



# Zone À Défendre: Transforming Territorial Planning through Occupation

Zone À Défendre: Transformer  
l'aménagement du territoire par  
l'occupation

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# Abstract

This study examines the Notre-Dame-des-Landes Zone à Défendre (ZAD) as an experimental site where diverse groups converged to resist an airport project and an extractive and oppressive planning system, fostering relationships of care and commoning. The ZAD emerged from a conflict between two visions of territorial organisation, where protestors disrupted a capitalist and globalist planning initiative by occupying the zone. Governance mechanisms based on conflict resolution and informality were developed to balance the needs of both the occupants and the land, with autonomy and commoning as core principles.

The ZAD promoted a non-monetary system of resource exchange, prioritising use value over exchange value and emphasising solidarity and independence from state and market influences. The zone cultivated symbiotic relationships with its socio-spatial environment, nurturing reciprocal ties with the land. The resolution of the airport conflict introduced new internal challenges, altering the zone's dynamics. Some residents opted to legalise their farms, while others resisted integration into capitalist planning systems.

This research contributes to the field of planning by providing a depiction of spatial governance in an autonomous zone rooted in insurgent practice. It enriches the literature on pluriverse and insurgent planning by offering localised perspectives on planning outside traditional state and market procedures. The study highlights alternative systems of resource allocation and the potential for radical planning to support community-based experiments, fostering non-hierarchical and solidarity-based relationships with land and people.

# Résumé

Ce projet a pour objet d'étude la ZAD (Zone à Défendre) de Notre-Dame-des-Landes en tant que site expérimental où divers groupes se sont rassemblés pour résister à un système d'aménagement extractif et oppressif, favorisant des relations de solidarité et de mise en commun. La ZAD est née d'un conflit entre deux visions de l'organisation territoriale, où les occupant.e.s se sont mobilisé.e.s contre un projet d'aménagement capitaliste et mondialiste en occupant la zone. Des mécanismes de gouvernance basés sur la résolution de conflits et l'informalité ont été développés pour équilibrer les besoins des occupants et de l'espace, avec l'autonomie et la mise en commun comme principes centraux.

La ZAD a promu un système non monétaire d'échange de ressources, privilégiant la valeur d'usage sur la valeur d'échange et mettant l'accent sur la solidarité et l'indépendance vis-à-vis de l'État et du marché. La zone a cultivé des relations symbiotiques avec son environnement socio-spatial, nourrissant des liens réciproques avec la terre. L'annulation du projet d'aéroport a introduit de nouveaux défis modifiant la dynamique de la zone. Certain.e.s résident.e.s ont opté pour la légalisation de leurs fermes, tandis que d'autres ont résisté à l'intégration dans les systèmes d'aménagement capitalistes.

Cette recherche contribue au domaine de l'aménagement en produisant une description nuancée de la gouvernance spatiale dans une zone autonome ancrée dans la pratique insurgée. Elle enrichit la littérature sur l'aménagement pluriversel et insurgé en offrant des perspectives localisées sur l'aménagement du territoire en dehors des procédures étatiques et marchandes. L'étude met en lumière des systèmes alternatifs d'allocation des ressources et le potentiel de l'aménagement radical pour soutenir des expériences communautaires, favorisant des relations non hiérarchiques et basées sur la solidarité avec la terre et les personnes.

# Acknowledgements

This project emerged from my deep commitment to social justice and radical planning. I am deeply grateful for my supervisor, Dr. Anna Kramer, who nurtured these reflections and pushed me to consider various perspectives about the zone and helped me form a coherent narrative around everything I was excited about with the ZAD. This project could not have covered the many dimensions of transformative living in the ZAD without their rich resources and input. I feel thankful that McGill has professors who nurture radical thinking and encourage us to critically rethink the structures we are training to integrate.

I extend my gratitude to the Urban Planning faculty and staff, who have been supportive in times of stress, especially in recent months which brought administrative complications my way. Their efficiency at that time allowed me to entirely focus on my research, which I am thankful for.

In the depths of researching and writing, my classmates were of extraordinary help in canalising my anxiety and helping me relax. Their brilliant minds and joyful energy supported me through this entire degree, and even more so in the lonely writing times.

During the time of this project, an encampment in solidarity with Palestine was set up and dismantled on McGill's lower field. The encampment's demands and modes of organisation echo those of the ZAD, and in many ways they are interconnected. I wanted to extend my solidarity to the students who held this camp over two months and created a space of international solidarity and mutual aid in our university.

From the ZAD to McGill's lower field encampment, from Notre-Dame-des-Landes to Palestine, liberatory politics are happening everywhere and they are building a global momentum for collective liberation. In writing this research project as part of my Master of Urban Planning at McGill University, I recognise the imperialist institution I am affiliated with, and I hope to contribute to a critical engagement with our education institutions and to the decolonisation of our university.

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# Introduction

Planning practice has been confronted with a variety of movements of contestation over time. Arising from deeper political crises, social movements or undemocratic planning processes, these conflicts often disrupt planning as usual and demand an improvement of planning processes to reflect values of equity and justice. Among these protest movements, France has seen the emergence of a new form of resistance to projects over the past decade. Popularised by the occupation of Notre-Dame-des-Landes (NDDL) against the construction of an airport on farmland in the west of the country, Zones à Défendre (ZADs) are a citizens' movement opposing large-scale development projects, often based on environmental and social concerns. Although Notre-Dame-des-Landes was the most prominent example of the ZAD movement, France has seen tens of ZADs established across its territory in the past 15 years, including a major ongoing occupation against a highway expansion in the region of Toulouse.<sup>1</sup> The deployment of occupation tactics to combat projects deemed ecocidal and socially unjust is therefore still contemporary.

Among these efforts to resist an oppressive system and envision collective alternatives, we find many movements that have contested these structures of power and their associated planning tools. We find examples of this around the world. Autonomous migrant squats in Athens have defied imaginaries around borders while breaking down the separation between spaces of living, working and communing.<sup>2</sup> An encampment on McGill's campus brought attention to the ongoing genocide in Palestine and in that way enacted international networks of solidarity through inhabitation.<sup>3</sup> The occupation of Syntagma square in Athens, again, in 2011 made public plazas a space for political governance and contestation, as well as popular occupation.<sup>4</sup> While these contestation movements all address different systems of oppression

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1 Clévenot, E. (2024, January 10). Cabanes et hamacs: Une nouvelle zad résiste à l'A69. *Reporterre*. <https://reporterre.net/Cabanes-et-hamacs-une-nouvelle-zad-resiste-a-l-A69>

2 Raimondi, V. (2021). For 'common struggles of migrants and locals'. Migrant activism and squatting in Athens. In *Resisting Citizenship* (pp. 39–56). Routledge.

3 Yanez-Leyton, C. (2024, April 27). Students set up "indefinite" pro-Palestinian encampment at McGill University. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/pro-palestinian-encampment-mcgill-1.7187290>

4 Kaika, M., & Karaliotas, L. (2017). Athens' Syntagma Square reloaded: From staging disagreement towards instituting democratic spaces. *City unsilenced* (pp. 121–132). Routledge.

and different injustices, they are interconnected in that they aspire to create a broader momentum toward liberation. Each of these movements has expressed solidarity with outside groups, and each of them has contributed materially and symbolically into other struggles. Their recognition that liberation is collective creates a movement that surpasses the hierarchic categorisation of disciplines and fields, and creates capacity and transferability of resilience across movements. It is in this broader movement of reclaiming space through inhabiting, and broadening the resistance against exclusionary and exploitative systems, that I approach the Zone à Défendre movement that arose in the 2010s in France.

Further, this project is firmly rooted in insurgent planning theory. Discussed in more depth in the following section, this project recognises that planning practice exists well beyond the technocratic institutions of the state, and that civil society holds agency over creating new forms of planning. By examining the ZAD as a space of experimentation and prefiguration, I consider that space as a laboratory for emancipatory planning practices and relations. Its practice of planning is radically different from that of traditional planning as it happens across the zone in the daily relations between the people and the land. Recognising the informality of planning decisions as legitimate, this project aims to show how new planning systems emerge out of conflictual and politically fraught relations, where relations to the land are co-created and negotiated every day.

To be able to capture these daily interactions and productions of space from below, I focus on the case of the NDDL ZAD to situate the ZAD movement within planning theory. Its prominence within the ZAD movement makes it attention worthy because of the impact it has had on other social movements, by feeding into wider networks of solidarity and by propagating communal knowledges to a variety of communities in France and beyond. For the purposes of this research, this case has also been selected due to the vast availability of information about the ZAD and its organisation. The methods section outlines the strategy that was developed to collect precise and informative online data about the zone to respond to our research questions, which are the following:

- **In what ways did the ZAD transform territorial planning through occupation?**
- **What strategies did the ZAD adopt to reproduce its planning model after its victory against the airport?**

These questions help shed light on the conditions that caused the alternatives to emerge, and the relations at the origin of these alternatives. They also orient this research to capture the intricate and evolving power relations between occupants, territory, and the state. Finally, they point to the strategies that were implemented once the original conflict against the airport was resolved. It highlights the paths toward normalisation and the transformed relations and practices created to adapt to the return of a state-driven set of planning norms.

This project is structured as follows. First, I conduct a deep review of the radical planning literature and begin to situate occupation movements within this body of literature, highlighting insurgent planning and pluriverse planning scholarship. I engage with the notion of commons and reflect on its applications on the ZAD. I then present this project's methodology and rooting these choices in an insurgent approach to epistemology. The findings are developed over three axes. First, the history of the movement is reviewed and explains the socio-spatial composition of the zone, discussing the alternative forms of governance, the relationship to informality, and the social division of space. It also argues that the commons created in the zone depart from Ostrom's (1990) vision to embrace collective usage of resources. Second, the zone's relations with other movements and with its territorial boundaries are analysed, positing that the strength of networks of solidarity across struggles has forged the zone's dynamic identity while rooting it in territorial belonging. It discusses bordering practices on the zone and creates a nuanced portrait of a zone of open access that produces boundaries to support and sustain its liberatory experimentations. Finally, the last section reviews the positions and strategies adopted by occupants after the airport project was cancelled by the state. It shows that occupants set up a diversity of material and social strategies to negotiate legalisation with the state in a way that could preserve central commoning practices, albeit informally. It recognises that for some, the end of the autonomous ZAD transformed the zone and suspended the transformative efforts due to the state's control of the territory. The project concludes by reviewing the ZAD's legacy through insurgent principles. It offers lessons for radical planners and suggests expanding research in autonomous movements to expand our understanding of insurgent practice.

# Literature Review

## Radical Planning

This research project investigates the case of an occupation against a planning project with the objective of expanding two bodies of planning theory. First, it is rooted in radical and insurgent planning and contributes to the many examples of situated struggles against oppressive planning systems. Second, it critically engages with understandings of the commons, which have had a significant impact on resource management in planning. These two aspects of planning theory will be discussed in turn in relation to the NDDL ZAD.

Urban planning theory has evolved over decades to provide a theoretical framework around the profession of planning. Critical voices have shaped this theory, building a significant body of literature depicting the roots of the discipline in exploitative and racist structures. Further, in trying to address these systemic inequalities reproduced through planning, theorists have offered approaches to transform planning. Building beyond the concepts of just city<sup>5</sup> and the communicative approach which failed to capture the uneven materialities of the planning system,<sup>6</sup> radical planning offers a materialist approach which sheds light on the power structures and relations that lie within the planning system. It recognises that urban planning practice is fundamentally linked to the rise of modernity through the use of domination and control of territory.<sup>7</sup> Cities exist within economic markets and are planned in order to facilitate those flows. As such, their spatial organisation tends to be overseen by experts, who can maximise the city's attraction of capital. This technocratic approach relies on expert knowledge as the foundation of its governance system, and conceptualises the city as a machine. Radical planning, in contrast, opposes such a structure and instead promotes a system of decentralised communal society aiming to advance human development.<sup>8</sup> Further,

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5 Fainstein, S. S. (2010). *The Just City*. Cornell University Press.

