



RECLAIM THE FIELDS



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ENGLISH VERSION



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If you want to help translated this bulletin into your own language, get in touch with the local group of your region or with the bulletin team. We will help you to lay it out and publish it: bulletin@lists.reclaimthefields.org.

WHO ARE WE ?

We are young peasants, landless and prospective peasants, as well as people who want to reassume the 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. 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.



EVALUATION OF THE RTF TOOLS

GOALS

FUNCTIONING

BULLETIN

- To keep traces of what's happening in the constellation where many people come and go.
 - To be a collective creation process.
 - To be an international communication tool for actions and background debates (for reports of the last General Gathering, proposals for the next in particular).
- In 4 languages (English, French, German, Spanish).
 - Every gathering organizes the next's preparation (before it was the hosts of the gathering that would manage the publication, but it was too much so since London: a team forms during the gathering).
 - Printing and distributing is everyone's duty: always have one on you!
-

WEBSITE

- To collect info.
 - To broadcast info.
 - To manage the mailing lists.
- Some persons take care of technical management
 - The site's content is filled by everyone
-

LOCAL GROUPS

- Links between the constellation stars.
 - The groups can claim to be part of RtF or not.
- As you wish.

EVALUATION

NEXT STEPS

BULLETIN

- Good feedback on the interest for this bulletin. But it needs a lot of energy, for translation in particular.
- A desire to change the front page.
- The next version will come out in english first (though texts can be sent in any language...) Then the translated versions will come.
- New layout in preparation.
- Idea of a common theme for each bulletin.

WEBSITE

- Many tools have been created, but nobody use them...
- No new tools will be created until the existing ones are not used!
- A use guide is being made to help people putting contents on the website.
- Reorganization of the structure to make it more accessible.

LOCAL GROUPS

- French speaker
- Brittany
- UK

GOALS

FUNCTIONING

GATHERING

- To meet on questions of organisation and debates.
- Once every 6 months, hosted by a different place.

EUROPEAN CAMP

- Getting together.
- RtF network life & experience sharing.
- Cravirola, France.
- Rosia Montana, Romania.

CARROTS

- To ensure the connection between the gatherings.
- Through the mailing list.
- Only with people who were part of a gathering or a meeting before.
- No decisions are taken by this group.

THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

- **Farm Network:** training network.
- **Land Access:** to make common the means to access to land and support to land access fights.
- **Seeds:** settlement of a conservation network, collection of legal information, writing of a guide on the multiplication and conservation of the seeds.
- Through the mailing lists.

GATHERING

- Barcelona, Basta, Wieserhoisel & London.
 - The balance is different for each gathering.
 - Some comments on the few peoples that attend (« locals » from « hosting countries » in particular).
 - Reminder about the necessity of people on the spot to organize it, and of adapted infrastructures to meet.
- Next gathering from the 29th of February to the 3rd of March 2012, at Metzcal squat near Turin.
 - Arguments: for the first time in Italy, a quite central position in Europe, links with Val de Susa and anti high speed train struggle, links with local groups and collective gardens, etc.
 - Idea of a possible next gathering in summer near Barcelona (Can Piella).

EUROPEAN CAMP

- In two years

CARROTS

THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

- An issue is about how the information comes back from those thematic groups to the RtF network (not much until now).
 - Another issue is the transmission of the information and missions when people come in and out the groups: make sure that things will be continued.
- **Farm Network:** validation of a charter in France.
 - **Land Access:** a page on the website with all the land occupation calls (with a moderation group: writing of a moderation charter) and a new collection of information to make common the means to access to land and support to land access fights.
 - **Seeds:** set up of a website and a gathering to discuss about this matter and prepare material for a common campaign during a few days (before the meeting in Turin).

REFLECTION ON THE CAMP IN ROSIA MONTANA

WHO IS WRITING THIS TEXT?

I was part of a group of roughly six people who were involved in organizing the camp in Romania, including the work on site in Rosia Montana a month before the camp.

This account is personal and reflects only my view on the camp and the process leading up to it. When I speak about "we" or "the organizing group" or anything like that I state my view of what happened.

Some words to who I am, as I am not from Romania. I am male socialized coming from a middle-class, white background from the chunk of soil that is called Germany. So my view on Romanian society and how things are done in Romania can just be that of a foreigner and I think it is good to have this in mind when reading this text.

WHY THIS TEXT?

For me it seems essential to reflect on how the organization of the camp went, what were difficult situations, issues, tasks and what could be learned when organizing a potential future camp, what worked, what did not, and so on.

I will try to give a critical reflection of

the camp, focusing on issues that were important to me in the process leading to the camp as well as during the camp itself, I do not claim to have a total overview about everything that happened before or during the camp. Also I want to stress that I honour the effort, energy and spirit of all the people who made the camp, its content and an amazing atmosphere possible.

THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING THE CAMP

For me the camp organizing process started 2010 at the assembly in Wieserhoisl, Austria where discussions took place about where to hold the next camp. A fruit of this was when some people travelled to Rosia Montana to get to see the local context and get to know the people involved in the struggle against the mine. This process manifested during the meeting in London at Grow Heathrow where the decision to have the camp in Rosia Montana was taken.

The group that ended up organizing the camp in advance was (more or less) made up of six people who spoke at monthly Skype conferences about how to organize the camp and what was still needed in planning and preparation. Of

these six people, five were in Romania preparing the camp a month in advance taking care of all the practicalities and things needing to be done, and two weeks before the camp more people started arriving and doing some amazing hands-on work in building a kitchen and different other infrastructural necessities for the camp.

Still I think it is important to point out that the five-six people involved in the organization were supposed to take care of all the basic necessities for the working of the camp (space, food, water, electricity, etc.), the content of the camp (schedules for workshops, film screenings, the sessions on the RtF process, connections with the local community, etc.) as well as huge topics like fundraising and mobilization.

In this group there were three people speaking Romanian, two of them native-speakers. These two people are also deeply involved with the Save Rosia Montana campaign and thus had a lot of contacts to people who had materials we needed for the camp, but thus also ended up with a lot of responsibility for basically everything.

LOCATION OF THE CAMP

The Camp took place in Rosia Montana, a village in the Apuseni Mountains of Romania.

Rosia Montana has no bus connection into the village, the only public transport possibility are buses stopping at the village-entrance, from where you still need to walk around 6 kilometres to the center of the village.

The Camp site was located on a plateau above the village, which meant a hike of another 1.5 kilometres uphill on a tiny

path. The plateau is accessible by car, but the road conditions are very bad and the access road does not run through Rosia Montana but through a neighbouring village.

So transport from and to the camp was a major issue and access to the camp was also rather restricted to people able to walk up and down a hill at all times to get down to the village, etc. The transport issue was solved for the most necessary things we had to transport, though during the preparation work on the plateau there were times there was no car and transport was tough. There was also little support to offer to people who were not so well on foot during the camp.

BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the big jobs the organizing team had to deal with was the basic infrastructure of the camp, meaning, space for tents, kitchen, toilets, water, food, tents, etc., as well as the monetary means to get these things (funding).

The Camp was based on an unused property, owned by a family actively involved in the resistance against the mine. The houses as well as the meadows surrounding them served as the grounds for most of the camp activities. Workshops and assemblies took place at tents on the plateau (community grazing land for cattle, horses and sheep).

Some basic infrastructure was in place or had been before for FanFest, a music festival held on the plateau a couple of years ago to support the resistance against the mine. The main issues were to (re)build toilets, have a working stove too cock for possibly a couple of hundred people and most urgently having flowing water for drinking and cooking.

Some of these tasks proved more difficult than imagined and some were only finished the day the camp was officially starting. The process of providing this basic infrastructure took a lot of time and energy from the five people organizing the camp. Especially the two native speakers were constantly swamped with writing mails and making calls about the things we were still lacking, for example trying to organize tents to hold assemblies, pots for the kitchen, and so on.

But as more and more people started to arrive the questions of survival were more or less sorted out and there was time to turn to what was actually going to happen during the camp and how this was going to be structured.

CONTENT

The question about how to structure the camp, meaning how to fit the proposed workshops, collected in advance by the organizing group, and the sessions on the RtF process, had not really been addressed by us who spent a month trying to get together all the basic infrastructure necessary. What had been done was laying out a proposal for the daily structure of the camp, starting hours for morning plenaries and times for meals, as well as proposed times for a scheduled demo and slots for the RtF process, so basically just a rough timetable with lots of empty space.

