

# THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE NOTRE-DAME-DES-LANDES AIRPORT

## 1) The project for an airport in NDDL : the facts

**Géography** : 30 kms North of Nantes toward Rennes

### Dates :

1967 : start of a project for an international airport meant for Concord (with provisions for 5 to 9 million passengers a year in 2000) and for freight (the objective : becoming « the Rotterdam of European Air »)

1974 : start of the acquisitions of lands by the General Council (like a County council) (only 850 ha altogether have been bought, whereas 1650 are necessary)

2000 after a silence of 20 years, the project is revived

2003 : a ministerial decree starts the study of the project

2010 : Choice of firm : Vinci and choice of financial structure

2014 : theoretical date of beginning of the work !

2017 : originally, the airport was supposed to open.

### The 2011 national budget approves the financial plan

This decision concerns the Conseil Régional ( Province Council)for « Les pays de Loire », the CR for Brittany, the Conseil Général (County council) for Loire Atlantique, the CU (urban community) for Nantes (Nantes Métropole), CU for Saint Nazaire.

The budget is 560 million €

The public funding is 254M€: 138,5 M€for the State, 115,5 M€for collectivities, 30% for Pays de Loire, 25% for Région Bretagne, 40% for local collectivities.

For the C.G. of Loire Atlantique, borrowing 23 M€for this expense means they have to pay a yearly interest of 1,2 M€ For comparison's sake, the CG spent 1M for family planning in 2010.

### Existing airports : their fate.

Anger-Marcé (Département Maine et Loire)The President of the Loire Atlantique CG is praying for its demise.

Nantes-Atlantique (South of the Nantes agglomeration, close to densely urbanised areas) This airport caters for the Airbus plant (1200 workers) A media debate is raging around this airport and what will happen to the airbus plant :

September 2010, Minister JL Borloo on a visit to Airbus announces that the airport will be kept. His cabinet immediately denied it.

October 2010 : GillesRetière (Mayor in Rezé, a commune in the south of the nantes agglomeration) writes in the editorial of the town's monthly that it will be kept.

October 2010 : Patrick Mareschal (President of the CG of Loire Atlantique) in an interview about the financial plan for the project, mentions the future sale of the present Nantes-Atlantic airport.

## 2) The Actors

### Specific associations

ACIPA (Associaton citoyenne Intercommunale des Populations concernées par le projet d'Aéroport de Notre Dame des Landes ) : 3360 members, site : <http://acipa.free.fr/>

ADECA (Association de Défense des Exploitants Concernés par l'Aéroport)

### Other actors

Les Citoyens Vigilants ( vigilant citizens, a group of individuals. Group managed by the president of ACIPA. Only purpose : alerting elected representatives at all levels.

The ZAD occupants (ZAD = delayed development zone, or « zone marked for destruction » or « zone needing protection »)

The Coordination includes political organisations, from the radical left and political ecologists, and even some « center » oriented organisation, besides associations for the protection of the environment, of the quality of life, or farmers ' unions.

The CeDpa is a collective of more than a thousand elected representatives who question the pertinence of the project.

### **On the judicial level**

Teams of lawyers are at work constantly, and enact appeal after appeal against decisions made by AGO-VINCI and the State, including appeals in European courts. By keeping up their and people's attention, they are part of the vigilance in connection with the farmers.

### **Politically**

By repeatedly addressing local and national political actors, ACIPA, Cédpa, COPAIN, etc. counter the meetings organised by the state to pretend that there are negotiations : Dialogue Commission, technical meetings (about the cost of modernising NA, about PEB, or the Water law). These political actors are constantly kept in the public eye.

### **3) The political issues and arguments**

Besides the purely technical arguments demonstrating the uselessness, harmfulness and waste of public funds this project entails, we reject this **symbol of capitalist and productivist society**.

The project favours means of transportation that are energy consuming and polluting, and have little social utility.

It is absurd to develop air transport when resources, particularly petroleum, are getting rarefied, and their cost is about to rise sharply.

One of the aims of this project is to facilitate the transport of goods, notably agricultural goods, between far distant places of consumption and places of production. This destroys food sovereignty at both ends : agriculture producing food for the local market is destroyed in the production zones, agriculture destroyed in the consuming zones. Generally speaking, such a project belongs with the increase in the globalization of exchanges and the delocalisation of productions, while it is urgent to relocalise.

It encourages energy consuming and polluting air tourism, reserved for well off populations and it makes whole parts of the world tourism dependant. It is only possible for the well off of the West to be able to travel by air if a large part of the world population cannot (the poor, and emergent countries) . The luxury of air-transport is only possible by grabbing the available ecological footprint for the benefit of a few people.

