

This booklet was printed in 200 copies, bound and trimmed by many hands during a cross-campaign event in March 2024.

To contact us: salut@reprisesdesavoirs.org

Typefaces

The typefaces used were Sabot and Nicostrat, composed by Martin from Fonderie d'usage.

Uses of the document

Translation rights authorised for all countries. Reproduction, even fragmentary, in any form whatsoever, is authorised and encouraged, provided the document is shared under the same conditions and the source is cited: Poursuivre les chantiers (V0), Reprises de savoirs (coord.), March 2024, 28 pages.



Previous publications with Reprises de savoirs (In French)

- Podcast broadcast by Avis de Tempête, S2 Episode #13, 'Cet été, toutes en chantier! Rencontres avec les reprises de savoirs' (May 2023)
- Podcast broadcast by Avis de Tempête, S3 Special Episode #2, 'Living in energetic environments - Caring for a windmill with Énergie de Nantes' (March 2023)
- Podcast broadcast by Avis de Tempête, S3 Episode #3, 'Building decolonial alternatives from undocumented migrants' struggles - A site report with the A4 association' (December 2023)
- Podcast broadcast by Avis de Tempête, S3 Épisode Hors Série #1, 'La Toupie Tourne - Reprendre le bâti au béton' (November 2023)
- Zine 'Déformations' (November 2023)
- Brochure 'A critical glossary to help you find your way in ecological lands' (July 2023)
- Self-deformations' brochure (November 2022)

Reprises de Savoirs

Poursuivre les chantiers (V0)

3

0- Foreword

7

1- Before the Chantier

7

1.1- Formulating the aims of the chantier

8

1.2- Think about who you want to host

9

1.3- Thinking about links with the local area

10

1.4- Calling on resource people

10

1.5- Anticipate costs, draw up a budget, practice free pricing

10

1.6- Organising event logistics

11

1.7- Managing registrations and arrivals

12

1.8- Drawing up a programme (and the space for proposals)

13

1.9- Carrying out the chantier collectively

14

1.10- Keeping records (« keeping traces »): preparing to create them

14

17

2- During the Chantier

17

2.1- Welcoming newcomers

18

2.2- Getting to know each other and breaking the ice

18

2.3- Circulating knowledge

19

2.4- Practising self-management

20

2.5- Pace the days

20

2.6- Ensuring the Chantier is safe

20

2.7- Making food

21

2.8- Considering systemic oppression

22

2.9- Opening up opportunities for expression and negotiation

23

25

3- After the Chantier

25

3.1- Tidy up, wash up, debrief

26

3.2- Thinking about or taking responsibility for what comes next

26

3.3- Taking part in inter-Chantiers

27

3.4- Traces: sharing what was made



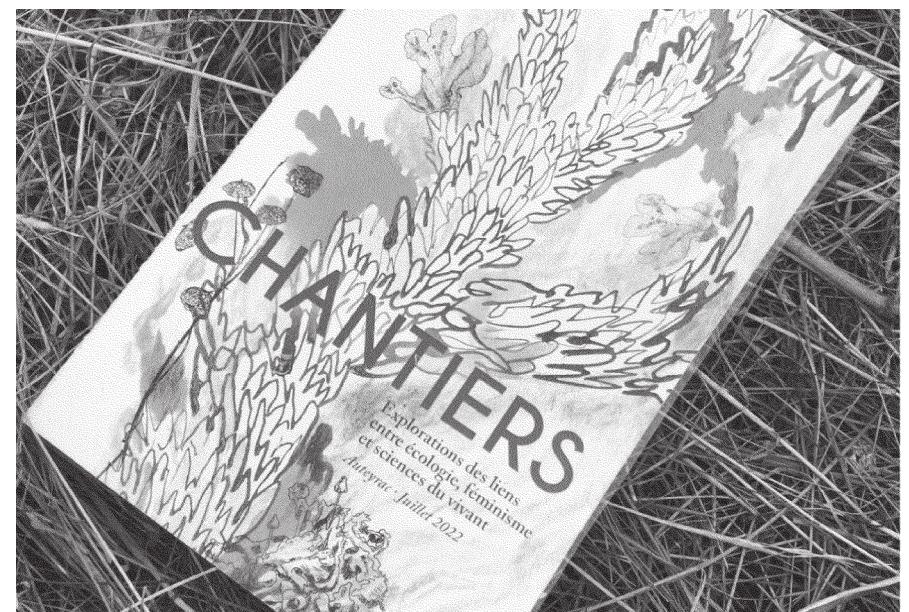
There's a framateam for taking part in the virtual inter-building site network (in French): <https://link.infini.fr/framateam-inter-chantiers>

3.4 Traces: sharing what was made

The traces (or records) transmitted by the workcamp organisers and collected by the Reprises de savoirs coordination team fall into two groups:

- Workcamp accounts: for example, the **Arboraison** workcamp in Bonny sur Loire recounted what happened on the site day by day; the **Graines de luttes** workcamp in Rennes produced a wiki to recount the events that took place there; three workcamps gave rise to podcasts on *Avis de Tempête*;
- Passing on know-how: For example, the **Énergie, pouvoir, autonomie** (Energy, Power, Autonomy) workcamp at Montabot produced instructions for use to enable people who were not present at the workcamp to reproduce the small-scale constructions that were being made there; for the **Écoféministe** (Eco-Feminist) workcamp, a collection was created to share resources on the subject; **Sentir-penser (feeling/thinking) an action-research** workcamp at the Combreux farm, produced a guide for learning to think differently about our relationship with language (*Traduire du français aux français*, 2022, Myriam Suchet, Éditions du commun)...

One day, perhaps, these traces will appear on the Reprises de Savoirs website, and from one to the next, we'll remember the various ways in which we've found a school!



