. There was a good mix of thinking and doing workshops and nice social element in the evening. It was great to get together to share in issues that are close to our hearts and learn a few more skills and bits and pieces of information.

The venue was great. This made things pretty easy in that we had good spaces for several workshops at the same time and a good cooking space, plus fresh veg from the garden. The weather was decent which helped, meaning that we could do outside activities with no bother, including volleyball! We got a load of outcomes from the main discussion session, which is useful to take RTF Scotland forward.



We didn't have loads of people, but a pretty good number (about 40) to make it work well. There were old and new faces, we linked up RTF folks from around the UK (plus Belgium) and made some good connections with like minded people across Scotland. It would be good to draw in more people next time, including those which aren't from the usual crowd. To do this we need to build up the RTF network and presence, so that people are aware of RTF and what the network does. The website worked well, but we need to work on social media.

Organising was by a small number of people, but we managed to keep work pretty minimal, particularly due to the venue. People took part during the weekend, although it could be more 'self-organising.' Need to work on involving people in the process and making them feel like it is a gathering run by everyone.

Thoughts for future gatherings are that it would be good to have a more focussed gathering concentrating on one issue and with an explicit aim. Suggestions also include: building infrastructure that would be useful in a land squat; focussing the gathering around doing work for the venue.

So thanks to everyone who came along to the gathering. We all met some new people which is the best thing about these events. Let's get on with strengthening the network!

**With love from RTF Scotland.**

# Report from the german-speaking RtF-Network

*“Beetroot instead of Asphalt” (in German it’s a rhyme)*

*Reclaim the Fields meets the vegetable growing cooperative “Rote Beete”  
(in engl. “red beds”)*

*What happened in the time from the Action-Camp in July 2014 until now  
(October 2014)*



## **The Action-Camp**

On the occasion of the still ongoing planning for building the B87n, a main road from Torgau to Leipzig, a summer camp in Sehlis near Leipzig took place (like the year before). Grassland was converted from 7 to 14 July to a place of encounter, self-defined work on topics and resistance. This meadow would be like other habitats and

cultivation areas of Parthenaue (countryside conservation area) destroyed by the project B87n.

Special for this year was the co-organization by people of the network Reclaim the Fields. In this line the camp was more than a protest camp against this main road. It should wider the space for subjects like struggle for land, community supported agriculture, self organized, common life and many more.

The first days have been an open space for self-defined work of different groups like RtF, the vegetable growing cooperative and the Refugee Initiative as well as building the infrastructure of the camp together. Despite some irritating organization stuff, the rainy weather and that the tents bended in rushing wind around 30 to 50 participants came in this early time. Themselves and their ideas were gathering in the morning plena and around the campfire.

**The next days were full of workshops and the preparation of the action. There have been workshops like:**

„Green Economy“ – rail and goods traffic – Community Supported Agriculture (CSA): Claim and reality – bio-coal oven construction – guided tour through the seeds farm in the neighborhood – CSA in Romania – introduction into post-growth-economy

The action preparation group repaired bikes busy as beens, organized flyer and snacks for the bicycle tour on Sunday, which should go through the surrounding villages. The culture program on Friday, Saturday and Sunday felt like festival. The number of participants grow while the evenings up to 300. The pizza crew in front of the mobile wood oven worked up a proper sweat. Together with the Brasbanditen, Karla- Heinz Feuermelder & die durchgeknallten Brandstifter\*innen, Jomomoyle, Wohin mit dem Wahnsinn; DJ Futternight und DJ Ringo Feier the people danced, celebrated and laughed. On Sunday the RoR-Sambaband joined in the bicycle tour and supplemented the 70 cyclers with the shouting break “Highway to Hell”. Afterwards cyclers, camp participants and the invited came together to have coffee and cake. Also the rain said again a big hello so that all came closer together under the tent. Besides this the last concert of the camp took place: “The most handsome choir” sung in the village church of Sehlis and Treibsand played.

Somehow tired but with better weather a small crew removed the camp and say good bye little by little. The camp was successful so far and combined with the support of the neighborhood hope have been spread that resistance against building projects by authoritarian states can still move people. And to ad on: It showed that camps like this are good frames to try out the Utopia in small scale, to experiment and collect important experiences for the self-defined life in communities.

Keep your ears and eyes open: it could be that we take this up for next summer...

You are welcome to participate, just write to: [rtf-aktionscamp@mtmedia.org](mailto:rtf-aktionscamp@mtmedia.org)

## **And this is what happened within the German speaking network of RtF**

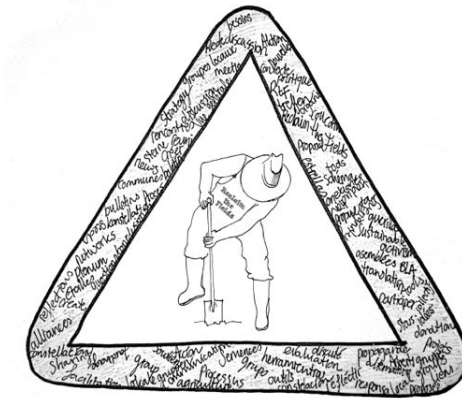
In the two short days when we work internal, two little groups emerged. First there are people which want to participate at Nyéléni process within Germany. The next conference will 2016 take place here. For more information what's going on look here [www.nyeleni.de](http://www.nyeleni.de). The other group of people wants to discuss the question how far an alternative\* agriculture can contribute to a social change.

Until now nobody feels responsible to organize the next rtf meeting – although people showed that there is interest in! So if you have a good mind to give space to a special RtF subject, try out an interesting working method or just want to show up at a certain location than take your chance because RtF is what you make of wolltet, dann packt die Chance am Schopfe: Denn Reclaim the fields ist das, was du draus machst!

In the meantime the little RtF star met and spend two wonderful days together. We read articles about CSA and non-commercial agriculture, spoke about it, collected questions. It was important for us to find out how we can existing projects or initiatives “scan” for their revolutionary potential. We searched in articles which reflect the practical experiences of alternative structures for hints what is really needed to overcome the status quo – not only with the frame/organization, also within the own thinking and doing. We started to write a questionnaire, which collects the needs for a change. This questions should help us to develop a kind of attitude, which allows us to be critical but not convicting towards projects and initiatives. Even if a project like some bourgeois CSA is not very radical on the first view it can be a step towards a society free of domination? In case of the potentials of this self-organization are exhausted, if enough people think about themselves and their lives. Asking we walk!

The points we collect can be applied also for non-agriculture projects, but in our group we have a focus on this issue so we include also questions concerning soil cultivation and cultivation plans.

# The last European Assembly



## Feedback from the European Assembly in Nikitsch

### 1. RTF political objectives

We tried to formulate and summarize the political objectives of RtF:

- «learn & implement» together; for e.g. by creating new installations or by operating through the farming network.
- «system change» to focus on the food production as a basic need and mean to change system
- «education» to reconnect people with nature and agriculture.
- « free land» out of the financial market through occupation (as a strategy to step out of the existing structures and gain independence).

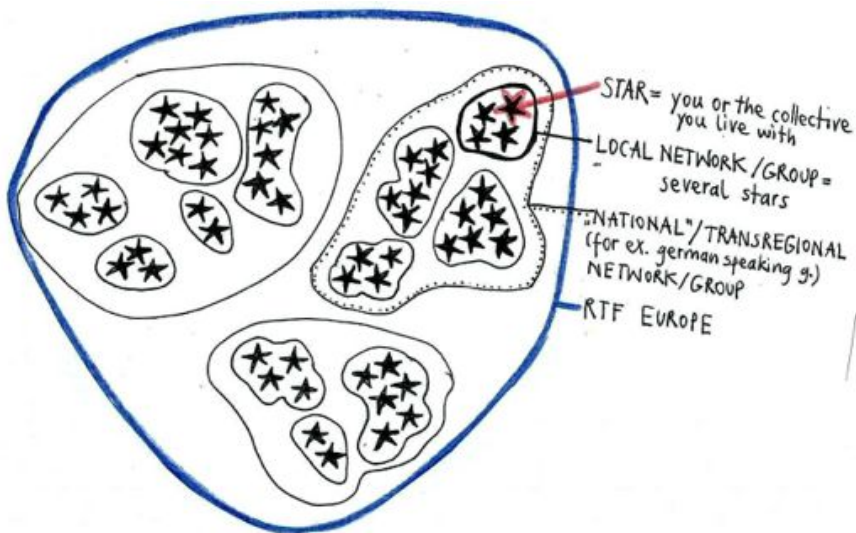
### 2. Structure of RtF: How to realise the objectives?

What tools exist within RtF and what can be improved, created and how?

The following tools and strategies already exist within RtF:

–Stars of RtF (experimenting and finding ways to step out of the destructive market system e.g. Foodcoop, free shops, seed swops, small scale agriculture, «free buy» land and occupations )

- Local groups/networks
- European meetings
- Thematic meetings (to come together, to learn from each other and help the stars with/through practical work, e.g. during the harvest period. Any star can invite people from the network),
- Working groups,-
- Thematic groups,...



In the end we had the following definition about the RtF structure:

*RtF EU is an organisational constellation in constant movement and process. It consists of stars which are individuals, collectives, organisations, and so on. The stars share RtFs values and do work/activities/something related to the RTF goals. They organise and meet in local networks (or groups) which are autonomous and work on their own objectives.*

## 2.1 Local groups or networks

### What is a local group/network?

In the course of the assembly we came to the following shared understanding of what we call a «local group»: RtF is a constellation of stars. A star can be a project, a collective or an individual. So a local group is a connection between several stars on a regional level which does not necessarily span a nation.

The local network should be the base of the RtF constellation with a certain autonomy. We are now at the RtF life moment where we see the necessity to work on RtF from bottom up.

There was the proposal to change the term «local group» into «local network».

There are different local realities that we have to respect –and here was a discussion about the differences between the french speaking local RtF-Network and the very young german speaking group, which doesn't feel as a local group yet.

The local networks don't need to be called «RtF» - the aim is to use RtF as a underlying framework and not make it something to rigid. During this discussion the question of «how to do things in the name of RtF» appeared. Most of the time, RtF is not «doing» or «organizing» actions. One example is the caravan – it's not an RtF caravan. Another example is the Nyeleni forum – they asked if RtF could send a representative. But it's not possible to send a representative. People, stars, collectives can be part of RtF and go there and represent themselves - but not RtF.

### Function of a local network

- **Facilitating exchanges within a certain region:** to share knowledge, skills, information, tools etc.; to create alliances; to install and support the creation of new projects; to support struggles, to create networks and alliances, to help each other, to organise actions.
- **To make RtF known:** through info evenings and debates; to spread ideology and ideas; to organize thematic meetings (eg. on GMO, the

CAP,...this can also be done by a star with the support of the local network).

- **Undertake tasks from the european level:** to work on the bulletin, prepare assamlages, get involved with the organisation of the camps, help to find money for the european process (assambly, travel costs...) e.g. by organising support events.

### **What can RtF on the european scale do for the local networks?**

–The RtF network can **support** the process of establishing new local groups. BUT it's important that the people and projects from the local level find a common goal –based on local needs. It's very useful to have a concrete plan and we need to accept that in some places it will take a lot of time and patience to form a group.

–. RtF can **strengthen local groups** by going to the region to organize a camp/gathering. Such an event can strenghten the local struggle or project or give the opportunity to form a local group.