So two days before the camp (or so) a group of people who had just arrived started to plan the first day of the camp, which was supposed to be a day of welcoming, getting to know one another and sharing about why everyone was there. This worked out rather smoothly, and in the meanwhile another group of people

had organized the schedule for workshops, discussions, working group, meetings, etc. Which ended up being painted up on a wall and all people (participatory) being able to post their own content at whatever times they wanted, with slots being reserved for a demonstration planned for Saturday and slots for the RtF process.

This tentative schedule was turned over on the second day of the camp when nearly all the workshops were cancelled to talk about the demonstration that was supposed to take place two days later. This changing of timetables kept on going the whole camp, as the morning assemblies took up more time than expected and one more direct action was planned which cancelled another day worth of workshops.

Though everybody was aware, that these timetable changes were inevitable a lot of people were frustrated with workshops not happening or not being able to attend certain workshops as more and more had to be put in the same timeslot to fit as many as possible.

Another huge work-load were the times set aside for the RtF process which was meant to be a possibility to reflect about the process RtF had been going through since the last Camp 2009 in Craviola. As well as an evaluation how the tools RtF has created, such as bulletin, website or assemblies, are working or not and how RtF wants to, should or could progress.

These sessions were prepared by a third group of people, of whom most had somehow been involved in RtF for a while, on the spot.

The actions, workshops, etc. that came out of this spontaneous (some might say

chaotic) process were well received and lots of people felt able to join, participate and take initiative during actions as well as at the camp. But some workshops also got lost along the way and were not done, as well as some people felt, that there was too much hour-long plenary talk about actions instead of small groups of people, who wanted to do these actions, planning and coordinating them. What worked very smooth and good, was the coordination with the local community in resistance, as they were always consulted about actions before-hand and if they would agree to such actions or not.

A point that had been planned for the program, which got kinda lost, were skill shares, workshops and practical work with the local community. This was partly due to the “organizing group” not being able to get clear information from the local community when and how this could be possible, as well as the overload of work we were trying to handle.

I personally think that this was one of the weakest points, as this hindered the people from the camp and the local community to get in touch through practical work and interaction and get a feeling for the other. Still there was good fellowship and interactions with the local community which connect everyone (I hope) who was at the camp, to the resistance of Rosia Montana and the people resisting, but this could and should have been much more focused. At least from my point of view.

INTERPRETATION

From the beginning of the camp English became the main language being spoken. This posed difficulties for some people, as they were not as fluent in this language as

others and thus had problems voicing their opinions in assemblies or had the feeling that they would slow down the process if everybody would need interpretation to understand them. We had, with the help of the Interpretation collective Coati, organized equipment for interpretation and some volunteer interpreters. As we had expected more Romanians to turn up, the interpretation was laid out much more for Romanian speakers than other languages. So the interpreters got rather bored with interpreting into a language that very few people needed nor spoke in, and few people even cared to take radios at the beginning of assemblies (which people needed in order to hear to interpretation), which made it even more difficult for people to speak up in their native language as they felt they would hassle everyone with getting a radio.

ATTENDANCE AND MOBILIZATION

One of the things that definitely need reflection is why so few people from “eastern” Europe attended even though the goal of the Camp was to bridge the gap from being a “Western-european” Constellation to being connected further with other parts of Europe, mainly former soviet-union or communist states. From my point of view the Camp failed in this aspect, even though there were people from “Eastern” countries and even people from as far as Turkey had come, but the attendance of Romanians was much lower than we had expected, as well as from other countries in the region.

I think a real analysis to why this happened can not be done by myself, as I am not aware of all the implications of the local contexts and situations. Some things I still want to point out are, that I

am unsure how good we reached out to people, informing them about the camp, which for me remains an open question for now, and my personal realization, that it might be difficult for people to take a vacation to come to Romania for a ten days camp, as the social structure in former communist countries seems quite different from that of post-cold-war capitalist-bloc countries. Still I think we tried and things moved. As this bulletin shows, we have some contributions from people not from “Western” Europe and in that sense have managed to reach out to a certain extent.

OPEN POINTS

There are some issues I did not address so far, of some of which I am aware and concerned, and some might be blind spots in my mind. An issue that I still want to raise is the gender issue, the way it was lived, perceived and performed at the camp. Still I feel unable to do this sufficiently in this text, as the issue is larger than just the camp and what happened there. So my proposition is to have a session at the gathering in Turin about gender and the way it plays a role in structure and activities of RtF how it is part of our activities as a transnational constellation and how to make the confrontation with this issue a continuous part of the activities of RtF.

CONCLUSION

All in all the camp was an amazing experience which, for me, was very energizing and amazing. Having many people from different struggles and backgrounds and such a nice, welcoming atmosphere around the camp made up for all what I might have criticized in the text.

Also the month in Romania working intensively on the camp with four other amazing people made me very happy, even though the process was tough and there were a lot of stressful situations it was an amazing time and opportunity to get to know you four, thank you so much!

As the idea of this text was to reflect about the camp and maybe make some suggestions as to what could be improved for the next organization of the camp, here are some points I have in mind.

- When choosing a locality be aware of how hard or easy it is to reach and what inclusions/exclusions this creates.
- See how many people really are willing to help in the process of organizing the camp.
- Make sure that you have a couple of native speakers (rather more native-speakers than non-natives).
- Try to judge how much work you will have to put into building infrastructure on the camp grounds and see if it is worth the while or if it takes too much energy.
- Make sure that you are enough people to shoulder the infrastructural organizing as well as the thorough planning of the content, as well as questions of how to organize schedules and work with delays and changes in the timetable.
- Make sure, that big agenda points are prepared well beforehand.
- Have a really amazing time together, this should not be work, this is pleasure!
- Start involving the local community early on in the process of the organization and keep in touch with them. Try to make fixed agreements for when and what content they would like to help with, if this is wished for.
- If the camp is held in a community

in struggle, be aware of how police react to what kind of action, what actions will be reasonable in the local context and reflect upon your personal stance towards political direct action and if it might be inappropriate to the local context.

– You leave, the local community stays!

I hope to have put some discussion in motion with this and put some points forward worthwhile to consider when preparing a next camp. Be aware of it, it's an energizing, fun and enjoyable activity, which is highly addictive.

If you have any comments or want to get in touch write me.

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THIS SPRING, HEADPHONES ARE THE 'IN' THING!

This article invites you to reflect on the use of English as the working language during the European gatherings of Reclaim the Fields.

During the last Reclaim the Fields camp in Rosia Montana, some simultaneous interpreting was provided. The Coati collective offered to set up the required equipment to cover two of the tents and some other small groups. Two technicians were there, many people coming for the camp offered themselves to translate, and finally, six professional interpreters came, as volunteer, from Romania. Even with all of that, during the meetings, workshops and presentations, the vast majority of interventions were made in English. Very few people spoke in other languages, and very few times we heard the point of view of the people would couldn't express themselves well in English.

I was asking to myself why we were listening to so few languages apart from English. I came up with various options. The first that came to my mind was that maybe everybody in Rosia Montana could speak good English; I rejected this one straight away: even I can only speak crappy English, and talking with others about that I realized I was obviously not the only one.

Then I thought that maybe some people were not speaking because they had nothing to say; I asked myself

whether we had nothing to say just because we didn't know English. I rejected this option because it doesn't make sense, and makes me furious.

I came up with a third option; maybe the ones that didn't speak English didn't want to express themselves. I didn't find this hypothesis very convincing either because I knew, from my own experience, that this was not true, but that led me to another option.

I thought that maybe the ones that didn't speak English didn't feel comfortable in doing so in other languages even if there was some simultaneous interpreting. And I self-convinced myself that this was what happened to myself even if I did force myself to speak my own language several times during the meetings.

I reflected about the hypothesis of not feeling at ease speaking even in my mothertongue. I shared that thought with others, and in the end I think this is one of the main reasons why so few people spoke in their own languages. In a context where the working language is overwhelmingly English, it makes you feel ashamed to speak another language in front of hundred and fifty, twenty or forty people, because that makes it clear that

you are not able to do so in English. On top of that, for the others to be able to listen to what you are saying, they need to put on their radio, syntonize on the right frequency, or stand up to grab a radio because they took for granted that the meeting would be all in English. The intent of this text is not to explain in detail why someone could feel uncomfortable when not knowing English. The reasons could be many, amongst others: visiblizing your social class, your educational level, your origins, the fact that you never travelled out of your country before, etc.

