

Bureaucratic land grabbing for infrastructural colonization: renewable energy, L'Amassada, and resistance in southern France

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Abstract

Governments and corporations exclaim that “energy transition” to “renewable energy” is going to mitigate ecological catastrophe. French President Emmanuel Macron makes such declarations, but what is the reality of energy infrastructure development? Examining the development of a distributional energy transformer substation in the village of Saint-Victor-et-Melvieu, this article argues that “green” infrastructures are creating conflict and ecological degradation and are the material expression of climate catastrophe. Since 1999, the Aveyron region of southern France has become a desirable area of the so-called renewable energy development, triggering a proliferation of energy infrastructure, including a new transformer substation in St. Victor. Corresponding with this spread of “green” infrastructure has been a 10-year resistance campaign against the transformer. In December 2014, the campaign extended to building a protest site, and ZAD, in the place of the transformer called L'Amassada. Drawing on critical agrarian studies, political ecology, and human geography literatures, the article discusses the arrival process of the transformer, corrupt political behavior, misinformation, and the process of bureaucratic land grabbing. This also documents repression against L'Amassada and their relationship with the *Gilets Jaunes* “societies in movement.” Finally, the notion of infrastructural colonization is elaborated, demonstrating its relevance to understanding the onslaught of climate and ecological crisis.

Keywords

climate change, development, infrastructure colonization, land grabbing, renewable energy, resistance

El acaparamiento burocrático de tierras para la colonización infraestructural: energías renovables, L'Amassada y resistencia en el sur de Francia

Resumen

Los gobiernos y las corporaciones exclaman que la “transición energética” a la “energía renovable” va a mitigar la catástrofe ecológica. El presidente francés Emmanuel Macron hace tales declaraciones, pero ¿cuál es la realidad del desarrollo de la infraestructura energética? Examinando el desarrollo de una subestación transformadora distribuidora de energía en el pueblo de Saint-Victor-et-Melvieu, este artículo argumenta que las infraestructuras “verdes” están creando conflictos y degradación ecológica y son la expresión material de catástrofe climática. Desde 1999, la región de Aveyron en el sur de Francia se ha convertido en un área deseable del mentado desarrollo de energías renovables, que ha desencadenado una proliferación de infraestructura energética, incluido una nueva subestación transformadora en San Víctor. Debido a esta expansión de la infraestructura “verde”, se ha dado una campaña de resistencia de 10 años contra la subestación. En diciembre de 2014, la campaña se extendió a la construcción de un sitio de protesta, y ZAD, en el lugar del transformador llamado L'Amassada. Basándose en estudios agrarios críticos, ecología política y literatura de geografía humana, el artículo analiza

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el proceso de llegada del transformador, el comportamiento político corrupto, la información errónea y el proceso burocrático del acaparamiento de tierras. Esto también documenta la represión contra L'Amassada y su relación con los Gilets Jaunes, "sociedades en movimiento". Finalmente, se elabora la noción de colonización infraestructural, lo que demuestra su relevancia para comprender la embestida de la crisis climática y ecológica.

Palabras clave

Cambio climático, desarrollo, colonización infraestructural, acaparamiento de tierras, energía renovable, resistencia

On November 15, 2017, at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 23, the French President Emmanuel Macron outlined "four priorities" for his *battle plan* to combat "climate change" and usher in "environmental transition."

First priority, to foster and to participate actively in the financing of all the interconnections we need between Germany and France, and also between France with Ireland, Benelux [Belgium-Netherlands-Luxembourg], Italy and Portugal. These interconnections will guarantee better use of renewable energy resources [and] ... the acceleration in the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases.¹

Macron continues by asserting a €3 price floor for CO₂ in Europe, trade policy meeting environmental commitments and joint transnational research on energy storage to make renewables a "non-intermittent" energy source.² Implicit in Macron's speech is that "renewable energy," market-based mechanisms, transnational energy grids, and technological development are essential weapons in his so-called "battle plan" against climate change.

The neoliberal environmental policy mechanisms espoused by Macron, including biofuels (Borras et al., 2010; Hunsberger et al., 2017), tree plantations (González-Hidalgo and Zografos, 2017; Overbeek et al., 2012), conservation enclosures (Büscher et al., 2012; Dunlap and Sullivan, 2019), and energy development schemes (Avila, 2018; Dunlap, 2019a; Franquesa, 2018; Siamanta, 2019), are spreading conflicts by grabbing land for "sustainable development" projects. Environmental policy focus "should not only be on the climatic events," write Mirumachi et al. (2019: 8–9), "but also on the interventions to deal with climate change, whether for mitigation or adaption." Examining the construction of "green" energy infrastructure in southern France, this article examines France's environmental mitigation "battle plan"—with its proposed transnational grid "interconnection"—arguing that it will spread conflict and socioecological degradation.

The "green" infrastructure examined in this article is a substation transformer, which is an interface that distributes, transfers, and controls the flow of electrical grid networks.