### **Existing local RtF-networks**

There are a few local networks. Maybe because the european RtF- process needs a lot of energy and so there is not a lot of time/energy left to create and work on local networks. It may help to decrease this intensity so that there is more time left to create local groups. It's important to keep in mind that there are already many active local networks doing important stuff on agriculture issues. It would be good to invite them to assemblages or when something happens.

**Spain:** there are already a lot of other existing networks but no RtF network. But there is a big motivation to present RtF after this assambly – for e.g. to anti- fracking struggles or land squatting networks and also to do fundraising and to print bulletins.

**Belgium:** We have to find ways how we can have a network present besides all the others. The discussions here help to have more clarity about the next steps; e.g. on the 17.April there is a action day planned with symbolic land occupations. Input from here will be taken there.



**German speaking network:** We just had a first meeting recently and start to feel like a group. Our second meeting will be a Camp at the beginning of July and we hope to have a third one in autumn. Every six month should be a meeting and towards the end of this year we want to evaluate if there is a more or less constant group forming.

There are also some actions planned: on the 17th of April; a reading group on capitalism and agriculture in springtime and smaller groups/individuals organize a propaganda event on the Fusion festival and at the degrowth conference; some people want to organise documentary series to spread the RtF word and there is a demand from AusgCO2hlt to have an RtF barrio at the climate camp. We ask RtF EU to join. We also want to create a crabgrass working group.

At the momwnt we are stressed that it`s and open local network and support from RtF EU (for instance use of infokiosk) is appreciated.

**Austria:** the austiran network is scattered; they met twice but have strong personal links. They organised a solidarity party. A meeting will be organised to see how they can further advance.

## **2.2. European scale: when, where, why and how do we meet?**

### **1. Meetings**

We agreed that it's not possible to have an european meeting every six months, if we want to invet more time on a local scale. But it seems important to keep the continuity of the european meetings. There were two diverging ideas of how to organize the meetings: One option was to have two different kind of meetings - the «functional meeting» about the funtioning of RtF and the «thematic meeting» where we can work on specific topics. The other option was to maintain the meetings mixed, where we talk about the functioning of RtF and also about specific themes. Finally the plenum took the decision to have functional meetings once a year (during winter time) and thematical meetings when people/local network/working group organise it.

## **Functional meetings:**

\*This assambleages are for:

a) feedbacks from the working group, finances, camp planning, news from local networks, exchange on what happens in the different countries,...  
b) for people who are already (some time) involved in the RtF process. There shouldn't be excluding formulations on the website but it should be made clear that the functional meetings are for working. «New» persons are welcome but should inform themselves before the meetings about the function etc. of RtF.

\* Organisation:

Until now the meetings were organised by small groups which were totally exhausted afterwards. We have to change this and split the work and responsibility.

The logistic (finding a place for the assembly, accommodation, food, practical information..) should be organised by a local group. The contentual preparation (to gather the current interests of the RtF people) and facilitation should be done by another group. They can get help and ask for support from the European network (experienced collectives and people) and from the carrots.

There was the idea to make an instruction manual for the organisation of the assemblies to collect persisting knowledge and experiences and that the preparation group doesn't need to elaborate it all over and over again.

\* ***Proposals for the next functional assembly (winter 2015):***

a) England: It has been a long time since people from England have been on an assembly. So it would be an idea to organise the next meeting there. There is a location. But we don't have precise information and it's uncertain if the assembly can take place there in the winter because there isn't lots of space. There should be an answer until the 21st of June. The information will be sent to Carrots email list.

b) Brussels: Theoretically there is space but the group has to consider this proposal. Maybe Brussels would be better for a thematic assembly. There

is already the idea to organise a thematical assembly on the topic agrarian policy and genetically modified crops. The assembly could also be connectend with thematical content, but this would not follow the decisions we took at this assembly in Nikitsch. Both, the tematical and the next functional meeting, can be possible in Belgium. There is a meeting in April and there will be more information afterwards.

The answer about the place should be known in June. If it doesn't work out with Belgium or UK there is at least one person who will look for another place. Three persons will remind the next assambly, communicate about the process, they will make a connection between this and the next assably and they will organise the content.

### **Thematical meetings:**

\* This meetings emerge when local groups come up with propositions. The idea of this thematical meetings is to work focused on a specific theme. This can be a discussion about terms but also about agricultural techniques, an exchange of knowledge or to support local struggles. These meetings are open for everybody.

\* There was the fear that only the functional meetings take place and that it may be difficult to find time for discussions about the political principles of RtF (or at which kind of meetings this should be discussed).

### ***\*Proposals for the thematical meetings:***

There are already some proposals for the thematical assamblages: Brussels (CAP and Seeds), Greece (there could be a smaller meeting when there won't be the next camp), Italy (GMO; two persons from Italy are here in Nikitsch), France (a farm network will be started soon, maybe there can be a thematical meeting afterwards). Other topics: RtF and the connection to cities. Are there also reasons for RtF to «go into» the city?; do we see us as a anticapitalist and radical organisation?, how can we support people who want to settle down in rural areas?

## **2. European Camp**

\* What for do we organise Camps?

...to make RtF grow – to present RtF, communicate the idea and «go into» new places;

...to fight and support local struggles

...to share skills, knowledge and ideas

\* The Camps differ from the assemblages by the people who organise it, the amount of mobilization, the openness, the diversity of themes and the duration.

The experiences from the last Camps show that it's hard to mix struggle and workshops and that it's important to analyse the local situation, struggle and place where the Camp will take place properly and include local networks beforehand. For some people this wasn't given enough at the last Camp in Mannheim. There is the idea to prepare a questionnaire about what a good analysis should contain. A analysis of the Camp's place and local situation/struggle shouldn't be only about making alliances with the people. It's also about visiting this place, getting to know his history and talk with the locals in advance; to find out how we understand each other and how we can connect with the people who are involved in local struggles. This local connection is very important. Some people remarked that this was very successful in Romania, in Germany not.

\* Who organises a Camp?: There is a logistic and a content group. The people who are involved in these two groups may differ but can also be the same persons. It's important to involve local people – that's also a possibility to include people outside RtF. The content should be a bit open, so that people who come later can also add ideas and workshops.

\* When do we organise Camps?: When there is a group of people who are motivated or if we are invited to a struggle. If there is no Camp for a longer time period (3 years), we must talk about it on the functional assemblages.

## **\* Proposals for the next Camp:**

### ***1. Greece, gold mine in Chalkidiki***

Not far from Thessaloniki there are gold mines and there is a big mobilisation (similar to NO TAV) and lot`s of repression against the activists. The thematic looks like Rosia Montana- ist it`s even the same firm that owns the gold mine. In Bulletin #7 there's an article about Chalkidiki and there's also a film <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diUxacCtCFc#t=124> [1].

There is the idea to organise a camp there in about two years. This proposal comes from RtF people who have been in Greece and also from people in Greece who are not involved in RtF. At the moment there is no RtF network in Greece but a lot of interest.

About the organisation: There are some people who will communicate with the people in Greece and share information, but they don`t want to be the only ones responsible. The Camp orga team 2013 doesn`t want to organise the next Camp and will not arrange the contact in Greece. We still need a person (or more) that has co-organised the last Camp in Germany to be involved in the organisation of the next camp. The orga team 2013 will send some information (time schedule etc.) from the last camp as a helpful starting point for the next orga team.

At the next assembly in winter 2015 we will talk more about the Camp and see if there is enough information to estimate if it`s possible and relevant to organise a next meeting in Greece.

There is also the proposition to organise a specific assembly for the preparation of the next camp. At the moment there are not many motivated people for the orga team, maybe when there is more information and clarity (when and where the next camp will take place) there will be more...

### ***2. UK***

There is the question if the UK RtF group can imagine to organise the next Camp in the UK? It`s geographically closer to most existing RtF local groups...

## 2.3 Working groups:

| Working group            | What's going on   | Problems/questions  | Ideas/solutions/decisions  |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Propaganda</b></p> | <p>started in Can Piella and continued in Manihelm to support communication and networking between groups (with paid crabbgrass, making lists) and help to use those communication tools.</p> <p>Also works on a flyer which is almost ready to spread.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>badly organized/ordered;</li> <li>tutorials are needed on how every tool works;</li> <li>tools are hardly used</li> <li>need help for the explanation of the different tools of RSE</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to structure the classification of tools on crabbgrass so they are more visible</li> <li>make tutorials</li> <li>give support to (local) groups on how to use them</li> <li>people can get in contact with the group through e-mail and at meetings</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Website</b></p>    | <p>apparently the website domain has been paid.</p> <p>In the past some people tried to start up an easier website but this is left unfinished.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of people and interest from the network</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain how it works in every meeting (e.g. with workshop to explain how to post information on the site)</li> <li>keep it simple and show how it works to people</li> <li>have something more participative so more people can make pages and have access</li> <li>possibility to change the server</li> </ul> |

| Working group | What's going on   | Problem/questions  | Ideas/solutions/decisions  |
|---------------|---|--|--|
| Info desk     | <p>works on the website once in a while, writes very little, meets occasionally but works well all in all. In the beginning it was part of the propaganda group, but through the use of (online) RfF tools they started to reorganise and are also working with people from outside of RfF now.</p> |  |  |
| Bulletin      | <p>tasks and deadlines are not respected!</p> <p>Communication between authors, translators and editors worked badly. But bulletin B finally appeared!</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* not enough people that keep connected to the group</li> <li>* the frequency of the bulletin may also change, when the assembly is only once a year?</li> <li>* are there other forms that fulfil the same purpose than the bulletin?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* at least a group of 5 responsible for the bulleting working process</li> <li>* can the bulletin be done by local groups?</li> <li>* proposal that the bulletin will appear once a year (this doesn't mean that there can be bulletins for the thematic assemblies too)</li> </ul> |

| Working group | What's going on  | Problems/questions   | Ideas/solutions/decisions   |
|---------------|--|--|---|
| Translation   | <p>there are two people who coordinate this group. They have met last autumn at the meeting in France and they want to develop a new model for the organisation of the translation group.</p> <p>Until now, you send them an e-mail with what has to be translated and why and they look who can translate it.</p> | <p>"need people to expand the translation group</p> <p>for the bulletin the translation never worked</p> <p>"and more appropriate tools for this, rather than a mailing list?"</p> | <p>* an ongoing call to all of us: join the list and translation group! If you want to help for translation, please send an email to the translation list</p> <p>* there are 6-7 persons at this assembly today who can imagine to support the group concerning the translation but not the organisation!</p> |
| Carrots       |  |  | [An organisation plan shall be developed.]  |



## **Feedback from the new "finance group"**

### **RtF money at the european level.**

Until now RtF keep safe on a personal bank account 4000 euros as a backup money used to help the organisation of RtF camp. The person «holding» this money express the wish to get rid of this task at the last camp.

For Infos RtF should own at the end of this summer camp accounting (waiting from some fundraising payment) 4000 euros back for the camp and 2700 euros wich was donate by a local group in sweden (from a collectiv kitchen ending is activity).

A working group (4 people) set up at Nikitish to talk about the money issue and working on concret proposal regarding the decision taken in Austria concerning money. This working group will be active until the next assembly in february 2015 where a new group will be creat.