6 Randolph, R., & Frey, K. (2018). *Planning and Governance: Towards Radical Political Approaches*. In *Politics and Conflict in Governance and Planning* (1st ed., p. 18). Routledge.

7 Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds* (1–1 online resource (xxi, 290 pages) : illustrations). Duke University Press.

8 Huq, E. (2020). Seeing the insurgent in transformative planning practices. *Planning Theory*, 19(4), 371–391.

radical planning has criticised inclusionary planning, rooted in the communicative approach, for shifting politics as consensual procedures and technocratic mechanisms instead of conflictual and fraught relations. This institutionalisation of participation has been co-opted by traditional planning and has served to reproduce the existing planning system with its power structures in a post-political context.<sup>9</sup>

Radical planning theory took a southern turn, which re-centred theory production to the global south.<sup>10</sup> By re-localising the production of knowledge to these localities, planning theory developed a nuanced approach to the planning practice and its actors, recognising the diversity of processes that go into planning a city.<sup>11</sup> In particular, southern planning theory has documented informal practices and service provision as inherent to the planning process. It challenged the narrow, expert-driven understanding of planning practice and instead shed light on the multiplicity of ways that city planning happens outside of technocratic planning institutions. By making visible the systems of dominance and oppression that the planning system upholds and reproduces, insurgent practice exposes the contradictions within the traditional planning system, which relies on the co-optation of urban resources for profit accumulation.<sup>12</sup> In that sense, insurgent planning politicises spaces that have been ordered and planned to serve capitalist processes,<sup>13</sup> and creates opportunities to produce social meaning to urban space through insurgent relationality.

Over the years, this southern turn came to be conceptualised as Pluriversal planning scholarship. Based on Escobar,<sup>14</sup> Vasudevan and Novoa E. use the concept of Pluriverse to engage with the multiplicity of knowledges that converge to create planning.<sup>15</sup> Engaging a diversity of publics and perspectives has been a common call within planning literature and emphasises the need for planning practice to expand its conceptions of knowledge and expertise beyond formal institutions of planning.<sup>16</sup> The pluriverse lens draws from radical and insurgent planning and focuses on the situated knowledges emerging from civil society. It recognises the interconnections between various fields and as such challenges the hierarchical segmentation of disciplines. Pluriverse planning scholarship examines communities which critically engage with their localised past while creating futures outside of the modernist planning systems. As one of these communities, the ZAD is founded on alternative knowledges and reclaims its agency over the planning of the occupied lands to collectively envision a future for the zone. It is therefore informative to

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9 Swyngedouw, E. (2014). *Insurgent Architects, Radical Cities and the Promise of the Political*. In E. Swyngedouw & J. Wilson (Eds.), *The Post-Political and Its Discontents: Spaces of Depoliticisation, Spectres of Radical Politics* (pp. 169–188). Edinburgh University Press.

10 Miraftab, F. (2020). Insurgency and juxtacity in the age of urban divides. *Urban Forum*, 31(3), 433–441.

11 Friedmann, J. (1993). Toward a Non-Euclidian Mode of Planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 59(4), 482–485.

12 García-Lamarca, M. (2017). From Occupying Plazas to Recuperating Housing: Insurgent Practices in Spain. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 41(1), 37–53.

13 Swyngedouw, E. (2014). *Insurgent Architects, Radical Cities and the Promise of the Political*. In E. Swyngedouw & J. Wilson (Eds.), *The Post-Political and Its Discontents: Spaces of Depoliticisation, Spectres of Radical Politics* (pp. 169–188). Edinburgh University Press.

14 Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds* (1–1 online resource (xxi, 290 pages) : illustrations). Duke University Press.

15 Vasudevan, R., & Novoa E., M. (2022). Pluriversal planning scholarship: Embracing multiplicity and situated knowledges in community-based approaches. *Planning Theory*, 21(1), 77–100.

16 Sandercock, L., (1998). *Towards cosmopolis: Planning for multicultural cities*. J. Wiley.

study this case as a situated example of insurgent planning, negotiating a local history and diverse social networks to resist traditional planning systems.

Further, insurgent planning brings a southern perspective to radical theory with a focus on informality, emphasising marginalised people's agency and ability to impact systems of domination.<sup>17</sup> In that sense, radical planning and insurgent planning share a critique of modernist state-led planning and challenge the institutions that uphold this system. They are both committed to territorial justice and recognise that to undo the inequalities produced by the modern planning system, planners have to adopt a differentiated approach fit for the context in which they plan, while recognising the necessity to work with social movements.

However, this project draws from insurgent planning because it analyses everyday practices and the way they transform planning. These practices, enacted on the ZAD, produced a set of relations which produced new ways of planning the land outside of market structures. In the intricacies of enacting a radically different model of spatial planning, I recognise that people and groups can simultaneously engage in insurgent and non-insurgent practices, in both invented and invited spaces<sup>18</sup> and that their positions change depending on the context and their socio-spatial relations.<sup>19</sup>

Beyond liberatory politics and advocacy, insurgent planning shifts our understanding of where planning is made and who planners can be, recognising that those outside of state- and market-led planning are also actors of planning. By viewing planning as a discipline that is conducted within a dominant capitalist system, but that intersects with a diversity of disciplines and perspectives, planners can allow their discipline to evolve and contribute to equity and liberation. As seen in a multitude of planning projects,<sup>20</sup> a failure to consider concerned voices and to meaningfully engage with potential alternatives can cause conflictual situations which result in the reproduction of systems of oppression. To profoundly transform planning from a tool for capitalist urbanisation to an emancipatory effort toward equitable land relations, planning ought to engage with diverse situated voices and support insurgent practices in their diversity.

## Commoning

As part of the invented space that the ZAD formed, many experiments were conducted to radically transform collective living and agricultural practices. Of them, the ZAD created a prominent precedent for the commoning of resources. This notion has been conceptualised in the literature and defined over time as various movements have attempted to create commons.

In a foundational work about the commons, Ostrom theorised the commons<sup>21</sup> in a reaction to Hardin's

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17 Huq, E. (2020). Seeing the insurgent in transformative planning practices. *Planning Theory*, 19(4), 371–391.

18 Miraftab, F. (2020). Insurgency and juxtacity in the age of urban divides. *Urban Forum*, 31(3), 433–441.

19 Huq, E. (2020). Seeing the insurgent in transformative planning practices. *Planning Theory*, 19(4), 371–391.

20 Fainstein, S. S., Forester, J., Lee, K. L., Na'puti, T., Agyeman, J., Stewart, N. J., Novy, J., Dedekorkut Howes, A., Burton, P., Norgaard, S., Smith, N. R., Zukin, S., Lubinsky, A., & Keith, M. (2023). Resistance and Response in Planning. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 24(2), 245–283.

21 Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press.

deterministic depiction of the tragedy of the commons,<sup>22</sup> whereby common resources are bound to be overexploited if there is no market to govern them. Ostrom's theory responds to several prediction models that determine that it is in people's best individual interest to extract as much value out of the commons. Instead, Ostrom presents a model where members of a group voluntarily agree to retain the value of their labour collectively. Ostrom's approach is institutional and sets out recommendations for successful common pool resources which are rooted in explicit collective rules and arrangements which are pre-emptively set up by the collective.

After presenting several cases of commoning across the world, albeit in small rural communities, she lays out guidelines for successful commons. Among them, she recommends that the boundaries of the commons should be clearly defined so as to prevent over-appropriation. She recommends rules that are adapted to the local context, participatory decision-making, and strict monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms. She also suggests that successful commons should hold legal status to ensure protection of their tenure, and explains that strong commons are ones that are connected with other commoning systems. Among these principles, the ZAD follows some, yet it seems to depart from others. This is due to Ostrom's narrow frame for defining common pool resources. Indeed, Ostrom's approach does have some limitations regarding applying the commons not only in their preservation, but also to their use. Fournier argues that under Ostrom's analysis, common resources are allocated collectively, but appropriated privately.<sup>23</sup> Expanding our understanding of common resources, I choose to root this analysis in a broader understanding of common resources, which conceives of them as not only collectively defined and managed, but also collectively used and transformed. Such an approach is more fitting for understanding the ZAD due to the diversity of uses of common resources in the zone, both during and after the struggle.

Moreover, commoning systems exist and are reproduced thanks to a set of daily operations and relations. The boundaries and conditions of the commons are therefore performed by the commoners as they interact with the commons and with each other, to form a dynamic common landscape.<sup>24</sup> Further, commoning practices must be understood within the wider capitalist context in which they take place. The existence of a wider economic system which challenges these structures means that the commons are constantly re-created and reproduced through social relations.<sup>25</sup> This makes the commons vulnerable to shocks and relational transformations, whereby the collective configuration that supported its production shifts.

This research project engages directly in the making of the commons on the ZAD, but it also raises questions about some of Ostrom's principles. These principles sometimes support findings about the ZAD, and sometimes contradict them. Chapter 1 directly addresses the source of these differences and argues that while the ZAD does not strictly implement Ostrom's principles, it conducts a complete effort at commoning as an autonomous zone.

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22 Hardin, G. (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243–1248.

23 Fournier, V. (2013). Commoning: On the social organisation of the commons. *M@n@gement*, 16(4), 433–453.

24 Poderi, G. (2021). On commoners' daily struggles: Carving out the when/where of commoning. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, 21(3), 73–93.

25 *Ibid.*

# Methodology

## A Critical Qualitative Analysis Framework

This research project is a case study of the NDDL ZAD. In France, the ZAD movement gained prominence with this zone, and it gained public and academic attention for over a decade. This wide coverage of the zone has contributed to significant progress in the social science scholarship about occupations. However, little has been written in the perspective of urban planning. By rooting this research in insurgent planning, I aim to engage with the everyday processes which formed an experiment against the modern planning system. The qualitative framework of this project is founded on the understanding that knowledge is situated and is produced in spaces of everyday life. Accessing this knowledge from within the zone will serve to document the imaginations and experiments that occurred within the zone, and to formulate an emerging vision for transformative planning practices rooted in values of autonomy and commoning.

As such, the qualitative framework of this project aims to engage the ZAD's situated knowledge and to outline the relational values created within the zone. It aims to document how occupants implemented a diversity of strategies to respond to a state that refused to recognise and formalise the communal structures that were created in the ZAD.

Six years after the cancellation of the airport (AGO) project, an evaluation of the everyday practices around the zone and their impact in creating an alternative conception of land, rurality and capitalism is an appropriate methodology to evaluate the impact of this occupation and respond to our research questions.

# Online Content Analysis

Analysing online content has been a rising method in the social sciences in the past decade. Information is increasingly decentralised, and the Internet is now a dense source of qualitative and quantitative social data. In particular, social sciences focusing on understanding social movements have used social media not only as a means of data collection but also as a subject of study. Movements like Occupy Wall Street have been studied for their ability to leverage support over online platforms.<sup>26</sup> These data have widely been used in social network analyses and have shed light on the mobilisation capacity of social media. In the context of the ZAD, online platforms have contributed to the mobilisation of a diversity of people. The very availability of online data about the ZAD is a direct consequence of the Internet's ability to mobilise support. Indeed, without this ability to reach broader support, much of the data analysed in this project would not have existed. However, in this research project, online data is not the object of study but rather the source of information.<sup>27</sup>

Social media content has been utilised in feminist research to access data about groups that are not as accessible to researchers due to their vulnerable status, typically due to gender-based violence.<sup>28</sup> This approach can be transferred to the study of social movements, as participants are also reluctant to disseminate information in fear of safety repercussions. This method was therefore adapted to fit this study's context, due to the lack of direct contact with ZAD occupants.