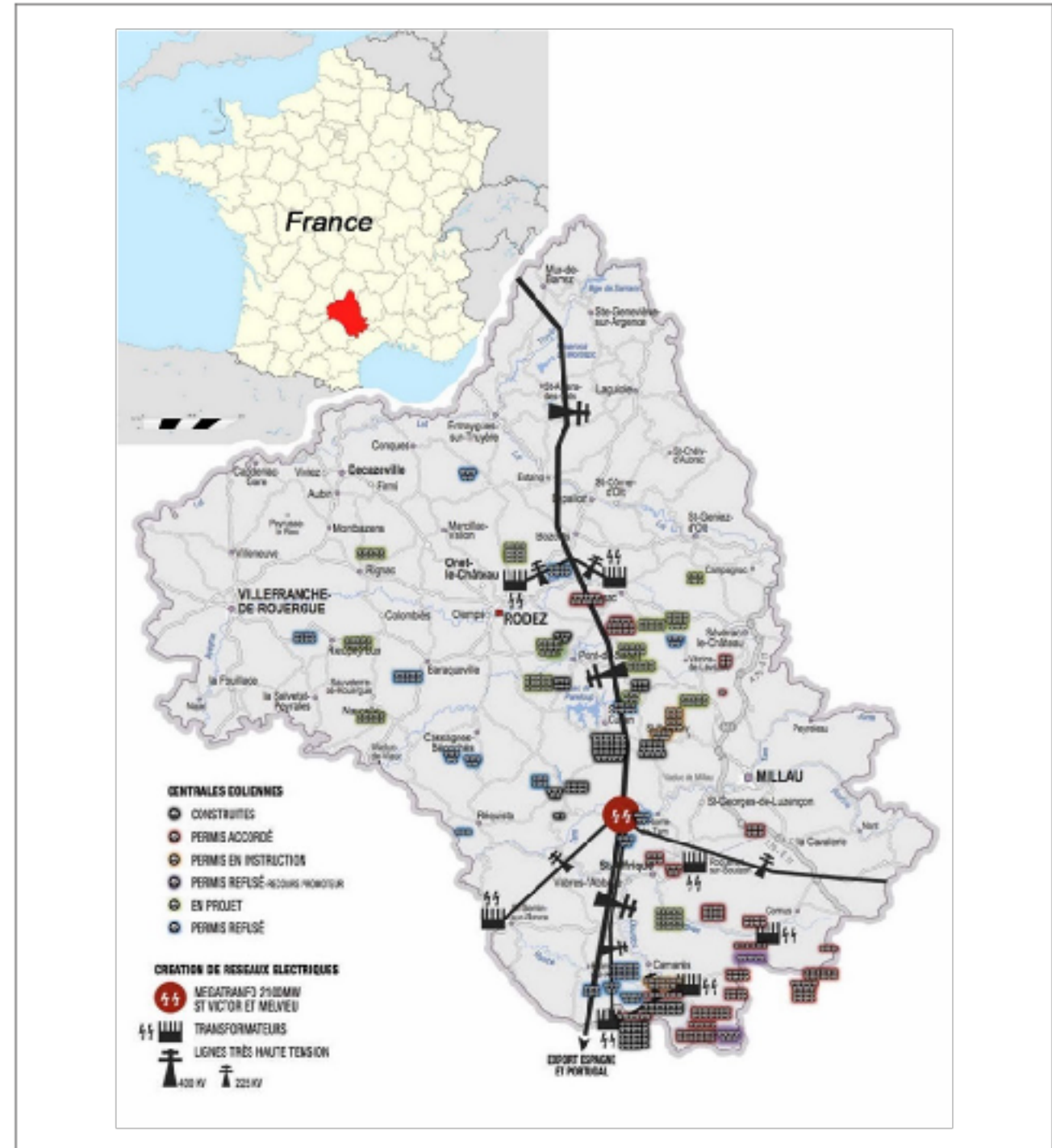


Figure 1. Map of France, the Aveyron Department, and electrical infrastructure. Source: Wiki Commons & RTE.

Since 2009, politicians, administrators, and the service company *Réseau de Transport d'Électricité* (RTE)/Electricity Transmission Network have planned to build a 400,000 V energy transformer substation in the hamlet of Saint-Victor-et-Melvieu, located close to Millau (Figure 1). RTE, as a subsidiary of *Électricité de France*/Electricity of France (EDF),³ has been developing the project without the knowledge or the consent of the local population or the property owners whose parcels overlap with the project site, like Marie-Bénédicte Vernhet. Presenting her concern, she explains:

When you see the advertisements on TV saying: "our energy is green!" Is it "green?" We do not experience it as green because everywhere we see massive amounts of concrete coming in for the wind turbines and this awful transformer that is being built on top of the power lines and high voltage line that we already have. We already had cancer in the village around here. So what will it be like with a big transformer? We feel like complete victims as well because the [old] mayor and all of them [politicians] have decided first that they will allow these projects to settle here without asking us, let alone telling us.⁴

Marie identifies the presence of hypocrisy through infrastructural materiality, illnesses caused by existing energy infrastructure, and victimization of the hamlet's inhabitants



Figure 2. Free commune of L'Amassada: "No to the transformer." Source: Benoît Sanchez.

by politicians. In 2010, these factors propelled a legal campaign against the transformer, or *transfo* as it is called locally. Sustained direct action began in December 2014 with the establishment of a protest site (*Presidio*) in the place of the transformer: *La Libre Commune de L'Amassada* (Figure 2). Since the imposition of the substation through claims of climate change mitigation and energy transition, a conflict has taken hold of the region.

Investigating the transformer, the theoretical and disciplinary influences are extensive. Contributing to the political ecology of the Global North (Brock and Dunlap, 2018; Schroeder et al., 2006), this article argues that climate change mitigation and energy transition are indeed a "battle" against the environment. This "battle" on the ground, understood broadly to include the human and nonhuman inhabitants (Springer et al., forthcoming), is complex and remains central to understanding the infrastructural development in southern Aveyron. Focusing on the birth and early processual life of an energy transformer (Anand et al., 2018), this article examines how energy infrastructure's national, or proclaimed ecological, "significance" is used to justify land grabbing and "prioritize some interests and scales over others" (Bridge et al., 2018: 2; Huber, 2015). This includes sidelining and politically constructing territorial struggles as not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) to defuse their extensive concerns (Dunlap, 2019a; Lake, 1993). Infrastructural research intersects with critical agrarian studies work on land grabbing (White et al., 2012), specifically with renewed interests in farmland grabbing in the European Union (Kay, 2016). Oppositional residents describe infrastructural development as "a type" of "new" "colonization" leading to the elaboration and development of the term *infrastructural colonization*.

Fieldwork in Aveyron was conducted between March 2018 and July 2019. Participant observation and semistructured and informal interviewing were employed on three visits to the region, resulting in 32 semistructured recorded interviews and over 25 informal interviews. There were 30 different people interviewed, including interviews conducted with landowners, mayors, civil servants, and various land defenders. The St. Victor Mayor, the concerned property's land owner, and select land defenders were interviewed twice, in March–April 2018 and 2019. Secondary and primary resources were collected: newspaper articles, company brochures, documentary films, recorded consultation sessions, and St. Victor town hall's RTE archive. Most of the names of the land defenders are anonymized, using cat-related names to honor L'Amassada's reoccurring cat theme.

The following section revisits critical agrarian studies and political ecology literatures to discuss bureaucratic land grabbing, territorialization, and infrastructural colonization. The second section begins by framing territorial struggles in France and the precursors of L'Amassada. The third section details the arrival process of the transformer, corrupt political behavior, misinformation, and the process of bureaucratic land grabbing. The fourth section documents the repression against L'Amassada, which includes discussing their relationship with the *Gilets Jaunes* "societies in movement" (Zibechi, 2012). This leads, in the next section, to developing the notion of infrastructural colonization and its relevance for understanding climate and ecological crisis. The article concludes by asserting that Macron's "battle plan" is perversely targeting the environment by expanding and intensifying infrastructural colonization, which is the material expression of ecological and climate catastrophe.

Infrastructural colonization: “large, imposed, and useless” territorialization

Land grabbing is the control and capture of land and natural resources. This involves resource transfers supported by various international, national, and local collaborations, which necessitates various forms of “hard” coercion and “soft” technologies of social pacification (Dunlap, 2019c). This entails “utilizing a diversity of coercive and/or deceptive tactics to achieve resource control” that are also essential to ecological distribution conflicts (Dunlap, 2017: 18). Struggles over the distribution of land, natural resources, and environmental burdens are considered ecological distribution conflicts (Scheidel et al., 2018), which are fueled by cultural and ontological disagreements. Arturo Escobar (2008: 14) recognizes culture as essential to ecological distribution conflicts as “economic crises are ecological crises are cultural crises.” Mario Blaser (2013: 15) describes “political ontology” as “whichever cultural perspective gains the upper hand will determine the access to, use of and relation to ‘the thing’ at stake.” Ontological and cultural relationships to environments become central factors of environmental conflicts.

Green grabbing represents eco-ontological distribution conflicts carried out in the name of environmentalism or sustainable development. Originally focused on the impact of biodiversity conservation, ecotourism, and carbon sequestration (Corson et al., 2013; Fairhead et al., 2012), this term also applies to the new resource valuations of hydro, wind, and solar resources (Avila, 2018; Dunlap, 2017, 2019a; Franquesa, 2018; Siamanta, 2017, 2019). This article acknowledges the proliferation of (unsustainable) energy infrastructure—high-voltage power lines, substations, control centers, smart technologies, and so on—justified in the name of the so-called “renewable energy” or “fossil fuel+” infrastructures (Dunlap, 2018d). *Fossil fuel+ recognizes that “renewable energy” necessitates hydrocarbons to extract large quantities of minerals and hydrocarbons, to process metals, manufacture various components* (Hickel, 2019; Sovacool et al., 2020; Zehner, 2012), *as well as for its transportation and operation of—the “+”—energy-harnessing infrastructure: vital wind, solar, and water resources.*

Land/green grabbing, however, does not “necessarily imply that a transaction is illegal,” writes Sylvia Kay (2016: 4); “many controversial land deals may be ‘perfectly legal’ from a strict law enforcement perspective but considered illegitimate.” Strict legal interpretation “misses the way in which powerful actors can shape the law to their advantage” (Kay, 2016: 4). Bureaucratic land grabbing highlights this issue, observing processual acts of self-legitimizing, methods, and practices of democratic authoritarianism exercised over land and people (Dunlap, 2019b). Bureaucratic land/green grabbing emphasizes the procedural legitimization of land theft and examines how unpopular and environmentally destructive development projects are permitted, which could

be called the *democratic conquest of nature*. Conventional energy infrastructures blur the line between land and green grabbing and are frequently branded as “green” regardless of various negative socioecological impacts (EC (European Commission), 2018). Energy infrastructure often leads to “land artificialization” of smallholder farmland (Kay, 2016: 17), which in St. Victor is described as colonization.