Using simultaneous interpreting, and having meetings in multiple languages, even if it would have been technically possible, was not made a reality because we limited ourselves to facilitate the communication with those who didn't speak English. And for this very reason, we had to insistate that it was ok to set up the equipment and have the interpreters working to enable just one person to speak with confidence.

I think we need to have both a personnal and collective reflection on the use of English in our constellation because, for me, it plays an important role in defining who participates in our European gatherings and our network. Who can speak good English? Are we limiting ourselves to well-educated middle-class people from Western European descendency? I guess that would be a shame to limit ourselves to this set of people and exclude the others.

We're leaving the work half done. RTF aims at being an assembly-led organization, working in a horizontal manner. We opted to use simultaneous interpreting so that everyone could participate and under-

stand. But for me, that doesn't only mean having the opportunity to do it, but should also include feeling at ease in doing so. And even if that requires reducing the use of English as a working language in order to normalize the use of other languages and simultaneous interpreting, I think we should do it.

For me the inconvenience is minimal: the extra time introduced by the translation, the buzzing in the ears, having to put on headphones. And the advantadges are really worth it: if we can speak our own language we gain expression proficiency, depth in our reflections, ease, we're challenging hierarchies, and favouring the participation of all by bring in more diversity.

During the camp, some tried out a strategy to encourage people to speak in their own language by speaking first in good English, and then in their own language, thus forcing everybody to put on their headphones, and listen to the translation. That was great but not enough to inverse this tendency.

So I invite people to speak in their favourite language, in order to normalize the fact of having multilingual meetings. People who do not speak English would then feel that interpretation is not only here for them, but that we collectively choose to make it possible to speak in a language in which we feel comfortable, and that they are not special cases for which an effort is being made.

Speaking in your favourite language favors the participation of all, because language is power!

LE SABOT: SPECIAL AIRPORT RURAL FIGHT!

Six months ago, we, the collective from Le Sabot, joined the struggle against the airport project in Notre-Dames-des-Landes. This text will present our struggle, give you some news about our agricultural activities, and share our reflections around the squatting of land as a tool to struggle against stupid projects.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Back in the 60's, the people living in Notre-Dame-des-Landes and its surroundings, heard for the first time about a gigantic urbanization project that would come and destroy their land. The plan was to build an international airport for the Concorde, the jewel of the French aeronautics, and allow it to reach the wall of sound once on top of the Atlantic. In a perspective of economical growth, having an airport in the region would open it to the world and bring in lots of money.

But that would require to bury in concrete around 2000 hectares of agricultural land on a wetland area. In a local context of strong peasants' struggles (struggle against the increase farm scales, connections with industrial workers on strike, creation of Paysans en Lutte, etc.), an association of farmers affected by the airport (ADECA) is created in order to defend their livelihood. It will fight to keep on installing new farmers, and during several years, this region will be one of the places in France with the most installations of new farmers.

Twenty years later the project is almost abandoned: the Concorde is not

selling as much as expected, and the economical crisis is showing up in the middle of the seventies. The airport project is completely forgotten, and we believe that the landscapes will be preserved.

The project is brought back to life at the beginning of the years 2000 by the socialist local government. Now, they want to create a new international airport in order to, according to them, alleviate the airports of Paris and to prevent the planes to flight over the city of Nantes, for security reasons, of course.

The logics of the policy-makers is simple: it would fit in a dynamic of extension of the city that would bring more investors, competition and innovation to Nantes and its region. And that means improving the transport infrastructures, creating new industrial and commercial areas, creating the corresponding jobs, increasing the population, and finally, pretending to create a one hundred kilometre long metropolis that would connect Nantes to Saint-Nazaire, with plenty of highways, motorways, high-speed trains, etc. The airport should then be seen as a key element that would allow the region to become a central point of travel for goods and people.

To render this vast project of ecological destruction acceptable, Vinci [1], the company running leading the construction had an idea that deserves a price for its stupidity: the airport will be of « High Environmental Quality ». Not only the laws of ecological offsetting will be respected, but the airport will have its own CSA project, solar panels on the roofs of the buildings, and also probably green plants inside the terminals [2].

But still, some people are resisting the logics of capitalism. As soon as the project is brought back to life, the ADECA strikes back, new associations are created such as the ACIPA which brings together the people against the airport, collectives of « vigilant citizens », the collective of « inhabitants in resistance », or as well the coordination of opponents to the airport which brings together around forty associations and collectives from all over the place.

THE OCCUPATION OF THE ZAD

In 2007, during a picnic amongst opponents, the idea comes up to connect the struggle against the airport with the one for decent housing. The local government, the Conseil Général, already bought some land and houses in prevision of the construction of the airport but left them empty. That's how the first house get squatted.

Two years later, a Week of Resistance as well as a Climate Camp on the ZAD,

now renamed the Zone to Defend, are organized and gather several hundreds of people. A call to occupy the empty land and houses is passed, and circulate in militant circles. The idea is to reinvest this area, and resist their will to empty it, be on the spot to take action, better react in case of progress of the construction, etc. The illegal occupation is now considered as a tool to fight the airport on legal, administrative, and media grounds.

Today, around twenty-five places are squatted on the ZAD: houses, huts, tree houses, trucks, unidentified settlements, etc. People are joining our struggle to fight in numerous ways the world that creates this kind of stupid projects: against capitalism and its extension, against urbanism, against the authoritarianism of the ones that take those decisions, against global warming, against social inequity, against all power structures, against the disappearing of species and spaces, against the planning of our cities and the control of our lives, etc. That's also a way of putting into practice our ideas, to feed reflections, to connect with people who have been living and fighting here for decades, and with whom we might not share all our political analysis or strategies, but with whom we are interested in acting.

This occupied zone is of course a place of transit and encounter with comrades fighting their own struggle in other places. People from Val de Suza, who are fighting against the construction of the high-speed train between Lyon and Turin,

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1. An international campaign against Vinci started in spring 2011, for more info: <http://stopvinci.noblogs.org/>
 2. For the record, Vinci just received the Pinocchio Prix in the category « Greener than Green ». No one can be fooled by them, not even Friends of the Earth. http://www.prix-pinocchio.org/en/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=7

are passing by quite often, friends that went and met the landless peasants of South America, urban gardeners fighting against the destruction by concrete of agricultural land in urban areas, or as well comrades that come and bring some news about their urban squat.

LE SABOT

In October 2010, the first francophone gathering of RtF took place in Dijon, in the Espace Autogéré des Tanneries. Several occupants of the ZAD were there and presented their struggle, the airport project, and their life on the ZAD. People were invited to visit the ZAD and see by themselves. In February, a bunch of RtF militants met on the ZAD to talk about the issues of access to land and find a way of supporting the struggle against the airport and the fast-growing urbanisation. A collective was created around the idea of taking over a piece of uncultivated land, and grow vegetables on it. The idea of the demo of the 7th of May was born: occupy collectively a piece of land belonging to the Conseil Général, the government of the region, and install on it a farm called Le Sabot.

See a more detailed story of this demo in the bulletin #4.

One of the main objectives of this demo was to make a mass action out of this intrinsically illegal idea of taking back the land. We wanted it to be a collective and federative action, in which every component of the struggle could fit, meet up and act together: the radical ecologists with the local farmers, the neorural squatters with the families from the nearby villages, etc. Of course, the symbolic act of occupying a piece of land for agriculture, in

opposition to the airport project, and the appetite of capitalism, helped a lot.

For the first time in this area, the occupation was announced in advance, and made visible and massive. This call for action gave birth to a new set of possibilities: being able to get together all the very diverse opposition forces for a common action outside of the limits marked by the law. And we also really feel that the people who participated in this will carry this place in their heart and will be willing to fight again for it when needed: a good way of getting the people involved and share the responsibility for the future defence of the place. The general enthusiasm lets us imagine other actions of this kind...

Since the 7th of May, the collective at Le Sabot has been working the land, with the active support of some neighbours: one of them dug a wheel to get water, another one lend his tractor and his motor pump, a local peasant helped preparing the land, etc. Some solar panels were installed, and lots of construction materials were recycled (greenhouse, drip system, tunnels, etc.). The seedlings that were prepared in advance were transplanted, and little by little, after long weeks of work, the first tomatoes, carrots, courgettes, salads, fenels, beet leaves, watermelons, and al. started to appeared.

WHERE THERE IS STRUGGLE, THERE ARE VEGETABLES! (AND VICE VERSA?)