### **Assembly consens:**

- keeping a backup of 4000 euros to be used for the camp organisation. The persons of RtF organising the camp should give back the same amount at the end of the camp for the next one.
- The 2700 euros can be use to pay back travel cost from th people needed support to come to the european assembly, pay the bulletin printing cost for european assembly, be a backup for paying the infrastrucural cost of the european assembly, to pay website cost.
- All other use of this money should be approuved in a european assembly. The assembly decided that the second «money box» should be fund by th local group (for example by organasing events, solyparty, popular market), and by a donation box during the meeting.
- The assembly insist of the importance of being able to pay back travel cost to try the make possible to everybody to join who wish it to join european assembly. It's ask to the local group to think about their local possibility to feed this money box to maintain is substanibility.

Regarding those decision the working group think about concret proposal.

- The idea of opning a bank account was puting aside, to restrictiv and not suiting an european level.
- The money will be transfert on a new personal banck account from on of the person of the working group.
- The 4000 euro will been holding on this account waiting to be tranfer on the account of on of the person organising the next camp when the next camp will be chosen.
- The 2700 euros will be hold on the same personal account, persons who are organasing a european meeting should ask a money transfer regarding their needs and needs in terms of payback travel.
- The money raised by local group should be in preferences bring during assembly or could be transfer.

To maintain the money process transparent a finances group is set up on the crabgrass : [we.riseup.net/rtf+finances/](http://we.riseup.net/rtf+finances/). You will find those infos on it and the accounting.

Of course the finance working group is an open group, and we ask everybody to think about to join this group on the next assembly, becaus we want don't want that the same persons deal with money in a long term.



## 2.4 Thematics groups

|                     |  |   |  |
|---------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Seeds</b>        | <p>For a long time they tried to create online tools. Now it mainly functions as an internet-based information exchange platform (e.g. to better understand the upcoming new European legislation). Lot's of time was spent to organise/create local seed networks.</p> <p>There is a mailing list with c.a. 50 people (reclaim the seeds) to exchange information and invitations..</p> |   | <p>The mailing list is still active, active again and everyone that is interested is invited to join the list.</p> <p>A SEED is organising a reclaim the seeds-meeting on 7-9 March. A working meeting is planned but people can informally talk about this and exchange experiences.</p> <p>FTA US-EU: There will be an European tour with testimonies of a Colombian group: contact the group for more info.</p> |
| <b>Farm network</b> | <p>At the moment mainly active in France, starting up in Spain.</p> <p>It took c.a. a year to arrange the connection of all the farms in France. At the last assembly in France it was decided to spread info.</p>   | <p>How can we bring new people into the network to farm and to learn?</p> | <p>Flyer should have been printed for the meeting but weren't ...</p> <p>so you'll find it in your bulletin 9!!</p>  |

|                     |   |   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Gender              | <p>At the assembly in Turin, there has been the decision that it would be important to have this group. There was a workshop at ZAD and also in Can Piella and Martheim.</p> <p>An open letter in German has been put on Indymedia by the Climate Camp group.</p> | <p>The awareness group is not so present at the assemblies, maybe it's because of the topic?</p>  |
| Access to land      | seems to have disappeared   | <p>Some persons are working on a report that will be soon on ecobryms. A decentralized group should emerge to exchange experiences.</p>   |
| Presentation of RTF | <p>There is an initiative on the francophone level who collects information and contents about R&amp;F. They want to organize meetings or weekends to introduce new persons to the idea of RTF.</p>   | <p>It will be done in one language and can then be translated and used by other groups to extranet RTF. The idea is also to present the Stars of R&amp;F to show the diversity and action scope of R&amp;F. It would be great if the stars would write something!!!</p> |

### 3. Evaluation of the meeting in Nikitsch

#### 1. At first we did an evaluation in the big group about the work of the organisation team and the organisational background of the meeting.

Most people seemed quite content with the accommodation and food, although some found it uncommon that we had to pay a fixed price for the accommodation. It would have been better to know that beforehand. Generally it would be nice to have the meetings at places that feel connected to RTF and that can host the meetings for free. In general people criticized the little information they got beforehand about the preparation of the meeting, and felt a bit left alone. On the other hand several people saw the quite comfortable accommodation with heated rooms, big kitchen, own meeting space e.g. Thus we could concentrate well on the contents of the meeting and the work process. At other meetings this wasn't possible so well, e.g. at Can Piella where the lousy infrastructure and external background made the constructive collective work quite difficult. Therefore the circumstances in Austria were pretty good.

In this big plenum there was also a discussion on party vs. need for retreat and the theme of alcohol at meetings. There had been conflict situations because the need of some people for rest and quietness had not been respected. It was also inconvenient that the sleeping rooms and the meeting- and party room were quite close to each other. For future meetings it would be perfect, if sleeping and party space were further apart from each other. But this won't always be possible. For that it could be useful to talk about the different needs regarding retreat and quietness, alcohol etc. at the beginning of the meeting and find compromises if needed. In general a sensible and respectful behaviour should be normal.

#### 2. Afterwards the evaluation was continued in small groups.

Unfortunately not all small groups send in their notes -so this summary is only based on the opinions of two groups involved. Hopefully it still catches the main points of all:

a) general atmosphere: Lots of people enjoyed the meeting. It was nice to see all the people and friends again. Many of them go back motivated to continue or start working on the local level. Also because the next assembly

is in one year, so there is more time for that.

Also the question came up how to fail and error in a nice atmosphere and not being depressed if it doesn't work out so well. What can we do to change that? It seems that we don't have concepts to handle conflicts within RtF in general [reflection inspired by a conflict about the party on Saturday that hasn't been solved. And also in other situations there were difficulties with dealing with divergent opinions, negative reactions and critique (keyword: discussion about money and finance stuff)]. We should think about this more in the future. For e.g. we could involve the approaches of non-violent communication more. And also a „open-ear-person“ could help to respond to upcoming problems in the general plenary.

#### b) Reflection on Methodology

Facilitation: Some people see the need for more facilitators. There was too much work for few persons and too few people who got involved in the preparation and facilitation for this assembly (mostly French speaking people). We talked about three ideas how to improve this:

1. *The distribution of tasks should be a collective responsibility.* That means, that the facilitation team is not responsible to find persons who support or join them. Cause it is not only about filling in the tasks, it's more about getting involved and share responsibility. To change this we could e.g. discuss/do the task allocation in the plenary.
2. *A facilitation workshop.* There was one at the RtF-Camp in Cologne this year. For this assembly there was none and also the question appeared when *there* is or if there is enough time during an assembly...
3. *A facilitation „buddy system“* so that there are different persons involved in the preparation and facilitation of the meeting: one person with less experience and another with more experience.

\* Discussions, debates and being there on time is not the responsibility of the facilitation group! Some people find that the role of the facilitator has to

be questioned, and that there was too much focus on /input from the facilitators and participatory approaches had been short of space. Other find that facilitators really attempted to consider, involve and give space to all opinions and statements.

\* There have been lots of flipboards and posters, which help to follow discussions, but some of them were not well understandable and unclear and some of them disappeared during the assembly. Others really liked the posters, said that the input was well prepared and really liked the questionnaire before the assembly.

Discussions and Debates: People remarked that the decision-making at this meeting was often too fast for them. They would have needed more discussions and time to work on it. But having „problems“ with discussions seems to be a „general thing“. We are often frustrated that we don't debate and when we have time it doesn't work out well. It seems we have difficulties with discussing and debating. Maybe it's not only the tools (like translation or facilitation) and we have to learn how to debate.

General plenary vs. small groups: There was too much work happening in big group and in the general plenary. That made it difficult for people who are less confident in talking and also for new people to get involved and emphasised a few dominant speakers. It would be better to work more in small groups and to feed back the results to the general plenary. Quiet often the ideas and results that came out of the small group processes didn't find sufficient attention in the general plenary and didn't get discussed any further. The content of some discussions remained unclear for less involved persons and „not experts“.

Program/ Timetable: During the assembly, there was the possibility missing to give feedback concerning its process, programme, timetable and sensitivities. Furthermore some people concerned about the fact that the timetable was too hierarchic and strict, whereby discussions were interrupted.

So it would be useful to have a organizing time and program plan that can be modified during the assembly and that can be adapted according to (upcoming) needs and the progress. Maybe it would be a good idea to have short plenary-feedbacks on each day of the assembly.

The program shouldn't be totally stuffed in advance and should contain a slack time.

When there is from now on just one international RtF assembly each year it should be maybe longer than just one weekend.

c) expectations for the next meeting

\*Concerning the content: Feedback from the different RtF groups about what happened during the last year.

It would be great too if there are more people involved in the organization of the content for the next assemblies. People should come prepared with their concerns and contribution.

\* Concerning the organisation: It would be nice to have more people in the preparation team. Maybe a longer assembly and a flexible, not too tight time schedule.





# Invitation for the next European Meeting

Join the Reclaim the Fields European Assembly in the UK!

## Reclaim the Fields European Assembly 2015

Sumac Centre, Nottingham, UK  
8th - 12th January

Reclaim the Fields is a constellation of people and collective projects willing to go back to the land and reassume the control over food production.

We are determined to create alternatives to capitalism through cooperative, collective, autonomous, real-needs oriented small scale production and initiatives, putting theory into practice and linking local practical action with global political struggles.

The European Assembly is an opportunity for people within the constellation from across Europe to meet, reflect and exchange information. The gathering is a chance to build relationships, organise & struggle together. For more information & to register visit:

[www.reclaimthefields.org](http://www.reclaimthefields.org)



map: [goo.gl/48jAjH](http://goo.gl/48jAjH)

### Why:

The goal of this meeting above all is to meet up to see where we are at with our European Reclaim the Fields constellation and to exchange information amongst the stars and local groups. It will be an occasion to put in practice new forms of organisation which have been decided upon at the last meeting (in Austria). As it will take place in the UK, we also want to create stronger links with people and collectives present there and exchange on local dynamics. This meeting will be a working and reflection space for local/regional groups and on themes present within RTF. As such it is mainly meant for people already active in the constellation, or which are aware/informed on the dynamics and last discussions of the network. But everybody is welcome!

**Program:**

*Thursday 8th* – arrival, in the evening presentation of the different groups/collectives/people/stars of the RtF-constellation

*Friday 9th* – working groups and thematic debate

*Saturday 10th* – organisation of the camp and next meeting

*Sunday 11th* – writing up notes of the meeting, if needed more time for the working groups

*Monday 12th* – collective work at Sumac Centre

A detailed agenda proposal will be send before the meeting.

If you have any proposals or questions concerning the content please contact: [contactrtf@riseup.net](mailto:contactrtf@riseup.net)

**Why there and why at that moment?:**

We choose to have this assembly in the UK to create more links with the UK and Scotland RTF groups who have been having regional meetings themselves.

We choose these dates (as besides our garden/farm activities might be more relaxed at this time a year) as it follows the Oxford Real Farming Conference (an alternative to an agro-business conference happening simultaneously) taking place just before the assembly in Oxford (UK) on 6th and 7th of January. The program you can find on [oxfordrealfarmingconference.org](http://oxfordrealfarmingconference.org).

All RtF-ers are very much invited to take part (take into account there is a participation fee of about 35 £).