3.2 Thinking about or taking responsibility for what comes next

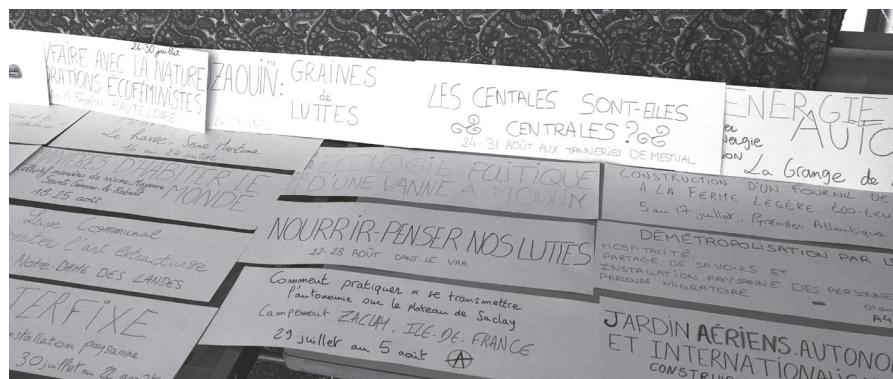
A number of workcamps have led to follow-up action of their own accord: some have been repeated, such as the **Digging a frog pond** workcamp, while others have given rise to national initiatives, such as the **Naturalistes des Terres** and the **Bâtisseureuses des Terres**. Some chantiers have also strengthened links between places and their neighbours, between groups or simply between people. It's important to be prepared for the fact that a chantier doesn't necessarily come to an end when it's finished: what it starts can continue over time.



3.3 Taking part in *inter-Chantiers*

Every year, the Reprises de Savoirs co-ordinating committee organises an *inter-chantier* (inter-workcamps) meeting, where organisers and participants from various workcamps can get together. The first year, this meeting was national. It gave us an opportunity to share our experiences and discuss themes that cut across all the workcamps (welcome, care, diversity of participants, taking back the common ground, support for struggles, etc.). In 2024, we decided to organise regional *inter-chantiers*, to enable more localised mutual aid networks to be set up.

The *inter-chantier* meetings provide an opportunity for feedback to help organise the workcamps (logistical organisation; linking up knowledge; micro-political tools; communication; production of records after the workcamps, etc.), times for 'deformation' (to get rid of certain relationships to forms of learning and transmission, and to propose others), times for political exchanges on the dynamics, times to deepen links and joint actions between workcamps organisers dealing with common themes and to ally with other close and proactive political forces that are being created. Workcamps that have taken place on mills are keen to activate a 'mill takeover' movement. The *inter-chantier* is a space for inventing new proposals!



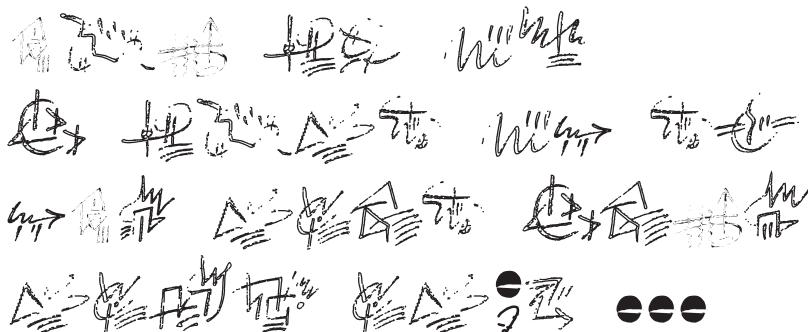
Foreword

At the time of publication of this brochure, more than 45 Reprises de Savoirs *chantiers* have already taken place. *Chantiers* or workcamps as diverse as walking together to understand energy plants, investigating land ownership in the Île-de-France region, digging ponds to defend an urban wasteland threatened by development, creating a mutual aid network for collective desertion, rehabilitating a mill and asking questions about energy environments... In the final analysis, a Reprises de Savoirs *chantier* can do as much or as little as you want, as long as it responds to a desire to build common ground, to seize together knowledge that is sometimes socially devalued, sometimes reinvented, to respond to the urgent needs of our time.

After two years of work and such an abundance of themes, practices, contexts and modes of organisation, we wanted to produce this booklet. In this booklet, we retrace these chantiers in order to learn from them, ask questions and look to the future, so that we can continue to bring Reprises de Savoirs to life.

Drawing on our successes as well as our failures, we are trying to provide food for thought on these curious objects that are the Reprises de Savoirs workcamps or *chantiers*, and to give pointers to those who want to join this experiment. Our aim is not to give precise advice or propose a set of tools, but to draw on the various experiences to help work camp organisers get started. When it comes to imagining how to welcome people, take care of a place, organise several dozen people, cook for as many people and learn in a different way, we're not starting from scratch. We've inherited a wealth of experience that abounds just about everywhere, and we've found our school together on several occasions, trying in the process to reinvent what a workcamp-school might actually mean.

We don't intend this brochure to answer all the questions about organising a workcamp. There are many resources available. For example, « Stone by stone - wall by wall, a few ideas for organising work by several people when you don't like the bosses » (in French) (<https://link.infini.fr/infokiosques-pierre-par-pierre>). Our intention is to give you a sense of what's specific about our workcamp dynamic and to provide a set of elements that motivate us.