Even if Le Sabot is a concrete tool for the food autonomy of the occupants and was created to allow people of the collective to learn on-the-job, its primary goal is to be a mean for the struggle. The vegetable stall is thought as a place to encourage the discussion: two nights a week at the farm and every Sunday on the main square,

people from Le Sabot offer their vegetables to the locals and travellers, and takes that as an opportunity to talk about the airport project, about what is going on on the ZAD, about the struggle, and the political issues at stake, and tries to get the people involved. The opening hours on the farm also create a link between the squatters and the locals who are coming for some vegetables or some bread, made and braked at the squatted bakery of « Les 100 Chênes ». Those open places make visible the occupations and their meaning. Finally, talking about crops and whether forecast can also be a way of building bridges between the rural world and the squatters in struggle against the airport, even if the relationships with the local peasants and peasants organizations could surely be further explored.

Another way of « feeding the struggle » is to provide vegetables to the various collective kitchens on the ZAD, and even other ones as it was the case for several gatherings with other collectives, for example during the G8/G20 camp this summer or during the anti-nuclear camp in Valognes. In the future, we hope to further reinforce this link with other struggles.

Because we think that everybody should have access to food, and because Le Sabot doesn't want to enter into market logics it was decided to offer those vegetables on a donation basis: the money that is gathered is used to support the project economically (seeds, tools, etc.).

This system might often raise some doubts. For example, some occupants of the ZAD might not feel comfortable with taking away vegetable without any economical counterpart (which should also be possible when working on a donation

basis) and the traditional skipping of vegetables from supermarkets hasn't disappeared totally yet. This idea of donation doesn't mean much to the locals either, who often prefer to be told a fixed price even if they ignore its meaning: it's already often complicated to justify the price of vegetables in relation with the working time they require in a traditional mode of production, so what should be the price of a kilogram of carrots that doesn't want to fit in the markets logic, or in a mode of production based on economical gains and losses?

Right now, Le Sabot is both doing an evaluation of its first season of crops and preparing the next one.

This piece of land is a peculiar one, as it carries a very specific collective project: the one of considering food production as a mean of struggle, in a bigger network of squatted places and a wider collective struggle.

So we need to reflect upon its place in this struggle:

- Is this tool relevant with regard to the amount of time that we dedicate to it?
- Are we contributing to the reproduction of specialization on the ZAD? Do we need people to spend their days planting turnips while others spends their days doing meetings? How do we allow everyone to have time for other activities?
- How can we use efficiently the specificities of Le Sabot to have an impact on this struggle?

Other questions on the effective visibility of the place would need to be addressed (relationship to the medias, and its impact, etc.) or as well on this image of « good and hard-working squatters » that can be pushed on the people from Le Sabot. We often need to fight against the

negative preconceived ideas against the rest of the occupants: spending nights finishing a flyer, doing endless meetings to prepare an action, taking time to understand the world we are living in or taking part in a collective working session to prepare an action are often less visible tasks than cultivating an hectare of vegetable...

There's also the question of the viability of such a project without social benefits (unemployment and other benefits) or the question of more efficient organization from the inside.

The issue of conciliating an agricultural activity, which requires a midterm planning, with the precarious situation of squatting is still a challenge for this pretty « rock'n roll » farming project.

Finally, this way of putting our ideas into practice allows to demonstrate that it is possible to rapidly install a farming project, in the context of a wider struggle, and without much material resources. As long as some good relationships are built with the locals beforehand, as long as we try to unite and not divide, and if the plan is prepared with people and collectives already living on the place and sharing a good deal of hope and solidarity. Even if this experience might not be reproducible as such, and even if it is still raises important questions, land occupation can be a great tool in the resistance against the artificialization of land and urbanisation.

FOR MORE INFO

<http://zad.nadir.org/>, the website of the occupants of the ZAD

<http://acipa.free.fr/>, the website of an inter-communal civil association of locals affected by the airport project



REPORT FROM THE 2ND FRENCH SPEAKING GATHERING

At the beginning of November 2011, around 70 persons met in Kraken, near Grenoble, for the 2nd French speaking RtF gathering.

SOME OF THE STARS

Kraken: a former summer camp bought three years ago by an association (so that the property is always collective, and that there's no inheritance issues). About ten persons, coming rather more from the cities and activist urban backgrounds, live there and manage various projects, choosing for the moment not to be a place for collective income generation activities. The place hosts collective and feminists skill-share transmission works, movie shows and debates, a woodwork workshop, an apiary... There's also the wish to be a place for « activist networks hosting » (and that's why we were there) and a place for self-managed holidays.

The Unnamed Group: for the moment has got a collective living place, and a reflection group for future projects including agricultural activities (mainly market gardening), militancy (participate in or support struggles), and hosting (« social » summer camps, activist meetings...). Many current reflections on legal statutes, ground searching, relationship to legality (building, buying...), relationship to money and property, etc.

Le Champ des Filles, Switzerland: a garden of 3 ha squatted right in an industrial estate in Geneva since April 2011. Negotiations are in progress with the landlords to stay on this ground while they don't need it.

Le Pot'Col'Le: squatted garden in Dijon, at the place where there's a « green-district » building project: sabotage action of a TV show presenting the project, announcement of a « public » meeting (that the town council didn't announce): opportunities reflections on housing, « green » urbanism, and participative « democracy » issues.

Malhaussette: collective farm (5-10 persons), goats and transformation, in a village of the Cévennes' mountains. Tenant of « Terre de liens » (emphyteutic lease of 400 euros/year), searching for collective agricultural statutes (for the moment in association, with a person declared as a farmer).

Batotopie: collective project of market gardening: short-term settlement or maybe longer.

ACCESS TO LAND WORKING GROUP

Meeting on this topic at the ZAD from 9th to 11th of March: struggle convergence against artificialisation of lands.

SEEDS

Feedback on the creation of a seed group during the RtF camp this summer in Romania, but as there was nobody in Romania to carry the responsibility of the group on the scale of France, the main debate was to find out how useful would be to create a French speaking commission on seeds?

We said to each other that we could:

- Connect with others at European level, give information about the legal background in France.

- Idea of setting actions to speak about this theme: seeds swap, days of exchange and information, carry this small seeds with us in order to scatter them around, etc.

- The seeds could make a good media for a political speech. The idea is to act on a different and complementary way to the associations that already work on this issue (Kokopelli in particular).

- List people in France who still have technical skills in the production and conservation of seeds.

- Integrate the seeds issue to the network's line on peasants settlement (for instance in an possible booklet on access to land...). Urge the young peasants not to settle with seeds or seedlings bought from the industry anymore.

That's how in total euphoria the seed commission was born. We where five, and twelve persons joined the working mailing list: semence@lists.reclaimthefields.org.

FARM NETWORK

The charter is currently being redacted, taking notice of the reactions in order to be published soon, the training network would take the name of « trade guild ». This text could be presented with the current text about food sovereignty.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

francegroup@lists.reclaimthefields.org

The list isn't very reactive but allow local and European informations to get across. It's not really relevant for organizing (among 150 persons, few are involved).

betteraves@lists.reclaimthefields.org

Follow-up and connection list between the French gatherings, created with a wish of efficiency. It's about persons interested in organizing the next meeting, inspired by the European carrots group.

THE WEBSITE

The website deserves more attention. Often the actions that happen in the French speaking area are not publicised. To publish something, send a mail with an explicit topic on the [francegroup](mailto:francegroup@lists.reclaimthefields.org) list.

FRENCH BULLETIN

A project of French speaking bulletin is launched. It's about publishing an issue a year that would deal with the news of the year (at a French and European level), reflection and theoretical texts, assessments of actions, informations about the meeting's organization (eg. practical sheets about the debates). Send your contributions before March 2012 to bulletin-fr@lists.reclaimthefields.org.

VISIBILITY FROM THE OUTSIDE

A project of making up a short RtF presentation flyer is in progress. The idea is to have an permanently valid flyer, relatively short with regard to the bulletins, easy to distribute. A text will be written to be proposed at the next meeting.

GENDER ISSUES IN OUR CIRCLES

Around 20 people participated on a discussion workshop on gender issues, half of them man-socialized. After a discussion on the term « gender » where we agreed on a definition, each took the time to think about an event or an anecdote referring to a sexist behaviour, a situation of gendered domination. In small groups of 4-5 persons each told her/his situation without debating it. Secondly we conducted a collective analysis to try to understand 'why did it happen like that', then 'how things could happen like that' and 'how things could be different'.

Then, each small group choose one of the evoked situation to share it in big group. There we focused more on listing reflection axis and trails about strategies and solutions to set up.