My study considers the internet as a source of information. While the majority of the literature focuses on the internet as a subject of study, methodological books have discussed the use of online sources as part of social movement research. Mosca emphasises that internet archiving has to be conducted in a precise way, and recommends using manual archiving when only looking at a few online sources.<sup>29</sup> The ZAD is a peculiar social movement and lacks traceable online information due to the safety implications of being involved in the movement. In this study, I used purposive sampling, which is based on the researcher's prior knowledge of the movement to inform the selection of the most representative texts. I conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on the ZAD, using academic and journalistic sources, as well as online material from blogs and podcasts in order to build a deep knowledge from which to inform the purposive sampling. I therefore created a wide dataset of online resources which covered many aspects of the ZAD, which I then used to triangulate my findings from the analysed texts. Further, my understanding of the ZAD drew from personal experience in visiting a ZAD in the south of France thanks to the involvement of a family member. Accessing this ZAD with the help of someone who was involved in the movement and gave me the tools to understand the internal mechanisms of the zone. While my experience is with a different ZAD, the tactics, governance structures, and attitudes toward commoning are similar.

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26 Tremayne, M. (2015). Anatomy of Protest in the Digital Era: A Network Analysis of Twitter and Occupy Wall Street. In *Social Networks and Social Movements*. Routledge.

27 Rogers, R. (2009). *The end of the virtual: Digital methods*. Amsterdam Vossiuspers UvA.

28 Morrow, O., Hawkins, R., & Kern, L. (2015). Feminist research in online spaces. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 22(4), 526–543.

29 Mosca, L. (2014). Methodological Practices in Social Movement Online Research. In D. Della Porta (Ed.), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (First edition, 1–1 online resource (xii, 471 pages)). University Press.

# Data

After reflecting on possible avenues for data collection for this project, this project utilised a range of texts published by occupants on the ZAD's official website, [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org). The website has over 400 published texts, ranging from calls to mobilisation to day-to-day testimonies or opinion pieces relating to the management of the ZAD. These texts are most often published anonymously, which was a necessity due to the increased criminalisation and surveillance of the movement. They serve to share information about mobilisations and as a platform for discussions and debates within and outside the zone.

While the website used in this study is the ZAD's official site, it was likely held and administered by a small group of people who likely filtered the content to some extent. It was impossible to identify the administrators of the website, which has not been updated since 2023, as their contact information was not up to date. However, the website has a wide number of textual and photographic resources that are rich in information about the zone. The topics covered ranged widely and a diversity of opinions is present on the site, as seen by the multitude of texts in response to previous opinion pieces published on the website. Dissident texts were also published on the site, albeit with a note of disagreement at the top of the article. It is to be noted that occupants who embraced a more anarchic lifestyle are likely under-represented in the publishers of articles. Their perspective is shown in some articles, and these texts were given particular attention to ensure that their perspectives are accounted for.

Within the website, 87 texts were selected based on the relevance of their title to this study. In my sampling, I searched for texts that discussed governance, conflict management, farming projects, autonomy, commoning, discussions around material and social access, solidarity networks, and attitudes to legalisation. Texts were read and coded progressively, with themes emerging as I connected some expected themes with the content that was present. New codes progressively emerged and were grouped into themes. Saturation was reached after analysing 52 texts, of which 43 were considered relevant. A data log is attached to the appendix, with a column describing the relevance of the text. After reaching saturation, codes were grouped into themes, which in turn informed this analysis. The codebook is attached as an appendix and provides a guiding definition of each code and theme, as well as their occurrence across the analysed texts. All quoted text in this report is translated from French using the software DeepL, which I edited to better reflect tone and intentions.

## Research Considerations

The subject of this research is a social movement which used illegal occupation as its core tactic. As such, the relationship of occupants with the state and with the police is sensitive. Over the years, policing of

ZAD occupants has sharply increased, making them vulnerable to police violence and criminalisation.<sup>30</sup> From my personal experience visiting another ZAD in 2022 in the south of France, I noted that occupants were reluctant to engage with outsiders who did not have affiliations to the movement. They demanded that phones be left outside when conducting assemblies due to the sensitive information that was shared. As such, occupants of another ZAD have expressed that they do not feel comfortable engaging in conversations that could jeopardise their status. To compensate for this ethical limitation, researchers have conducted ethnographic work, integrating the movement over several months and creating interpersonal connections and relationships of trust with the occupants while also contributing to the struggle.<sup>31 32 33</sup> Due to the scope of this research project, as well as time and budget limitations, I could not engage in these methods. In exploring ways to disseminate information about the NDDL ZAD, I understood that much of the information necessary for this project was available and accessible online. I shifted my data collection strategy to collect valuable information already available and compiled online, recognising that occupants had shared relevant information that could address my research questions. To compensate for the fact that the texts were not specifically written to respond to my research questions, I used purposive sampling and collected a larger dataset to ensure that I would obtain sufficient information. This method proved successful, and I reached saturation after analysing 52 of my 87 identified texts. Together, my methodology thoroughly analysed existing data and triangulated my findings using published work, without compromising my ethical duties to the subject of study.

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30 Mascarello, L. (2015, April 14). La loi sur le renseignement vise aussi les zadistes, les écolos et les antinucléaires. *Reporterre*. <https://reporterre.net/La-loi-sur-le-renseignement-vise-aussi-les-zadistes-les-ecolos-et-les>

31 Ross, K., & Mauvaise Troupe Collective, M. T. (2018). *The Zad and NoTAV Territorial Struggles and the Making of a New Political Intelligence* (1–1 online resource (155 p.)). Verso Books.

32 Bulle, S. (2020). *Irréductibles: Enquête sur des milieux de vie de Bure à N.-D.-des-Landes*. UGA Éditions.

33 Duplay, E. (2021). *Notre-Dame-des-Landes, après la lutte*. Éditions du Seuil.

## CHAPTER 1

# Against the Airport and its World

## A Brief History of a Movement Against the Airport

The Zone à Défendre (ZAD) acronym is a subversion of a planning term, the Zone d'Aménagement Différé. A French equivalent to the right of first refusal, this tool was used at NDDL in the 1970s to allow the state and the commissioned company to acquire the fields in the zone designated to host the future airport.<sup>34</sup> For forty years, the mobilisation against the airport remained local. Displacement occurred as some farmers accepted to sell their parcels, while others refused to sell and opposed the airport project. In these early years, the main opposition to the airport therefore came from rural and local voices, often driven by their private interests. On the other hand, while not directly an urban project, the airport was a major project in urban policy in France. In an effort to decentralise urban development away from Paris, national directives incentivised territorial development in medium-sized cities in France. Nantes was the target of this program, and aimed to attract economic as well as labour flows through a variety of policies.<sup>35</sup> To accommodate for this circulation, the state developed a project for the Aéroport du Grand Ouest (AGO) on the site of NDDL. As such, the airport came to symbolise a vision for a world city in the making, which would attract workers and capital in a globalised world. To make it possible, the state leveraged its planning tools, with the Zone d'aménagement différé as one of them.

The Zone d'aménagement différé presupposes a declaration of public utility for the project, which is granted by the state to projects that are deemed to meet their territorial development goals. In granting this title to the AGO, the French government perpetuated assumptions which uphold the modern planning system. Through this title, the French state declared that rapid, efficient travel is essential for a booming metropolis, but it must be built away from the city core, in land that holds less value. To locate an airport on arable agricultural land is to implicitly declare that metropolisation and urbanisation takes

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<sup>34</sup> Rialland-Juin, C. (2016). Le conflit de Notre-Dame-des-Landes: Les terres agricoles, entre réalités agraires et utopies foncières. *Noréis*. 133–145.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

precedence over rurality, food security and farmers' livelihoods.<sup>36</sup> This planning directive, which would have vastly transformed the local landscape in NDDL and would have endangered essential ecosystems, was formed by various bodies of decision-makers who are removed from these localities. The zone was therefore designated from the top-down, with insufficient concertation and social acceptability. At this point, any opponents to the project were dismissed as mere NIMBYs who did not understand planning principles and needs.

In 2008, the Zone à défendre rose as an occupation on the site of the planned airport against a destructive project that, on the one hand, threatened local human and non-human livelihoods, and on the other, symbolised a globalist form of economic growth. The ZAD is therefore primarily a defence movement, which sets out to protect agricultural lands and local livelihoods against the rapid and exploitative mechanisms of modern capitalist territorial planning. These planning tools are identified by occupants as directly serving the purposes of rural dispossession, and are exposed for their attempts at concealing it under green policies: "Building the commons means defending this territory against all metropolitan development projects (airport, road bypass, housing estate, eco-neighbourhood, nature reserve, etc.)."<sup>37</sup> In this sense, many occupants shed a critical eye on the modern planning system and rejected it in its entirety, preferring instead to engage in radically transformative practices which depart from the norms and processes existing in the modern French territorial planning system.



Figure 1: Banner used during the 2012 reconstruction of the zone after the Caesar operation (large eviction attempt). Source: [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org)

Encapsulating this rejection of the entire planning system and beyond, the main slogan used during the ten years of occupation in NDDL is "contre l'aéroport et son monde" [against the airport and its world],<sup>38</sup> which explicitly connects the AGO project with wider globalist capitalist structures. This slogan is central to the struggle, and was broadly used in speeches, opinion pieces, protest banners, and news articles. This

36 Corroyer, P. (2019). «Faunes sauvages» en politique. Tisser et mettre en scène un territoire contestataire: De la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes à Bure. *L'Espace Politique*, 37. pp. 1-24.

37 [Zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2015) "De la ZAD aux Communaux ? Quelques pistes à explorer pour aller plus loin...". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067>

38 De Clerck, P. (2018). Habiter avant la règle: Quelques nouvelles d'une mise en chantier de l'institution à Notre-Dame-des-Landes. *Revue Interdisciplinaire d'études Juridiques*, 81(2), p.271.

core message reminded audiences in simple words that the occupation not only opposed the construction of the AGO airport on this site, but it also opposed the principles of capitalist growth, state-led urbanisation and metropolisation that led to this project. The occupation's clear objective, communicated from the onset of the occupation, suggested that even if the airport project was abandoned, the struggle would remain, as captured by the following quote:

What kind of victory are we talking about when we fight against the airport and its world? For the airport, perhaps we can win; for the world, a new cycle of relentless struggle will have to be waged before we can begin to glimpse the beginnings of light...<sup>39</sup>

By twisting the meaning of ZAD, the occupation directly appropriates dominant planning tools to shift the power dynamic and impose an alternative vision for the planning of NDDL.

Semantically, the ZAD creates an enclosure. Leveraging the vocabulary of urban and territorial planning, it creates a protected autonomous space which radically rejects top-down decisions about land uses.<sup>40</sup> In its rejection of dictated land uses, the ZAD is a counter-zone. It refuses to subscribe to cartesian designations of land use and instead welcomes a diversity of activities and actors in its space and in time. The ZAD is a dynamic space which changes as people come and go, and as activities start and end, and as conflicts arise and are resolved.<sup>41</sup> Rather than being pre-determined, land uses are determined on an ad-hoc basis. Occupants move in and build shelter and small farms, based on natural resources, affinity with neighbours, and simple appreciation of the area. At the core of this project is a will to organise collectively through diversity.

## Commoning Practices

Squatters who occupied the space in the first months came from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from activists to scientists, but shared a critical view of globalisation, and broadly fit under the umbrella of the anti-, or alter-globalisation movement,<sup>42</sup> while not always claiming it explicitly. To create a zone that functions socially while also accommodating for a diversity of needs and backgrounds, occupants experimented with a diversity of ways of managing and using land and other resources. The core effort behind these systems was to create an autonomous zone which did not depend on state and market resources and rules, that was governed by the users of these services, and that facilitated the commoning of resources. As discussed in the previous section, one of the drivers of the creation of the ZAD is the defence of the

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39 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2013) "On dirait que ça te plait de marcher dans la boue..." <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1217>

40 De Clerck, P. (2018). Habiter avant la règle: Quelques nouvelles d'une mise en chantier de l'institution à Notre-Dame-des-Landes. *Revue Interdisciplinaire d'études Juridiques*, 81(2), p.271.

41 Verdier, M. (2022). Une nature ingouvernable La polémique sur les ressources inappropriables dans la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes. *Revue Française de Socio-Économie*, 29(2), 71-89.