It will destroy rich soils and humid zones, home to exceptionally varied flora and fauna, and develop concrete out of proportion. From 2006 to 2009, France lost 279 000 ha of agricultural land. Which is about half a département. It also amounts to more than 5 000 average farms.

It diverts public funds toward multinational concrete-producing firms for risky projects, while the country suffers budget cuts in spite of urgent social needs.

The management of airports is now in the hands of private groups, following the European Regulations and the treaty of Lisbon, which we fought against. The refundable advances allotted to Vinci in the 2011 budget will only be refunded in fact if the benefits are substantial (« Advances that can get reimbursed as a return to good fortune in connection with the airport's results ») It means that if the airport loses money or only produces gains lower than a certain sum, the taxpayers will finance the airport for almost 50%. It is extremely easy for private firms to transfer the profits from one branch to another and be free to rob local collectivities.

To fill this airport and justify the project, it will be necessary to accommodate rake airports like Ryan Air, which feed on public subsidies and run away when they are caught breaking social laws and thus to use blackmail against workers' protection.

Infrastructures such as airports, that are so important that they entail social and economic choices, ought to be controlled by the state.

It funds immoderate structures instead of financing « soft » transports, education, health, and all the real needs of society. The argument that it creates jobs doesn't work. Most of the jobs created on the building site will be precarious, will bring no social progress, no durable reduction of unemployment. Moreover, the created jobs will remain socially useless, when many public transports need urgent developing.

It is based on a competitive view of territories inside Europe. The Urban Communities of Nantes and Rennes have concluded a « Conférence Permanente » agreement, and they aim at improving the international attractiveness and competitiveness of the united Nantes-Rennes. The airport of NDDL and an LGV (a line for ultra speedy trains) have the same objective. The PS leaders imagine a region with a million more inhabitants. These disproportionate structural projects invest in the competition between territories, and neglect rural zones close by. Each region must transform into showcases for globalised capitalism, without ever asking the population what society they really want. It is very representative of a form of megalomania and ambition shared by a few representatives from the UMP (right wing), the PS (socialists) and PCF 44 (local communist party).

**Against this project, we campaign for complementary territories that don't want to deprive their neighbours of activities and riches. Where equipments are shared and exchanged. This project is a national and even European symbol that perfectly suits that Europe of finance, that we did not want, and that they force on us, in perfect contempt of the people's answer to the 2005 referendum. It is fitting, when the worldwide ecological and social disaster is so blatant, for us to point out the people responsible and to assert what type of society we want to build. The capitalist system has reached its paroxysm in contradictions and destructive madness.**

**It is served, among others, by the elected representatives from all parties, lost in the same madness, dressed in a megalomaniac speech, which we should treat as lullabies.**

**The victims are always the same : the population, collateral damages in the endless fight of capital against capital.**

**We think that any project must**

**Respond to the democratically defined social needs of the people.**

**Take into account the rarefaction of resources and be ecologically responsible.**

**Ensure that wealth is shared, in the French and European population, and between the peoples of the world.**

#### **4) Technical arguments (press book of the coordination of opponents)**

##### On ecological and territorial grounds

Destruction of one of the last zones of exceptional biodiversity in the département

Important risks from pollution and from sealing the soil on huge expanses of land that is a river basin head

Accelerated urbanisation on about fifteen kilometers North of Nantes

Destruction of 2 000 ha of local peri-urban agriculture

##### On energy grounds

For purposes of rentability, the private contracting firm will seek at any cost to develop air traffic, a major factor in the consumption of petroleum and production of glass house gaz, but bringing no economic or social advantage to the zone.

New roads will be built.

The employees will commute daily between Sud Loire (where they dwell today), and Nord Loire, where their jobs will have moved : it amounts to about 60 kms every day.

### On economical ground

Overestimated equipment, compared with the low demand for air transport in the West, and considering the number of airports in the neighbourhood (Sait Nazaire, Rennes, Anger) ;

Underestimated investments : 581 million € before tax in 2006 — in England, the project to enlarge Stansted airport, near London, has been estimated 2.9 billion € for one track, one terminal, and a parking site for the planes !

Considering Nantes-Atlantique airport as a disposable airport, although it does its job perfectly.

Activity is slowed up and jobs are endangered in sud Nantes around Nantes-Atlantique Airport, specially EADS ;

Rennes Airport is weakened, it might close down ;

The new airport would necessitate new rail and road connections to be built, whereas they exist for N.A.