The Landworkers Alliance (UK branch of Via-Campesina) is facilitating a whole day at this conference. Reclaim the fields UK and Europe as well as the newly formed Groundspring network (a new entrants to farming support group made up of organic, biodynamic apprentices and others wanting to make change and get into farming) are very much invited to share their experiences on how we can procreate changes to move agriculture forward.

**Travel:**

Nottingham is right in the centre of the UK, accessible by affordable coaches and trains (from London, trains:the oxford tube and oxford

express. Coach: the mega bus and national express. From oxford to Nottingham there will be a few lifts and some buses. We are applying to a fund to try to cover travel costs. So please let us know when you would come and what your possible travel expenses may be. So if the fund gets through, great; if not we will try to help each other out -so anyone who wants to come, is able to do so!

Some websites to check international travels (keep in mind that advance booking lowers the costs!)

Megabus: [uk.megabus.com](http://uk.megabus.com) (around 40 pounds single)

Eurostar: booking in advance now seems to cost 88 euros return from Paris: [www.eurostar.com/fr-fr/calendar/londres...](http://www.eurostar.com/fr-fr/calendar/londres...)

IDbus: [fr.idbus.com/fr](http://fr.idbus.com/fr)

Eurolines (buses to london) : [eurolines.com](http://eurolines.com)

### **Info about the host:**

The Sumac Centre is a volunteer-run social and community centre based in Forest Fields in Nottingham. They host multiple radical & community groups and are run on non-hierarchical principles. They have a lot of indoor space available for the assembly and indoor accommodation at both the centre and at the Housing Cooperative across the road. They run on a sliding-scale basis. We will be able to access beds/floor space/showers & warmth in the winter!

### **Food from Veggies:**

Veggies, a cooking collective based in this centre will organise the cooking and local food supply. They are a vegan cooking collective supporting campaigns for humans, other animals and the environment since 1984. Even so we will help with the cooking, and any produce that people want to bring is definitely appreciated!

We can connect with the multiple growing & food related radical projects in Nottingham (such as [ecoworks.org.uk](http://ecoworks.org.uk) / [summerwood.org.uk/](http://summerwood.org.uk/)).

### **Call-out for funding**

At the last assembly in Austria, it was said that part of the 'RtF-money' would be used to pay for people's travel costs in order to facilitate participation and as such lessen burden on people's daily expenses. But

we also said it would be great to not end up with no reserves, therefore it was asked to people, collectives and local groups to try to gather this amount so we can maintain the reserves. As such we want to use this invitation to ask you, if possible, to organise benefit dinners, parties, actions, and other inventive creations to try to gather these funds so we can be solidary with people that have less capacity to gather these.

### **Registration:**

\*Please fill in this [registration form](#) to let us know that you are coming and if you are coming by car/van this is particularly useful as then we can organise lift/car sharing as much as possible.

### **Seeds:**

« Reclaim The Seeds » invite you to bring your self produced seeds and all the pedagogical material that seems relevant, in order to swap seeds and discuss about it.

### **Some more practicalities:**

- ALCOHOL: there is a bar, when the bar is open, please use it, when its closed its ok to drink your own
- DOGS: we are still checking with Sumac Centre about their dog policy. If you want to come with a dog, please contact us before at [contacttrf@riseup.net](mailto:contacttrf@riseup.net), so we can talk about it.
- KIDS: people with kids are welcome! We are trying to organise a special space for children at the meeting. If you plan on coming with kids, please contact us before [contacttrf@riseup.net](mailto:contacttrf@riseup.net) in order to talk about what you need there in order feel comfortable.
- LANGUAGES: thanks to the bla collective, there will be interpretation into three or four languages depending on the needs of the people present at the meeting.



### **Contact:**

If you have any questions concerning logistics or content of the meeting please contact [contacttrf@riseup.net](mailto:contacttrf@riseup.net)!

**See you all there!**

## Some background on the last European meeting and general RtF-info

At the last European meeting in February 2014 in Nikitsch/Austria we worked on the functioning of the RtF-constellation. This is what came out: We still understand RtF as an organizational *constellation* of stars which is in constant movement and process. *Stars* are persons, collectives or projects who/which share the RtFs values and relate themselves and their work to the RtF goals. The stars are organized and meet in *local networks* which are autonomous and have their own objectives. The local networks are the base of the RtF constellation since it is essential for RtF to work from the bottom up.

Apart from the local networks, there are seven *working groups* (website, bulletin, translation, finance, propaganda, infokiosk and a group organizing the next meeting). And five *thematic groups* (seeds, farm network, gender, access to land and presentation of RtF).

On the European level there are three different kinds of meetings:

- *Functional meetings* once a year during winter time. The objective is to get feedback from the working groups, plan the camp, get news from the local networks and have an exchange about what is happening in the different local contexts.
  - *Thematic meetings* take place whenever people/local networks/working groups organize one. The idea is to work on specific topics. This can be for example a discussion of concepts, an exchange on agricultural techniques and knowledge or the support of a local struggle.
  - *European camps* take place in summer and are bigger and take longer than the other meetings. The objective is to make RtF grow by „going to new places“, support local struggles and share skills, knowledge and ideas.
- h2. The last two camps took place in Rosia Montana/Romania in 2011 and in Manheim/Germany in 2013. There is the proposal to do the next camp in 2015 in Chalkidiki/Greece.

# NEWS FROM THE STARS

## Coverage of the occupation in Can Piella

This article is a summary of an article (translated from Catalan) that was regionally published in the local paper *Ara Vallés* in December 2013, the year of the action (European Rtf meeting in Can Piella, Feb 2013). Some of you might remember it, as I distributed it over several Rtf email lists in the beginning of 2014. One member of the bulletin group proposed me to print the note, since they thought it interesting and i agreed. I feel that it is important to show the support and solidarity that Rtf can be - without wanting to be proselytizing - especially to groups of people who need it to throw themselves into the adventure of occupation, creating gardens and empowering themselves producing their own food, choosing their own working practice and certainly being more free.

But it also seems interesting to me because the meeting in Can Piella was a before and after of the organisation of Rtf. In spite the meeting being a success since the goals that had been set in the assembly were all reached, it also showed that we needed a change, to be more effective and to enjoy it more, and that way do better networking. Todays results spring from this very meeting and the ones after.

In Can Piella we discussed, organised, worked in groups, new people were integrated and an action was carried out. An action that enabled a group of local neighbours of La Llagosta (neighbouring municipality to Can Piella) to start a community garden of several 100m<sup>2</sup>, which by now has consolidated. Well, some would say: institutionalized, but anyways, thanks to the way it was made and the preparation work of the compaïnerxs of Can Piella in the 3 proceeding years, they continue the practice of horizontality and collectivity, along with the new, individual gardens.

For sure i could keep talking about this, but i will leave it for the article, just one more thing: the action was prepared, done and organized with the hope that it would last over time, but also with the hope that Rft could help with the beginning of a gardening emancipation of some people who needed it, without wanting to be elitist or pretending to have the only truth, but instead letting them little by little find their way into self-organizing this new adventure in their lives, which is absolutely what they are doing.

“the Properties of Can Xiquet, a part of La Llagosta, close to the train station, will be available to start community gardens since an agreement was found between the municipality and the owners of the place, who will give a cession for social use. Actually this project started in 2012 when a group of young people from the youth forum had the idea to start gardens in La Llagosta. One year later, while negotiations continue, a collective starts the first garden on the land, which will now be regulated with the agreement.



Two years ago the Councilors of Environment and Youth created a committee with the goal to formulate some regulations for the use and creation of organisational tools necessary for the keeping of the gardens. In this way they could prepare the plots of Can Xiquet for

the agricultural use for personal consumption.

During last march about fifty people occupied a part of the land in Can Xiquet to start a community garden. With the slogan "Ante vuestra crisis, recuperemos nuestras tierras" - "In the face of your crisis we recover our land", these people call for an alternative concerning food and accounting the critical situation of many inhabitants of the municipality. The action is supported by Can Piella and Reclaim the Fields. Actually Can Piella carried out the action during the European meeting of Reclaim the Fields, to start a community garden. The mayor says that for now there has already been talks with the land owners to carry out the project.”

L

# Yorkley Court Siege

On 23rd of June I was awoken by my friend who said that bailiffs were here, I thought the day had come.

I quickly put my clothes on, ran down to our compound of a concrete car park with a fence round it, one large military hanger and a smaller site office, our kitchen and communal. I found about 15 security and 5 bailiffs, with two 4x4s and a trailer with fencing on it. They had us, or so I thought.

I was shaken, I re-occupied the main hanger, the bailiff came to tell me they were there to remove all the things, not people. All possessions, buildings to be taken down removed, all caravans, vehicles everything will be taken down and removed. All stuff put into a secure compound in the front field and given back to us at a later date. They were there for the next two weeks and would demolish and remove everything.

I took some time to compose myself, I went to the forest and took a long drink from the spring and felt better. I made the call outs to the phone tree. I took a saw and blocked all the paths into the rest of the land. I came back to the main hanger and began to barricade the main hanger door with wood. They tried to stop me but I got the door way barricaded and lay on top of it, I managed after that to get the door closed. There were people on the roof of the hanger and people negotiating with the bailiffs, some of our local supporters the "middle class ring of fire" were there drinking tea and explaining to the security the reality of the situation.

The police were called by the bailiffs because they accused one of us of threatening them with an axe, which was untrue, they could not arrest the accused as they were on the roof, the police arrived with full riot gear, assault rifles and tear gas (they said they were on their way to Glastonbury festival if we are to believe anything they say). The Police left not to return, even though they were called back many times by their side and many of our supporters. The police were obvious in their absence. The collusion of the police chief Richard Boyles with the Land agent Barry Hutchens, lawyer Richard Tolson and our new enemy the wealthy Brian Bennet became evident over the next three days and lead to the hasty retirement of the chief of police one of our long standing nemesis. More on this later.



By mid morning we had shut, locked and barricaded the gate to the compound, locking them in. The negotiations with the bailiffs had continued, they now knew the land was not Richard Tolsons, they were there illegally, we convinced them to leave the compound. We would release them and their vehicles from there to leave the land.

We got them moving up the 200m track to the road and ran ahead to re-take possession and control of the main gate, when I got there I saw that they had a lot of machinery and equipment. Two big flat bed lorries with fencing on, a big tractor, two diggers, three 4x4, an ATV, another trailer with fencing on and a portacabin for their office. They were in the process of building a second gate inside ours to lock us in and out at the same time. They had by that time put in two large metal gate posts, fence posts and were busy building the fence and hanging the new gate. We re-secured our gate but realised their gate must be removed. So we began to dig out their new gate posts by hand straight away, they made a small attempt to stop us but we continued to dig. This for me was the turning point, we negotiated, we resisted, we fought back. We now had control of our gate, we then held them and their equipment inside and so began the stalemate and the siege of Yorkley.

We maintained the defence of the whole site at five locations, three gates to the road, the house and hangers for over 52 hours straight with people on guard all night long. We had people arriving from as far away as Nottingham, London, Reading, Cardiff and Bristol, in the first day we had over 30 people which grew to over 50 in three days. With people arriving just at the right time to take positions at the defences to relieve exhausted people. We fed everyone, maintained fires all night and transported water to all positions. We had radio equipment which was really the most useful tool of the siege to maintain communications between locations. We had support from many people from the local town of Yorkley, bringing food water and all sorts of things like blankets and tents.