42 Barbe, F. (2016). La «zone à défendre» de Notre-Dame-des-Landes ou l'habiter comme politique. *Noröis*. (238-239), 109-130.

commons against a project of privatisation of natural resources,<sup>43</sup> such as the arable land which would host the airport, the air that would be polluted or the loss of habitat for local species. As a proposal for an alternative mode of territorial governance and social organisation, occupants made it clear that creating commons was indissociable from the struggle against the airport:

“The future of these lands depends entirely on our ability to live there together today. These two issues are inseparable. If we do not manage, here and now, to reconcile the different practices and the multiplicity of uses that co-habit the lands of the ZAD, then it will be difficult for us to project ourselves together into an airport-free future.”<sup>44</sup>

Creating a common narrative and a viable alternative planning project of the ZAD was therefore one of the core objectives of the zone and shifted the power dynamic from a defensive effort to a transformative effort. The ZAD became a site of experiment where theoretical conceptions of the commons came to be materialised in the ways the territory was managed. Expanding beyond Ostrom’s understanding of the commons,<sup>45</sup> the ZAD was a space where not only use value was prioritised over exchange value, but it was also a space which reclaimed its right to the production of rural space. In that sense, the ZAD was an autonomous project which centred not only common institutions but also common use and community building, which in turn generated resilience and reproduction of the commons created in the ZAD. It encompassed a “shared territory, communal land, and the infrastructures of autonomy that are developed on it.”<sup>46</sup> In that sense, land ownership was collective, with no individual tenure of the land, and instead collective projects ranging from agro-ecological farms to wood workshops and non-markets. While the occupied zone was managed collectively, historical farmers retained their right to their lots based on their usage of it.



Figure 2: Picture of a communal library on the zone. Source: [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org)

43 Fournier, V. (2013). Commoning: On the social organisation of the commons. *M@n@gement*, 16(4), 433–453.

44 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2015) “De la ZAD aux Communaux ? Quelques pistes à explorer pour aller plus loin...”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067>

45 Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press.

46 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2015) “De la ZAD aux Communaux ? Quelques pistes à explorer pour aller plus loin...”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067>

In the ZAD, resources were open to be utilised by all, as long as they were not used to extract a private profit. Lying between Ostrom's vision of planning in common<sup>47</sup> and Fournier's concept of planning for the common,<sup>48</sup> the ZAD was a space of autonomy, where some resources were used for a collective purpose, such as collective fields or libraries, while others were utilised to fulfil individual needs. In that sense, while tenure was collective, use could serve a diversity of purposes and aspirations. The 100 Noms farm was a prominent case of commoning, which produced food for the zone between 2013 and 2018 when the farm was destroyed by the police. It supplied food for the collective and created a space for discussions and community gatherings around collective meals,<sup>49</sup> therefore sustaining the social relations that upheld the commons of the ZAD. Viewing these commons not as mere natural resources but instead as social relations between members of a collective which use and reproduce the resources allows us to understand the relationships of care and mutual aid that were formed within the commons. I propose to view the commons not only as the land and agricultural outputs that were shared with the collective on the zone, but instead the spectrum of relations of care and mutual aid that existed on the ZAD, ranging from collective farming to supplying newcomers with a roof and a sleeping bag as a form of opening to the community.<sup>50</sup>

In its commoning structures, the ZAD also embraced informality in the ways people used resources and interacted with one another: "In the slightest of its folds, its interstices: people tinker, trade, barter, steal, exchange, recover, free-ride, fiddle, squat, tag, transgress, live."<sup>51</sup> The rules governing resource use were not codified, and instead of resorting to monitoring and sanctioning institutions as recommended by Ostrom,<sup>52</sup> ZAD occupants managed conflicts over resource use on an ad-hoc basis. This is fundamentally attached to the ZAD's commitment to ensuring autonomy for all groups, and fostering a space which allows for experimentation and self-governance. The zone was particularly prone to conflicts because of its nature as a haven for activists, radical farmers, intellectuals and other politically-minded individuals. With no explicit rules around land use, conflicts arose when two incompatible uses existed in the same space. While such a mode of governance demands increased efforts toward conflict resolution and mediation, it also creates a deep knowledge of the place, its traditions and its diversity within the occupants. To address these conflicts, various instances of governance and conflict resolution co-existed in the ZAD.

As a relatively large autonomous zone, the ZAD created a range of gathering spaces to reach collective decisions about daily operations, resource use and conflict resolution. Often conducted in a non-hierarchical way along the model of a general assembly, the uses assembly (*assemblée des usages*) gathered participants to reflect on the uses of the land on the zone. This was a space of direct democracy, where all participants were invited to voice their opinions and to engage with differing perspectives. In that sense,

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47 Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press.

48 Fournier, V. (2013). Commoning: On the social organisation of the commons. *M@n@gement*, 16(4), 433–453.

49 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1451) (2013) "Collectif des "Cent Noms"". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1451>

50 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4800) (2017) "Témoignage d'une nouvelle arrivante". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4800>

51 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2255) (2014) "22 Février, la faune sauvage déboule du bocage : biodiversité de la subversion". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2255>

52 Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press

the uses assembly was a space of creation of alternative social relations which were grounded in direct representation by the people who used the ZAD instead of experts and outside deciders.<sup>53</sup> Other governance institutions existed and each addressed a component of communal decision-making.<sup>54</sup> Assemblies like Sème ta ZAD focused on having a coherent agricultural strategy within the zone, while COPAIN organised among agricultural professionals to create a resistance strategy against the airport. The diversity of governance spaces and their degrees of formality meant that the diverse publics of the zone could gather within and between affinity groups to reach collective agreements about resistance strategies and collective living. In turn, this strengthened and reproduced the commons by creating a culture of collective decision-making and by rooting communal thinking in the operations of the zone.

Because the zone was a space of experimentation not only for commoning but also for autonomy and participation, it also accommodated for publics who were reluctant to partake in formal governance institutions. By having a non-hierarchical spectrum of modes of governance, a diversity of forms of decision-making arose on the ZAD. Many decisions were reached informally in discussion on the field, and did not need to be raised in formal meetings. This very informality attracted individuals who rejected formal planning and governance altogether and rather sought increased autonomy from collective living. As such, widely different modes of inhabiting the land co-existed in the zone, with sometimes irreconcilable differences. To maintain its openness and allow for as much diversity as possible, the ZAD was organised spatially as well as socially. The characteristics of inhabitation forms on the zone are discussed in the following section.

## A Site of Differentiated Inhabitation

The origins of the ZAD are rooted in a conflict intrinsically linked to the land. In one territory, two opposing and mutually exclusive visions for usage and development have coalesced into a conflict of over 10 years. In the first section of the first chapter, I explained how dominant authorities view the territory. In this section, I delve into the occupants' understanding of the territory as a site of inhabitation and autonomy. In doing that, I attempt to further define the nature of this struggle and to explain the forms of territorial governance that arose in the ZAD.<sup>55</sup>

Inhabitation constitutes the principal way in which occupants related to the territory. Drawing from social sciences, I posit that inhabitation creates a social link with space, and serves to transform and re-appropriate the meaning of the zone. Inhabitation also represents the primary tool of resistance against the AGO project. It is by inhabiting the space that occupants prevent the state from carrying out its project

53 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067) (2015) "De la ZAD aux Communaux ? Quelques pistes à explorer pour aller plus loin...". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067>

54 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2016) "« En quoi l'organisation de la vie et de la lutte sur la zad est-elle un laboratoire de démocratie ? »". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3934>

55 Barbe, F. (2016). La «zone à défendre» de Notre-Dame-des-Landes ou l'habiter comme politique. *Noröis* (238-239), 109–130.

and further its model of capitalist territorial development. Dismissing reductionist depictions of the ZAD as merely a camping site, an inhabitant says: “No, we’re not camping out; we’re building, cultivating and inventing emancipating forms of existence, despite the permanent threat imposed by those who want to see us disappear.”<sup>56</sup> In this way, inhabitation transcends its passive role in modern society and instead fosters radical and generative social connections. It brings different people in the same space and fosters networks of mutual aid. When arriving to the ZAD, an inhabitant reported that they were offered shelter and told to settle wherever they wanted in the space.<sup>57</sup> Another occupant explains that they arrived on the zone to support the struggle, but ended up staying and inhabiting it.<sup>58</sup> By making inhabitation a collective matter instead of an individual one, the ZAD creates grounded communities which pursue their struggle from the ground up and in relation with each other based on the territory they share, both spatially and socially.



Figure 3: Picture of a house made out of recuperated materials. Source: [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org)

As a laboratory for new modes of social living, the ZAD is a haven for people who want to create new communities away from extractive systems. Different values and ideals of inhabiting materialised differently on the zone and shaped not only the conditions of inhabiting the space but also the ways the land was used. A significant part of the ZAD population envisioned an agro-ecological system with communal farms and sustainable living, while others embraced re-wilding and anarchic living. To some extent, these different living models organically appropriated various lots to sustain their lifestyles across the 1,650 hectares of the zone. Over time, the departmental road that crossed the ZAD from north to south, RD281, renamed “route des chicanes”, constituted a pre-existing boundary between the east and the west of the ZAD. The west part of the zone set up a number of small farms as well as other collective spaces, and envisioned a nuanced approach to technology, where machinery and tools were used in moderation

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56 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2014) “Ceci n’est pas un camping.”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2106>

57 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2013) “La ZAD ne se raconte pas, elle se vit.”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1028>

58 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2017) “Lettre aux comités”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4682>

when they facilitated agro-ecological projects.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, the east of the zone tended to be more informal in its organisation of space, with inhabitants rejecting the use of machinery and preferring to re-wild the space, creating a non-hierarchical environment between living organisms. The east of the ZAD also fostered space for individuals who were at odds with the state. The east was therefore a haven for people that were targeted by the French judicial system, people who were defined by the state's bordering system to be illegal on this land, or people who were cast out of social services due to their drug consumption or mental health conditions.<sup>60</sup>

These different societal projects co-existed within the zone partly because of their shared position against the airport, and partly because of the spatial allocation of the zone which allowed people to concentrate spatially based on their affinities and projects. That spatial differentiation was organically established over time and over several cycles of conflict. For example, the east advocated for rewilding and non-hierarchy with nature. Inhabitants of this part of the ZAD therefore relied on manual labour and develop practices that are respectful and non-exploitative of their environment.<sup>61</sup> These different uses of the land sometime coalesced into conflict. In 2013, while Sème ta ZAD wanted to expand their agricultural efforts to the east of the RD281, opponents set up barricades and refused such an activity. Formal assemblies and negotiations resulted in the creation of a non-motorised zone, aimed to protect local biodiversity.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, while spatial planning often started on the field, it sometimes had to be deliberated on in more formal types of institutions.

Despite these differences, there was a broad understanding that the range of practices that coexisted in the ZAD were co-constitutive of the struggle and that all belonged there despite differences: "We are all, from now on, occupiers without right or title in the eyes of the State whether we are former tenants, resisting farmers, or people who have made the choice to come and live here illegally to prevent work and occupy land."<sup>63</sup> Leveraging Lancione's concept of the spectrum of home(less)ness,<sup>64</sup> the ZAD was a space which radically rejected the binary between being housed and unhoused and instead expanded inhabitation beyond the traditional boundaries of the home to encompass the entire zone. The different modes of inhabitation were recognised to generate resilience and to strengthen the struggle against the airport.<sup>65</sup> While this internal resilience and diversity was maintained from within the zone, the ZAD also grew in relation to its surroundings by leveraging networks of solidarity. The following chapter delves into the ZAD's relation with the world outside the zone.

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59 Corroyer, P. (2019). «Faunes sauvages» en politique. Tisser et mettre en scène un territoire contestataire: De la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes à Bure. *L'Espace Politique*, 37. pp. 1-24.