Colonization politicizes the process of land territorialization. The territorialization literature details the intimate sociopolitical practices of land control (Peluso and Lund, 2011) and exemplifies continuity with the colonial process (Lund, 2016, 2019). Temporal periodization, however, with “colonial territorialization,” discursively separates continuous processes of land control and degradation organized by states and their economies (Rasmussen and Lund, 2018: 394). “Colonization,” as a term, implicitly politicizes and takes a position against the colonial model or the state (Dunlap, 2018c, 2019a). The state is a highly developed (computational) evolution of the colonial model (Dunlap and Jakobsen, 2020; Gelderloos, 2017). Understanding the state this way can relate to Indigenous struggles for self-determination and autonomy; their rejection of state legitimacy; its modes of political organization and corresponding methods of extractivism (Churchill, 2003; Dunlap, 2018c), which extends to dissident non-Indigenous people. Individual self-identification with state-building, nationalist mythology, governmental sociocultural engineering, and resource extraction become central issues (Dunlap, 2018c, 2019c; Dunlap and Jakobsen, 2020). The state organizes the framework of public–private development, while infrastructural development is the material manifestation of the colonial/statist project (Anand et al., 2018; Bridge et al., 2018; Murrey, 2020). Industrial infrastructures replicate colonial/statist sociocultural values in the local. In northwest Italy, the NoTAV movement confronted an infrastructural knowledge/power regime—a high-speed train (TAV)—that was referred to as an “*infrastructural dispositif*” (Leonardi, 2013: 35). This is the statist and market-oriented material, social, and political apparatus as well as its corresponding ideological dogma embodied within infrastructures, expressed in the equation: “infrastructure = modernization = economic growth” (Leonardi, 2013). Infrastructure development, regardless of popular contestation, is always positioned as the “higher” or national good (Bridge et al., 2018; Huber, 2015). Infrastructures, then, are desired for various—real and imagined—reasons (Anand et al., 2018; Dalakoglou and Harvey, 2012), which is where power resides and conflicts complicate.

While neglecting various analytical “ruptures” (Lund, 2016), colonization discursively challenges the organizational and structural violence associated with infrastructural development. Colonial processes are viewed without temporal or spatial boundaries and are marked by socioecologically degrading actions by various actors and sociopolitical regimes. This perspective draws continuity between

infrastructures and political regimes, recognizing an infrastructural “colonial present” both north and south of the globe. This framing decenters the industrial and infrastructural dogma normalized into everyday life, which also extends in academic habitus and research. The next section turns to the history of political struggle in the Aveyron region.

Aveyron and territorial struggle in France

Aveyron is a county within the Occitanie region of southern France. This rural area has been historically “suspicious” of foreigners and regarded as “backwards” by government bureaucrats (Weber, 1976: 44–45). It consists geographically of forest-covered rocky hills, interspersed with lively streams and the Tarn River. Known for its inhospitable environmental conditions, this region was exclusively on an agrarian subsistence economy (MTC, 2019; Weber, 1976), which continues today, although its economic activities have now diversified into tourism, slaughterhouses, and artisanal crafts and service industries. Aveyron is France’s largest producer of sheep, where dairy products and beef account for 40% of the agricultural market.⁵ It is also home to the world-renowned Roquefort cheese, which is an essential source of employment in the region. Its energy production has relied primarily on hydroelectric resources. Since 1999, it has become a desirable location for wind energy development (Nadaï and Labussière, 2009). Since then, as Nadaï and Labussière (2009: 747) tell us, “there has been a growing opposition to wind power” that has only intensified over time. However, determined political struggles in the region are rooted in a much longer history, which in recent times we can trace to the Larzac military base in southern Aveyron.

On October 28, 1971, French Defense Minister Michel Debré announced its expansion by 14,000 hectares (Terral, 2011). This project threatened the expropriation of sheep grazing land—many associated with Roquefort industries—and triggered what would become a 10-year transnational antimilitarism campaign on the Larzac Plateau. People migrated from all over France to support the struggle as it became a site of international solidarity, serving as a precursor to the process of transnational “summit hopping” associated with the antiglobalization movement (Sullivan, 2005). The ZAD (Zone-to-Defend) movement inherited and advanced Larzac’s legacy (Quadrupani, 2018; Vidalou, 2017). The Larzac struggle had two important influential aspects. The first is the migratory and circulating transnational solidarity networks of resistance, among them anti-mining and airport struggles in New Caledonia and Japan (Terral, 2011), respectively. The influx of people coming from outside of the region influenced local farmers to become “open-minded and ready to contribute to wider struggles” (Gildea and Tompkins, 2015: 582). An important observation, Gildea and Tompkins (2015: 584) note, was that the

“success of the Larzac campaign depended on the sheep farmers co-operating with outsiders who had more organizational power and experience.”

The second was the employment of the term “internal colonization” to describe the military base expansion. The 1960s’ revolutionary fervor, especially of the Maoist and Marxist-Leninist types, was heavily influenced by anticolonial struggles. Revolutionary solidarity led to identifying not only common enemies, but also common politicospatial dynamics. This came in the form of realizing that “peripheral parts of Europe were also being ‘colonized’ by more advanced industrial regions in the core of the European Community” (Gildea and Tompkins, 2015: 589). Investments were pouring into industrial and urban areas, meanwhile the countryside—in many instances—were being depopulated, pillaged, and used as the playground for foreign bureaucrats and politicians (Gildea and Tompkins, 2015). The term internal colonization then came to highlight dynamics taking place between cities and the countryside. Local folklore, language, and culture of Occitanism was historically assimilated and suppressed by French state building (MTC, 2019; Vidalou, 2017), which now is recognized as an important language.

In French, the term ZAD originally stands for “deferred development area” (*zone d'aménagement différé*). This signified the demarcation and reservation of land for a development project. The first recognized ZAD was in Notre-Dame-des-Landes. In the mid-2000s, a 1970’s airport plan began to be implemented, resulting in various segments of the population organizing to thwart the displacement and defend the farmlands of local landowners. People refused to leave and began converting the “deferred development area” into a “zone-to-defend” (*zone à défendre*) (MTC, 2018 [2016]). Refusing displacement and land transformation, people not only sought to resist the airport construction, but initiated a prefigurative collective autonomous project of ecological protection and food autonomy (MTC, 2018 [2016]). It was not just about the airport, but as the slogan goes: “Against an Airport & its World,” a world predicated on capitalist relationships and destructive ecological practices. The Notre-Dame-des-Landes ZAD lived through multiple police–military occupations and demolitions and, now, has succeeded in terminating the airport project in 2017 (Anonymous, 2019). The ZAD concept simultaneously spread, igniting a movement of autonomous land projects blocking development projects, that Le Monde (2015) claimed totaled 27 in France. ZADs were formed to fight high-tension wires, highways, dams (Sivens), nuclear waste dumps (Bure), ecotourism (Roybon), and more (Quadrupani, 2018). While resistance movements like the ones in Larzac and Plogoff remain important inspirations, the Zapatista struggle in Chiapas was also a foundational influence.⁶ From the Narritua antiairport struggle in Japan⁷ (1960s) to Álvaro Obregón/Gui’Xhi’Ro’s struggle against wind parks in Mexico (Dunlap, 2018b), the ZAD concept has a profound

affinity with generational territorial struggles across the world. L'Amassada's antitransformer struggle falls within this constellation of autonomous land defense collectives.