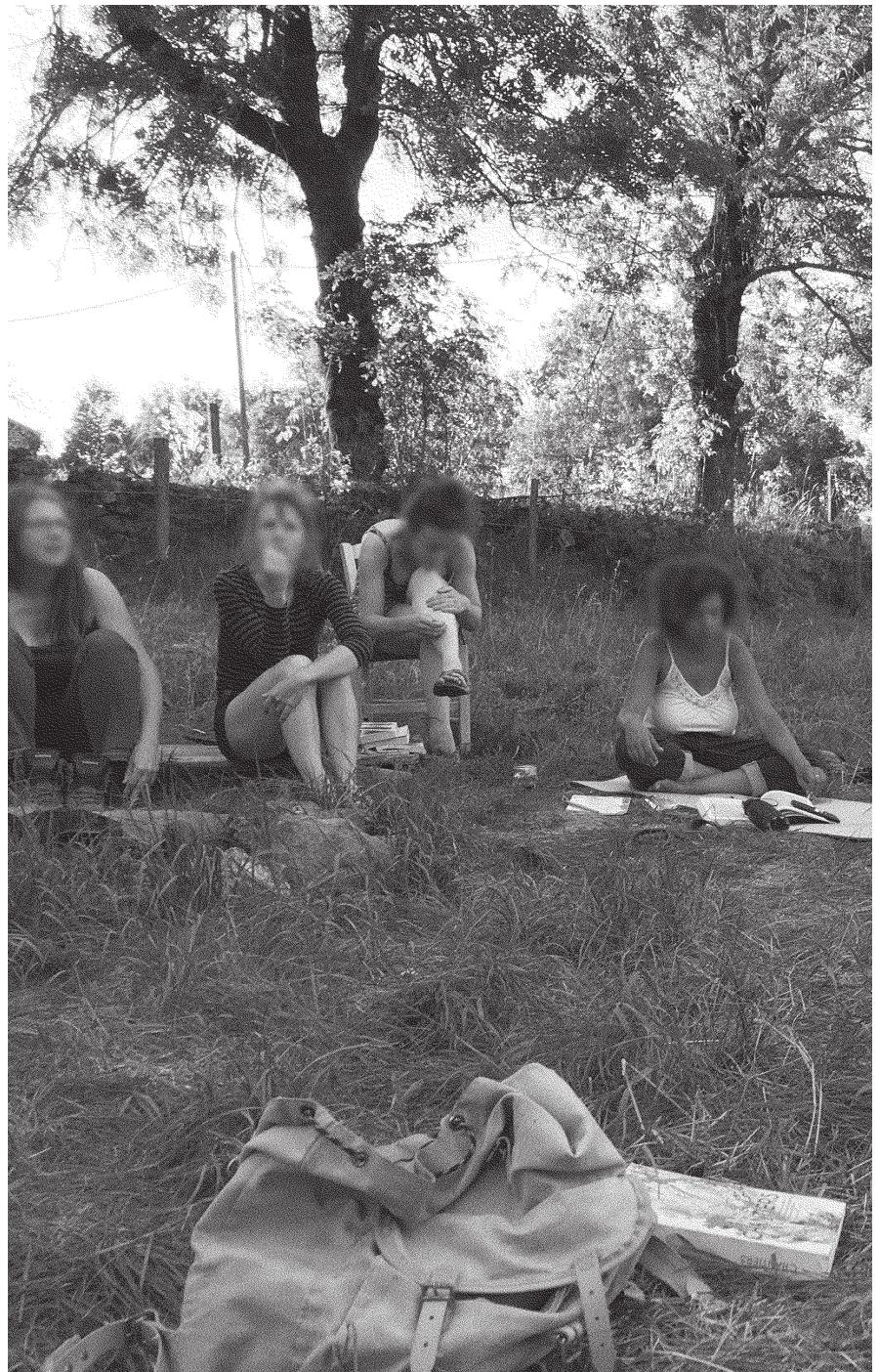
After the Chantier

3.1 Tidy up, wash up, debrief

The end of a workcamp can be quite exhausting: on top of the (good) tiredness of organising and spending time together, there's the need to tidy up. It may sound trivial, but the end of a workcamp can be anticipated by remembering that it doesn't end when the participants leave. This is the moment when you have to take the greatest care of yourself, and make sure that there are enough of you to finish tidying up the workcamp area and dismantling the camping site, in short, to bring the sequence to a close. If it seems appropriate to ask some people to stay a few extra days to help out, it's always better to plan ahead.

Many of the chantiers have had dedicated debriefing sessions, with everyone and then between organisers. At the end of the **Communal Luxury / deserting extractivist art** workcamp, the final morning was devoted to a 'nugget-pebble' or ('rose-thorn') tour: each person was asked to name something positive to take away with them, their nugget (or 'rose'), and something more unpleasant, negative, to improve, their pebble (or 'thorn').

There is a sheet called **Giving and receiving feedback** by Seeds for Change UK <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/feedback>





Many chantiers incorporate measures into their cooperation frameworks and logistics to prevent the impact of systemic oppression. Some have set up special settings, such as the chosen mix-gendered electricity workshop during the **Energy, Power, Autonomy** workcamp, which make it possible to overcome the difficulty of access to certain types of knowledge for participant assigned female.

Resources

For more tools on care, see the work of *Diffraction* (in French) (<https://diffraction.zone/boite-a-outils>). Numerous resources exist on these subjects, including the Ulex anti-oppression kit: <https://link.infini.fr/kit-anti-oppression-ulex>

2.9 Opening up opportunities for expression and negotiation

To facilitate the expression of discomforts or uneasiness, the chantier participants have introduced a host of tools and devices that respond to different issues. For example, several workcamps have set up shout boxes, which are emptied during the workcamp to adapt or react to what is happening. The principle is to write words anonymously in a box, for things that might be difficult to express in a large group, to put down rants, nuggets, words of love, difficulties or a description of an oppressive situation; and to read them out collectively when they are counted. We also set up weather forecasts round to describe our state of mind at certain times of the day, making room to hear what others have to say, and taking it into account in the process. At the Montabot Energy, Power and Autonomy workcamp, a mid-term review of group dynamics was proposed. During the workcamp, there were also rotating roles for 'ears', people who could be called on to talk about problems and bring them to the fore.

All these tools can be used to address problems. To respond to them, the framework of the chantier is adjusted and negotiated (the programme, the pace, the tasks).



know the quantities per person; it avoids the stress of running out or wasting food.