Issues:

- How to encourage the listening and limit the confrontation during debates?
- How to evolve our approach, often axed on performance and productivity?
 - How to set up the knowledge transmission in a constructive way?
 - How to encourage self-confidence, kindness and attention to the other? (without lapsing into a « domination » of kindness that could paralyse the debates with the absolute wish to avoid conflicts.
- How to make a specific background or network take a stand in front of prob-

lematic situations (violences)?

- How to support the persons who are victims of aggression?

Solutions & strategies:

- From the very beginning make clear the observation that many situations of domination when speaking are gendered, as well as when listening, or with regard to the credence gift to an interlocutor.
 - Give a special attention to mix roles with responsibility, either in debates (eg. facilitation) or in logistics (eg. kitchen).
 - Bring the gender issue in RtF reflection spaces: write in the RtF texts the importance of the domination issue, and bring this position to the outside.
 - Think about the origin of our social construction, propose resources like books, booklets, videos.
 - Have a strong collective position on the listening and the recognition of the feelings and expressions of persons that have been victims of sexists aggressions
 - Be attentive in bigger meetings.
 - Create space for the expression of feelings and empathy during RtF meeting.
 - Think about non-mixed times, about non-mixed sleeping places if necessary.

ON FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Here are some miscellaneous reflections on the concept of food sovereignty.

- Feed the people? Which people? Can we speak about food sovereignty, when the food production depends on 2-3 % of the population?
 - The issue of how we produce (organic, local, etc.) is not sufficient to think the world. We must question for who we produce? What does it support? If the ways of living, the politics disagree with what we want? Work to feed organic bourgeois? Supply social struggles more than every-

body? We're in a world of chosen production, so why not of chosen distribution?

– What's the signification of the food price: with regard to the work demanded, to the accessibility... which connection to the sale? We mustn't want absolutely to stay away from the commercial relationships, because it's not possible in this world, but at least we must ask the question, so that it can exist in our experiences of production (without searching for purism). Manage to surpass the consuming and producing limits, etc.

The debate on RtF position with regard to this notion of food sovereignty raise the question of the links we want to have with the organizations that participate in creating this concept, even if it doesn't seem to be simple to be clear on that until we're not clear within our group. It seems easier to make things with others on thematics, concrete actions, « occasional » attractions than on fine principles.

But this issue of food sovereignty can still be a way of going further into common reflections of RtF, of developing a common imaginary, of developing specific reflections, for instance with regard to the norms, the traceability, the non-commercial agriculture, etc. Defining ourselves and our positions must not lead to an ideological closing (not to excluding or moralizing) but to enriching the debates with a new understanding, to sharpen the directions in which we want to project ourselves. What's the political consistency of what we speak about? Do we meet around open, large, consensual words, or do we have a clear political line? Doesn't the interest of the RtF network rely more on these meetings and forums than on the idea to have common positions and advances?

CONCLUSIONS OF THE WEEK END

Plenty of newcomers interested by the issues raised by RtF, great! On the other hand, we must seriously think about how these kinds of meetings are structured, between times of « discovering » the network and organizational times. It's not possible to ask people that have just met the network to give their opinion on commissions or workings in progress, and at the same time this gathering was for the most of the commissions an opportunity to meet again to push things forward and it generated frustrations for both sides.

To answer those issues, we talked about:

– If the discovery and working meetings happen at the same time, it must last longer (idea of a « French speaking camp » during a week?)

– Distinguish the thematics for « evolutive » reflection (for instance, the propriety, the traceability, the seeds...) and the organization times (that can be more closed, but that must still manage to welcome new people and put in parallel times of « informations » and of « advances » of the projects).

– Formalize times of welcoming, times of reflection on the network's identity.

– Meet on specific thematics.

– Have a group that prepare the contents of the gathering: it could be good that people who are interested meet one or two days before the beginning of the gathering to think about a proposal of methodology and thematics (besides taking care of the logistic food details...), and that this proposal is then collectively adopted at the beginning of the gathering.

Nothing was decided with regard to a next French speaking gathering; if you want to organize it, just do it!

NUCLEAR POWER PLANT CONSTRUCTION IN BELARUS

The republic of Belarus is the area, which was the most massive affected by the catastrophe of Chernobyl more than twenty-five years ago. A big part of the people still suffer with health problems, lots of people died in early age and there are annual remembering demonstrations related to the catastrophe. Nonetheless, the "elected" president Lukashenko, who is since the fall of soviet union in power and his government sending lots of political critical people to prison since then decided some few years ago for economical reasons to construct a first own nuclear power plant.

The construction of this started in the end of 2011 with financial support by

Russian economy and protest was minimal. On the one hand there are the typical wrong promises of "new labour" in the poor country, on the other hand people are afraid to speak in public against any plans of the regime and as we could see in December 2010 at last elections the way to prison is fast and direct if there is any doubt of political loyalty to the leading gang. Nonetheless there are people speaking up against the unjust and who try to inform people about ways to change society. The case is not well known in public and solidarity with antiautoritarians in Belarus is needed.

GET IN TOUCH

- <http://abc-belarus.org/?lang=en>
- <http://belarusantiatom.info/>

MORE INFO

- <http://charter97.org/en/news/atom> (in English)
- <http://a3yo.noblogs.org/post/2011/04/24/antiatom-widerstand-in-belarus-flyer-anlasslich-25-jahre-tschernobyl/> (in German)

THE DAM PLAN IN PORTUGAL

The impulse for electrifying Portugal came in the 60's and 70's when the fascist regime set the trajectory for industrialized development that imposed an intense social and territorial reorganization of land use that undermined rural identities with unprecedented violence.

Local energy providers were nationalized into EDP or Electricity of Portugal which got the monopoly of production, transport and distribution of energy and started developing the hydroelectric infrastructure, scattering over 150 dams all over the remote countryside. Portugal's entrance in the EEC in 1986 unleashed the process of economic growth in earnest, with fast modernization, industrial expansion and productivity increases in agriculture, while these land use changes led to an increasingly pronounced rural exodus. In the 90's they started privatizing the company to an array of private investors and full privatization was completed this January – the biggest stakeholder in EDP now being the Chinese company behind the Three Gorges Dam. Most large dams are located in the poorest regions in the country, very few promoted any meaningful development, and some were met with great resistance.

THE CASE OF VILARINHO DA FURNA

The first emblematic fight was lost in 1972 with the displacement and submergence of a small village in Serra do Gerês, a beautiful wild region of national parks. This village got a place in the history books when a team of ethnographers considered it an exemplary testimony to a communitarian way of life almost gone from the territories, consisting of an old organizational system where private property existed but was complemented by equal access to common land, where social and economic organization were tied into the sharing of labour force and resources, and where people chose and changed their representatives amongst themselves, was a prime expression of a popular democracy, completely autonomous of the official authorities.

When the centralized decision came to flood the valley, 57 families were forced to relocate, receiving a meagre 5 escudos per meter squared of land lost, including the houses. They took everything including the roof tiles with them, leaving only bare walls to meet with the rising water level. It now boasts the first underwater museum in Europe.

THE BATTLE OF FOZ COA

When preparatory works for this dam started a collection of Paleolithic cave paintings were found and proposed solutions such as removing the rocks and setting them up in a museum were met with vicious resistance from archeologists. The campaign “cave paintings can’t swim” started with a 600 strong protest camp at the site, was taken under the auspices of the socialist’s electoral campaign, and when they got elected in 1995 they stopped the dam. Two opposing development paradigms met here; an industrialist strategy reliant on the effect of the dam as economic metabolism, and one based around implementing cultural and local activities that value patrimony and assets.

Foz Coa was an emblematic victory because it publicly recognized science and culture as having equal importance to growth and capital, which was unprecedented and hardly experienced since in the public domain. The Museum and Visitor Centre there received 35000 visitors last year and is running for best museum in Europe in 2012.

THE NATIONAL DAM PLAN (PNBPH)

The current situation with climate change and rising oil prices has led to policies favoring renewable energy production. The National Dam Plan approved in 2007 acquired the status of ‘work of public interest’ because it was going to address these issues, being advertised as renewable energy, solution to pollution, external dependence and energy storage.

Let’s unpack the spin; firstly, we import oil for transport not energy, secondly, international experience shows that energy efficiency is by far the best investment in the energy industry; thirdly,

damning a river is a violent alteration of the natural order, carrying great losses to environmental quality and cultural heritage and does not constitute a form of renewable energy.