60 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1798) (2013) "A propos du "mépris de classe" sur la ZAD". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1798>

61 Verdier, M. (2022). Une nature ingouvernable La polémique sur les ressources inappropriables dans la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes. *Revue Française de Socio-Économie*, 29(2), 71-89.

62 *Ibid.*

63 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067) (2015) "De la ZAD aux Communaux ? Quelques pistes à explorer pour aller plus loin...". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067>

64 Lancione, M. (2023). *For a liberatory politics of home*. Duke University Press.

65 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2106) (2014) "Ceci n'est pas un camping". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2106>

## CHAPTER 2

# Community Resilience in and out of the Zone

## Networks of Solidarity

At the foundation of the zone are networks of solidarity that spanned across France and across social classes. Throughout the occupation's history, calls for solidarity structured the zone and supported the defence of the territory as the state attempted to reclaim its control over that space. The defence of the zone rallied hundreds of people in times of eviction by the police and ensured that the occupation remained for over a decade until the airport project was officially cancelled.<sup>66</sup> Its ability to leverage broad social and material support was developed through the creation of local support committees across France, which coordinated actions and protests in support of the ZAD. This community response and support in turn strengthened the movement by circulating an alternative narrative about the zone and about the planning project presented by the state.

Beyond defending the zone, networks of solidarity made the creation of alternative planning systems possible. Resource allocation and labour operated differently in the ZAD and attempted to emancipate people from extractive practices that exist in the modern capitalist system. Instead of relying on monetary exchanges and relations of extraction and profit making, the ZAD projects were collectively produced thanks to a commoning of resources and skills. For example, the 100 Noms farm was materially established after putting out a call for machinery and materials,<sup>67</sup> and was eventually rebuilt after a fire thanks to the solidarity of occupants and other farmers.<sup>68</sup> These new models of provision and resource allocation can inform planning practices because they radically restructure the nature of stakeholder relations in making collective projects. Existing planning institutions, including non-profit and public institutions, rely on the market to source the materials and knowledge necessary to develop their projects. The ZAD therefore radically transforms real estate and proposes an alternative to market allocation of resources.

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66 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1584) (2013) "Venir sur la ZAD... ou pas ?". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1584>

67 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1451) (2013) "Collectif des "Cent Noms"". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1451>

68 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2086) (2014) "Feu les 100 noms". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2086>

Further, networks of solidarity expanded outside the ZAD to support other social movements. This reciprocal show of solidarity was intrinsically connected with the ZAD's effort to fight against both the airport and its world, recognising that solidarity will shift power dynamics<sup>69</sup> and strengthen the prevalence and viability of alternatives to the capitalist system.<sup>70</sup> This solidarity materialised by sharing the agricultural outputs with striking farmers or workers,<sup>71</sup> or by attending protests in solidarity with adjacent causes such as refugees rights or housing rights. There was an understanding that by cultivating diversity and getting involved in multiple forms of struggle for liberation, the movement was building resilience and ensuring that the alternative they were creating was a viable one. This resistance expanded beyond the French borders, with participants recognising the need for collective liberation and solidarity with land back movements in North America<sup>72</sup> or with occupations against infrastructural projects in Italy for example.<sup>73</sup>

The aggregation of these networks of solidarity within and outside the ZAD created synergies which strengthened all movements. The creation of ties with the zone's neighbours helped the zone gain a more intimate knowledge of the land and house supporters in times of evictions,<sup>74</sup> while neighbours benefited from shared resources and support in their own struggles. ZAD occupants visited other struggles both in France and abroad to share knowledges and good practices from the ZAD, and come back with international precedents for collective living and resistance, from factory squats to tree occupations.<sup>75</sup> Unionised construction workers refused to participate in the construction of the airport, declaring that they are not mercenaries.<sup>76</sup> All these forms of solidarity reflect the synergies created in the space of the ZAD and shared beyond its boundaries.

This solidarity is radical and transformative, and actively re-centres the margins of the capitalist system by expanding solidarity with various forms of deviance and illegality: "squatters, immigrants, angry folks, autonomous folks, free spirits".<sup>77</sup> As such, the ZAD profoundly transformed social relations between various struggles and created expansive communities that relied on shared resources and co-created growth. Instead of organising collective living in separate spheres as the traditional planning system does, the ZAD recognised the interconnection of various fields and showed that advancing one field could contribute to the bettering of another. Labour, housing, production, or education were not considered different jurisdictions and were planned relationally. For these systems to positively reinforce each other, a deep knowledge of the zone's institutions and needs had to be developed. This influenced the zone's openness and ability to welcome newcomers. The issue of access is discussed in the next section.

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69 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6016) (2018) "Aux soutiens de la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes - Nous sommes la lutte contre le monde de l'aéroport !" <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6016>

70 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049) (2018) "La fin de la ZAD, le début de quoi ?". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049>

71 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067) (2015) "De la ZAD aux Communaux ? Quelques pistes à explorer pour aller plus loin...". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067>

72 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4278) (2016) "Ça y est l'hiver est là !". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4278>

73 Ross, K., & Mauvaise Troupe Collective, (2018). *The ZAD and NoTAV Territorial Struggles and the Making of a New Political Intelligence* (155 p.). Verso Books.

74 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4278) (2016) "Ça y est l'hiver est là !". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4278>

75 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4682) (2017) "Lettre aux comités". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4682>

76 *Ibid.*

77 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5075) (2018) "Ils veulent expulser une de nos Zones à défendre, silencieusement ! No pasaran !". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5075>

# Perspectives on Bordering

As explored in the previous chapter, the ZAD was a space that transformed modes of inhabitation. As part of its transgression of modern forms of inhabiting, the ZAD was founded on inhabitation as protest, and in that sense the boundaries between home and outside were fluid and dynamic. Wider bordering practices existed on the zone, rethinking inclusion and exclusion in a way that allowed free access to the zone, while protecting the experiments and forms of inhabitation that were taking place within. Understanding bordering practices on the ZAD allows us to reflect on bordering practices in the modern planning system from a different viewpoint and envision alternative forms of inclusion and exclusion.

To understand how the ZAD transformed bordering, I first propose a reflection on bordering in traditional planning. While modern planning does not plan for people but for uses, it is founded in a broader statist system which controls access to territories based on people's identities. Cities exist within modern states which enforce strict border laws, de facto excluding irregular immigrants. Likewise, cities plan against people whom they define as undesirable. Homeless people, sex workers or drug users are but a few categories which are often excluded through city planning regulations and zoning. Municipal police forces enforce these boundaries within and outside established rules by forcefully removing these populations. In Montreal, the encampment in solidarity with Palestine on Square Victoria was cleared by the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) on July 5th, 2024.<sup>78</sup> In Paris, police dismantled homeless and migrant camps across the city in July 2024 to make way for the Summer Olympics.<sup>79</sup> Encampments and squats are cleared by city forces across the world because they do not fit within the city and the state's vision for productive and desirable uses. These forms of inhabitation radically challenge the spatial distribution of modern cities and confront traditional assumptions around the separations of uses, and the distinction between the private and public realm. By bringing inhabitation to the public realm, encampments and squats politicise spaces of living and blur the distinctions between different uses of space. With an insurgent planning lens, I understand occupations to directly challenge the depolitisation of urban as well as rural space. By applying this analysis to the ZAD, new perspectives about territorial planning emerge. The zone's bordering and zoning practices were guided by transformative principles of open access, spatial defence, and territorial belonging. These elements will be discussed in turn.

The first chapter engaged with the diversity of publics in the zone and their approaches to inhabitation. By exploring the principle of open access, I seek to understand how existing occupants approached the welcoming of newcomers. While it is true that borders were fluid on the zone and people were welcome to settle within the zone as they pleased, different groups had different attitudes toward access. Certain spaces such as la Grée embraced unconditional access.<sup>80</sup> This ensured that nobody was turned away due

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78 Bordeleau, S. (2024, July 5). La Ville de Montréal a démantelé le campement propalestinien du square Victoria. *Radio-Canada*. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/2085923/demantelement-campement-propalestine-square-victoria-montreal>

79 Cassard, J. (2024, July 17). À Paris, des expulsions à un rythme olympique. *Reporterre*. <https://reporterre.net/A-Paris-des-expulsions-a-un-rythme-olympique>

80 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586) (2019) "Un an après les expulsions, qu'est-ce qu'on fait encore sur la ZAD ?" <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586>

to their characteristics, recognising that the most marginalised groups likely suffered most from exclusion by other groups on the zone. Other spaces, such as la Wardine, adopted more formal access practices after the end of the ZAD so they could ensure continuity in their vision.<sup>81</sup> Access based on affinity was adopted by several spaces on the zone, which in turn allowed different groups to experiment with innovative ways of living collectively according to their distinct values and needs. And while many were welcomed into groups and found their space in the multiple experimentations that took place in the zone, others did not find belonging in the zone and either left or embraced an individual lifestyle, most often in the East of the zone. This dynamic and constantly evolving social landscape of the zone created an environment of renewal, allowing the zone to embrace new perspectives and preventing it from settling into one set of structures solely based on habit. The new perspectives of newcomers allowed existing residents to see their conflicts in a different light and to perpetually learn different ways of approaching resource allocation or conflict resolution.<sup>82</sup> The zone's principle of open access expanded beyond social access and included physical access to the space. As such, occupants negotiated strategies that ensure that neighbouring farmers could have access to the zone and not be fenced out due to excessive barricading.<sup>83</sup> Open access was therefore an evolving and negotiated principle which had to be confronted to the ZAD's material need for defence.



Figure 4: Picture of barricades on a local path. Source: [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org)

Barricades were a pivotal part of the zone's bordering practices and fell within the principle of spatial defence. As a zone to be defended, the ZAD implemented spatial and social strategies that protected the zone's integrity in the face of hostile state authorities. Barricades were considered to directly enable the zone's prefigurative project because they protected the zone from the influence of the state:

81 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2019) "Un an après les expulsions, qu'est-ce qu'on fait encore sur la ZAD ?" <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586>

82 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "Aux soutiens de la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes - Nous sommes la lutte contre le monde de l'aéroport !" <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6016>

83 [zad.nadir.org](http://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "À TOUTES CES ÂMES EN LUTTE, de près comme de loin qui rêvent et agissent pour un monde meilleur." <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5035>

To defend a truly agro-ecological and solidarity-based project, you have to dare to hold a barricade. In other words, if you don't want to hold up a barricade, you have to embrace a government-led agro-ecology.<sup>84</sup>

Barricades formed defence infrastructures which protected the zone from outside attacks, whether from the police or from violent groups attempting to sabotage the occupation. This spatial control consisted of setting up barricades at the edges of the zone which prevented access to heavy vehicles. It also consisted of planning roads and paths to be narrow and dissimulated enough to not be navigable by outside forces. By making roads illegible to the state, the zone protected its territory from state control and aggression. In that sense, defending the territory against eviction directly shaped the spatial organisation of the zone: barricades and tree houses primarily responded to the zone's need for protection against the state, and might not have existed in a more secure environment. That said, barricading was sometimes contested among occupants, as it hindered movement within the zone. In particular, there were demands for removing the barricades outside of times of eviction to create sustainable routes of transportation for agriculture to prosper.<sup>85</sup> As such, territorial defence and infrastructural management were contested strategies which evolved based on the defence needs of the zone.

Occupants recognised that in allowing the state to map the zone and comprehend its spatial organisation, they made themselves vulnerable to tactical evictions targeted at more vulnerable or strategic sites. Remaining illegible to the state is a strategy which is rooted in post-structuralist concepts that connect territorial knowledge to power.<sup>86</sup> In particular, knowledge of a territory makes military operations easier and therefore makes a territory vulnerable to outside control. Similarly, mapping exercises were feared by some occupiers. Indeed, a mapping project, CartoZ, attempted to spatialise ZAD activities in order to document mobilisation processes and tactics.<sup>87</sup> Occupiers objected to this exercise as it could have facilitated the legibility of the ZAD for public authorities.