One of the main references is the book (in French) **Cantine, précis d'organisation de cuisine collective**. Otherwise, there's this brochure on the infokiosk (in French): **Cuisine de survie, or how to feed 100 people or more in a joyful and good-humoured way...** with 21 easy-to-make recipes. All you have to do is convert the quantities and you'll be on your way! <https://link.infini.fr/infokioskes-nourrir-100-personnes>

2.8 Considering systemic oppression

«Some people can have a master's degree or a doctorate when others were able to leave school at 15. Some people don't know how to name what they know. Not everyone has the same experience of life in a group and the same needs. Some speak the language of power, others that of the streets, fields and factories. Some have book knowledge, others have experience. Some are used to assemblies, others fear them. Some feel legitimate, others less so. Some speak a new, fashionable language, others are unfamiliar with these new words. Some distance themselves from their emotions, others are overwhelmed by them... Some speak and write in their profession, others prefer to use their body and their gestures to express themselves as accurately as possible. Here, we want everyone to express themselves in the words that are closest and most intimate to them.» - Extract from the welcome text for the Tanneries 2022 inter-chantier.

Particular forms of care emerge from workcamps that are part of the culture of care. Tons of gestures, ways of saying things, ways of doing things and ways of asking questions, which, when put together, are good for relationships, cultivate our sensibilities and our ability to 'work together'.

Racism, Sexism, Ableism, Ageism & Childism, Classism, Homophobia, Transphobia, Biphobia... During a workcamp, all the systemic oppressions are replayed. Oppressions are unique in that they are sometimes invisible when we don't name them. They can be perpetrated through individual and collective postures, taking advantage of blind spots. Although workcamp organisers cannot prevent or anticipate everything, it is important that these realities are taken seriously. Oppression has taken place on every site, and a very small number have been able to identify it and identify tools for intervention. To cite just one example, an anonymous workcamp experienced a situation where sexism became invisible. Some of the site's participants, uncomfortable in an overly masculine atmosphere, held a single-gender meeting without any cis-gendered men and then took the floor at a general meeting to express their discomfort. At the time, there was no appropriate response from the people responsible for this atmosphere, in this case the cis-gender men. The chantier ended in a tense atmosphere. In other cases, certain situations were resolved positively. In one chantier where intellectual work was paramount, the final debrief was very important. This helped to unravel any misgivings or misunderstandings that may have arisen.

Before the chantier

1.1 Formulating the aims of the chantier

Often, the proposals for the Reprises de Savoirs workcamp are based on a particular problem or situation in the place hosting the workcamp. For example, the 'Living in energy milieu' chantier at a mill near Nantes involved reconstructing the rendering of a discharge canal and maintaining a turbine, as well as carrying out naturalistic surveys to gain a better understanding of the environment. The 'From colonial heritage to living together' chantier, which involved the redevelopment of an industrial greenhouse, looked at how to re-appropriate an infrastructure designed to optimise agriculture. How do you transform a place where crops are grown off-ground, in an agro-industry that takes advantage of the vulnerability of undocumented workers for back-breaking work, into a welcome place? A chantier is often a thematic thread that guides and orientates a series of events: practical workshops, discussions, meetings and evening events.

This was the case during the workcamps in the Tarn in July 2022, which easily mixed work in a former Lafarge factory that had become a recycling centre with presentations or discussions on the history of political ecology.

The duration of a workcamp can vary enormously, with some taking place over 4 days and others over 3 weeks. These timeframes do not allow for the same things and also depend on the availability and constraints of the venue, the organisers, their objectives and their desires.

To formulate the initial idea, we suggest writing a short description. This is the kind of short text that could then appear on the network's website (in French) (<https://www.reprisesdesavoirs.org>). For example: 'Associated with the creation of an asso-

ciative café and the setting up of a solidarity canteen for a rural area, the Minervois informal ecofeminist group is proposing a multi-diversity workcamp based on knowledge and practices, around subsistence and households.'

Sometimes, at the start of a workcamp, it is useful to formulate a clear objective, either internally or explicitly. For example, for the Activating naturalist knowledge in the service of the struggles chantier at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, the organisers' intention was to meet with a group of residents mobilising against the construction of a Total petrol station and to enable naturalist knowledge to be mobilised as part of their struggle. From then on, much of the work carried out during the few days on site was aimed at meeting the neighbouring collective.

We can imagine the desire to do a Reprises de Savoirs workcamp as a gamble, an attempt to bring two (or more) worlds together. Non-exhaustive examples: investigating the maize industry while setting up a small-scale popcorn factory for an activist event; organising a canoe race to talk about watersheds ahead of an international mobilisation on water, and so on.



1.2 Think about who you want to host

Depending on the chantier you are organising and the objectives you have set yourself, it may be important to ask 'with whom' you want to carry it out and 'for whom' it is being set up. These moments of shared life and organisation help to forge fairly strong links that often make you want to go further. To put it another way, when building a workcamp we can ask ourselves: which community do we want to activate and strengthen through it?

Some workcamps may decide to welcome only a certain type of audience. For example, the Knowing/Doing with nature, ecofeminist explorations workcamp in Haute-Loire in July 2022 was a chosen mixed-gender workcamp, with no cisgender men (i.e. people who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth). At the Food Autonomy workcamp in Tarnac in 2023, participants were explicitly asked to 'adopt an agro-ecological farming approach based on personal practice and research'.

Other conditions may include geographical proximity, because the aim of the workcamp is to build a local network. At the Jardins Aériens workcamp in Montreuil, many of the participants were residents of the town, or even neighbours who discovered the site on this occasion, and some became involved after the workcamp ended.

The Reprises de Savoirs website can only partially bring in the people you want: it tends, for example, to bring in people who are often from outside the area in which you are located. For the moment (in 2023), our communication is mainly through the media and national websites that already target a certain sociology of readers: Reporterre, Terrestres, Mediapart, LundiMatin. If your objective is to reach a

his or her behaviour and respect the rules set together.

Despite all the precautions and attention paid by everyone to safety on a workcamp, an accident can happen very quickly. That's why it's important to:

- Prepare a complete first-aid kit accessible to everyone;
- Appoint one (or more) person(s) to contact immediately in the event of a boo-boo, breakdown or more serious injury, who can accompany the person until the end of the treatment;
- Identify who in the group has first aid training / first aid qualifications;
- Identify the vehicle that can be called upon at any time for emergency transport (and make sure that the keys are in a place known to the referees).