The dam plan is also in conflict with the national energy efficiency plan (PNAEE) approved in 2008 which vowed to reduce expenditure by 10% in 7 years (to little avail since Portugal is so energy hungry that in 2010 and in spite of the economic crisis energy consumption grew by 4.7%). There is also the fact that it infringes upon European legislation namely the Habitat Directive and the Water Framework Directive, to produce 0.5% of gross energy consumption and 3% of electricity demand. Economically interesting investments in energy efficiency could save 25% or more of current consumption with 10 times less costs. New dams are incompatible with energy efficiency since they compete for investment funds, state budget incentives, consumer financial effort and skilled labour. Building new dams is 6 times more expensive than optimizing old ones.

The PNBPH has been propagandized as private investment when it is supported by a “guaranteed power” state subsidy amounting to 49 million euros per year; the costs of this plan to citizens will be around 16000 million euros, 2000 euros per person. Everyone will pay in taxes as well as in a projected 10% increase in energy bills.

THE SITUATION NOW

A coalition of environmental NGO’s has been campaigning at the national and European level since the PNBPH was announced in 2007. The Foz Tua dam became a prominent focus of the struggle because the dam will flood the Tua river

valley which is a World Heritage Site due to the geomorphology of the region, the agricultural production (namely world famous orange grooves and vineyards) and a train line dating to the beginning of the century.

The coalition asked for an independent report from ICOMOS/UNESCO to evaluate the government's plans which came out blatantly stating not only that this dam will severely decharacterize the region and make it lose the status of exceptional universal value, but more importantly that compensatory measures were less important than considering whether the dam should be built at all. Proposed compensatory measures include commissioning an award-winning architect to contribute to minimizing its visual impact. Dams have been an ideological pretext for large-scale construction, a symbol of the fallacy of economic development sustained over the last century,

causing compulsive rural exodus, abandonment of land and loss of sustainable livelihoods.

It is up to us to expose the obsolete nature of these ideas. A great wall of cement cannot be further from the answer to the economic and social problems of our times. We need to make them understand that their interests are against our values.

There is a persistent campaign by formal and informal groups of local residents, conservationists and outraged citizens to restore truth in public opinion about this matter, and to work on a different future for the region of Trás-os-Montes. Proposed actions for the coming year include continuing demonstrations in Lisbon and preparing a solidarity caravan through the villages in the valley which will culminate in a camp, to celebrate the region, its people, the wild river.

MORE INFO / GET INVOLVED

ariana@gaia.org.pt

PROTEST AGAINST THE COPPER AND MOLYBDENUM MINING IN TURKEY

Pupils of the elementary school of Tepeoba made a tour to the first mine in Turkey which possesses the technology to process molybdenum. The 40 pupils of the village Tepeoba, which has 500 inhabitants, planted together with their teachers and technical staff of the mine 500 groundcovers 1 plants and 150 fruit trees. The director of the school thinks that such actions are very good because they raise the ecological awareness and therefore the kids can perceive and understand nature in a much better way. The dinner in the canteen with the technical staff afterwards and little presents should keep this unforgettable day in remembrance (as reported by the local daily newspaper of 8th of April 2011 under the title: « Encouragement of ecological awareness: Our pupils planted trees for the first time »).

The plants in which copper and molybdenum are extracted and processed and of which I report here are set officially in the northwest of Turkey, approximately 10 km north of Havran, province Balıkesir. (In this region were about 100 licenses in total for ore-mining assigned.) There's the general apprehension that also gold is extracted here backdoor. The area of mining was bought from the state forest and amounts

to 1.7 km². The majority of the black pine forest are old stocks and olive groves are situated only 1000 m away from the mine. It was immediately radically deforested.

According to the olive law §4086/5 of the year 1995 it's forbidden to construct any plants that are not for olive processing in olive groves and in their circuit of at least 3 km. This law was unfortunately not adhered. Likewise it's obvious that the environmental impact assessment was conducted in favor of the ore-producing company Özdogu Insat ve Tic.Ltd.Sti.

By several sides came reactions. Shortly after the concrete halls were visible widely in the area, the first demonstration took place on the 10th of April 2011. 750 environmentalists marched with loud drums and banners with which they demanded for the repeal of the licenses. They protested against the government that assigned 45.000 licenses since 2004, about 30% of these to foreign investors. In comparison to the years from 1932 to 2004 only 1500 licenses were assigned. After a media conference, a free speech podium was erected where everyone could give an opinion. There was grape juice and bulgur too. Kids performed

traditional dances. Representatives of all parties, except of the governing AKP, attended the meeting.

Archaeologists expressed their horror considering the 4000 years old remnants of the ancient city of Thebe at this place.

A renowned newspaper published good news at the 1st of August 2011: a mine in Tepeoba will be shut and Thebe excavations have begun. But from official quarters no actions were taken. Neither was it scientifically documented nor have excavations really begun.

The olive farmers who are the most affected in the area reacted the latest. Only after many olive trees (more than agreed) were torn down and the fields were destroyed for the positioning of power poles and the construction of additional access roads, did they sue the area authority. But it was not successful.

overgrow the government.



A EUROPEAN MOVEMENT FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The Nyéléni European Forum for food sovereignty took place this year in Krems, Austria, from the 16th to the 21st of August and proved to be a milestone in the European movement for food sovereignty.

A bowl of earth, a pitcher of water and a handful of seeds were the symbolic opening gestures given by Ibrahima Coulibaly from Mali to the attendees of the Nyéléni European Forum. The symbol of Nyéléni continues to live on, a legendary Malian woman, farmer and feminist. The first world-wide Nyéléni Forum for food sovereignty took place four years ago in Mali, founded with the help of Ibrahima Coulibaly.

The 2007 Nyéléni Declaration states that « we hope, that many local, national, regional and global forums will take place in the future ». Krems received the honor of hosting the second Nyéléni Forum, this time with a regional focus on Europe. « It is important, that a strong movement is created in Europe, due to the severe consequences of the current European agriculture market on farmers and other markets around the world ». This statement was made by Ibrahima, whilst at the same time wishing the European attendees a successful forum.

THE GOAL OF THE FORUM

The Nyéléni Forum ended up being just that, with help from numerous attendees. Over 400 farmers, gardeners, producers,

environmentalists, representatives of NGO's and initiatives, activists, scientists etc. from 34 European countries, 9 delegates from countries of the Global South, and more than 150 helpers, interpreters, and cooks came together to make the forum possible.

The process of building up a European movement for food sovereignty had already started years before. Although many organizations had been working on similar topics, the forum had the aim of generating an energy and movement, of creating a functional system of coordination and of bringing the concept of food sovereignty to different circles.

The organizers consisted mostly of the ECVC, the European Coordination Via Campesina, and their Austrian organization ÖBV, as well as Friends of the Earth Europe, Attac and FIAN. Their goal was to integrate regions and sectors of the society that were previously less involved in the movement. Especially (south)-east European countries and Caucasus countries were finally able to more actively participate, which led to stronger networks and more coordinated actions in the region as well as in Europe.

AN INTENSIVE AND COLORFUL PROGRAM

Krems region.

The program consisted of multiple plenary sessions, as well as thematic and regional meetings to certain issues. The delegates were able to exchange with each other their experiences and understandings of food sovereignty, discussing about obstacles and challenges, as well as strategies for creating a new, democratic European food and agricultural system. « We are convinced that a change in our food and agricultural system will be the first step in the direction of a broad change in the society », was the conclusion written in the declaration.

Food sovereignty does not only demand a democratic control of production, of allocation and of access to food, but also demands the eradication of all forms of violence, be it sexism, racism or class power. A womens meeting was organized on the first day of the forum and made it possible for the female delegates to discuss about the continuing disadvantaged position of women in agriculture, as well as emphasizing the importance of working against the patriarchal system.

Other activities were also organized, for example the early morning community-generated "misticas", a day of field trips with hiking and excursions to local farms, a loud procession through the city, as well as a market of ideas, where on the marketplace of Krems, Austrian and European initiatives presented themselves and their ideas to the public. From a seed exchange to a dumpster-diving mound of food from the local supermarket trash, as well as a colorful stage program with theater and music, the forum offered a big diversity of ideas and possible implementations of food sovereignty to the people of the

The shared meals were also an important part of the forum, where a peoples kitchen magnificently cooked regional, organic, and vegetarian menus in massive quantities and afterwards, the attendees were able to enjoy a nice evening program. During this time it was possible for informal exchanging and networking, which was often not possible during the official meetings.