There was a scuffle with security in the middle of the first day, the security climbed over the fence and came onto the site to guard the equipment, so they said, they were physically removed by about 15 or 20 of us and put over the gate. Thank you to every single person who dropped their busy

lives to help us when we needed them, you made the difference and we would not still be here if it was not for your presence and support.

We had media coverage from local papers, local TV which from the first reports of “Bailiff threatened with axe” and the usual prejudice rubbish changed to being “sustainable farmers win injunction” and more supportive as the true story from our side came out.

The legal fight was one of the most challenging, we managed to gain an injunction against the employers of the bailiffs and security to ban them from our site and all areas we were in possession of.

The dynamics of this occupation and the different interests are complex but explained in zine 6 well. The developments since that report are that a very wealthy land owner who buys a lot of land in the forest of dean to develop it against the wishes of many many local people has taken an interest in the land at Yorkley Court. Brian Bennet has made his intentions to buy the land at Yorkley from the lawyer Richard Tolson public knowledge. They now work together to attempt to remove us from the land we occupy, they employed the security bailiffs and contractors to attempt to forcibly remove us from the site and take possession for themselves. The whole operation failed and must have cost them a lot.

The legal situation now is that we are pursuing a tribunal case against them to de-register their claim on the land which they made very soon after the RTF gathering we held there in march 2013. We are saying they have no right to register the land we were in possession of at the time. The strip of land we live on has never been claimed or registered by them and is not included in their possessory title or the tribunal case, and so their attempt to force us off was a desperate move to get us out.

We are now in the process of registering the land to a community land trust, we have submitted a planning application for change of use from agricultural to residential for the purposes of pursuing sustainable farming practices and living in community there. We have the full support of the local Parish council, which is an unusual occurrence. The planning application is a massive document, with over 90 supporting documents, including the Via-Campasina statement on the right of the peasant. A big

thanks to everyone who has put the planning application together its been a though document to write.

We have had a lot of success over two years in our community outreach, with our increased exposure we have had an overwhelming amount of well wishers and supporters come to our side. Our community work has been recognised by the people of Yorkley and we have regular open days once a week where everyone (except those mentioned in the injunction) is welcome to come and spend time in the autonomous zone of Yorkley Court. You are welcome to come and feel the freedom any time.

Since the events of the siege we have all felt stronger as a group but also we have had to deal with a lot of stress from those days. The struggles to live our lives as we choose continues, come visit find out more, keep up with events on the web and join the fight when they come again. Yorkley Court Community Farm.

By Bogo De Knoville

## Network of agricultural companionship

### **pitchfork and free field**

a RtF initiative

Pitchfork and free field is a network of farms gathering the history of these places and their political practices. It is supported by the farms it accompanies (or wishes for an addition of individuals or collectives already working in agriculture).

### Short Extract of the companionship's principles:

Along with other strategies, one proposition in trying to stop the devastating industrialized agriculture could be local and regional exchange, based on agroecological production that is matching the needs of nutrition decided by the inhabitants of an area. In a global logic of fights trying to turn over the

actual trends, it is becoming a pressing need to reclaim the fields and install oneself on the base of a land that is being worked, shared and inhabited.

The institutional model of agricultural schooling is not fit to satisfy the claim for that many installations. It is a model that is always aiming to produce future “chefs of agricultural businesses”, defending the idea that the only purpose of agriculture is incorporation into the market, productivity and cost-effectiveness.

We think that there is a big need in sharing knowledge and emancipatory practices. To promote the process of peasant installation means questioning and surely re-evaluating the life style and skills of peasants, especially in all aspects of political consciousness and fighting techniques, solidarity and collective resistance to the capitalist system.

We are in need of farms or places that exist and want to share their skills, their basic production techniques, but equally share their experiences and political ideals.

The network of companionship wants to take part in this claiming of knowledge and practices necessary for the installation of new peasants. It wants to serve them as a tool for reflection, exchange and action around the question of access to land, agricultural techniques, methods for the organization of the production, the use and free exchange of seeds, up to the possibility to constitute collective farms.

To get oneself into this network means giving room for initiatives of installation far from the agricultural norm (those that know about food production). It also means sustaining the creation of a tool of collective emancipation and new farms of resistance.

### **What is it? How does it work?**

This network is aimed at anyone that want to learn about alternative forms of agriculture, with or without prior experiences. It's a network of experimental places trying out forms of emancipatory living based on peasant life style.

To learn around the network is above all a meeting and exchange with

people resisting by their way of life and practice of fight against the model of industrialized agriculture and the capitalist system.

If the meeting is fruitful, the form and duration of the companionship should get defined by the people involved. It's a tool of reflection and action to allow and encourage new peasant installations.

## **SoLiLa! Good food for everyone!**

### **...AND FOR FREE!**

*This article is a summary of a text which was written by three members of SoLiLa collective and is based on their experiences, opinions and processes of reflection. Even if many of it might be shared by the collective this is not a group opinion.*



SoLiLa! Comes from  
Solidarisch

Landwirtschaften!

„farming solidarily!“

and is a collective that was born along with the occupation of some land in Vienna in 2012. After only 10 days the nearly two hectares of land along with hundreds of planted seedlings was evicted by privat security and all build

infrastructure destroyed. In may the following year we again occupied a fallow land, this time in Donauefeld, a traditional vegetable production area nort east of the Danube river which is a current target of the cities „development“ policy. Again we got evicted after eleven days, but this time we manged to recover some of the seedlings from the soil and relocated

them to the land of a initiative of some friends. To not be constantly threatened of eviction and move our working focus away from press work, mobilisation, maintenance of infrastrucur and negotiations more towards actual agriculture, we then decided for this year to rent some land. The idea to strengthen and widen strucutres of solidarity in Vienna by producing and destributing vegetables non-commercially took a big part in this decision. To be precise we actually didnt rent the land we cultivate this year but are more or less tolerated; up till now we neither have signed a contract with the municipality nor have we paid any rent..

To farm solidarily means to us to work orientated by the needs, work non commercially and collectively, break down the devision between consumer and producer and make the harvested produce available to all who need it. Farming solidarily also means to us enriching existing left autonomous structures and networks in vienna by the self-determined production of food and supply several political groups and spaces with vegetables.

Our field now is situated in Lobau, a nature reserve on the outskirts of Vienna. Twice a week we have open field days when everyone is invited to farm and harvest together. According to necessity there is partially nearly everyday somebody from the colletive present. To bigger actions like the plantig and harvesting of the potatoes up to 40 people showed up. To talk about organisational stuff we meet once a week for a plenary to check the finances, plan events or parties, but also to educated us as a group, work on group dynamics and reflections on hierachies are important aspects. The distribution of the harvest is mostly done by bike.

This season group of people living in trailors, two house projects, two free shops, a self-organized cafe and our own stomachs were the (ir)-regular recipients. Since it is our wish to not only feed the people organizsed in the left scene, soon there will hopefully be a distribution point in the shared office of some critical initiatives along with the SoliLa-corner in the free shops.

### **About the dificulty of giving away vegetables for free**

In spring we invited several groups and collective to present our new focus, to grow and give away vegetables self-organized. We had wanted to

discuss and plan together how harvest, distribution and storage could be handled. But look at this – hardly anybody showed up! And also after repeatedly asking there were few replies. We were astonished. There was nobody in Vienna interested in autonomously produced, tasty vegetables that were free of pesticides? Was it that food simply didn't play any role in left circles – apart from antispecicist ideas? We thought that several factors accounted for that:

Still it seems easy to feed one self on stolen or dumpstered stuff, food production is happening mostly outside of the cities and often in other parts of the world. The close connection between displacements, migration, industrialised agriculture and slave-like working conditions in tomato greenhouses is only noticed on the borders of the Fortress Europe. Growing vegetables in urbanised Vienna is not only a topic of little urgency in the everyday of political activism, it also suits perfectly in a „competitive“ city. In the recent „urban-gardening-Hype“ along with sponsored community gardens and mobile raised-bed systems, a sceptical attitude towards urban agriculture is quite understandable. The trendy urban garden with its promise of individual creative city appropriation is not only an excellent strategy of pacification, it also fires the upgrading of districts and by this way the expulsion of the financially less-sound inhabitants. Opposed to the neoliberalization of the city we see SoliLa! as a practical attempt to appropriate our selves of space and play – according to our own ideas and needs. connecting food sovereignty and the right-to-city movement central to us, since both approaches ask the same question – who decides about the things that concern us all?!

Furthermore food production brings up the bad associations of tradition, patriarchy, homeland, blood and soil. During National Socialism the image of an idealised peasant life and the role of agriculture ensuring the alimentation of the „own people“ was a central part of fascist ideology and policy. And there are also obvious current brown tendencies in agriculture and environmentalism, consciously trying to blur the difference between „nature conservation“ and „homeland conservation“ (Heimatschutz) as well as between „local“ and „native“.

For that reason its important to us to build critical structures of solidarity and not leave the field to the Nazis. We oppose to this taking over and want to appropriate our selves not only to the access to land but also the discussion about it. Because peasant resistance and self-determined food production are central parts of emancipatory movements in many parts of the world.

More information about SoliLa, current actions and news on <http://solila.blogspot.eu>.

## Nyeléni Austria\*

This text will briefly document the process of Nyéléni in Austria. It was written by two participants at the 1st Austrian forum of food sovereignty.

The 1st forum of Nyéléni for food sovereignty took place from the 13th to the 17th of April in 2014 in Goldegg, Salzburg, Austria. The goal of the forum was to open up space for networking, exchange and discussions; to create regional structures; to deepen the common understanding of food sovereignty.

Following the 1st European forum in 2011 in Krems (AUT), the targeted goal of this forum was to strengthen, to network and to (re)vitalise the movement of food sovereignty (Esou) in Austria. Being a central and visible event, the forum is and has always been part of a process which goes beyond the time of the forum. In the forefront, regional groups has been organised – on the one hand for contextual preparation through mainly thematic preparation work done by small pear groups. Therefore, participants could be part of the arrangement of the forum, and locally embedded and personal contacts and synergies were created. Also after the time of the forum, regional groups continue to meet and go on working out together topics related with food sovereignty. On the other hand, as wide mobilisation on a local level took place, the idea of Esou was carried on into areas in which the concept has not been well-known so far.

More than 200 people from Austria and a few from neighbour countries participated the forum. Ensuring women, farmers and young people being



not underrepresented, quotas were manifested at the pre-selection of participants. But it showed up that the run for the forum in some regions was not quite as strong as expected in the beginning. More than half of the participants were under the age of 35 years, but only approximately 20 % are working in the agricultural sector. The participants of the forum gave reason for the low quota of farmers as the temperatures were unexpectedly warm just before the forum. According to the fact that many farmers are stuck to their farms due to the work depending on the saison, future fora might be better taking place during the winter months. The vast amount of younger people – they are often active in consumers' initiatives such as foodcoops and/or in an academian context – can most likely be accounted for that the concept of Esou is still very much academically minted in Austria, and rather well-known in bigger cities like Graz, Wien and Linz than on the countryside. Comparibly, the quota of gender worked out quite well: 45,3% of the participants were masculinely socialised, 54,7% femaly.