Resources

For more technical information on legal responsibilities and insurance, see an OFB resource on volunteer workcamps (in French): <https://link.infini.fr/ofb-chantiers-benevoles>

2.7 Making food

When you're cooking for a large number of people, there are a number of questions to ask yourself, and it's always a good idea to think ahead about the canteen, as we've already seen stressful workcamps fall on just a few people.

Cooking for 30, 40 or 100 people requires the right equipment.

Here again, the canteen depends enormously on the number of mouths to feed and the equipment available. Some workcamps set up kitchens from A to Z for the occasion; in these cases, they rely on outside canteens with equipment. At the **De l'héritage colonial à l'habiter en commun** (From colonial heritage to living together) workcamp in Lannion, participants brought in collective kitchen equipment. Other workcamps take place in places already equipped to cook in quantity, such as the **Political ecology workcamp on a mill gate** at the Quincaillerie in Venaray-les-Laumes. Preparing the canteen for a workcamp can be a role in its own right, managed by one, two or three people

What kind of diet?

It's useful to know the dietary requirements of the participants from the outset, so that menus and stocks can be adapted. How many people are gluten-free? Does someone risk going to hospital if there are peanuts lying around in the kitchen?

Menus?

Some workcamps have prepared menus and recipe cards in advance, with quantities, stages, etc. This has made it easier to plan ahead. This has made it easier to anticipate food quantities, and also greatly facilitated the task of 'kitchen' self-management. For more than 50 people, it's almost a necessity! When you draw up a menu, it's good to

Resources

You can also have a look at the fanzine (in French) *L'autogestion c'est pas de la tarte*: <https://link.infini.fr/infokiosques-autogestion>

2.5 Pace the days

Being part of a chantier requires you to keep to a common rhythm. For example, you might have an opening circle in the morning can be an opportunity to take stock of the progress of the work, to divide up into teams, to tell each other how we're doing and to sound out our expectations for the day, rather than starting straight away. Sometimes a group includes camp leaders, people who have done theatre, dancers or circus performers - in short, people who have a taste for bringing these moments to life in a fun way! It's a chance to play a game together, or to get a collective energy going.

We sometimes regretted not having had a bell, a cymbal or a fireman's siren to punctuate the times of day. Keeping the timetable, letting everyone know that it's time to eat, finish the day or get together, is an important role that can be taken on by someone in the self-management team to relieve the organisers.

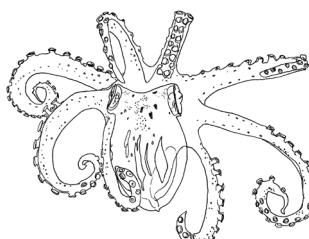
See section 1.8 - Planning a programme.

2.6 Ensuring the Chantier is safe

Whether you're building a bread oven or metal structures for water tanks; whether you're cutting stone, renovating buildings, dismantling a mill gate or simply surveying the area on foot, workcamps are no picnic.

The workcamp organisers are responsible for the shared safety framework. This means that everything must be done to ensure the safety of the people taking part in your activities. In particular, this means

- Ensuring that everyone has the right level of information and equipment to carry out the activity;
- Taking the time to present the different tools, the correct technical gestures and the safety rules to be observed (and giving regular briefings);
- Identify referrers, i.e. people to whom you can turn if you have any doubts or if you need help;
- Invite everyone to be aware of their physical and mental state (tiredness, pain, emotions, etc.) and to take them into account in the level of demand on our bodies. This means making it clear that everyone is free and responsible to accept or reject an activity and to adjust it according to their needs;
- Encouraging co-responsibility on the work site: each person has the right to tell the other that he or she does not feel safe, and to ask the other person to change



public close to your area, the communication of your chantier should be thought out accordingly, for example by informing your neighbours, by distributing information locally, by contacting groups or associations linked to your issues, by asking that the description of your chantier be published on a particular list, website or social network, or quite simply by contacting them directly!

1.3. Thinking about links with the local area

One of the challenges of the Reprises de Savoirs workcamp may be to deepen and nurture links within the area where the workcamp is located. Sometimes, the arrival of large numbers of people from elsewhere with a particular language or attitude in a local environment can be quite intrusive, and even counter-productive for local anchoring. Conversely, the encounter between locals and people who come to set up or support a dynamic in a place can transform the relationship that its inhabitants have with their own territory, and vice-versa! In a way, the workcamps also serve as a moment of openness and welcome to a place for neighbours, relatives and people who are difficult to approach and who are invited to come along for the workcamp. This is the case almost everywhere: the site lives off the local fabric.

At the Graines de Luttes (Seeds of struggle) workcamp in Rennes, the organisers noted that they had built new links with their neighbours. During the Démétopolisation par le bas (Demetropolisation from below) workcamp in Aubervilliers, the survey of agricultural land in the city was an opportunity for new volunteers to get involved with the association running the workcamp. The Reprises de Savoirs approach can also be used to revive memories. At L'Autonomie workcamp on the Plateau de Saclay, one of the crucial questions facing the developers was how to restore the memory of past social struggles and the popular history of an area. Chantiers can be seen as long-term perspectives because they recur in certain places. Organising a workcamp is also a way of putting down deeper roots - provided that this is one of the objectives and that you give yourself the means to achieve it.



1.4 Calling on resource people

A Reprises de Savoirs workcamp is an opportunity to build something collectively with the users of the space, while being supported by people who are there temporarily. You can get in touch with resource people on specific issues or skills. Soliciting people helps to create a community around a subject, a place or a practice. At the Food Autonomy workcamp on the Plateau de Millevaches in April 2023, an agro-nomist specialising in living soil market gardening techniques was called in and took part in the workcamp on a voluntary basis. At the Digging Ponds and Weaving Interspecies Alliances workcamp, an anthropologist studying amateur naturalist practices took part in the workcamp and presented her research work for an afternoon.



However, one of the aims of Reprises de Savoirs is to unravel the postures of expertise, the hierarchies between knowledge-thinking and know-how, and their influences on collective ways of doing things. Let's learn to put the question on the table and discuss it, and invite experienced people to be participants like the others, for example by offering them the chance to stay for the whole of the chantier rather than just for the duration of an intervention, to take part in the week's logistics, and to immerse themselves in the spirit of the workcamp.