The transformer: corruption, land grabbing, and consultations

The small hamlet of St. Victor-et-Melvieu, with a population just under 400 people (INSEE, 2016), was engulfed in a political crisis. "I was a municipal councilor in 2007 and in 2010," explains Carole, "the mayor told us in a meeting about a small solar project on the hill." She and the other 10 town councilors voted against and denied the project, yet "afterwards the city published a meeting report for councilors..., announcing: 'We refused the construction of a solar panel park as a way not to disturb the future construction of a transformer.'" Carole was shocked. The mayor "did not ask for our view on the matter and did not show us any files or reports mentioning this project." Carole, and another member of the town council, called a meeting with Daniel Frayssinhes—the St. Victor mayor from 2008 to 2014—and "he refused and didn't want to share information with the inhabitants." Only 3 of the 11 town councilors were officially against the transformer because, according to Carole, they "didn't want to contradict the mayor or confirm that he was wrong in his actions" because they "might also receive some benefits for their loyalty, like getting construction permits easily." Carole confronted Frayssinhes and asked "why he was hiding this from us and he answered that the director of RTE told the mayor to keep quiet about it because otherwise there would be protest from the inhabitants. He was honest about it."⁸ By signing a contract with RTE, Frayssinhes had "violated procedures."⁹ Private transformer agreements took place between friends, among them Senator Alain Marc and local industrialists, in and outside the town council.

The denied solar project would have had the same location as the transformer. The father of Marie—the landowner—was the mayor of St. Victor for 18 years, during which Frayssinhes was his protégé. Marie's father was sick with cancer when he heard the news and was infuriated. The contract was signed, discord fermented, and Marie's father would pass away within 12 months. The Vernhet family's land was chosen, according to RTE (2017: 1), for strategic reasons: "the 400,000 and 225,000 volt networks intersect in one place: at Saint-Victor-et-Melvieu. It is the best place to link the two networks by a new 'interchange.'" Moreover, "[t]he substation is a strategic node for *locally redistributing energy* from national lines" (emphasis added). RTE (2019), at the same time, on the same webpage, writes:

By 2030, 40% of our electricity will have to be renewable. Wind, solar, geothermal or methanation are all new energies to connect to electricity networks. Occitanie has all the assets

to become one of the leading regions in terms of production from renewable energies.

As a result, RE production is expected to be around 3,000 MW. The 225,000-volt electricity transmission system in Aveyron, Tarn and Hérault will have to be able to accommodate this additional production and transport it to major consumption centers.

Local here then comes to mean Occitanie region, which comprises 13 departments, including Toulouse and Montpellier (Delga, 2017). The "strategic node" and "local" renewable energy development are the main justifications for the transformer.

St. Victor's current mayor Jean Capel asserts:

The persons who are in favor of this project all agree to build it near St. Victor and embrace the project, but they refused it in the first place to locate the construction on their grounds. And this makes me think that there is a great deal of passive corruption concerning the transformer.¹⁰

RTE strategic node is positioned on the border with another district; meanwhile Melvieu residents (living near the existing transformer) pressured politicians to place the transformer in St. Victor. It also relates to tax income disputes and political maneuvering with the idea of "the Community of Communes." St. Victor is a wealthy village with 13 different power lines, a hundred pylons, and 2 major infrastructures (substation and dam) that annually affords its payments of roughly €500,000 from hydrological resources and €100,000 from electrical infrastructures.¹¹ Senator Alain Marc created the Community of Communes, to organize five nearby villages into one administrative organization, in order to "alleviate the financial constraints of the poor villages." People contend, however, that this served Marc's political ambitions as the Community of Communes was a tax redistribution scheme that could gain "the support of some mayors."¹² After January 2018 a "unique taxation" scheme emerged, organizing village revenues into the Community of Communes' fund, which managed an unfavorable redistribution system for St. Victor, leading them to withdraw from the organization.¹³ NIMBY concerns, the redrawing of tax lines, and territorial jurisdictions were also embedded political factors that played into the transformer placement.

The fact that the elected representatives withheld information and approved the transformer without a public consultation provoked generalized outrage. Carole and others began organizing "a petition in 2010 against the project and it turned out that 80% of the villagers were against" the transformer.¹⁴ After the petition, the civil society group Plateau Survolté (Overvolted Plateau) was formed. Having an association enabled them to file lawsuits against companies, initiating a self-funded information and legal campaign against RTE. By 2013 the legal campaign was becoming dismal.

Opposition and legalized expropriation

The legal avenue of protest proved to be restrictive. Not only were private energy developers supportive of the project, but so were senators and local mayors. By 2006 there were already 246 wind turbines and 53 construction permits granted in Aveyron (Nadaï and Labussière, 2009). Documenting the governance framework for renewable energy in Aveyron, Nadaï and Labussière (2009: 752) observe “wind power planning became more open to developers than to other parties.” The “institutionalization of revenue sharing with local communities through taxes,” Nadaï and Labussière (2009: 752) assert, “has undermined the power of local opposition” in favor of wind developers and politically ambitious politicians.

While Plateau Survolté was spreading information and organizing legal defense, the ZAD struggle in France was gaining momentum. The struggle in Notre-Dame-des-Landes was intensifying, while outside Toulouse, in Sivens, another ZAD emerged to block a dam project. The Sivens struggle was violently repressed and led to the murder of 21-year-old Rémi Fraisse by “flash ball” stun grenade in October 2014 (Quadrupani, 2018).¹⁵ Some people from neighboring towns, like St. Affrique and Camarès, “began going to the weekly or monthly meetings” in St. Victor and they said: “Wow, this is great what you are doing, but maybe at some moment we need to occupy the land where the transformer is going to be built.” Almost everybody agreed.¹⁶

They began organizing themselves with Plateau Survolté and members of the Vernhet family: “We talked with them and thought about building an occupation site on their land, where the transformer is supposed to be. Then three months later we launched this project”—L’Amassada, which means “assembly” in Occitanie.¹⁷ The construction of a communal house began in December 2014 on an exposed and windy hilltop and within 3 months the first structure of L’Amassada had sprouted. L’Amassada began as a *presidio* (protest site). The term *presidio* comes from the NoTAV movement (Leonardi, 2013; MTC (2018 [2016]) and signifies a common space for events, discussions, and organizational activities. L’Amassada’s construction was not appreciated by RTE and led to a law suit against Marie’s aunt. Initially L’Amassada served as a common space for meetings, events, and “artisanal” workshops. Nemesh remembers L’Amassada as a space with “sometimes just boring meetings every Saturday that” were “really cold and you are suffering,” but at the same time “you are really proud.”¹⁸ By 2018, L’Amassada expanded to three building structures with a kitchen space, a cobb dorm room, and a meeting hall, with caravans, dry toilets, a solar shower, a greenhouse, gardens that used a phytopurification system, chickens, cats, and a microscale artisanal wind turbine (Figure 2).