Closely related to territorial defence, bordering practices on the zone were guided by a principle of territorial belonging. By inhabiting a defined zone, occupants developed an intimate relationship with the land which they cultivated collectively, both literally and figuratively. Their agro-ecological project relied on a deep knowledge of the space they inhabited, rooted in the respect of the capacities of natural resources. In order to enter in a non-extractivist relation with the land, occupants therefore had to understand the natural cycles of the landscape and its characteristics. Its properties as a wetland meant that while water was an available resource, it had to be managed consciously in order to ensure its durability. These knowledges

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84 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5441) (2018) "Colère écologiste : lettre ouverte d'un Naturaliste en Lutte". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5441>

85 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5725) (2018) "Appel à laisser circuler les routes de la zad hors période d'expulsion." <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5725>

86 Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State*. Yale University Press.

87 Barbe, F. (2016). La «zone à défendre» de Notre-Dame-des-Landes ou l'habiter comme politique. *Noröis*. (238-239), 109-130.

were shared across the zone, between old occupants, historic farmers and newcomers.<sup>88</sup> As such, an influx of newcomers necessitated a time of adaptation to a new environment and spaces in which this knowledge could be passed on. By embracing a deeper and more direct knowledge of the space, the ZAD created an alternative to modern planning projects. In radically rejecting the fast pace of urban development, the ZAD argued for a planning approach that is holistic, with projects not only responding to an identified problem but that also fit within a wider relationship of care to the land developed over time.<sup>89</sup> Bordering practices therefore served to maintain and reproduce this culture within occupants.

Staggering access therefore allowed existing residents to develop a knowledge and connection to the space, in turn enabling them to make informed decisions about the types of uses they wished to conduct on the zone. This directly relates to the ZAD's governance model. As there were no elected officials or designated experts to make decisions for the collective, it was essential for the occupants to be educated about the key stakes and incorporate the zone's commoning culture. In Ostrom's lens, such a process might increase transaction costs<sup>90</sup> as each newcomer must be acquainted to the system of commoning on the ZAD and spend many resources in that process. However, this is a pivotal element for creating a direct democracy that functions and that is sustainable over time. As such, bordering practices served a protectionist purpose, enabling residents to create a gradual and deep knowledge of the space they inhabited and used.

After a decade of struggles and negotiated access, the zone's bordering system was radically transformed in January 2018. The AGO project was cancelled by the state, marking the victory of the movement against the airport. However, the future of the ZAD and its autonomous decisions became uncertain as paths to legalisation both offered a chance for new projects to continue while also hindering some of the zone's core principles, as captured by this quote:

The opening of the ZAD may be in danger. Even with the best of intentions (and it's not always easy to believe in them in the moment), having made commitments to the State means that it's no longer so easy to let new people come in, build where they want and do their pirate projects as they see fit.<sup>91</sup>

The next chapter engages with the conflicting views around the future of the ZAD after the cancellation of the airport. It discusses the negotiations with the state and the conditions for legalising the existing farms. It critically engages with formal and informal structures that were put in place to preserve the culture of the ZAD, and presents some criticisms raised against legalisation, as well as alternatives to it.

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88 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5690) (2018) "Lettre à nos voisin.e.s.". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5690>

89 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1584) (2013) "Venir sur la ZAD... ou pas ?". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1584>

90 Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press.

91 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049) (2018) "La fin de la ZAD, le début de quoi ?". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049>

## CHAPTER 3

# The Struggle Beyond the Conflict

## Conflicting Views on Legalisation

When the airport was officially abandoned, the zone celebrated their victory against the airport. However, in its struggle against the airport and its world, the efforts to oppose the wider modern territorial planning system and its capitalist principles remained. After getting the airport project cancelled, the occupants had to develop strategies to ensure that their mode of collective living and agro-ecological production would remain instead of returning to an intensive model of agriculture which existed before. In contrast, the state set a clear course to bring the zone back in order. It conceded the movement's victory against the airport but ensured that it would regain control over land use and planning of the area. The state's mandate, at that time, was to ensure that activities and uses in the ZAD fit within a wider planning framework, with individual leases over the land and clearly defined land uses. The government took key measures to ensure this process: it allowed farmers who chose to sell their land for the project to return; it negotiated with current occupant farmers to set up individual leases; and it cleared remaining squats that rejected legalisation.<sup>92 93</sup> The first element of this strategy was the return of historic farmers. Since 2008, these farmers were offered monetary compensation for their displacement and some of them were offered temporary leases within the bounds of the zone to prevent further occupation. As such, these returning farmers managed to accumulate several parcels of land and expand their production. Their return symbolised a return to traditional farming for the zone, with some intensive farms and excessive use of synthetic products. Occupants were critical of these farmers, informally called "cumulards" due to their accumulation of land parcels through agreements with the state and against the ZAD.<sup>94</sup>

Returning to traditional agriculture did preserve the original use of the land but failed to implement progressive solutions that were experimented on in the ZAD. Moreover, by returning the land to exclusively agricultural activities, the state shut down other community-building activities and uses such as the free

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92 Duplay, E. (2021). *Notre-Dame-des-Landes, après la lutte*. Éditions du Seuil.

93 De Roo, P. (2023). La lutte pour l'usage des terres à Notre-Dame-des-Landes. *Multitudes*, 92(3), 129–131.

94 *Ibid.*

store or collective libraries. This example of zoning practice reveals the lack of mixed uses in rural planning. It shows that France's planning system does not prioritise a holistic planning vision that understands agricultural landscapes as complete ecosystems maintained by ecological and social relations built around a diversity of uses. As well, many occupants demanded that sustainability clauses be added to new leases to ensure that environmental protection practices are maintained as historical farmers retire and sell their lands. These demands are formulated in reaction to some returning farmers with property in the East of the zone who used glyphosate, a controversial herbicide, to treat their land.<sup>95</sup>

In the zone, 300 hectares of agricultural lands which were expropriated by the state were occupied by ZAD occupants between 2012 and 2018 for farming. At the end of the occupation, the state demanded of them to submit official agricultural projects in order to issue leases over the land. This legal framework would set up precarious individual leases for the farmers, which would not allow them to collectively manage the land, nor would it guarantee tenure security.<sup>96</sup> Long negotiations were carried out between occupants, supportive elected officials and regional planners. Occupants wanted to set up a collective ownership model based on the tenure style in the Larzac,<sup>97</sup> which obtained collective ownership after mobilising against a military base in the south of France.<sup>98</sup> This precedent is foundational in the history of French social movements as it achieved the protection of agricultural lands in the area, while also securing a new form of land tenure. However, despite these examples of successful and ongoing collective models of ownership, no collective lease was allowed in NDDL due to the firm stance of the state against this model of ownership.<sup>99</sup> Instead, occupants created strategies to sign individual projects that would be viable within state regulations in order to preserve their projects. While these leases were signed individually, the funds and projects were set up collectively. Occupants therefore accepted to enter in agreement with the state over land tenure and managed to do so by collectively agreeing on how the projects would be managed informally among inhabitants.<sup>100</sup> In that sense, individual leases were a necessary façade which ensured that existing farming projects could be maintained in an airport-free world.

In the weeks after the victory against the airport, occupants organised assemblies and support groups to present as many projects as possible, and as such to maintain a wide footprint over the zone. They created a “administrative self-defence bureau” where people could “update maps, collectively apprehend the procedures, analyse real estate laws and so on. There's a rotation of people taking part, on a voluntary basis of course.”<sup>101</sup> The legalisation process was therefore still rooted in a communal approach within the ZAD, ensuring that those who wanted to pursue this path had access to all the necessary support and knowledge. Occupants proposed 28 agricultural projects, of which only 15 were accepted by the region and allowed to continue their operations.<sup>102</sup> These lands only accounted for about 170 hectares of the

95 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583) (2019) “Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583>

96 Duplay, E. (2021). *Notre-Dame-des-Landes, après la lutte*. Éditions du Seuil.

97 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5053) (2018) “#ZAD #NDDL une des routes de nos a-venirs...”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5053>

98 Crézé, R. (2023). L'appropriation collective du foncier au service d'une agriculture ancrée dans son environnement naturel. L'expérience du Larzac. *Revue Française de Socio-Économie*, 30(1), 71–90.

99 Duplay, E. (2021). *Notre-Dame-des-Landes, après la lutte*. Éditions du Seuil.

100 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583) (2019) “Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583>

101 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5964) (2018) “A Propos de la signature des COP”. <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5964>

102 De Roo, P. (2023). La lutte pour l'usage des terres à Notre-Dame-des-Landes. *Multitudes*, 92(3), 129–131.

1,650 hectares of the zone.<sup>103</sup> This was a limited win for the farmers, who did secure their projects over that space but could not maintain collective control over the entire zone.

The conditions of the leases were precarious, with strict rules over land use. These leases only allowed for agricultural use and had to be renewed each year by the farmers. If the lease was to be broken by the state, which could happen without notice, farmers were obligated to vacate the space and would have to pay fines if they failed to do so.<sup>104</sup> Legalising the uses of the ZAD meant that many of the informal and fluid forms of land use had to return to codified and mutually exclusive uses. This fundamentally transformed the ZAD and brought the space into a new relationship with traditional planning institutions.<sup>105</sup> As phrased by one of the occupants, “COPs enable the State to guide, control and constrain the activities of lessees”.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, rules around agricultural practice relating to building code or livestock inventories, as well as various taxes applied on agricultural companies, meant that farmers needed to increase their production with the perspective of becoming financially viable. While these rules ensure a certain safety and legibility of the farm, they put a strain on small farmers, who are often pressured to sell their lease to larger farms that make economies of scale. This model is therefore biased against small farmers and ultimately pressures them into turning to more intensive practices.<sup>107</sup> This model of agricultural production breaks the relations of belonging outlined in the previous chapter: by requiring farmers to have increased yields and to exploit their parcels individually, the symbiotic relationship with the land is weakened and replaced by a vision for productivist land use.<sup>108</sup>

Over several years, grassroots mobilisations did secure an improved form of tenure and managed to change the precarious occupancy contracts (COP) to nine-year leases, making tenure more secure.<sup>109</sup> It ensured that agricultural land within the zone’s old boundaries was cultivated following agro-ecological principles and was not sold to intensive farms and agricultural corporations.<sup>110</sup> Further, many farmers chose an ad-hoc form of collective management of the land, where they share resources and support various mobilisations with food donations. For example, the Sème ta ZAD assembly maintained its commoning efforts with farms that voluntarily entered the agreement and mutualised their resources. The free store of the zone remained and provided food to occupants and outside groups.<sup>111</sup> Occupants created an endowment fund which aimed at reserving funds to purchase parcels sold on the market, ensuring that they remained within de facto collective ownership.<sup>112</sup> As such, non-monetary exchanges and mutual aid efforts were preserved beyond the victory against the airport and despite attempts from the state to limit them. Therefore, while the ZAD legacy could not transform the land tenure system, it created networks

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103 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2019) “Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...” <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583>

104 *Ibid.*

105 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) “La fin de la ZAD, le début de quoi ?” <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049>

106 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2019) “Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...” <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583>

107 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) “Mouvement, où est ta victoire ?” <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5118>

108 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2019) “Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...” <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583>

109 Allain, P.-H. (2020, February 5). Notre-Dame-des-Landes: Deux ans après, les apaisés du bocage. *Libération*. [https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/02/05/notre-dame-des-landes-deux-ans-apres-les-apaises-du-bocage\\_1777408/](https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/02/05/notre-dame-des-landes-deux-ans-apres-les-apaises-du-bocage_1777408/)

110 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2019) “Un an après les expulsions, qu’est-ce qu’on fait encore sur la ZAD ?” <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586>

111 *Ibid.*

112 *Ibid.*

of solidarity and a level of savoir-faire within the community. These relations were created from the bottom-up and attempted to resist the co-optation by market relations. However, wider capitalist structures did weaken some of these efforts.