Finally, it is possible to call on people and resources before the workcamp begins. In the Minervois region, the organisers had two days' training with a wool-maker to prepare their workcamp. At the *De l'héritage colonial à l'habiter en commun* workcamp, the organisers prepared an interview with a sociologist, which was broadcast during the workcamp.

1.5 Anticipate costs, draw up a budget, practice free pricing

In the Reprises de Savoirs workcamps, we encourage free access and a free contribution to the costs of the work camp. For each workcamp, this means giving specific thought to its budget.

Until now, we have been reluctant to ask paid speakers or trainers to take part in the workcamps. In fact, we thought that recognising the transmission work of certain people in monetary form could be detrimental to the creation of a multiplicity of exchanges and circulation of know-how between all the people involved. But we're not here to dictate rules or give solutions, and depending on the situation, we can ask ourselves the sincere question: what skills can't we do without? Are these practices difficult to recognise and value? What is the situation of people who are seeking remuneration for these practices? Does this risk changing the collective dynamic? These are open questions.

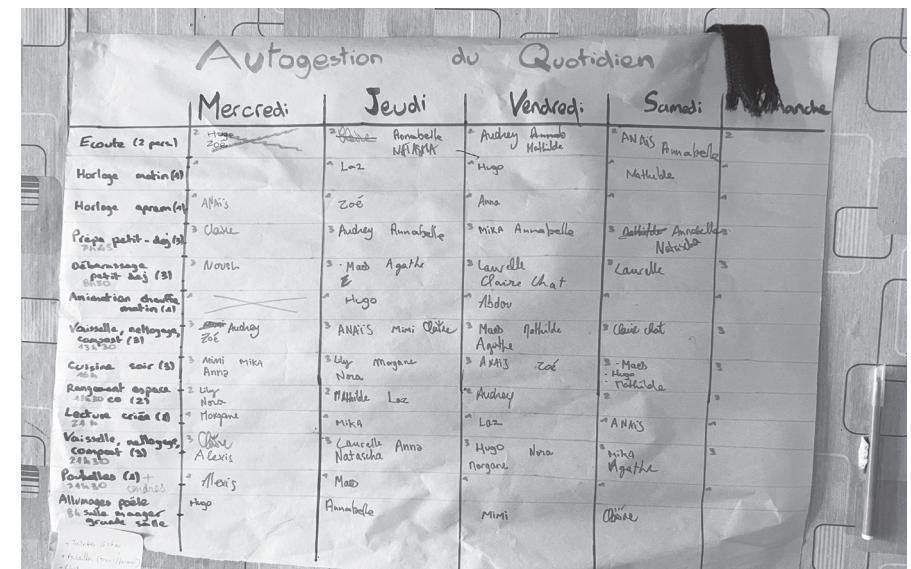
To date, the Reprises de Savoirs co-ordinating committee has offered a contribution of 300 euros for the first year and 400 euros for the second, to make it easier for people to access the workcamps. In certain situations, we have also supported fund-raising campaigns that we have circulated, and we have sometimes been able to apply for specific funding. So don't hesitate to discuss money with us, to ensure that your chantiers are carried out under the best possible financial conditions!

During the workcamps, there is often a free price box and one or two people responsible for collecting the money and doing the accounts. Some workcamp organisers who are committed to transparency on the issue of money have proposed graphic representations explaining expenditure, or a visual barometer showing progressively where the free price box stands on the reimbursement of food shop-

At the Les centrales sont-elles centrales (Are nuclear power plants central?) work-camp, which started in Landivisiau in Brittany, the organisers proposed discussing electricity centralisation by going on a hike from power station to power station and collecting oral and material evidence. Some people shared their theoretical knowledge of the nuclear issue, others spoke of their experiences in places where major energy projects were being fought, and others focused on a sensitive and geographical approach, collecting traces to map the energy issues in the area. On the final day of consolidation and feedback, maps, friezes, functional diagrams of power stations and songs about EDF (French energy service) were completed and presented. Once again, it was through the multiplication of points of view and relationships to an issue that people created a community of knowledge around the topic of energy plants.

2.4 Practising self-management

Self-management (“auto-gestion”) plays an important role in the Reprises de Savoirs workcamps. In the context of the workcamps, self-management is characterised by taking charge of the work and caring for it collectively. The best way to make this possible is to set up an explicit framework that allows people to commit to taking on tasks: keeping schedules, cooking, emptying compost toilets, organising activities, washing up, tidying up tools, tidying up communal areas, or attributing references (kitchen, tools, etc.). Preparing the workcamp also means defining and preparing for the self-management that will take place. The most common way of doing this is to try and mark out the tasks that will enable daily life to be reproduced on a ‘task board’ that people can sign up to.



2.2 Getting to know each other and breaking the ice

There are many strategies for breaking the ice. At the De l'héritage colonial à l'habiter en commun (From colonial heritage to living together) workcamp, after a briefing on how the week would go, we all went apple picking together - we had to get into groups of 3-4 and tell what had motivated us to come here. At the Know and know-hows with nature, Ecofeminist Explorations workcamp, the week began with a plenary 'weather round': a large-group time when everyone had a chance to share what they had come up with. An infinite number of moments like these can be imagined, depending on the skills and expertise present; the trick is perhaps to take care of these first moments and get the collective dynamic working quickly.

Because things can go wrong when groups don't get to know each other. For example, the Des récits contre l'artificialisation de la forêt (Tales against the artificialisation of the forest) workcamp was organised very quickly to gather testimonies from local residents when a one-day event was announced in the Jura. Participants could only travel for 4 days. So, as soon as they arrived, the group was already thrown into a gathering of 200 people and in discussion with the local struggle collective. As the organisers were already a group of people used to working together, they didn't realise the real need for the others to meet up, form a group and feel at ease.

