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#citizens #crops

Beauregard: A Farm and a Rural Third Place

Structure : Beauregard



Bizanet Occitanie

TherProject: A Farm and a Rural

Beauregard tells the story of an attempt to break free from the model of intensive industrial agriculture. In 1999, Karine and Nicolas took over the vineyard, practicing conventional farming before transitioning fully to organic farming in 2010. It took twenty long and perilous years before they were partially freed from the productivist system.

The Beauregard farm is now firmly established on the model of small-scale farming. This transition took place gradually, step by step, by producing compost on-site to enrich the soil, by introducing beehives and a flock of sheep, by sowing cover crops, and by planting trees to restore hedgerow landscapes where they

had disappeared… The wines are vinified without any additives, through spontaneous fermentation with indigenous yeasts that form a self-sustaining ecosystem in the cellar. Many practices have been modified to make living organisms an ally. But Karine and Nicolas have come to believe that this will not be enough to cope with the rapid economic and climate changes to which they are exposed.

Vine monoculture is responsible for the disappearance of the small-scale farmers and the communities they formed in the Corbières. If no alternative is considered, this monoculture will be responsible for the disappearance of all agricultural production, whether conventional or organic. Intensive industrial agriculture applied to viticulture is doomed. Two paths lie ahead: to sink into ruin in what will become an industrial wasteland (with solar panels or wind turbines as the only prospect to replace the abandoned vineyards) or to take an active part in dismantling this infrastructure (dismantling in the economic sense = breaking down a large, no-longer-functional unit into several diversified units adapted to the economic environment).

The Beauregard rural third place was born out of a desire to see agricultural activities continue in our countryside. The proposal is not to abandon vineyards in the Corbières and Minervois; quite the opposite is what we envision. The farming practices implemented at Beauregard cannot be immediately replicated or generalized across the entire Languedoc-Roussillon production region. It is among farmers that we wish to innovate to shape new agricultural realities with the aim of inhabiting our countryside in a desirable and sustainable way.

The peasant mobilization we envision seems to us inseparable from other forms of mobilization.

· Mobilization through culture – The condition of farmers will not evolve without a “reinterpretation” of our relationship to life, nature, progress, the imagination, poetry, music, song, literature, and language. The third place we are fostering is a nourishing third place, and it will be as much about nourishing bodies as it is about nourishing minds. The challenge is to challenge the overwhelming dominance of cities over the countryside: they invade our shared space and impose upon us what we should feel, read, understand, know, and become. We want to be a place for exchange, encounters, creation, and dissemination.

· Mobilization through struggle – The plight of farmers will not improve without a bold show of strength against the land grab by the agro-industrial complex. We demand desirable living conditions in the countryside for all residents of rural areas. We align these with the desirable conditions for living in cities for all residents of working-class neighborhoods. We must build bridges between our villages and the cities. These connections will enable the peasant class to join forces with the working class in the struggle against all forms of domination imposed by the bourgeoisie.

· Citizen Mobilization – The situation of the peasantry will not change without a democratic revolution that empowers residents to make informed choices about their food. The agricultural workforce accounts for less than 3% of the total workforce, and divisions within the sector are significant: between “conventional” and “organic” farmers, between “independent” and “cooperative” farmers, and between the “traditional” and “new” generations. The transformation of our food production model must be envisioned with all farmers, mobilizing all food consumers in support of food democracy.

The Beauregard farmers’ third place will grow stronger as these movements converge. We are opening it up to collective and democratic experiments among farmers, artisans, and residents to combat isolation and overcome feelings of powerlessness. Our vision is to act through mutual support and cooperation so that we can confront, on our own terms and from our rural communities, the social and ecological crisis that is hitting us head-on. Political ecology must be democratic, driven by those most directly affected in each region; otherwise, it will become yet another tool of domination, violence, and loss of autonomy. There can be no ecology in rural areas without the workers of the land and without the residents of rural territories!

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