Plateau Survolté and L’Amassada underline the three principal problems of the transformer project: first, land grabbing and the intensification of energy infrastructure in

St. Victor; second, the transformer will enable an increase in the wind, solar, and biomass colonization of Aveyron, in order to become “energy positive” (Delga, 2017); and third, its energy use. The transformer, they argue, will not serve for local use but for distant large cities, which includes forming an energy corridor or “highway” between North Africa and the EU (Trieb et al., 2016). Overall, there is a complete and utter disbelief in the discourse of “energy transition” as a solution to ecological catastrophe. The transformer and wind parks were nothing more than a capitalist accumulation strategy “hiding behind a green camouflage.”¹⁹ Jerry Cat explained, “rather than a transition, wind energy is an accumulation of more growth.”²⁰ Jean-Baptiste Vidalou recognizes a political-security strategy associated with “ecological transition,” contending:

The economy wants to keep moving, it does not want disorder and the green economy is just there to put some oil into the global capitalist machine—to put more oil into the machines so it could be more fluid.²¹

Plateau Survolté and L’Amassada proved to be an obstacle to RTE and energy companies in the region.²² RTE (2019) contends that they conducted “200 meetings and field meetings.” Although the location and participatory quality of these 200 meetings remain unknown, many meetings were attended by supporters of L’Amassada. The documentary *Pas Res Nos Arresta* (2018)²³ covers the direct actions and manifestations, many of which intended to disrupt meetings associated with transformer development. The Climate Energy Project Manager of the Regional Park (*Parc naturel régional des Grands Causses*), Alexandre Chevillon, remembers an intervention in 2017: “The protestors arrived from St Victor and occupied the building, insulted everybody and broke some materials. They refused to speak and debate, and opted for anti-democratic methods and values.”²⁴ The claim to democracy is reoccurring among officials associated with the transformer and wind energy development. While RTE sued Marie’s 68-year-old aunt, she was intimidated and interrogated by police. This induced fear and stress, provoking her to transfer the land officially to Marie in 2015. RTE approached Marie’s aunt twice, then ever since RTE never contacted Marie:

Since I have been the owner I have never met RTE. They have never been in touch with me and they sent me a letter that said: “As there is no agreement between you and us, you will be the object of expropriation.”²⁵

As Marie’s aunt was on trial and a judicial back-and-forth proceeded, the Vernhet family along with L’Amassada devised a strategy of parceling out her land to 132 different people to complicate legal land acquisition.

While the trial against her aunt would last until Spring 2019, RTE filed a *déclaration d'utilité publique* (Public

Utility Declaration) in 2017. The civil code, article 545, states that the Public Utility Declaration is “the state sanctioned procedure of land expropriation for reasons of public utility and with just and prior compensation” (Française, 2018). The procedure begins with a Public Utility Inquiry (DUP) that determines the “public good” or “national interest” being served by the expropriation, which is followed by surveying and appraising the land, before a judicial phase of ownership transferability is initiated (Française, 2018). On June 13, 2018, a Public Utility Declaration was declared by Nicolas Hulot, then minister of Ecological and Solidarity Transition.²⁶ Marie remembers, “in the summer, in July, we got a letter saying that our lands were expropriated as the Public Utility Inquiry approved it.”²⁷ “Yet, everybody knew that it would be ‘yes,’” explains Marie, the Public Utility Inquiry “is never refused—never.”²⁸ Energy transition and climate change mitigation form a strong justification for land expropriation, which ordered permanent land acquisition from two families that were rejecting the project: the Vernhet and Montade families. Both resisted the process until the police invasion. The Vernhet family had 28,311 m² (2.83 hectares) of land expropriated while the Montade family had 16,970 m² (1.7 hectares). This also includes land leasing for 4 years from six property owners, among them the Montade and Vernhet families.

During the DUP judicial phase, the state had to establish “just and prior compensation.” After notifications by RTE’s land appraisers and lawyer to St. Victor,²⁹ an expropriation judge came to town. The Vernhet family and L’Amassada organized a “people’s tribunal,” invited the media, and put the judge on trial publicly (Lundimatin, 2018).³⁰ Both Marie and the judge made statements as an Amassada participant acted as the presiding judge. Marie made a statement, part of which included: “There was not a price given to this land, we gave it the value of our fight and this you cannot take. You can put a price on the land, but you can never take the value of it.”³¹ The judge, having little control over the way the events were unfolding, eventually left. A letter would establish the price of Vernhet’s land at €18,000, 20% higher than

market value. Marie’s husband calculated that €18,000 is equivalent to 3 years of harvest and production (of straw, wheat, and milk).³² The process of land expropriation was rejected and subverted at every turn by the landowners and L’Amassada, but the bureaucratic procedure continued. The *presidio* became a zone-to-defend, with barricades erected, during the summer of 2018 (Figure 3). The Public Utility Declaration is a central mechanism of bureaucratic land grabbing serving infrastructural colonization.

Consultations, transition, and misinformation

Police invasion and expropriation was looming, meanwhile energy transition and energy development were being promoted during the consultations of southern Aveyron’s “Climate Plan” hosted by the Regional Park (ADN (Aveyron Digital News), 2019). “The Aveyron public inquiries,” that happened a decade earlier, “proved to be only marginal landscape adjusters because of their late position in the [development] process and the weight given to public interest and rational argument” (Nadaï and Labussière, 2009: 751). Since 2010, concerned citizens and L’Amassada participants have been attending meetings and consultations, accusing them of denying the impacts of renewable energy transition, which entails ignoring the structural concerns raised by participants, neglecting resource extraction supply chains, proposing inadequate measures, and intensifying socioecological problems by “green washing” regional industry. Between the years 2015 and 2018, L’Amassada organized to shut down RTE and Regional Park events with physical disruption and blockade techniques. De-escalating their interventions in 2018, their consultation participation could be described as more “respectful interventions,” with an emphasis on dialogue.

The May 25, 2018, consultation serves as an example of a respectful intervention. Consultation meetings are usually advertised through newspapers and Persistent Kitty remembers going to the St. Affrique city hall and how “two Le Parc [Regional Park] engineers welcomed [them] with games,



Figure 3. Barricades on the western entrance road to L’Amassada. Source: Benoît Sanchez.



Figure 4. The board game of the *Parc naturel régional des Grands Causses*. Source: Université Rurale.

similar to Monopoly, as a way to explain how great the ecological transition is” (Figure 4). Many participants were insulted by this and perceived it to be “a way for deputies to publicize their [environmental] commitments.”³³ Some people mentioned: “The absence of representatives is a continuation of the first meetings.” Alexandre Chevillon pleads with them to watch a video which frames the issue of global warming, repeats existing statistics about energy consumption in the region—“58% of our consumption” was covered by renewable energy in 2017—and affirms the Regional Park’s commitment “to cover all of our energy needs thanks to a renewable energy production by 2030.”³⁴ People were outraged by the presentation of incomplete information as well as faulty statistics that included the A75 freeway (creating a negative statistical slant). They confronted Chevillon with identified lies concerning the wind turbine numerical cap. They felt betrayed by the process of decision making without proper public consultation and sensed that every energy development plan “is thought and decided before people even know about the projects.”³⁵ Chevillon keeps encouraging them to play the board game, justifies the statistical arrangement, and reminds everyone “about the fact that

representatives you criticize were democratically elected.” The consultation ends in theatrical, yet pointed fashion:

Citizen (A75): We came here to tell you that we’ve had enough of your games and tricks and that we are always losing something because of your projects.

Ex-official: You came to this meeting to drag officials in the mud. You’ve done this for previous public events related to the establishment of energy infrastructures. You are discrediting your own movement/claims.

Citizen (A75): The problem is that democracy doesn’t exist.

Ex-official: And it’s because of you.

Citizen (A75): I’ve been fighting industrial wind energy plans for 14 years now. We’ve managed to prevent the biggest project from being realized in Aveyron. But now we are talking about a wider scale plan, encompassing not only Aveyron but the entire Occitanie region. The fight goes on, but representatives refused to be with us tonight, instead of that they organized a [private] meeting on their own at 5pm.

Woman: We do not need your project, we are already self-sufficient regarding our energy production. You are developing renewable energies in an uncontrolled way.

[People start to leave]

A.C.: “You’ve ruined the meeting, thanks a lot.”