In addition to networking, the results of the forum was the declaration, where concrete problems regarding Europe were raised and where strategies were developed for a new food supplies, agricultural, and social system which can be shared in different political circles, organizations, and institutions. The different regions also presented their concrete action plans. For Europe two days were marked for activism: the World Food Day on the 16th of October and the Day of Peasant's Struggle on the 17th of April.

For the collaborations and strategies created at the Nyéléni Forum to be successful and for a strong movement to emerge, continues work is necessary, especially after the forum. For certain the Nyéléni Forum has proved to be a milestone in the European movement for food sovereignty. How this movement will affect the world to come will remain an exciting question yet to be answered.

MORE INFO

<http://www.nyelenieurope.net/>

TWO SONGS ABOUT THE DIGGERS

The Diggers were a group of Protestant English agrarian communists, begun by Gerrard Winstanley in 1649. They Diggers tried to reform the existing social order with an agrarian lifestyle based on their ideas for the creation of small egalitarian rural communities.

THE DIGGERS' SONG, 17TH CENTURY

Dm A7 Dm
You noble diggers all stand up now, stand up now
You noble diggers all stand up now
F
The wasteland to maintain
C
Sin cavaliers by name
Dm
Your digging does maintain
A7
And persons all defame
Dm A7 Dm
Stand up now, stand up now



Your houses they tear down stand up now, stand up now
Your houses they tear down, stand up now
Your houses they tear down
To fright your men in town
But the gentry must come down
And the poor shall wear the crown
Stand up now diggers all

With spades and hoes and plows stand up now, stand up now
With spades and hoes and plows, stand up now
Your freedom to uphold
Sin cavaliers are bold
To kill you if they could
And rights from you to hold
Stand up now diggers all

The gentry are all round stand up now, stand up now
The gentry are all round stand up now
The gentry are all round
On each side they are found
Their vision so profound
To cheat us of our ground
Stand up now stand up now

The clergy they come in stand up now, stand up now
The clergy they come in stand up now
The clergy they come in
And say it is a sin
That we should now begin
Our freedom's for to win
Stand up now diggers all

The lawyers they conjoin stand up now, stand up now
The lawyers they conjoin stand up now
To arrest us they advise,
Such fury they devise,
The devil in them lies
And hath blinded both their eyes
Stand up now, stand up now

'Gainst lawyers and 'gainst priests stand up now, stand up now
'Gainst lawyers and 'gainst priests stand up now
For tyrants they are both,
Even flat against their oath
To grant us they are loathe
Our meat and drink and cloth
Stand up now diggers all

Stand up now diggers all!

You can find a recorder version of this song by Chumbawamba on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/OA4FTIz2Zrw>

They make the laws
To chain us well
The clergy dazzle us with heaven
Or they damn us into hell
We will not worship
The God they serve
The God of greed who feed the rich
While poor folk starve

From the men of property
The orders came
They sent the hired men and troopers
To wipe out the Diggers' claim
Tear down their cottages
Destroy their corn
They were dispersed
But still the vision lingers on

We work we eat together
We need no swords
We will not bow to the masters
Or pay rent to the lords
Still we are free
Though we are poor
You Diggers all stand up for glory
Stand up now

You poor take courage
You rich take care
This earth was made a common treasury
For everyone to share
All things in common
All people one
We come in peace they said
The orders came to cut them down

**"England is not a free people, till the poor that have no land,
have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons..."**
Gerard Winstanley, 1649



You can find a recorder version of this song by Billy Bragg on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/lxW5yvpeHg4>

GOING BEYOND OUR BACKYARDS

Beyond Our Backyards (BoB) is an European project aiming at capacity building of actors of local agroecological initiatives (permaculture, community supported agriculture, transition initiatives, urban agriculture, among others) to study and engage in large scale political issues and processes which impact the local agroecological initiatives (e.g. seed policies, common agricultural policy, property related laws), and in the agro-ecological practices affecting these major political issues (e.g. seed exchanges, cultural practices, solidarity networks, political mobilizations). For this purpose the project brings together actors from three distinct spheres of action: academics, political activists and the developers of local agroecological initiatives.

Initiatives carrying an "agroecological identity" are expanding in Europe and worldwide. Among these initiatives are land communes, permaculture projects, urban gardens or even transition initiatives. To a large extent, these initiatives share the values and even languages of agrarian and ecological movements of the Global South and of anti-capitalist social movements. However, most of them are focused on the very local practical work of

their project because of the conditions within which they try to survive. This leads (a) to a downplay of the political context in which they operate (such as the agro-industrial complex, its safeguarding institutions and lobbying; as well as market capitalism itself); and (b) to a disregard of the historical background of social struggles and alternative modes of organization, together with the history of scientific and political thought.

The Beyond Our Backyards project idea departed from this observation of a lack of engagement of these rapidly expanding local agroecological initiatives in the political movements and campaigns that deal with topics that directly affect them. This leads to difficulties in intertwining and developing collective action to tackle the common problems of these initiatives, resulting not only in an increased fragility, but also in the lack of a true social movement, capable of confronting industrial agribusiness and changing the functioning of the global food system. To overcome this issue, the project aims at building up an social movement based on an agroecological identity, by bringing together actors from the expanding local initiatives with those of the academia and

political movements and campaigns. Rather than recreating campaigns and issues, the project aims at working synergistically with existing projects and campaigns, including several initiatives within the Reclaim the Fields constellation (e.g. reclaim the seeds, access to land). Furthermore, we also expect to be able to develop joint political strategies and synergies with Southern movements sharing the language of agroecology (such as Via Campesina or Navdanya).

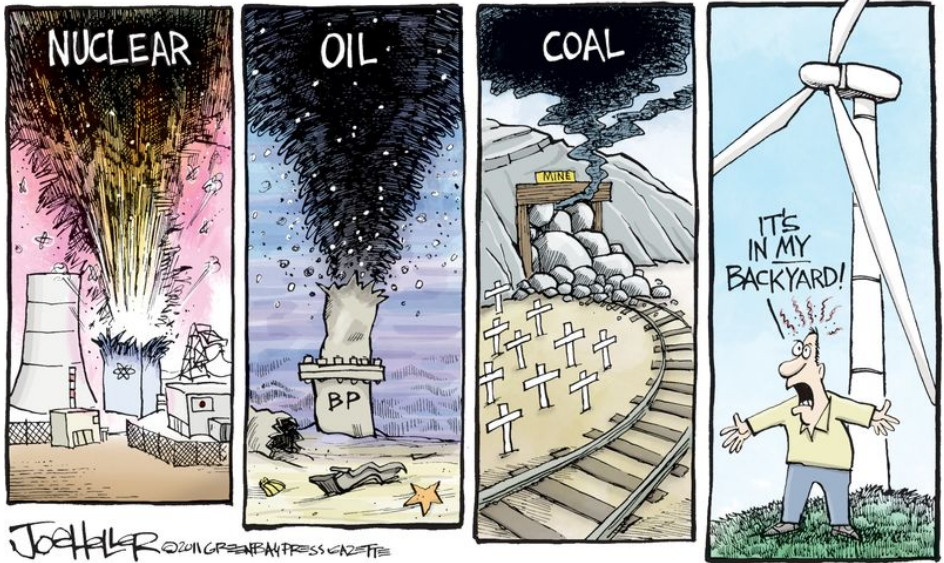
The first international BoB meeting took place in the community of Gastwerke, in Escherode (near Kassel, Germany) by the

end of October 2011. During this meeting, 30 people — and a few more online — took part in an open space where it was possible to approach the different backgrounds, find points and interests in common and make them converge into common ends. As a result of this meeting, several initiatives (see box) are being planned and developed. New participants and contributions are therefore very welcome in any of them.

For any additional information on the BoB project, please write to info@agroecol.eu. More information and updates will be made available at the project website.

<http://agroecol.eu>

ARGUMENTS AGAINST-



CURRENT BEYOND OUR BACKYARDS INITIATIVES

SEMINAR VALUE OF FOOD

In this seminar we will discuss the value of food and how it changed in the last centuries in our own societies and how food is valued in other societies. We will analyze the connection between value and price from a philosophical point of view and analyze ways in which the social exclusion by higher costs in future food production can be avoided. We will do so by looking at practical experiences of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Projects, Food Coops and Urban Gardening initiatives. The seminar will be open for people from all over Europe. Apart from two real-life meetings (~June / December 2012) the seminar will be held online. For traveling costs to the two meetings a limited funding will be provided. The Meetings will probably take place in France and Spain. The concrete content of the seminar is still open for discussion and proposals are very much appreciated.

valueoffood@lists.agroecol.eu
<http://lists.agroecol.eu/mailman/listinfo/ae-valueoffood>

BOB RESEARCH PLATFORM

Several people became involved in developing a research platform focused on action research, with the following aims: collect information on research in BOBs related subjects and form groups of people interested in exploring them; inspire joint research; exchange knowledge about and experience from action or activist research.