Within an individualistic legal framework, it was observed that many projects that were legalised eventually integrated more traditional forms of land management, relying on individual projects instead of common management.<sup>113</sup> The commons, in Ostrom's understanding of common allocation of resources,<sup>114</sup> were therefore eroded due to legal institutions that did not institutionalise these commoning practices. Moreover, without a common project to oppose, many occupants progressively chose different directions for their projects, influenced by their values and their legal status on the land, leading to decreasing collaboration and collective decision-making across the zone. In turn, one can argue that the commons created within the ZAD were co-opted by the capitalist system, where "capitalism accumulates not just on the back of labour whilst formally 'employed'. It also harnesses knowledge, language, cooperation and information developed outside work, in the commons".<sup>115</sup>

Ultimately, the strategies that emerged after the cancellation of the airport were formed with a degree of consultation and attempted to mitigate the risks for the farms and living spaces that were created and maintained over a decade. Inhabitants recognise that while this path of legalisation creates uneven power dynamics and subjects the occupants to restraining conditions imposed by the state, they collectively attempted to preserve the core activities and experiments of the zone in a precarious political context.

I don't think we could have prevented all forms of institutionalisation, firstly because wanting to defend a territory does not mean it can be defended, and secondly because certain activities, certain lifestyles and, for all of us, simply routine (normalisation isn't always where we look for it), were already preparing us for it.<sup>116</sup>

Recognising that the zone was a dynamic space shaped by outside forces, many inhabitants chose a path which would maintain the core principles of the zone, albeit in an informal way, while guaranteeing its protection from eviction by signing leases with the state. Others, in contrast, did not accept such co-optation and entered a new phase of resistance.

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113 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586) (2019) "Un an après les expulsions, qu'est-ce qu'on fait encore sur la ZAD ?". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586>

114 Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press.

115 Fournier, V. (2013). Commoning: On the social organisation of the commons. *M@n@gement*, 16(4), 438.

116 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "Aux soutiens de la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes - Nous sommes la lutte contre le monde de l'aéroport !" <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6016>

## Expanding the Resistance

Overall, the legalisation strategy was not accepted by all occupants, with some rejecting this tactic altogether. Many pointed out that legalisation is only possible due to the occupants' privileges and because the state could transform the ZAD into a territory under state control that served its objectives while co-opting the positive impacts of the zone's sustainable practices. Occupants opposing legalisation point out that migrant or Romani encampments are never legalised, for example, and that in accepting to negotiate with the state, farmers integrated an exclusionary bordering regime.<sup>117</sup> They criticised the lack of negotiations between occupants before engaging in negotiations with the state. Further, they expressed a feeling of betrayal as those who were able to engage in formal planning processes due to their financial security and education secured contracts with the state.<sup>118</sup> They highlight that the system in charge of granting their leases over the land is also responsible for clearing informal and alternatives forms of inhabitation, reducing inhabitants to mere rent-paying tenants, and eventually creating a "pilot zone of eco-agriculture", rooted in a productivist model of green agriculture.<sup>119</sup> As such, many remained sceptical about an opportunity to pursue communal agriculture under the structures of modern planning. These occupants were attached to the autonomy of the zone and its opportunities for experimenting with radically different models of spatial planning and collective living and argued that these opportunities were severely restrained under a legalised framework governed by the state.

Conflicts arose between occupants, and some occupants that pursued legalisation discontinued their solidarity with others who chose instead to reoccupy the zone. With the state proposing a legalisation that would alter the nature of the ZAD as an autonomous space, the zone was faced with growing internal divisions.<sup>120</sup> Assumptions around the social value of different projects in the zone lead to some farm projects being prioritised in the legalisation process over other forms of inhabitation such as tree houses or huts.<sup>121</sup> Unlike many conflicts during the initial occupation, these conflicts were harder to reconcile because of their different status in the eyes of the state. With parts of the occupants choosing to collaborate with state planners, they exposed illegal occupants to evictions and legal recourse, which created two classes of inhabitants. The clauses of the contract obliged contract holders to denounce any irregular activities on their land and explicitly prohibited caravans or huts to be set up on these sites.<sup>122</sup> By signing these leases, occupants formally agreed to cease all occupations. The state's vision for the lands in NDDL was hostile toward informal or collective forms of land tenure and use, and therefore discarded alternatives from being established within the area.<sup>123</sup> As well, an occupant questioned what could happen to inhabitants who

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117 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "Contre l'aéroport - et pour son monde, ou quoi ?". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5106>

118 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "Jusqu'où ira-t-on dans ce foutage de gueule des négociations". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5911>

119 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "On a eut la tête de VINCI mais le combat est très loin d'être fini !". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5061>

120 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2019) "Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583>

121 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "Jusqu'où ira-t-on dans ce foutage de gueule des négociations". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5911>

122 *Ibid.*

123 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org) (2018) "Pendant ce temps-là, à l'Est de la zad...". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5693>

had irregular status, such as people with a police file or undocumented immigrants.<sup>124</sup> By no longer sharing a common status as squatters, new power dynamics emerged within the zone and compromised the principle of autonomy and non-hierarchy which was set during the occupation. Returning to Lancione's spectrum of home(less)ness,<sup>125</sup> the return of the zone into legality reproduced the existing differentiation between forms of inhabiting, policing those who did not settle in formal housing structures, and as such weakening the networks of solidarity and belonging between occupiers across housing status.

Those refusing to vacate the zone or legalise their status rejected a potential return to a normal state of affairs. They argue that the zone constitutes a logistical base for people who want to join the struggle which makes it a resource worth defending beyond the victory against the airport.<sup>126</sup> Part of the dissenting occupants who rejected legalisation chose to remain on the zone and attempt to resist evictions. They opened a new chapter of the struggle, focusing on resisting against the airport's world from within the zone, refusing to let it become a "normalised territory".<sup>127</sup> This resistance primarily operated through inhabitation and squatting, while most existing farming projects pursued legalisation. Over the months that followed the victory, illegal squatters were evicted by the police, and their living spaces were cleared to make way for farming projects.<sup>128</sup>

With solidarity networks being weakened on the zone, many joined small organic farmers, artisans, or autonomous collectives which pursued the principles of the ZAD.<sup>129</sup> Others opted to sustain the struggle on other sites. They integrated other ZADs, joined autonomous zones in France and abroad, or embraced a nomadic lifestyle by inhabiting spaces until they were expropriated by the state.<sup>130</sup> Thus, the struggle expanded beyond the zone and the deep belonging and commoning culture settled in new spheres well beyond Notre-Dame-des-Landes.

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124 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5106) (2018) "Contre l'aéroport - et pour son monde, ou quoi ?" <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5106>

125 Lancione, M. (2023). *For a liberatory politics of home*. Duke University Press.

126 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3925) (2016) "Notre-Flamme-des-Landes" <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3925>

127 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5075) (2018) "Ils veulent expulser une de nos Zones à défendre, silencieusement ! No pasaran !". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5075>

128 Duplay, E. (2021). *Notre-Dame-des-Landes, après la lutte*. Éditions du Seuil.

129 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583) (2019) "Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583>

130 [zad.nadir.org](https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049) (2018) "La fin de la ZAD, le début de quoi ?". <https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049>

# Conclusion

The ZAD was an experimental space which gathered a diversity of publics united in opposing an extractive and oppressive planning system, converging in a space where relationships of care and commoning were produced. This generative space emerged in a contested territory where two visions for territorial organisation coalesced into a conflict of uses. In occupying the zone, protestors chose a tactic that materially undermined the advancement of a capitalist and globalist planning project. By reclaiming territory away from neoliberal planning forces, the ZAD created an invented space which facilitated new relations between inhabitants, the land they occupy, and their surroundings.

As a coalition of diverse groups of people, the ZAD articulated new governance spaces and mechanisms to mediate between the needs of occupants and of the land. Both autonomy and commoning represented core values which were enacted informally through different inhabitation forms. They co-existed in the ZAD and were mutually constitutive, because it was through autonomy from the state and newly gained liberties that communal projects were able to emerge, forming through encounters of different groups. Rules around land use emerged organically as a result of conflicts, and therefore strengthened the community's sense of belonging as they constructed their model of governance in a series of negotiated decisions. As a space that emerged in conflict, occupants dedicated time and effort, as well as spaces and material resources to conflict resolution. From informal conversations between disagreeing individuals to zone-wide uses assemblies, occupants understood that spatial planning was produced in all spheres of life and engaged in informal as well as more formal modes of spatial governance. This model widely differed from traditional top-down planning, where decisions on land use are initiated by planning experts, failing to meaningfully engage in constructive conflictual situations arising from discussions between diverse voices.

In creating commons, the ZAD became a space where resources were produced and exchanged in a non-monetary system which prioritized use value over exchange value. It promoted commoning both resource allocation and resource use, and founded its relationship with resources in solidarity and autonomy from the state and the market. Instead of exchanging resources for profit making, the zone explored new resource relationality, rooted in principles of solidarity and community care. In turn, symbiotic relation-

ships were created between the ZAD and its socio-spatial environment, mutually building capacity and supporting its prefiguration. These relations extended beyond human relations and produced reciprocal ties with the land, which nurtured the movement and is preserved through a deep knowledge of the landscape and a duty of care from its occupants.

Once the conflict over the airport reached a resolution with the airport being cancelled, new stakes and conflicting visions arose, shifting existing dynamics within the zone. A fracture between occupants who chose to legalize their farms and those who refused to be co-opted by the capitalist planning systems severed the relations of solidarity within the zone. Multiple tactics, sometimes contradictory, were set up over a short period of time to preserve living spaces and projects that existed on the zone. These strategies negotiated with the state and attempted to enhance the occupants' agency by agreeing to the state's contracts while setting up informal communal structures. By pursuing communal projects in the interstices of traditional planning, legalized farms transformed their relationship with the state to maintain some of their experimental practices. Others believed that legalisation would fundamentally denature the ZAD, and that communal structures would be co-opted to reinforce the capitalist planning system. They argued that accepting to legalize the farms limited the farmers' ability to dissent and to engage in emancipatory planning forms. To pursue their commitment to insurgent practices, these occupants rejected any form of legalisation and instead provided their support to other squats, ZADs, and autonomous movements. This dispersal of knowledges symbolized a pollination of insurgent movements across Europe, and strengthened social movements across spheres of action. Communal tactics were adapted to new contexts and expanded the resistance beyond the boundaries of the ZAD.

The results of this project contribute to the planning field in two ways. First, they offer a nuanced and complex depiction of spatial governance practices on an autonomous zone of insurgent practice. By engaging with the multiplicity of ways the ZAD created commons, produced relations between people and land, and mediated between diverse visions for spatial planning, this research project contributes to a growing body of literature in pluriverse planning scholarship and insurgent planning. It offers new localised perspectives on planning outside of state and market mechanisms, and explains how a diversity of processes and relations converge in forming an alternative planning system, founded on non-hierarchy, autonomy, and relationships of solidarity between people and the land. Second, this project informs radical planning practice by providing precedents for alternative systems of resource allocation, emancipated from monetary logics. While these models cannot be applied within a statist planning system due to the interconnections between planning institutions and capitalist processes, these transformative models can be used to expand our understanding of the discipline and the experiments it can support. Engaging in radical planning can span beyond technocratic institutions and support communities in developing alternative connections to the land and to other groups. By understanding that traditional planning exists within dominant market mechanisms, radical planners can use the lessons from autonomous spaces to nurture experiments within their own territories and engage with mutual aid groups, shelters, squats, public space occupations and popular universities.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Data Log