Citizen: No we haven’t, we have raised a major issue regarding your plans and we must talk about it during a real public consultation.

While the board game made this consultation particularly patronizing, this is representative of the quality of deliberation and discussion allotted by authorities. The desire for adequate scientific assurances regarding energy consumption, local pollution, energy development regulations, supply chain of raw materials and proposed energy use is denied by theatrical subterfuge. Renewable energy supply chains and fossil fuel+ systems have also become accomplices of natural resource extraction in order to rebrand company images and power the mining operations themselves (Dunlap, 2019c: 14–15; Furnaro, 2019). The issues raised by oppositional residents are highlighting serious socioecological impacts and developmental trajectories with geopolitical implications (Hickel, 2019). The consultation, like others elsewhere (Dunlap, 2018a; Leifsen et al., 2017), worked to disregard structural, political, and scientific issues related to energy infrastructure. The board game deflected these concerns while serving as a tool to normalize the infrastructural dispositif and planning perspective. Local administrators have been promoting varying degrees of neoliberal environmentalism, which is common practice in France.

Already living with nearby energy infrastructure, health and transnational energy flows are significant issues for oppositional residents of St. Victor. Mayor Capel acknowledges that electrical infrastructure “undoubtedly creates health issues, and we have several cases of tumors and

Alzheimers disease within the population.”³⁶ While the correlation is difficult to prove scientifically, the health concerns raised by people living close to electrical infrastructures were similar to those felt in La Ventosa, Oaxaca (Dunlap, 2017, 2019a).³⁷ Marie contends that these health issues combine with negative emotional experiences related to the transformer’s development process as well as the police repression experienced by some individuals. I spoke to three retired EDF and RTE employees,³⁸ who worked with them for over 30 years, yet stood against the transformer project, acknowledging the lack of social-collective benefits, limited employment, “evacuation of electricity made from wind energy,”³⁹ and negative health impacts related to oversaturating the village with energy infrastructure. The interviews disclosed personal health issues caused by physical proximity to electromagnetic fields.⁴⁰ Based on physics calculations, the European Council’s precautionary principle requires people “to be at least one meter away per kilowatt installed,” explains Patrick (EC (European Commission), 2015).⁴¹ For a “400,000 volt infrastructure, populations must be at least 400 meters away, which creates an uninhabitable area,” explains Patrick, although “there are no laws or legal rules regarding the distance between electrical infrastructures and populations. It allows the state to do as it wants.”

Finally, about the construction of a transnational energy corridor, Patrick asserts that the transformer is “supposed to raise the tension to 400,000 Volts.”⁴² This supports the claim for the need to have an 800,000 V high-tension wire, which an RTE representative (when asked in person by Marie) eventually admitted to its “possibility.”⁴³ The ENTSO-E (2019) map already confirms the transnational importance of the St. Victor transformer, which connects not only to the Asco nuclear plant, but also to hydrological, wind, and solar resources in the southern Catalanian Terra Alta region (Franquesa, 2018). Documenting Terra Alta resistance against energy infrastructural colonization from the 1950s to present, Franquesa (2018) shows how energy transition in Iberia was a process of energy transaction and accumulation, not socioecological transition. Energy-capital accumulation and “successive additions of new sources of primary energy” were precisely the concern of Plateau Survolté and L’Amassada (Bonneuil and Fressoz, 2016: 101). In consultations and interviews, political representatives claim “fossil fueled energies or nuclear is meant to disappear in the future.”⁴⁴ Harnessing antinuclear sentiments is central to developing wind and energy infrastructure, yet EDF is currently building a new—and USD 3.6 billion over-budget (Kar-Gupta and Twidale, 2019)—nuclear power station in west England (Sullivan, 2013) and, at the behest of France, is preparing to build six new third-generation nuclear power reactors over the next 15 years (Reuters, 2019). Political representatives emphasize “local” energy production and regional “renewable energy solidarity,” and ignore that the so-called “Occitanie local” reaches until Catalonia. Since 2006, there has been some discussion about a transnational

energy super grid between the EU and North Africa (Sarant, 2015), which the new St. Victor transformer could be an instrumental part. During the consultation, instead of proposing meaningful participatory strategies to enact genuine energy transition, residents are confronted with board games, as well as evasive and antagonistic answers from representatives. The actions of representatives discredit their legitimacy, suggesting a lack of information, carelessness, and further investigation of vested interests.

“War of Attrition”: political repression against L’Amassada

The resources and political repression dispensed against L’Amassada have been significant. The transformer struggle, Picnic Kitty contends, is “a war of attrition” organized with the “logic to get people tired and disinterested in the cause.”⁴⁵ This grassroots movement has focused on blocking construction sites and roads for wind energy development and organizing information awareness campaigns, demonstrations, carnivals, and conferences, while disrupting public events. Black Cat explains: “We are building community together—I wouldn’t use the term ‘occupation’ or ‘ZAD,’ as these labels are those used by the media and the state to categorize us in a pejorative way.”⁴⁶ Wind turbine saboteurs, on the other hand, criticize L’Amassada’s strategy, advocating “a backlash based on our own desires against those in power” on the basis of “[m]obility, stealth and unpredictability” to stop the operation of capitalist infrastructures (Anonymous, 2018). The French state has attempted to criminalize the ZAD movement, trying to position them as “extremists” or terrorists. Identifying capitalism and industrialism as the cause of ecological catastrophe, members employ a participatory, nonviolent, and self-defense-oriented strategy. Similarly, Indigenous land defenders in Oaxaca have been slandered as “indigenous Taliban” (Bárcenas, 2016), while “Zadists” have been called a “green Jihad.”⁴⁷ The struggle against infrastructural colonization in Aveyron experienced similar “soft” counterinsurgency patterns as those in Oaxaca (Dunlap, 2019a, 2019c), employed to progressively divide and exhaust opposition with widespread police surveillance, harassment, and arrest.

It is analytically useful to think about L’Amassada as being composed of two waves: the *presidio* (December 2014–June 2018) and a unique ZAD-like articulation (June 2018–present). Besides the generalized police harassment of people supportive of the ZAD movement, a clear starting point is Marie’s aunt who, 68 years old at the time, was interrogated by the police for “a few hours and they made her think that she was a delinquent, a criminal”⁴⁸ for allowing the construction of L’Amassada. The trial was annulled in 2019, with the cost of €4,000–5,000 for the family. It “was intended to split everyone up and it did!” claimed Marie⁴⁹ who described the disputes that arose. Police checkpoints

throughout the village put people on edge. When they gathered in L'Amassada, police would set up check points nearby, search vehicles, and monitor parked vehicle license plates—"they check everything that no cop would ever check on a roadside stop. When there is an event at L'Amassada they will stop every single person on the main road—both ways—to check on everything!" Collectively punishing the village with police controls employed a divisive strategy to erode support for L'Amassada. Additionally, anti-ZAD specialist with experience in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, Gendarmerie captain Antoine Berna (see Beaubet, 2019), was assigned in the summer of 2018 to the area.