During the forum, formed which five thematic key distribution, markets work and social goods and acces to



small groups were worked according to aspects: production; and food networks; welfare; common land and other

resources; political frame conditions. Besides the contextual work of the topics, also the method of open space was used to work out concrete strategies and ideas for the realisation of food sovereignty. Hence, planning on a regional and superregional level, 22 projects and actions were developed due to the work of the small groups with different thematic foci. For example, a farm bourse ([www.hofgründer.at](http://www.hofgründer.at)) which provides information and consultation for potential farm founders and farm owners is ment to be established. Besides te resulting networking, also workshops and other events shall be organised. Such a platform for networking especially is seen as an important step, since, on the one hand, many Farms have no subsequent followers (disinterest of the children or childless), and on the other hand, the debut phase in agriculture is quite difficult for many young people (no access to land and low amount of social/economic capital.)

Also the situation of the harvesting helpers in regions dominated by vegetable farming is quite precarious (missing social insurance, very low wages and excessively long working hours, missing workers' safety regulations, etc.). That is why the goal of the harvesting helpers' campagne is to pick out the working conditions of (migrative) seasonal workers as a central theme, and consequently to improve them effectively, to enlarge alliances with labour unions as well as to support the self-organisation of harvesting helpers.

The „Bauernzeitung“ („Farmers' newspaper“) is the weekly newspaper with the highest edition in rural areas. Within the forum, a meiden guerilla action was planned which is supposed to infiltrate subversive contexts into this conservative newspaper so that a wider mass of conventional farmers will hopefully be addressed.

In the afternoon of the 17th of april, the forum was taken to an end with a „market of ideas“ which was welcoming also the neighbours and those people who didn't take part at the forum. At this market, different organisations and initiatives presented themselves by providing information, exchanging, giving taste samples, playing theater, singing songs and other perfromances. Next to many others, there was food sovereignty music and a quiz, milk tasting and a play-along theater.

The process of Nyéléni will be carried on even after the forum. The different regional groups regularly but sometimes also unregularly prepare meetings which help to exchange latest happenings, actions and developments in the region; for strengthening and carrying further the idea of food sovereignty; and for realising planned projects. Time will show if the euphoric atmosphere from the forum will last and if the targeted projects will be further developed and realised...

A detailed report about the fori will be soon published as a pamphlet and is ready to be read at: [www.ernaehrungssouveraenitaet.at](http://www.ernaehrungssouveraenitaet.at).

---

\*We see the concept of a national state as a construct of modernity which targets to create in- and exlusiveness, to build up boarders to the outside and enforces homogeneity to the inside.

# QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

## *You didn't content with us*

This is the story about women, lived and built up by women. They are the main actresses in this story ... but no, never being victims. Doubtlessly, it is a story of the Western world because there is no doubt that women living in other parts of our globalized world live way awfuller experiences and the intensity of suppression which they suffer is not imaginable for us. Nevertheless, this is no excuse to accept what is happening in our surrounding. This story is a Western one also because the context of the story takes place in this part of the world; in old Europe.

This story could begin in the prehistoric time when women were already caring for the one who needed help. The women of the Neanderthal people had an exceptional knowledge of plants, how to eat them as well as to use them for medical purposes. The people of Cro-Magnon probably learned from them, maybe, as time passed by, they also developed their knowledge by themselves and collected own experiences during dozens of millenniums populating this planet from the Iberian peninsula to the great steppes of the North and until the Caspian Sea.

This story could continue in a cold cave in the West of the River Rhine in the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It was the time when the Frankish extended their regime. Profane rites of fertility were predominated in those caves: Women and men lied down together without knowing with whom. It didn't matter anyway because the purpose of this was to render homage to mother nature and to give further the gift of life. Different women who knew the body and nature heated up the cave and prepared a stimulating atmosphere by spreading smells and chants so that young women could go from one man to another and could enjoy their sexuality. But already at this time, first catholic fears were sneaking through those regions. They arrived from the south, from the Christianised, Gallic-Romania population. It was not rarely that some of these heathenish orgasmic nights ended up by the visit of the bishop screaming at the demoniac side of this action and

accompanied by Frankish soldiers who beated up men and locked away women.

For continuing telling this story, we could also switch to the epoche in which the Romanic cathedrals were built; it was the 8<sup>th</sup> century; while the church had invented the inquisition to knock out heretics and to cope with the female Catharses. Women remained being dominated but could use freely plants and other gifts of nature. Obviously, the word of witchery began to spread everywhere and heretics were started to be burnt. It was assumed as being bad to use plants, to wash oneself with water and to care for an appropriate hygienic – diseases fell into the hands of men and into monasteries.

Doubtlessly, this story begins with a grownup inquisition and the mass incineration of witches during this period of time which we call the modern age. Released by wars lasting for years and years and by times of starving, the black pest served as the reason and excuse for the incineration of witches. The image of the bad witches which has been constructed by the yearlong work of the church spreaded more and more within the famished people being tired of many deaths, wars and hate. During just more or less two centuries, the inquisition killed or alively burnt more than 20 millions of women. The prevention of diseases was put aside and the treatment became a science studied exclusively by men. Women were forbidden to practice any function. Absolutist kings had a bath only once a year, while a suppressed and subservient people being filled up with fear forgot to know the gifts of nature and life on the countryside, and because they felt forced to escape into big cities during wars and famines in order to feed the industrial township.

Women were meant to be dumped, but it didn't work out. Many witches were killed and now we are screaming out: They were witches, they are witches and they will be witches. Here are the descendants which dance over the flames day by day. Let's fight for freedom and for passing the time of suppression by men for good. You are the lovers of the fire, the destructor of all. Burn the church and the state for finally burning the patriarchate and, starting from there, to evoke a society of women and man which doesn't belong to men only – like the one of today.

They want to burn women again, but we will stand up from the fire, our lives belong to us and our bodies are our properties. Dancing on the flames we shout out: We are witches. Make the suppressors shivering because the fight continues. Our released power will be the one of those you burnt. Because there is no greater wisdom than the one we have taken possession of by ourselves. No human knows better its body than a woman herself.



For those, for us and for future women.  
The Agropunk witches of the mountain villages

## Agroecology

### Intro:

For a few years, *agroecology* has become some kind of fashion. In December 2012, the French ministry of agriculture was using this expression in a discourse on the coming agricultural trends. But behind that name they had put a collection of techniques calling for intensified precision agriculture, a doubled green revolution and other disguises of ecological engineering that are far from questioning the current agricultural model, and that only serve to put a green blanket over a capitalist vision of agricultural production.

A collective of associations and organisations that are working with agroecology wrote a calling to stop the reoccurring political overtaking of a word and a possibility for change. It's this text that several of us found interesting and wanted to share.

The working mode of a collective for a peasant agroecology and the forms of actions (interventions close to institutions, conferences...) are not exactly the ones we use, but we still want to continue to follow (from far, with our means) what's happening and where it is leading.

**Hoping that this text will also inspire you!**

# **Collective for a peasant agroecology**

**on 27 January 2014**

## **Communiqué**

The organizations which signed the communiqué decided to form into a «collective for an peasant agroecology». This position text is a first step. After organic farming, fare trade, ecoconstruction, society wide project carried by agroecology is also being roundabout. Our collective don't believe that the technician easy path could answer political and environmental issues. It intends to defend values and promote initiatives carried by peasants, citizens, and all actors of the society movement, and denounce fake solutions.

The present communiqué acts also as the beginning of closening work, of convergence, and collective organization. The collective is opened to all organizations which recognize themselves in this approach.

## **Toward an peasant agroecology**

We, organized social movements, associations, worker-unions, and professionals, say that there is a peasant agroecology in France. We are obliged to qualify it as «peasant agroecology» to distinguish it from the minister's of Agriculture communication campaign which carries the flag of agroecology. Only to better hide the headlong of industrial agriculture towards financiarization of nature and bioeconomics.

In fact, industrial methanizers, which diverts food production to favouring the waste of energy, direct sowing with Round Up® herbicide and genetic technologies destined to patent seeds are tricks that scandalously inscribe under this ministry's banner of agroecology. Also, the last, by elaborating a farming orientation law and claiming it agroecology, helps validating a law on intellectual propriety which, by patents on biochemicals, molecular and genetics enlarges the power of transnationals on all domains of the living and forbids peasant seeds!

Peasant agroecology is also a corpus of living practices and social movements with a common political objective: a social and ecological

agriculture anchored within territories. It includes itself through a movement of global societal transformation reaching all activity sectors (energy, transformation, market exchange, transportation, habitat, education, health...). We criticize the productive ideology, the agro-industrial model and even the concept of agricultural development. The term development is assimilated to the notion of unlimited economic growth. This notion is antinomic with the living, which development is not made only of growth, but is contained in complex dynamics balance at all organisation levels. Applied to agriculture, development is a mirage kept by petrochemical inputs and subsidies. The french ministry's projet perpetuates an agricultural model in wich human work is taxed, employment is destroyed and the capital's interests preserved. Fossile fuel is granted, and negative impacts are to the collectivity to pay, and the benefits are privatized. At the present time, there are in France 5 million unemployed, counting landless peasents, and 500 000 farmers.

It is an aberrant situation in a climate warming context which needs a reduction on fossil energies consumption and a significant increase in agricultural population. Since the eighties, there is no more growth in cultural yield but only the growth of fossil energy consumption which replaces human work by mecanisation, the growing use of chemical inputs and the enlargement of holdings surface. Today, only a massive peasant installation is able to answer ecological, food supplies and social challenges that we are all facing.

The collapse of the breton's agro-industrial model leads us to face reality : rather than sticking our head in the sand waiting the return of an innaccessible growth, facing the crisis and administrated precarity, today we reach the time of fundamental choices. The generalisation of an ecological agriculture is not out of reach but stands as a real political choice going further than simple technical evolutions. Agroecology reverses the hierarchy of knowledge, questioning an academism that opposes know-how and theorical knowledge. Scientific and technical knowledge cannot be dissociated form popular knowledge and practices ; they are its expression. The first agronomic knowledges were peasant knowledge and know-how

which never stopped to adapt to their environment and to societies. Practices which claim to be agroecology are alive and in the heart of creative, cultural and social processes. Opposing to privatization of the living, by reclaiming the concrete realization of collective rights for commons, they fight against a dominant economical model based on the supremacy of ownership.

Peasant agroecology is before all a tool of social transformation. This concept is shared with other peasant and civil society organizations in the world and in particular with the Via Campesina, in a society project necessarily based on peasantry. We go with a hand outstretched towards people whom their salaried work, independent or domestic, participate in the real economy. The goal is to put back humans and nature at the center of social questioning, to exit the dictatorship of money and finance. We will continue to meet to build bases for our actions, to weigh against tries to frame, by the travest of words or bureaucratic constraints, popular initiatives with a social and ecological goal.

### Signatory organizations of the collective:



to contact the collective : [agroecologie.paysanne@gmx.fr](mailto:agroecologie.paysanne@gmx.fr)



# The relation to animals and livestock keeping

For the meetings of «Ramène Ta Fourche» («take your pitch fork»), a local network of the greater west of France, we decided to discuss about our relation towards animals. We were about twenty, in a garden taking advantage of the first rays of sun of the season: some vegans, some breeders of cows, chickens or earth worms, people who wanted to become cultivators or farmers, people living in rural collectives,...

After a round where everyone could share their view on the question of animals and livestock keeping, during with many people were desperately looking for words, we tried to find a way of expression where nobody would get hurt, how emotional! Three big topics were showing up: the question of ethics, the fights (especially around the electronic chip to be implanted) and breeding techniques. (the account might not reflect the order of discussion, and certainly will leave out some nuances...)