Document name	URL	Date	Relevance
#ZAD #NDDL une des routes de nos a-venirs...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5053">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5053</a>	22/01/2018	2
22 Février, la faune sauvage déboule du bocage : biodiversité de la subversion	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2255">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2255</a>	27/01/2014	1
A Propos de la signature des COP	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5964">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5964</a>	11/06/2018	3
A propos de l'opération Yes Chicanes !	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1155">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1155</a>	28/02/2013	0
A propos du texte "mepris de classe sur la Zad"	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1804">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1804</a>	25/07/2013	2
Appel à laisser circuler les routes de la zad hors période d'expulsion.	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5725">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5725</a>	26/04/2018	2
Aux soutiens de la ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes - Nous sommes la lutte contre le monde de l'aéroport !	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6016">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6016</a>	05/07/2018	3
À TOUTES CES ÂMES EN LUTTE, de près comme de loin qui rêvent et agissent pour un monde meilleur.	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5035">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5035</a>	17/01/2018	3
Ca matin	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4713">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4713</a>	21/08/2017	2
Ce qui se vit à Notre Dame des Landes	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article778">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article778</a>	03/12/2018	0
Ceci n'est pas un camping.	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2106">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2106</a>	14/01/2014	3
Colère écologiste : lettre ouverte d'un Naturaliste en Lutte	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5441">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5441</a>	12/04/2018	1
Collectif des "Cent Noms"	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1451">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1451</a>	25/03/2013	2
Contre l'aéroport - et pour son monde, ou quoi ?	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5106">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5106</a>	02/02/2018	1
Ça roule !...ou pas ? - gestion routière du far far west	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5740">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5740</a>	29/04/2018	1
Ça y est l'hiver est là !	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4278">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4278</a>	19/12/2016	2

Document name	URL	Date	Relevance
De la ZAD aux Communaux ? Quelques pistes à explorer pour aller plus loin...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3067</a>	17/06/2015	3
Depuis la zad de Notre-Dame-des-Landes - Ce que nous voulons pour le 9 janvier	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3354">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3354</a>	09/01/2016	0
Des témoignages des confrontations entre des habitant-e-s de la ZAD et les chasseurs de la région	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2058">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2058</a>	15/12/2013	0
Défendre la chataigneraie à Notre Dame des Landes	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1041">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1041</a>	10/01/2013	1
ET TOC ! Récit d'un jour de victoire...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5083">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5083</a>	29/01/2018	0
Face au jeu de dupe de la consultation publique, continuons à construire un avenir sans aéroport, continuons la lutte !	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3611">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3611</a>	15/02/2016	3
Feu les 100 Noms	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2086">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2086</a>	05/01/2014	0
Fondus dans la forêt...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article516">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article516</a>	06/11/2012	1
Fouiller dans les ruines de ses souvenirs...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5783">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5783</a>	05/05/2018	1
Ils veulent expulser une de nos Zones à défendre, silencieusement ! No pasaran !	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5075">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5075</a>	27/01/2018	3
Jusqu'où ira-t-on dans ce foutage de gueule des négociations	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5911">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5911</a>	28/05/2018	3
La ZAD ne se raconte pas, elle se vit.	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1028">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1028</a>	10/01/2013	2
La fin de la ZAD, le début de quoi ?	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6049</a>	29/07/2018	3
La question de l'emploi à NDDL	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1495">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1495</a>	04/04/2013	0
Les 100 noms renaissent au Liminbout	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5806">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5806</a>	15/05/2018	0
Lettre aux comités	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4682">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4682</a>	14/07/2017	2
Lettre à nos voisin.e.s.	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5690">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5690</a>	24/04/2018	1
L'autonomie en question	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4894">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4894</a>	18/11/2017	1
Manifeste des habitants non-humains de la ZAD	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1240">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1240</a>	16/02/2013	0
Mouvement, où est ta victoire ?	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5118">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5118</a>	04/02/2018	3
Nantes, le 17 novembre 2012 : un monde humain est en marche	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article655">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article655</a>	22/11/2012	2
Non à la violence de l'Etat contre les communs !	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5476">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5476</a>	13/04/2018	2
Notre-Flamme-des-Landes	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3925">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3925</a>	11/07/2016	2
Nous sommes à un moment charnière de nos vies et de nos ambitions politiques.	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4590">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4590</a>	05/06/2017	1
On a eut la tête de VINCI mais le combat est très loin d'être fini !	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5061">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5061</a>	24/01/2018	2
On dirait que ça te plait de marcher dans la boue...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1217">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1217</a>	12/02/2013	2

Document name	URL	Date	Relevance
Pendant ce temps-là, à l'Est de la zad...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5693">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article5693</a>	25/04/2018	3
Pourquoi j'aime la ZAD	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1084">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1084</a>	20/01/2013	3
Que reste-t-il du champ des possibles ouvert...	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6583</a>	05/07/2019	3
Témoignage d'Angevines de passage sur la ZAD le 7 novembre	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article541">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article541</a>	07/11/2012	1
Témoignage d'une nouvelle arrivante	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4800">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article4800</a>	12/10/2017	3
Un an après les expulsions, qu'est-ce qu'on fait encore sur la ZAD ?	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article6586</a>	08/07/2019	3
A propos du "mépris de classe" sur la ZAD	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1798">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1798</a>	23/07/2013	1
Venir sur la ZAD... ou pas ?	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1584">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article1584</a>	29/04/2013	3
Éloge de la ZAD	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2779">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article2779</a>	24/11/2014	1
« En quoi l'organisation de la vie et de la lutte sur la zad est-elle un laboratoire de démocratie ? »	<a href="https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3934">https://zad.nadir.org/spip.php?article3934</a>	16/07/2016	3

## Appendix 2: Codebook

Theme	Code	Definition	Occurrence
Borders		Pertains to the borders of the zone and movement across them. Captures who can enter and exit, and how these barriers are materialised	25
	Social access	People's access to the ZAD and the social structures that allow the welcoming of new people	19
	Spatial access	Barriers and roads that allow or prevent outside people from entering the zone	6
Collective living		Social networks and institutions that facilitated living in common and collective ownership of the zone	55
	Belonging	A feeling of connection with the community and the land which creates relationships of care	9
	Community	The production of links between inhabitants	13
	Commoning	Commoning of resources and collective uses	25
	Education	Sharing of skills and knowledge about the zone	8
Conflict		Disagreements over uses or values that arose in the zone	33
	Generative conflict	Conflict being depicted as a source of creation of community, resilience and democracy	5
	Values conflict	Diverging views on societal projects or attitudes to the government	5
	Conflict resolution	Approaches toward mediating and resolving existing conflicts on the zone	4
	Uses conflict	Conflict stemming from different or incompatible uses of the ZAD's resources	19
Governance		Formal and informal spaces for resource use allocation and for conflict resolution	37
	Direct democracy	Instances of deliberation by and for the people without representatives	9
	Participation	Spaces for participation to the planning process	15
	Negotiation	Strategies to defend the ZAD project in the state's institutions	13
Alternatives		Creation of a radically different way of planning social life and land use on the zone	47
	Experimentation	Practical efforts to try different forms of social organisation or land uses	15
	Imagination	Exploration of abstract forms of emancipation from oppressive systems	13
	Precedents	Existing examples which attempted to separate themselves from the capitalist system	8
	New uses	Uses that were implemented and accepted as part of experimentations	11
	Informality	Decision made ad-hoc	

Theme	Code	Definition	Occurrence
Space		Spatial organisation of the zone	29
	Inhabitation	Living on the zone as the central form of resistance, making inhabitation an active act rather than a passive one	15
	Infrastructure	Existing structures on the ZAD that were developed and maintained to support daily operations and defence	14
Connections		The relations between groups and people within and outside the zone, which co-create the zone	53
	Networks	Connected groups that relate to each other through channels of communication, of material support or symbolic support.	13
	Internationalism	Networks reaching beyond national borders, expanding solidarity past the socially constructed national identities	7
	Solidarity	Relations of care and mutual aid between people of groups based on shared values.	24
	Autonomy	Independence and ability to make decisions outside of outside control, especially from state institutions	9
Victory		Phase started after January 2018, when the French state announced the cancellation of the AGO airport	54
	Legalisation	Attitudes toward entering an agreement with the state surrounding land leases within state-imposed codes and rules	40
	Ungovernmentability	Aspiration to remain outside of state control and maintaining autonomy from the state at all times	14
Planning		Approaches to territorial planning	37
	Traditional planning	Perceptions of traditional planning tools by occupants	21
	Undesirability	Undesirable land uses for traditional planners as perceived by occupants	6
	Rural planning	Suggested and imagined modes of planning specific to rural areas as attempted within the zone	10

## Appendix 3: Sample Coded Text

Excerpt from “Ca matin”, zad.nadir.org, August 21, 2017.

Text analysed using taguette.org.

Ce matin, je me suis levé trop tôt, parce que je m'étais couché trop tard : j'étais occupé à parler pendant des heures de la situation de la ZAD avec la médiation, comment faire quelque chose qui marche avec nos envies, nos analyses et nos temporalités parfois contradictoires. Vaste question, c'était passionnant d'en discuter... mais après il était déjà tard et je voulais quand même passer voir des vieux potes d'il y a des années de retour pour quelques jours sur la ZAD, alors je suis passé à pas d'heure honorer leur invitation, content de se raconter les histoires de nos vies et de nos potes d'ailleurs.

Mais fallait se lever, parce qu'on avait rendez-vous avec les camardes du groupe patates pour réparer des machines agricoles dont on aura besoin pour la récolte. C'est un groupe d'une demie-douzaine de personnes avec lequel on a pris en charge le suivi d'un champ de un hectare de patates. On va les mettre sur le non-marché, un moment de partage des produits de la ZAD à prix libre pour que tout le monde puisse manger quels que soient ses moyens, mais qu'il y ait toujours assez de sous dans la caisse collective pour continuer les cultures l'année prochaine [[connections.solidarity](#), [collective.community](#)]. On espère en avoir assez tout l'hiver et si la récolte est bonne en filer à d'autres luttes. Bon tout ça à l'air formidable, mais confronté à la pratique, ben ce matin c'était plutôt chiant. Après mon petit déjeuner trop matinal pour croiser mes cohabitant.e.s, je commence par charger mes outils dans la voiture pour aller au chantier. Mais j'ai pas de forêt de 16, donc je passe à l'atelier collectif en emprunter un [[collective.commoning](#)]. Sauf qu'il est pas rangé à sa place, donc je galère mais finis par le trouver. Arrivée à notre lieu de rendez-vous, on commence par atteler la machine au tracteur pour la mettre sous le hangar où on va faire les réparations, et j'explique aux autres, qui sont nouveaux dans le groupe cette année, comment elle marche et comment faire la manœuvre. Une fois la machine rangée, je laisse mes deux camarades démonter les pièces qu'il faut changer et je rejoins une autre camarade avec qui on doit finir de réparer le broyeur. On doit s'en servir cet après midi, mais un autre groupe de culture a cassé une roue il y a plus d'un mois, et n'a toujours pas fini de le réparer. Donc on s'en occupe avec d'autres qui en ont besoin urgemment, et forcément ça nous énerve un peu de réparer la casse des autres. [[conflict.uses](#), [collective.commoning](#)] D'autant plus qu'on trouve pas la perceuse que nos prédécesseurs sont censés nous avoir laissée, donc pendant que ma camarade lime une pièce pas droite, je commence un tour du quartier pour aller à la chasse à la perceuse. Je trouve assez vite chez des potes qu'en plus je suis content de revoir, chouette ! Donc on refait le trou manquant dans le métal, et on commence à mettre les boulons pour constater qu'un des trous fait par nos prédécesseurs n'est pas droit et qu'on a abîmé le boulon en essayant de le passer dedans en force... et en plus on sais pas dans quel sens était montée la roue. Bref, le désespoir me guettait, quand un camarade forgeron passe par là, et miracle, non seulement il a un plan pour remettre notre trou récalcitrant dans l'axe, mais en plus il était là au démontage de la roue et sait dans quel sens elle va ! [[collective.education](#)] Finalement, on va manger plus tranquille des pâtes avec un reste de sauce aux protéines de soja et des tomates fraîches avec l'équipe qui était sur l'autre machine, et je laisse ma camarade avec un autre qui me remplacera pour l'après midi pendant que je vais au rendez-vous pour écrire ce texte.

Ma morale de cette matinée, c'est qu'on a des projets formidables, mais qu'au niveau de l'organisation collective, c'est une fois de plus pas le top. Comme disait l'autre, l'autogestion, c'est pas de la tarte ! [[collective.commoning](#)]