L'Amassada was also subject to frequent helicopter visits between 2017 and 2019. Marie explains:

Once they flew above my house six times—six times, then L'Amassada, the little village, the little hamlet there and another house in St Victor [which are all people concerned with the struggle]—six times. And who pays the kerosene, who pays for the pilot and what for? What are they checking?⁵⁰

Carbon accounting rarely acknowledges the operations of political repression. On a Saturday after drinking a beer, Nemesh recounts turning around to a helicopter: "And suddenly we hear a sound and just above the hill, just next to us, there is: 'rwwwwwwhhh,' an elevating helicopter—just in front of us. And they are looking at us and they have cameras, that's it." The helicopter was roughly "20 meters" away to the point where "you see the faces of the pilots inside."⁵¹ Frequent helicopter visits combined with the presence of Gendarmerie Mobile Platoon Intervention Units (*Les pelotons d'intervention de la gendarmerie mobile*)⁵² and police surveillance. For instance, there were "two cop cars with a truck and it had a giant antenna with a guy with binoculars."⁵³ Surveillance was matched with arrests and interrogations. Responding to civil disobedience actions against the Crassous wind park, police raided 15 houses in January 2018. The aggressive and humiliating action of the raid varied among houses, yet the apprehended suspects were all brought to different police stations between 1.5 and 2.5 hours away from their homes. People believe this was a strategy not only to prevent counter-demonstrations outside the police station, but also to create transportation issues for arrestees. People were arrested in front of the schools where they were delivering their children as well as while people were in bed. One woman recounts:

It was like seven o'clock or something, but then I heard a voice that said: "Open the door!" I was like, "Ahhhh... fuck off! I'm sleeping!" Then the man with me was like, "Answer it, it's the police." I was like, "Nahhhh." Then they opened the door, I was naked and I was like, "What are you doing here!?" The chief of the group handed me a letter and I said, "Just a letter? You come into my home at seven o'clock to

just give me this fucking letter?" And they said, "No, you are coming with us."⁵⁴

A woman police officer watched her get dressed, and she had to explain to her son why she was being handcuffed. Frightening her son, the police raid was an exercise of intrusion, humiliation, and capture.

The intelligence service, however, took a special interest in arrestees with generational roots in the region. "The local intelligence agency of Aveyron, DGSI (General Directorate for Internal Security) came into the interrogation room," recounts Farm Cat. He "tried to explain that he was the guy from the intelligence agency and that I did not have to be friends with other cops, but I could cooperate with him—leader with leader." Farm Cat refused, and the DGSI agent continued to pressure Farm Cat telling him:

All your fellow fighters have nothing to lose, but you do. Think of it, you have a baby. You are about to be a dad and you are running your own farm with your dad. You will be alone, your friends will have left and you will still be dealing with these things.⁵⁵

The police did everything they could to divide oppositional residents from each other and from neighboring residents. Resources were mobilized to repress opposition to energy infrastructure. This "war of attrition," Picnic Kitty explains "is a repression spread out over time, it gets exhausting and it demobilizes people. The police knows this and they play with it, hoping that the movement runs out" of energy.

As barricades were erected, hard times fell on L'Amassada between January and February 2019. RTE declared a €2,000 fine each day for anyone identified to be present on the site of L'Amassada (Lundimatin, 2019a). There was a lookout tower (Figure 2) where they would do rounds: "We wake up at 6am every day to check if the cops are coming," explains Pirate Cat,⁵⁶ "we were told we would not last past March... so we were like: 'Okay, maybe it is tomorrow.'" Police would come in groups of 5–10 and try to catch people living there, which created a game of dog and cat. Meanwhile L'Amassada began making links with the *Gilets Jaunes* (Yellow Vest) societies in movement. A larger nationwide movement, the *Gilet Jaunes* also reacted against a neoliberal environmental policy that sought to reduce fossil fuel consumption by imposing a fuel tax (Fassin and Defossez, 2019). "People understand," say Kneading Cat, "that the carbon tax on fuel was not to make a transition, but for taxes to make money."⁵⁷ This policy ignited a viral, heterogeneous, and riotous movement that came to demand social justice and democratic renewal in the streets on November 18, 2018. Initially criticized for being antiecological, the movement replied: "*The end of the month and the end of the world is the same fight.*" *Gilets Jaunes*, since then, have demanded an aviation and maritime fuel tax along with the restoration of

the high-income “solidarity tax” (Martin, 2019). Both *Gilet Jaunes* and L’Amassada are fighting against neoliberal environmentalism. “*Gilet Jaunes* are fighting for more social justice—even if it is not always clear what is happening,” Travel Cat explains:

In the ZAD movement the ecological problems are completely linked to the social problems, so we are kind of doing the same here: we are not defending a roundabout, but we are defending a place and practicing direct democracy and resisting the police.⁵⁸

L’Amassada participants created connections with the *Gilet Jaunes* during assemblies, occupations, and demonstrations. During those, there were profound discussions about wind energy development; “RTE says: ‘We are building the highway of electricity for the future,’” explained Vidalou, and “‘we are occupying the roundabout of electricity.’” Occasionally, *Gilet Jaunes* participants from St. Affrique and Millau would do police lookout shifts at L’Amassada. Both movements disrupted the circulation of energy and capital flows; both were against socioecological injustice; and both would be confronted by surveillance, riot police, and tear gas.

On February 7, 2019, over 100 police raided L’Amassada and St. Victor, arresting 5 people. Two of the three arrestees were simply passing by L’Amassada at the time of the arrest. In court, on July 3, the five people were charged €650 with court administrative fees. L’Amassada participants continued organizing conferences (Lundimatin, 2019b), spreading information about their struggle against the transformer and fossil fuel+ infrastructure. Then at 5 a.m. on October 8, 2019, about 200 riot police, 15 police vans, 2 armored transport vehicles, and 2 excavators invaded L’Amassada’s hill

(Lundimatin, 2019c; see Figure 5). The police blocked the roads to prevent outside support; L’Amassada ignited their barricades and slowed the onslaught of riot police and their machines. L’Amassada supporters eventually got on the roofs, but the police removed them one by one. Afterwards, the excavators destroyed this ecological anticapitalist space. Within 48 hours, the site was fenced off with razor wire, security personnel, 24-hour floodlights, as RTE proceeded to level out the land (Figure 6). On October 12 and November 1–3, 2019, land reclamation attempts and protests were met by the riot police with tear gas and arrests. The message is clear: peace is war, environmentalism is electrical infrastructure.

Infrastructural colonization: “NO to the transfo and its world”

Material infrastructure, especially of the techno-industrial variety, organize environments to accommodate their existence. Ecologically speaking, industrial infrastructure is always the coercive articulation of the calculus of human and nonhuman casualties in spatial interventions (Sullivan, 2013). The social, however, has variegated impacts: constructing different imaginations (Dalakoglou and Kallianos, 2018), promises (Anand et al., 2018), and enchantments (Harvey and Knox, 2012). “[I]nfrastructures have become ‘matters’ of the crisis itself,” write Dalakoglou and Kallianos (2018: 86), pointing to the self-reinforcing and perpetuating relationship between infrastructure and economic crisis. Infrastructural colonization takes this another step further, acknowledging the self-reinforcing and perpetuating relationship of socioecological crisis sustained by the



Figure 5. Riot police and armored vehicles occupy L’Amassada’s southwest entrance. Source: Université Rurale.



Figure 6. L'Amassada post police invasion. Source: Marie-Bénédicte Vernhet.

exponential growth of both conventional and “green” or fossil fuel+ infrastructures.

On October 08, 2019, 4.7 hectares of land was grabbed in St. Victor. On October 30, 2019, the Conseil Communautaire (2019: 9) announced that “200 new wind turbines are planned out of a total of 1,000 projects,” including a solar park. This expansion is made possible by the new St. Victor transformer. Learned dependence on industrial-computational systems, legislation enforcing technocapitalist development, and corresponding political repression enforce a global process of infrastructural colonization, which inhabits not only space, but the minds and life worlds of people. Consider L'Amassada (Figure 6) after its destruction: the space was enclosed with fences, armored with razor wire, secured with flood lights, and protected to produce a legible, symmetrical (flat), and socioecologically degraded construction site. Industrial infrastructure, and infrastructure systems, projects embody a sociocultural value system that demands ecological domination, the proliferation of technical language (that transcends different languages), speed (production–consumption convenience), mass consumption, economic accumulation, and territorial control that have profound, and underacknowledged, psychogeographic effects. Infrastructures organize both physical and psychosocial space by “rolling-out” an infrastructural dispositif.