2.3 Circulating knowledge

The circulation of knowledge and its appropriation by all is at the heart of the Reprises de Savoirs workcamps. The advantage of the work camp format, which combines a number of approaches to a topic or issue, is that it mobilises a range of knowledge that addresses the subject of the work camp in different ways. When digging a pond, you can look at it from a technical, ecological, socio-cultural and historical point of view (who digs ponds and why?). During the Digging a pond and weaving interspecies alliances chantier, people also asked questions about the geography of the area, the places from which the frogs could reach the pond - they took a walk around the neighbourhood to identify wetlands and ecological corridors. Students in nature management and protection came to talk to activists - raising the question of the role of naturalist knowledge in ecological demonstrations. Others suggested singing, dancing and playing to get the morning going. Many different people played a role in passing on their knowledge, and many learned together by studying documents on ponds. Some invented a ritual of inauguration by bringing mud from a nearby forest pond. In short, this workcamp mobilised a multitude of knowledge, without it flowing in only one direction. In this way, we are trying to move away from the posture of the trainer/teacher who has nothing to learn from others, and the passive participant who is only there to receive.

What we are working on are the ways in which we learn collectively from each other.

ping, with the total to be reached..

1.6 Organising event logistics

Logistics cover all the practical issues involved in organising the event, and are often handled by people who know the local network. One way of avoiding overloading the logistics department is to separate what concerns reception at the venue and what concerns the workcamp.

During a workcamp, the site changes and its uses change to accommodate a larger or smaller group. Some sites are used to receiving people, while others have to invent everything from scratch and set up a camping site. During the De l'héritage colonial à l'habiter en commun chantier, we built the compost toilets, the showers, the signage for the car park, the composters and the kitchen. In this case, the installation of the workcamp is a workcamp in itself.

So it's worth specifying beforehand and during the events what help is needed for setting up and dismantling.

Other logistical points to consider when hosting a group includes:

- Access to the venue: how to get there and how to leave? Should car pooling be organised? Some chantier use participative spreadsheets, while others use what-sapp, signal or telegram groups, which raise the question of digital access for all;
- Access to water;
- Toilets;
- Food (see section 2.7 - Cooking);
- Sleeping: how should sleeping arrangements be organised? Are there places available on mattresses? In a dormitory or shared room? In a tent? Can special needs be catered for?
- Collective hygiene: stories of gastros at the Nourrir et penser les luttes (Feeding and thinking Struggles) chantier in the Var region showed how essential it is to have facilities for washing hands when leaving the toilets, as well as disinfection systems in the auto-washes (with hot water, for example).

All the logistical points are often the subject of an email to the people registered for the workcamp some time in advance. This is an opportunity to explain the reception conditions, to ask if there are any specific needs, and also to sound out the resources that participants can bring.

Resources

Many resources exist on these issues. For example, see Rage de camps, Piste et outils pour des campements auto-gérés (in French): <https://ragedecamp.eu.org/telechargement>

1.7 Managing registrations and arrivals

When it comes to registering for the workcamp, there are a number of issues to consider. The first is the number of participants. For some workcamps, the limit was 8 people, for others around 80. There was one workcamp with three participants. So the numbers can vary enormously, depending on the objectives of the chantier, the capacity of the group and the format proposed (with 80 participants, it's not easy to have a discussion all together!)

What do we do if we have 20 participants and 60 applications? That's when you have to make a choice. For each chantier, the 'conditions' are different. Do you want a chosen mix-gendered group? Local proximity? An interest in the subject? The possibility of being there throughout the workcamp?

It's never simple. One example is to set a deadline for registrations so as not to apply a 'first come, first served' policy. Once this date has passed, the organisers undertake to respond to everyone, positively or negatively. It's also possible to draw lots if we haven't established any criteria. Finally, it is also possible to use an online registration form to facilitate the management of registrations, such as *framaform*, a free and open source tool.

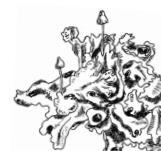
The final difficulty relates to the amount of time participants spend on the workcamp. If it lasts a week, it can be restrictive if some people can only be there for the first 4 days or the last 3. You need to ask yourself whether or not this is a problem for your chantier, or if attendance varies, how you can maintain a group dynamic despite it all. Managing the comings and goings of people can be a huge burden, especially if the site is difficult to access and requires shuttles, for example. This can cut into the group atmosphere, but it can also be a way of adding energy and vitality.

See section 2.1- Welcoming newcomers

1.8 Drawing up a programme (and the space for proposals)

See section 1.1- Formulating the chantier's intentions

A programme can be more or less constructed in advance, more or less open-ended. Some organisers draw up a fairly precise programme for the workcamp. In the case of the ecofeminism chantier in the Minervois, the organisers say that this advance planning enabled them to establish a reassuring framework for the participants, and that they found flexibility within it. Other workcamps prepare a semi-open or completely open programme, such as the Autonomie workcamp on the Saclay plateau, where the first day was devoted to building the programme with workshop proposals from the participants. The *Sentir-penser une recherche-action-création* workcamp looked at the relationship between



During the Chantier

At the start of the chantier, time is often set aside (sometimes a whole day) for welcoming participants, to explain the purpose of the workcamp, the location, the communal living environment, how self-management works, the workcamp programme, the *Reprises de Savoirs* network.... and other points covered in the sections entitled During the Chantier.

2.1 Welcoming newcomers

There is often a lot of information to pass on at the beginning. At the Energy, Power and Autonomy work camp at Montabot farm in the Manche département, where the 80 expected participants arrived in dribs and drabs, a welcome leaflet was handed out with all the important information, the programme, a map of the site, etc. The leaflet was then distributed to all the participants. At the 'Habiter des milieux énergétiques au moulin d'Angreviers' work camp, the organisers had also put together a small booklet that participants received in advance, with information about the work camp as well as the history of the mill, the association behind it, and so on. Elsewhere, the choice was made to have an introductory moment to pass on this information. This introductory moment was sometimes punctuated by a tour of the site.