### **Alternatives**

Anti-project activists offer several solutions which would allow :

#### A considerable reduction of over-urban-zones flights

By the transfer of Paris and Lyon traffic over on the TGV, which would suppress 30% of it ;

Providing a connection between airports in the West to regulate the traffic ;

#### Total suppression of over-urban-zones flights

By replacing the present airport's North-South oriented with another, West-East oriented runway : this new route is proposed by the association « Solidarités-Écologie » is compatible with the present PLU and has received no serious criticism from the elected representatives and technicians to whom it has been presented.

This alternative solution asks for modest funding (65 million €), compared with the NDDL project. It is adjustable and progressive. It would annex only 200 ha new land, from a zone of farmland abandonment, as against the 2000 ha for the new airport (including platform and roads).

It has many other advantages :

Less noise because there will be no turn at take off and possibly a sharper slope.

Easier road service, with close circle road and a tram 2kms away, railway on the site.

Reasonable and progressive cost ;

Part of the land needed already belongs to the airport activity zone ;

It is compatible with the local urban plans of sud Loire communes ;

Up to now ; no serious study of alternative solutions has been made. Elected representatives and the administration still follow the project of building a new airport with 2 runways, considerably oversized, like « half- a Roissy-Charles-De-Gaulle » (Roissy airport, with 4 runways, has a nearly 60 million passengers yearly traffic !)

#### Alternatives

Improvements on the present airport

Ban on night flights

Less noisy landing procedures by continuous descent : « a precise approach and perfect security », according to pilotes.

### **5) For more information**

on Nantes-Atlantique , see :

[www.solidarites-ecologie.org](http://www.solidarites-ecologie.org)

[www.esginfra.com](http://www.esginfra.com)

on the project :

ACIPA <http://acipa.free.fr/> (voir fiches thématiques si besoin pour arguments)

Zad <http://zad.nadir.org/>

CeDpa <http://aeroportnddl.fr/>

## 6) Latest news

### 2011

In July 2011, first nation size rally brings 15 000 people on the site ; it was organised by a collective of organisations : parties, Greenpeace, Amis de la Terre, Attac, unions, like the farmers' confederation,...

### 2012

In 2012, a hunger strike just before the presidential elections won a suspension of expulsions which is still official.

In October 2012 the Gendarmes (militarily organised police) attacked and occupied the ZAD (Opération César). The excessive violence they displayed inspired a huge reaction, with 40 000 people on the place, and increased permanent occupation

Other actions include support rallies outside all kinds of tribunals, protective interventions when farmhouses are threatened with destruction on the ZAD, interventions in public reunions almost every day in the country, and organisational meetings to discuss judicial, political, practical strategies.

They go on building cabins, meeting places, cantinas on the ZAD, under protection of the tractors of the Collective of Indignant Farmers' Professional Organisations (COPAIN)

In November 2012 was organised the Second European Forum against useless and enforced projects (GPII)

### 2013

January 2013, destruction of a farmhouse. Vigilance and résistance organised, with vigilant tractors around the farms. Protecting Bellevue Farm, which is permanently occupied.

Vigils in Nantes Center, with discussions and distribution of documents, posters, etc.

National demonstration on 4th January 2013, « Save breeding », called by the Peasants' Confederation.

31st January 2013, the French Supreme Court turns down AGO-VINCI's request to be allowed to continue expelling people before the appeal (about the identification of expropriable pieces of land) has been decided. It is a great victory as it stops the project.

9th of February, demonstration in Nantes.

Meetings around the Government's « Commission for Dialogue »

April 2013 : Operation « Sow on the ZAD »

April 2013 : Reports of the 3 official commissions, dialogue, agriculture, and water : the scientists' conclusions invalidate the project.

May 2013 : a human chain of 40 00 people, 25 kms long.

August 3rd and 4th : festive and militant rally, including the 200 support committees.

October 2013, the april sowing is saved by a tribunal decision ;

December : the « Fighting Naturalists » bring down the official reports on biodiversity and denounce the « replacement » policy advanced by the préfet's (governer) decrees, moving to other places or simply destroying species.

### 2014

Huge and joyous demonstration in Nantes on the 22nd february, again 40 000 people, but the town is treated as a battlefield by the police forces : some seriously wounded.

23rd of March : town councils and mayors' elections. The PS is routed.

Conclusion : I would here want through my intervention on the expérience of NDDL, similar in yours to Hellenikon, and my presence among you, to deliver a message of hope and support in the name of all my comrades from France.

As Hellenikon, and all our common struggles in Europe, NDDL is more than ever Résistance culture.