We will start trying to define the keeping of livestock: a domestication, a modification of an animal with the interest of an outcome (of meat, milk, affection, wool, work, eggs, honey, fertilizer...). So animal farming is creating two big «ethical problems»: killing and domination.

We agree enough to say there is no occidental society that vitally needs animal keeping to assure nutrition (we can live without meat) neither for the production of vegetables (even if the manure is easy and not as expensive as nitrogen). So the question really is an ethical one.

## **What kind of relationship with which animals?**

For some, livestock keeping is above all a question of relating to animals. These relationships are demanding as well as enriching, and some express a need of these types of relationships in their daily life: taking care of animals is a good reason to get up in the morning, get a feeling for one's moods or theirs, they love that...some add that the relation to a flock -rather than just one individual animal- is what interests them most, and that the relations among the animals also make the interest in keeping them.

We referred to the work of Jocelyne Porcher, a sociologist of the National Institute for Agricultural Research, according to which a co-construction exists between humans and animals and that the beauty of these relations needs to be preserved. The disappearance of the animal keeping would then be a loss in terms of understanding of differences, of co-existing with non-human beings in the daily life and acquiring a sensitivity with forms of communications beyond words. By this argument, we are reminded that millions of people don't have relations with animals in their daily life more than in a supermarket shelf, and that there is a growing disconnection between the consumption of animal products and the life of these animals. On the other hand, animal keeping reduces the space available for wild life and therefore for possible co-existing with non-domesticated animals (for example the disappearance of the aurochs for extending the pastures for cattle).

For others, keeping animals is nothing but a form of modern slavery: under the pretext of «taking care» of animals, they are kept sick, dominated and we decide about their life and death. Might be that we are now in a moment similar to the one when the Europeans started to question if women had a soul, or the indigenous, or the blacks, ....and in some 300 years the same questions will be asked about exploitation of vegetables....These questions around animal keeping are connected to notions of spirituality, especially making the distinction human/animal/plant. Right now we are seeing ourselves as superior and therefore give us a role of the caring and the dominating. But how can we be sure that we are caring?

For others again, the question of domination is a fact that cannot be denied, but that needs to be accepted, even in «small-scale» animal farming.

Are we asking us too many questions while the ants are asking less in their using of aphids?

We remind each other a lot of the importance, we pass a lot of time wanting to find our place, to feel good with what we are doing, but that desire is also coming from a society where individualism is overboarding.

The killing, the stage that often ends the relation with a farmed animal is seen by some as an integral part of the relationship, accounting to death.

Others are asking themselves how to skip that stage, but often find themselves confronted with material limits: in a flock, killing some animals allows the others to find enough space for sufficient nutrition. An example was quoted of breeding cattle and choosing to let live all animals for longer than normally, and letting them have a social life in flock for the time of life that is granted to them. There is actually enough pasture in this farm for the cattle to stay there for 3 or 4 years before they are sold as veal calves.

For the breeders, the conditions of slaughter are very hard, including in small cooperative slaughterhouses.

### **Animal keeping and biodiversity**

We talk also about the connection between animal keeping and biodiversity: in the swamps, if one doesn't mow to make hay, the soil drains and an ecosystem specific to humid areas is lost. Animal husbandry is a way of maintaining the landscape if one answers to its current needs and uses: the land is shaped by economic and technical requirements.

If we stop breeding, there will be much more forest and other ecosystems based on cultivation of plants (or more sealed land if nothing else changes in the world).

In some places, there wouldn't be any humans without farming animals (we decide to talk about what's happening around us and whatever the Inuit might be doing should serve to justify the positions we take in our environment). And if animal husbandry was disappearing now, the animals that have become dependant on human activity will disappear along with it. That also raises questions about «biodiversity», about the image of nature. (for example installing a chicken farm in a place led by a nature conservation association who see the chickens as snake predators, a protected species, has made some difficulties)

### **What kind of farming are we talking about?**

The question of scale is raised: the 200 laying hens of Bois Joubert look like a lot for the ones who have a critical view of livestock keeping and very little for the «traditional agricultural world» (who rather have farms of 2000 to 6000 chickens in our department), which places the ones who try to get

out of the classic model, however without challenging animal keeping as such, in an uncomfortable position facing the whole world.

There are also farmers in the industrial system who say they love their animals....other systems are talked about, for example an experience of permaculture in Austria with «breeding aurochs» in the mountains, or pigs in the forest.

In small farms one can assure conditions more favourable to the well-being of the beasts: life on the fields, giving them a possibility to be in a flock and have a social life, ect. From a point of view of ecological efficiency, its always possible to argue that its the big industrial farms that are more efficient than the small ones: the rustic chicken eat more, need more space, for a production

inferior to battery chickens, so the indoor breeding minimizes all this and makes the manure mangement easier...but its not efficiency that mostly interests us, and refusing to enter into this kind of logic, of cost-efficiency, of «ecological perfection » is also a fight that needs to be lead.

Then also the question of economics is asked with the animal husbandry: the laying hens are kept in the farm for 2 or 3 years, the phase in which they are considered to be productive, and they have a life span of 10 years. Is it possible to get out of these economical relations with animal farming?

For some it is that economic relationship thats the reason for this daily relating to animals (production of milk, eggs).

In the end, it is quite often the economic questions that conditions the form and size of the farm. The question around food in the financing «household» comes up: actually its representing less than 10 percent of expenses: is it a fight worth fighting so that animal feed would be a bigger expense than other, less neccesary ones?

### **Farming animals as a means of struggle**

The question of animal husbandry can also be asked in other terms, for example in the ambit of Via Campesina, were the small farmers are fighting against the agrobusiness. The small famer is then also perceived as a means of autonomy and of anti-capitalist fight. The people dont only do it

as part of an ego-trip but because they think that preserving the animal farming will allow resistance against privatisation of life and the loss of control over our own lives. In this perspective, the vegan position could be perceived as facilitating the work of multinational companies dreaming of the possibility to produce synthetic meat, something also important to fight against. Having a little bit of life stock can also be a way of resisting restrictions that are always getting more and make more and more dependant: ban of keeping poultry in most cities, ban of slaughtering animals....

There is a connection to autonomy (for example animal traction as opposed to dependency from fuel), to ancient knowledge, for example weaving or tanning. We have less and less conscience about where the products around us are coming from and these practices allow us to recover this knowledge. To be able to kill one self an animal can be a conscious act, considering the quite present taboo concerning death in our society, making our lifes more artificial. To know how to kill, does that mean accepting the idea of death?

Defending the keeping of livestock is the defence of something quite patrimonial (the practices of our grandparents we dont want to see disappear), maybe also conservative, while veganism is being a rupture, a model completely different to the existing. Is it that the question is rather to fight for freedom that is endangered by the current societal model, or to fight for completely new relations?

### **In our middle**

Very quickly we realize that the discussion returns to personal feelings: some have the need to live with animals to feel good, others find this unbearable because of the violence that that implies, especially the killing. It is a sensitive topic in RtF, as we have seen in several occasions, and strongly in the camp in Germany. That return to painful feelings: the sens of guilt of animal keepers being made «assasins», the pain of vegans that could feel excluded in certain situations. How to ensure co-existence?

People of different collectives of life and work tell of this questions coming up. In one place, the collective food is vegan and there isn't any animal

keeping: they have some donkeys for traction, of which one vegan person is taking care (which could cause him or her some troubles in the relationships with the people who work with that model of animal keeping: veterinaries, farriers...having quite different visions and approaches). They also have bees but that's accepted. They have some discussions about laying hens, but for the moment the sensitivity among the vegetarians is shared enough to postpone the question. In another agrarian collective, where they grow veggies and grains and where there is one activity of cattle keeping and milk processing, one of the people who took part in the animal husbandry became vegan, raising some questions in the centre of the collective; for some a challenging of the livestock keeping, for some attempts of coexisting, but that finally concluded with this person leaving, followed by many and interesting discussions. In La ZAD, very different visions and struggles get together, from anti-speciesist to «classical» animal farmers, and the discussion doesn't come to be held. Partly because the position of the opposition to animal keeping is a minoritarian position, and so the ongoing position would have to fight to reaffirm its point of view. The critic to animal keeping can lead to a distance concerning the agricultural world, which could be problematic for the relations to alliances (a pressing question in the ZAD as well as around RtF meetings). But still we all agree to fight against the big industrial animal farms.

To finish, we ask our selves about ways of discussing these questions serenely, if possible. It's a question of getting to know in practice, not only in theory, of accepting the different points of view, and of using the imperfections of the moment to improve....the question of coexistence also comes up, of what kind of living together we can have in spite of the differences...and then we all had a meal together...

We decided to meet up to follow the discussion during another meeting this time being more centred on the problematic that animal keepers encounter in their work, mainly the increasing obligations (implanted chips, veterinarian controls, slaughterhouses,...) that are imposing norms suitable for industrial animal keeping to all farmers (a good means to make the small farms disappear...)...To be continued in the next n°?!

# Nyeléni youth and food sovereignty

## Young people in action: struggles and visions for Food Sovereignty

*Peasant villages which resist, feed the fertile soil where the youth grow to join their hands together in a creation of the future. The youth which is the people, the youth which is the earth.[1]*

Young people in the rural areas of the world are facing one of the greatest challenges in all history: **gathering the testimonies of the farmers' struggle and at the same time facing the new challenges for the construction of a radically different world.** All over the world, the neoliberal capitalist system has imposed a political and economic model of industrial agriculture, intensive monoculture and of land grabbing driven by transnational corporations with the approval of national and local governments. This model –which promotes the privatization of all natural resources including land, forests, water and planted seeds - destroys livelihoods and rural cultural heritage, and exhausts Mother Earth.

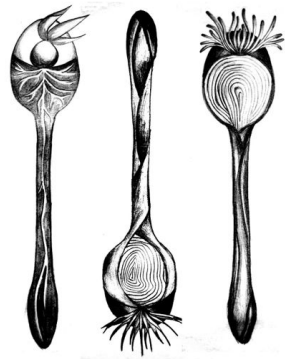
## Fighting against...

**Throughout the world, young people are standing up to the capitalist neoliberal system.** In the streets and in the countryside, they are fighting to build new pathways for our society and planet to follow. The industrialisation and mercantilization of agriculture creates a system in which very few people hold power over nature and over all the different phases of the food distribution system (from its production to its distribution). This system puts a barrier on access to natural resources and to the land which farmers need in order to produce healthy food, and it also denies access to local markets where they could get a fair price for their products without having to compete with prices which are below the cost of production of imported and subsidised foods. Above all, this system strips the farmers of their role in society and the youth is fighting to safeguard this role. **They are fighting for the right to produce food for their communities and for the right to have sovereignty over their lands, their seeds and their traditional knowledge...and they are doing so in new ways and by new means.** From the youth's point of view, the theme

of access to land is a key element of the fight, especially now that land grabbing and the system of large landed estates is more and more prominent all over the world. For this reason in cities and in the countryside, young farmers are occupying land and territories to produce local food, and to challenge the neoliberal capitalist model which allows corporations and other private interests to grab, exploit and destroy land and by doing so to destroy the way of life of communities all over the world. The current industrial food system is not able to offer a future to humanity. The earth is a resource which is shared amongst all of us, it belongs to all of us and we all belong to it. The only alternative proposal capable of recovering the life and dignity of these people and of encompassing our shared struggles, and standing against the current capitalist financial system is Food Sovereignty. And young people represent the future of Food Sovereignty in the world.