One of the difficulties for a workcamp is to ensure that the information is properly passed on to those who were not present at the introductory session. This is why some workcamps give priority to participants who are able to arrive on the first day. Others are working on creating comprehensive signage on large posters. Some have discussed the possibility of formalising a welcome role, so that there is always someone ready to put down their tools to welcome a newcomer.

See section 1.7 - Managing registrations and arrivals.



Pendant le chantier

time and efficiency, by moving away from the familiar relationship between timetables and the programme: there were around ten participants and they chose to work with the momentum of the moment. For the participants, this relationship with time was a learning experience in itself.



Some workcamps chose to separate the morning manual work from the afternoon reflection (discussions, listening to podcasts, surveying texts, etc.). While this format sometimes works, it is not the only way of doing things - if we take the interweaving of theory and practice seriously, it is rather the framework, the reflective dimension and the clarification of practices within the workcamp that enable this crossover. It is therefore possible to do 'nothing but manual work' throughout a chantier, as at Jardins aériens. Autonomie alimentaire et internationalisme in Montreuil, where material objectives formed the backbone of the week (redoing the floor, repainting the walls, installing the electricity). It then became clear that the distinction between practice and theory is irrelevant, and the two are closely intertwined: working together activates discussions, questioning, theories and so on.

Overload / Rest

Some workcamps participants regretted having overloaded the programme - between manual work, discussions, evenings, evenings out, screenings - the activities were one after the other, and this rush could lead to frustration and exhaustion. Generally speaking, we like to leave the evenings at the workcamp to simply chat, play 'coinche' or go for a walk. Some have even set aside time for 'doing nothing', which we try not to fill with activities that are too exciting.

1.9 Carrying out the chantier collectively

You're beginning to see that running a chantier is a lot of work, isn't it? You have to think about the programme, the time management, the materials for the workcamp, the tools, the supplies, the canteen equipment, the menus, the self-management tasks, the care, and it hasn't even started yet. So if you're going to get involved, count yourself in, and make sure you will be able to share the mental load. We think it's essential to carry it as a group. After that, the challenge is to know how to let go of the load as the workcamp progresses, and to put in place the right conditions for self-management, so that the participants can take control of the collective life.

In some workcamps, a handful of organisers have found themselves in charge of the activities, the kitchen, the purchase of equipment for the camp, the accounts, the group atmosphere, etc. All this can quickly become unmanageable. Defining precise, delimited roles can help to avoid dispersal - and if the organisation's resources are insufficient, don't hesitate to mobilise the participants.

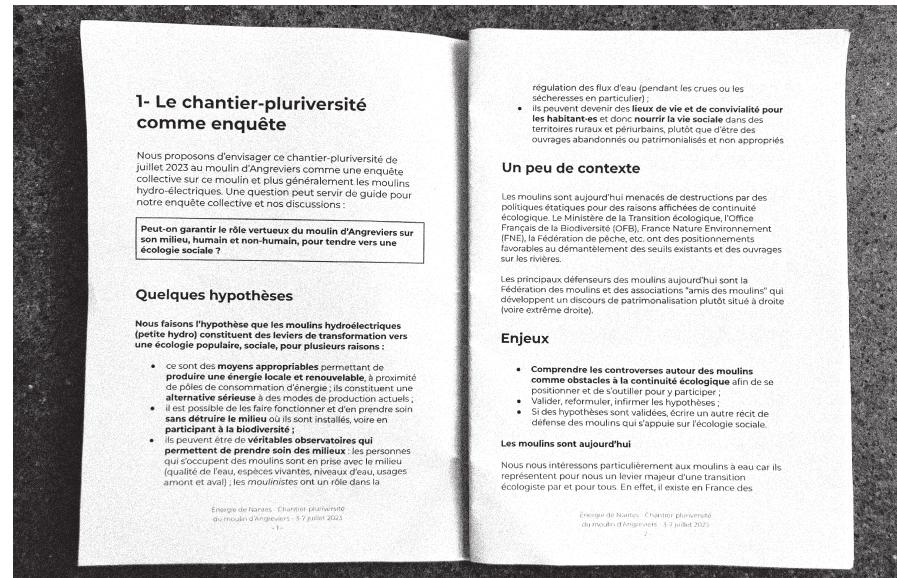
See section 2.4- Practising self-management

1.10 Keeping records (« keeping traces »): preparing to create them

Keeping records (or « traces » as we like to call them) of the workcamps can be a rich process, which can have its place while it is happening (and not just at the end or after), and which makes it possible to create specific spaces for dialogue, transmission, expression, etc. It can take very different forms depending on the chantier. It can take very different forms depending on the nature of the workcamp, the sensitivities of the participants, the resources available and the political intentions and objectives.

For example, during the 'Inhabiting energy environments' workcamp at the Angreviers mill, there were three types of trace with distinct processes:

- A podcast that enabled a 'call' to be made to link up communities reactivating mills from a popular ecology perspective. A person trained in podcasting had been invited to take part in the workcamp explicitly to make these recordings;
- Little cards (tutorials) to make the skills put into practice easily 're-mobilisable' (masonry of an underground canal, maintenance of a hydroelectric turbine, naturalist surveys);
- Audio recordings of the collective assemblies where the following issues were discussed the paradoxes of ecological continuity, or revolutionary commons.



Discussing the subject of traces before the workcamp can help you to plan spaces in the programme and provide materials (paper, printer, felt-tip pens, binding materials, sound equipment, photographic equipment, etc.).

At the Reprises de Savoirs chauffants (heating knowledge) workcamp in Concarneau, the desire to keep a record was carried throughout the weekend by the group, both individually and collectively. One of the participants drew on her desire to make comic strips to illustrate moments from the workcamp. Sitting between the team that was building the stove and the one that was chewing up the windows, he drew, jotted down funny phrases and described the different stages of the chantier, without taking part in it manually, and at the end of the day he was able to offer a nice, playful souvenir of the work that had been done. A collective camera was also available. The final result was a poem written spontaneously and collectively around the stove.

See section 3.4- Traces: sharing what was made