<http://lists.agroecol.eu/mailman/listinfo/ae-research>

FOOD COOPS MANUAL

2012 is the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives. As part of this, UNDP has given support to local food coops in Poland to develop materials. A part of this developments will be integrated, developed and internationalized within the BoB project. The first step for the manual will be a food co-ops and CSAs conference/gathering on April 14th-15th in Warsaw. The material and knowledge gathered at the conference will end up in the publication.

SEEDS

One of the topics where national or international policies are more visibly affecting or threatening local agroecological practices are those related with seeds. Within BoB, we aim at linking the content of the Reclaim the Seeds campaign to the other groups like CSA, permaculture projects or researchers, enhancing the potential of these projects through political learning and scientific research, while making their participants aware of the threats posed by current and proposed seed laws. Potential developments include: development of documentation on seeds preservation, use and politics, in conjunction with Reclaim the Seeds; integration of political issues and current research on seeds issues; organization of seminars, trainings or meeting.

E-LEARNING PLATFORM

To support the learning process of the different participants of the network, we are projecting the development on an e-learning platform, which might be integrated into a social network for sharing experiences and contacts on agroecology. There are already some potentially interested partners, including the Fundació Ent (Spain), which promotes courses on topics such as food sovereignty and the Bewegungsakademie (Germany), organiser of courses on political engagement on environmental issues. Furthermore, it would also provide support to any learning initiative organised by BoB participants and allow a dynamic exchange of experiences and calls for cooperation.

NEXT INTERNATIONAL MEETING WILL HELP TO CREATE A CENTER FOR RESEARCH-ACTION AND DEGROWTH

The next international BoB meeting is planned to happen in June-July 2012 in Cerbere, in the French Catalunya. It should involve a practical component of establishing food-based relations with the local community, as well as supporting the setting up of a new center for research-action and economic degrowth: the Can Decreix. The participation will be open, with the possibility to apply for travel funding.

ECOLOGIST STRUGGLES IN TURKEY

Ecology Collective Association (EKD), established in 2007, is giving an eco-socialist fight against anti-ecologist policies in Turkey. Struggling together with the sufferers in order to give life a new meaning and change it is a personal and social responsibility that Ecology Collective takes.

It has a strong stance against all kinds of nationalist, militarist, sexist and prohibitive tendencies in order to free water, air, earth and labor together and enable people to live in peace. With this stance, it comes together with other organizations in the fields and actions; develops fighting practices by organizing joint workshops, forums, reading and movie days; theoretically produces knowledge with its own publications, lawsuits it filed and tries to become a strong legal opposition to all people, institutions and businesses which are currently against nature and labor.

“No Genetically Modified Organisms Platform” (GDOHP) was established in 2004 after the release of “Life Can Not Be Patented” text on electronic environment. Ecology Collective is a component of this platform and the platform has over sixty components. It fights against international seed monopolies and tries to inform people about genetically modified plants, which are modified under laboratory conditions and released to nature by biotechnology companies. It also gives information about adverse effects of feed and food, made out of these plants, on health, ecology and biodiversity. As a part of this fight, GDOHP travelled to various

cities with Monster Corn and Monster Tomato balloons in hand and came together with people, explained the harmful effects of GMO to people from every segment of society; with the policies and activities, it brought the GMO issue to the agenda of Turkey and raised the public awareness.

One issue related to GMO that needs significant attention is biodiversity in Turkey. Despite all the mistreatments and losses, Turkey is still rich in terms of biodiversity and number of species. In Turkey, about two thousand plant species out of eleven thousand are endemic species that cannot be found elsewhere.

In Turkey, especially during the liberalization process after 1980's and as a part of policies imposed by EU, importance placed on agriculture and stockbreeding has been decreasing. Liquidation process of villages and rural areas leads to excessive population increases, especially in big cities and accelerates the disappearance of rural area values. Urging young population of the rural areas to migrate to cities for reasons such as work or education and forcing rest of the rural population to sell their land are recent problems of Turkey. Since the rural population produces with

its own means of production, it becomes a problem for capitalist processes, which are targeting rural sources with cheap methods, leading to policies that force rural population to migrate. Rural population encouraged to migrate sells its lands with low prices and, as emblematic for capitalist dynamics, becomes cheap labor force in the city. Apart from that, workers traveling to other parts of Turkey for a seasonal job are transported under improper conditions and work under very bad conditions. These workers, especially women, who are trying to meet the need of shelter under unhealthy conditions, are getting serious diseases because of the conditions they endure in order to survive and sometimes even lose their lives.

City and rural areas complete each other and cannot be separated. Liquidation of the rural areas because of excuses such as EU harmonization process, development, industrialization, democratization causes ungovernable problems, massive losses, big destructions in ecological and social terms.

Lately Turkey, with its underdeveloped structure and bad governance, has been witnessing accelerated constructions of hydroelectric plants and dams, thermal and nuclear plants, mineral research and processing activities. For that purpose, local people are left deprived of their houses and villages; they are openly made feel that it is impossible to earn their lives with agriculture or traditional production methods. They are asked to work under bad conditions in the construction and operation of these plants and to be included in the wheel of capitalism. People who work and die in these plants or facilities are hidden from the public. Moreover, cyanide gold companies and cement factories are accelerating the

exploitation of both nature and labor.

After enabling the construction of hydroelectric plants with the current law, especially East Black sea region of Turkey has been chosen and by changing the natural flow direction of streams, ecosystem is destroyed, trees are cut down, lives of all the organisms in that ecosystem are endangered.

Despite all the reactions of the local people against hydroelectric plants, more than 2000 hydroelectric plant projects are waiting to be implemented; companies are trying to gain sympathy by organizing meetings to inform people. In addition to forest ecosystems destroyed by hydroelectric plants, destruction of forest areas are continuing thanks to the law including regulations related to selling of the lands that are no longer forest, defined as 2B lands. Despite all the sorrowful consequences of the nuclear disaster which took place in Fukushima, Turkish government is not giving up on its love for nuclear. Nature destruction of AKP is known as "Crazy Project" by the public and the project includes a new city in Istanbul, a new strait and a new bridge.

Ecology Collective, aware of all these, is a political movement and organization that always focuses on organized fight, believes in the need to raise our voices together. It organizes actions, festivals, congresses; tries to make its voice heard with original reaction methods and the most importantly tries to develop alternative thought systems together. For a world without exploitation in which we will live fraternally with all its beauty, all its organisms and all its values; long live our eco-socialist fight!

Deniz Zengin — Ecology Collective
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To get more information about the network, follow our latest news or join us in the struggle, you've got several possibilities.

Go and check what's going on on our website:

<http://www.reclaimthefields.org/>

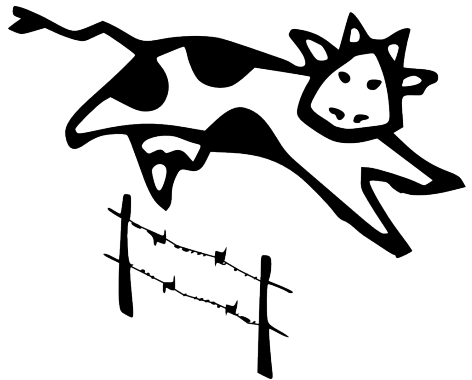
Contact us by mail:

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european.general.list@lists.reclaimthefields.org

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RECLAIM THE FIELDS is a constellation of young peasants, landless and prospective peasants, as well as people who want to reassume the control over food production.

We aim at supporting and encouraging people to stay on the land and go back to the countryside. We want to promote food sovereignty (this expression being subject to debate and discussion within our network) and peasant agriculture, particularly amongst young people and urban dwellers, as well as alternative ways of life. 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 bulletins aim at facilitating the information transmission between the stars of the constellation, sharing the latest news and the current state of the process amongst the people or collectives already involved and allowing new people to catch up and join us, having at disposition the necessary background texts and a history of the debates.

For more and fresher news, check our website:

<http://www.reclaimthefields.org/>