### Fighting for...

Young people's struggles are the product of over 500 years of resistance to colonialism and are fed by the inviolable right to imagine and build a way of life from the land around them in balance with nature and its ecosystems (the Pachamama)[2]. The young people of Via Campesina integrated in more than 160 organisations in over 70 countries have taken over the legacy of this long history and of the farmer's struggle waged by the people of Via Campesina. Young people of all continents are showing us that another world is possible.



On the one hand, **through the participation of the youth in demonstrations of struggle and resistance for Food Sovereignty worldwide.** Examples of this are the MST cooperatives in Brazil, land occupations in Andalusia, the fight against GM maize in South Africa, or the struggles against Monsanto led by farmers in India.

On the other hand, **through the work of their organizations in promoting self-management, participatory decision-making, greater recognition of the key role of youth and of the creation and use of new forms of organization and of action.** On the streets of many countries,



we are seeing the beginnings of movements such as the Occupy movement, the Indignados, and the Arab Spring - driven by many of these young people who are building new ways of organizing society from the bottom up.

The youth are fighting for land rights, for comprehensive agrarian reform and to ensure the rights of people working the land. Young people are fighting for another way of producing food, using **agroecology** and its principles as a basis to build local food systems that work with nature and not against it, and which claim rights over seeds – this is our heritage and it works at the service of humanity. They develop markets and processing systems as well as local distribution systems in order to find an alternative to the market that oppresses them. Agroecology and its principles meet the vision of a local, ecological and economic model which is also cultural and political and which young people want for their present and their future. Young people are fighting for gender equality and against the patriarchal system. They are fighting for the rights of young women farmers and for the right of access to quality sexual and reproductive medicine. The youth of today are fighting to ensure dignified conditions for all, they are fighting for a future in rural areas. In order to carry out their struggles, young people know the importance of education and training, as more and more states, as well as national and local governments do not address their educational needs. Therefore there has been an increasing tendency for self-training, new training initiatives and popular education at the heart of peasant resistance groups as well as the practice of agroecology. An education to live, to think and to find new ways to organize oneself. An education that helps us to decolonize our hearts, thoughts, words and actions. These are the paths that the youth are taking right now.

### **We are the present**

Our first step is local: we work the land or attempt to work the land. Each of us tries to live according to the agricultural model and the model of society that we claim to follow. We see our struggles reflected in the struggle of others in the field, in cities and in any other places where people are fighting against the neoliberal capitalist financial system.

Therefore, the second step we undertake is union work: this is seen through the militancy that we express in every debate in which our movement takes part or supports through our efforts. In this way we build networks of militant alliances with students, urban activists, farm workers, consumers, migrants. If young people do not defend themselves and if they don't work together, then no one will do it for them! **We are not the future, we are the present!**

¡Alerta, alerta, alerta que camina, la juventud en lucha de la Vía Campesina!

[1] Poem of Javier García Fernandez, young activist of the SOC-SAT. Original version in Spanish.

[2] Pachamama, Mother Earth is the highest divinity of the Andean people.

## RTF-TOOLS

### Meeting organisation

This is not a fixed methodology but a suggestion of practical tools to organise RTF meetings. It departs from the idea that the organisation of these meetings is shared between a local group that takes care of logistics and a group taking care of content

Questions on Location / local group

- amount of places for meetings, amount of sleeping spaces- available spaces: kitchen, welcome space, meeting spaces, party space, resting area, dormitories, outside- material and financial needs of hosting space- procurement of materials and food- availability of internet, printing, phone, ...- local issues, actions ...?

**Before and during assembly-** clear welcome of the participants- collective review (daily?): group guidelines on living and meeting conducts, collective time, timing of meetings, content- regular synthesis on decisions and

meeting issues- reminders on practical stuff: collective tasks, money, ...- attentiveness to minutes

**Preparation of content in order of priority**- agreement on location and meeting objectives in assembly and/or on Carrots- call-out on European list to organisers, for content, themes- announcement on the EU list on dates, location, issues- inscription of motivated people on carrots- if needed: questionnaires, call-outs to fine tune themes- first draft of a general program

**Communication**- address the EU list and/or local lists and/or external- send first general mailing several months in advance- send mail reminder ( 3 months prior)- *put information on website*- send practical mail 1 month prior: how to get there, food, program, needs

**Preparation in situ**- local group: prepare procurement (orders, harvest, stock)- local group: find materials, install the space- content group: synthesis of intervention proposals and discussion issues, advice on the program- content group: preparing days programs, plannings, daily life, task lists- both groups: preparing logistics and meetings views- both groups: prepare visits, voluntary work on site, contacts with outsiders

**After the meetings**- cleaning up- share/distribute rests, stuff,...- gather meeting minutes with Bulletin group- thank you mailing and final state of affairs on EU list- announce follow-up, calendar,etc...

## RtF communication tools

The constellation RtF contains local groups, stars (which form local groups) and working groups, which are spread all over Europe. Sharing information and organising collectively is a necessity that we fulfil mostly, in a short as well as in a far distance. For that reason we have created a group called "Propaganda". The role of "Propaganda" is creating and providing these tools, as well as attending and explaining to those people, that wish to use them, how to. The idea is not to "possess" tools without knowing their potentials, but respond to specific needs through appropriate techniques.

**Another mission is providing the keys of organisation of meetings and assemblies, with the aim that each person wishing to engage would have the knowledge to fulfil (de lo que ya se ha realizado y antecedentes en la materia.)**

The virtual tools so far:

-Mailing Lists: For our communication and sharing internal information. There are specific lists for each working group or local group: [reclaimthefields.org/mailling-lists](http://reclaimthefields.org/mailling-lists)

-Website: To put in place various information. The Website is our “visible face”. Right now you are on the page reading this text.

-Crabgrass: To organise collectively and store internal documents. It's built up in a network (RtF Europe), groups (working and local groups) and committees (group internal): **IMPORTANT: HTTPS!!!** [we.riseup.net/rtf](https://we.riseup.net/rtf)

-Etherpads: For writing collectively. You can create them here: **HTTPS** [pad.riseup.net](https://pad.riseup.net)

-FTP-Server: For storing internal documents or sharing them online. On this link you can find the public part: [we.riseup.net/serveur+ftp/ftp-server](https://we.riseup.net/serveur+ftp/ftp-server)

-Calendar: In construction! It will serve to communicate the events, actions, workshops, jobs, etc.. To realise locally where we live and fight.



In practice:

You can prepare a help how to use these tools if you like, writing to [propaganda\[at\]lists.reclaimthefields.org](mailto:propaganda[at]lists.reclaimthefields.org), or following the tutorials that you can find in crabgrass site of the group “Propaganda”. To reach the group, you’ll have to contact us and ask for an invitation. If you wish other tools or working techniques, we ask you to contact us, and that you join us to facilitate a creation.

**We are available for any question, opinion:**  
**[propaganda\[a\]lists.riseup.net](mailto:propaganda[a]lists.riseup.net)**



## Kuwataka

The Martial Art of Kuwe (the hoe) is a combat technique from the Japanese army, originating on the islands of Okinawa in the Edo Epoch(1600-1868).

The population of the Okinawa islands had always been closer geographically and culturally to China and Taiwan. In the beginning of the Edo times, the Satsuma dynasty was ruling on the islands, and installed several rules, which forbade the use of weapons for non-aristocrats along with high taxes with the

hope to subdue the whole region for once. To continue their resistance, the farmers started to use their working tools as weapons, which gave birth to what later, in the end of the 19th century became the Kobudo, literally «farmers fighting arts». Kuwe was not the only tool the farmers transformed to become a weapon: we can actually find several other martial arts that were derived from agricultural tools: the Nunshaku (Chakos), the Japanese flail; the saïs, a type of small hand pitch forks which was used to gather the haystacks; the staff, or Bô, are some of this range of ingenious adaptations. Here we are talking about things natural in an agricultural society, extremely wide spread and totally accepted. There is not a single Kata (form) for the Kuwe, opposed to other martial arts weaponry.

In spite of the Kuwe being known, under different names, to agriculturalists of the whole world, its use as a weapon of self defense is only known in Asia and still here not very wide spread, by its very nature.

Currently it is found in a folkloric context and maybe sometimes in Martial Arts demonstrations without referring at all to peasant struggles.



One could argue that that has to do with a general moving away from fighting techniques, which is generally connected to a preference to go the legal, political or medial way, and that, if arms are used, the choice is weapons that request less mastery, like a machete, or firearms, which are produced in great quantity for that specific use.

However we do see the reappearance of the Kuwa used collectively, in an aesthetic way.



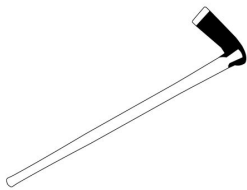
There are groups that practice Kuwataka and turn it into demonstrations supporting a peasantry that is autonomous and free of choice. We could for example observe them in Switzerland on the International day of peasant struggles, on the 17th of April 2011, and also in Brussels in June 2014 around the trial about a ripping out of GMO potatoes.

Without entering into a spiral of violence, this tool and also other agricultural tools (pitch fork, sickle, tractor) immediately install a relationship of actual strength facing authorities, who then back off and give passage to those demonstrations «with the pitch forks in the hands». Are they fearing the peasants, who traditionally haven't hesitated to use physical force and intimidation to make their rights and demands taken into account (Rennes 2006, Kulon Progo, demonstration occupation, The movement of people without land in Brasil)?

To read this fear in the eyes of those who normally impose on us their rules and violence reminds us that, beneath their uniforms, there are hidden just plain human beings, far from being all mighty if one gives them the concrete means to stop going along and get out of their conventional organisation.

What makes the difference, in the end, to our medieval occidental peasants, is that our fighting arts have lost their actuality (except for some laypersons and explorers), whilst the Japanese didn't only conserve them but also cultivated them in a cultural ambit.

The Kuwe aswers to a defensive need by its nature. Its a big staff ornated with a heavy pieace of metal ideal for hitting but also for executing a defense. The specific of the Kuwe, opposed to the Bô (or staff), is exactly this hybrid nature. The execution of techniques special to the staff has become quite available: actually, if its absence of a blade (ejiri) might make it appear less dangerous then the other, thats because one forgets the weights of the kuwaba: by giving counterweight it allows extremly fast movements making it possible to hit with the blade. The other part of the handle (egashira) makes the Kuwe similar to the staff, if a little shorter, which again allows faster moves, along with withdrawals and avances. The kuwaba can be used to project the force of the ground on the adversairy, even to the extent of grapping a limp.



**Resources:**

La Nouvelle Histoire du Japon, Pierre François Souyri, Edition Perrin, 2010.

Kobudo d'Okinawa, Kenyu Chinen, Sedirep, 1985.



Reclaim the Fields is a constellation of people and collective projects willing to go back to the land and reassume the control over food production. We are determined to create alternatives to capitalism through cooperative, collective, autonomous, real needs oriented small scale production and initiatives, putting theory into practice and linking local practical action with global political struggles.

**[www.reclaimthefields.org](http://www.reclaimthefields.org)**