Severe dependency leads to infrastructural self-identification. Infrastructural systems and urbanism are the new habitat (Vidalou, 2017), causing disconnection and systematic betrayal of ecosystems and nonhuman populations

(Dunlap and Jakobsen, 2020; Dunlap and Sullivan, 2019; Springer et al., forthcoming). The psychopolitical power of infrastructural colonization is “hidden like a sewage system, an undersea cable, a fiber optic line running the length of a railway” says The Invisible Committee (TIC), 2015: “Power is the very organization of this world, this engineered configured, *purposed* world.” Consider this excerpt from a text written by L'Amassada:

By creating a “territorial space” to manage, to count, to plan, to homogenize. The [transformer] device does not work if it does not cut beforehand, and so to speak at every moment, parcels of land, to produce them as “pole”, as “zone”, as “site” separated on which to act in return. And if it is necessary by bringing a war to its inhabitants, by chasing the undesirables: those who refuse the economic order, who resist colonization. This is the truly despotic character of spatial planning. The despot here is not to be taken as pure constraint, but rather as a control and norm-setting device. It does not answer so much to the question of what to forbid or not, but to what does or does not fit into the norm, which corresponds to it or not.... The despot, this hydra, must normalize the territory as much as the bodies; he must homogenize them, make them comparable, each portion of beings, each cut part must have its function, be subject to such or such mode of production. (Lundimatin, 2019d)

The eco-psychogeographical impact of infrastructure and the ideology of progress that propels its expansion remain

the core of the colonial project. The domination of nature, myth of human supremacy, the “Othering” of difference, and the prioritizing of ecological destruction over other (relatively) ecologically harmonious activities embody the colonial/statist system. Infrastructural colonization—despite all its technological allure—implants its sociocultural value system, poisons combative ontologies, and enforces its cultural-spatial regime. Infrastructural colonization is a terraforming or “cratoforming” process: “a kind of social engineering and legibility-imposing architecture” imposed by state authority to transform “environments at an elemental and ecosocial level to favor its own proliferation” (Gelderloos, 2017: 138; Dunlap, 2019c). Cratoforming emphasizes social control through spatial organization, but also technological infrastructures that extend to the so-called renewable energy systems (Dunlap, 2019a; Han, 2017; Vidalou, 2017). The green economy has renewed the infrastructural colonizing force that creates more climate change and more ecological and habitat disruption, but also psychological fragmentation with the so-called “clean” or “green” infrastructures. In the end, infrastructural colonization necessitates an insensitivity toward habitats, nonhuman entities, and people themselves, an insensitivity and carelessness that root the onslaught of climate and ecological catastrophe.

Conclusion: green colonization

Ecological and climate catastrophe is the result of systematic infrastructural colonization. Macron’s “battle plan,” operating in the name of the environment, indeed is a plan of infrastructural colonization organized around economic expansion and state control. Discussing the history of territorial struggles in Aveyron, the ZAD movement, land grabbing, and territorialization, this article explores the process of bureaucratic land grabbing and the procedural development of a transformer substation as well as the resistance that formed against it.

The prefigurative ecological and anticapitalist vision of L’Amassada was crushed by riot police, armored vehicles, and excavators—the execution of Macron’s “battle plan.” Socially and ecologically friendly degrowth and postdevelopmental pathways remain forcefully off the political menu. The ideology of technocapitalist progress and the infrastructural dispositif fashion themselves as “ecologically sustainable” and “climate friendly” and employ the discourse of democracy to double-down on the process of energy-capital accumulation. Severe climate change denial is embedded in the infrastructures of industrial society, which rejects the idea that the modality of technocapitalist development is the cause of ecological and climate catastrophe. Dependence and addiction on environmentally destructive computational systems and modes of organization remain the greatest environmental policy issue. *Political ontology and (geographical) landscapes, and more so their postdevelopmental*

possibilities, must be reduced, flattened, and subjugated to make way for the transformer. The securitizing, leveling, and compacting of land necessary to build the transformer reflects an insensitive and reductionary political ontology that hemorrhages negligent and bias statist/institutional accounting; public/private sector misinformation; nonbinding and theatrical consultation procedures; and systemic political corruption that supports the current socioecological direction dictated by technocapitalist development. The trajectory of progress is enforced through multilayered and scaled coercion and social engineering (Dunlap, 2019c; Verweijen and Dunlap, Forthcoming), which means reconsidering not only what we consider as “green” and “renewable,” but also our relationship to our environments.

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Notes

1. Minutes: 5:11, 6:20–53, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txl6O2GP0yQ>
2. The so-called “renewables” are an intermittent energy technology dependent on nuclear and thermal (coal) power plants to stabilize energy grids.
3. While 83.7% of the company is public, 16.3% percent is private (EDF, 2019).
4. Interview 14, April 7, 2018.
5. <https://www.everyculture.com/Europe/Aveyronnais-Economy.html>
6. Personal Communications, March 2015.

7. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJMB01iscM0>
8. Interview 4, April 2, 2018.
9. Interview 31, Mayor Jean Capel, May 3, 2019.
10. Interview 10, April 6, 2018.
11. Ibid.
12. Interview 31, May 3, 2019.
13. Ibid.
14. Interview 4, April 2, 2018.
15. Watch the documentary: *Teaser La Bataille du Teste* (2015). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P83r4sVVrdM>
16. Interview 9, April 5, 2018
17. Interview 1, April 1, 2018
18. Interview 8, April 5, 2018
19. Interview 7, April 3, 2018.
20. Interview 1, April 1, 2018.
21. Interview 26, April 24, 2019.
22. Notably, I walked into an RTE workshop in St. Affrique where they had a L'Amassada poster on the wall.
23. English subtitles version is titled *Nothing Will Stop Us: ZAD Everywhere!* Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4huoGY91diM>
24. Interview 12, April 7, 2018.
25. Interview 22, April 22, 2019.
26. Hulot's foundation since 2006 has been receiving €460,000 for 5 years from EDF, RTE's partner company (Bérard, 2017).
27. Interview 22, April 22, 2019.
28. Ibid.
29. Sexist assumptions were made, as frequently a male figure was expected.
30. See the news report: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_W1QKPb8aNQ
31. Interview 22, April 22, 2019.
32. Field notes, April 21, 2019. Their farm consists of 150 hectares and 350 sheep that produce milk for Roquefort cheese.
33. Interview 18, April 21, 2019.
34. Consultation Video & Transcript, 0.0, May 25, 2018.
35. Ibid.
36. Interview 31, May 3, 2019.
37. Ibid.
38. Two living within St. Victor and outside, in the Occitanie.
39. Interview 32, May 3, 2019.
40. The interviewed couple both worked for EDF/RTE and began arguing because their partner refused to explicitly relate a tumor behind their eye (that caused permanent blindness) to working around energy infrastructure. Interview 32, May 3, 2019.
41. Interview 27, April 27, 2019.
42. Ibid.
43. Personal Communications, October 29, 2019.
44. Interview 12, April 7, 2018.
45. Interview 17, April 21, 2019.
46. Interview 20, April 22, 2019.
47. Interview 9, April 5, 2018.
48. Interview 22, April 22, 2019.
49. Interview 5, April 2, 2018.
50. Interview 14, April 7, 2018.
51. Interview 8, April 5, 2018.
52. Interview 19, April 21, 2019.
53. Ibid.
54. Interview 6, April 3, 2018.
55. Interview 5, April 2, 2018.
56. Interview 19, April 21, 2019.
57. Interview 16, April 20, 2019.
58. Interview 23, April 23, 2019.

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