

A CALL TO ORGANIZE “WATER CONVOYS”

TO CONVERGE AGAINST MEGA- BASINS AT THE END OF JULY





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At the end of July, when the eyes of the whole world will be turned towards the inauguration of the Paris Olympic Games on the Seine, for us, the focus will be on winning the most essential of challenges : **the challenge of defending the quality and the fair sharing of water.** Between July 14 and 21, we intend to team up and decide on collective means of protecting water from predatory companies and polluting industries.

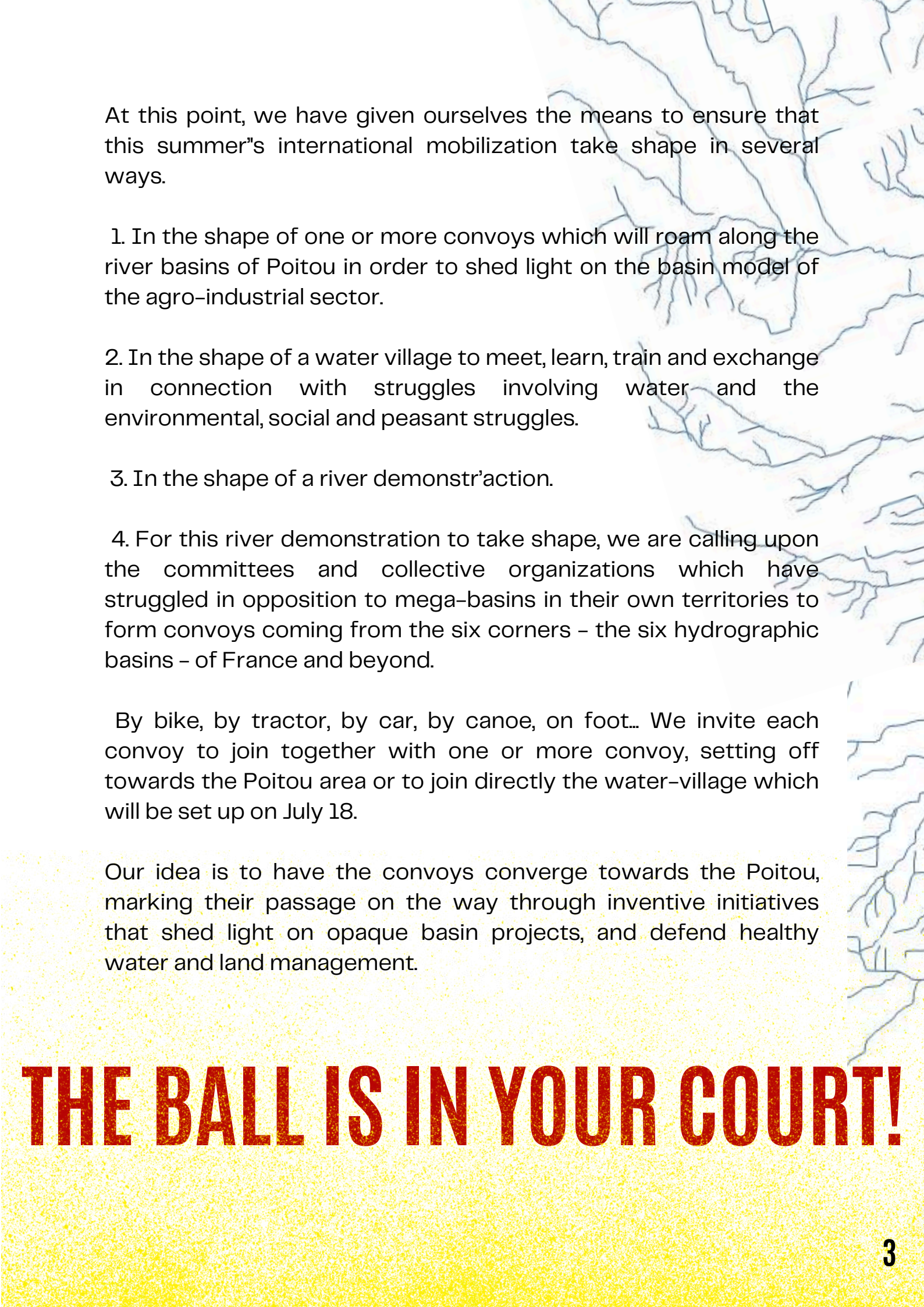
With this in mind, we are calling upon those who have defending water at heart to organize **convoys that will massively converge on the largest endangered wetlands on the Atlantic coast - the Marais Poitevin - at the end of July.**

In recent years, the fight against the mega-basins in the area of the Marais Poitevin has truly become emblematic of collective efforts against the world of water grabbing and degradation. These plastic-covered craters have emerged as the latest weapon in the survivalist weapons plan of high-productivity agribusiness as a strategic device in the headlong rush into this destructive farming model. As government spokespersons imply: "Without water grabbing, there can be no agro-industrial complex." That is why, today, the hoarding class is fully focused on imposing these projects. Though they are struggling to complete the one in Sainte-Soline, in recent months two new basin construction sites have opened in the département of the Deux-Sèvres. **All over France, basin projects are surfacing.** The largest national farmers' union, FNSEA, has made them one of its foremost demands. An Agricultural Orientation bill is currently being shaped in Parliament which aims to protect basins as objects of major national interest.

But, as local residents, associations, collective organizations, farmers, workers, **we are more mobilized and determined than ever to put a stop to mega-basin projects in favor of developing peasant farming models** which are more organically concerned with the life-cycle of water, the needs of farmers and all living things.

Today, the challenge to put a stop to basin projects is one struggle that must be won. This is why we are calling for a massive gathering in the Poitou area as of July 14 **to put an Olympic and revolutionary stop to the projects of the water-hoarders.**





At this point, we have given ourselves the means to ensure that this summer's international mobilization take shape in several ways.

1. In the shape of one or more convoys which will roam along the river basins of Poitou in order to shed light on the basin model of the agro-industrial sector.

2. In the shape of a water village to meet, learn, train and exchange in connection with struggles involving water and the environmental, social and peasant struggles.

3. In the shape of a river demonstr'action.

4. For this river demonstration to take shape, we are calling upon the committees and collective organizations which have struggled in opposition to mega-basins in their own territories to form convoys coming from the six corners – the six hydrographic basins – of France and beyond.

By bike, by tractor, by car, by canoe, on foot... We invite each convoy to join together with one or more convoy, setting off towards the Poitou area or to join directly the water-village which will be set up on July 18.

Our idea is to have the convoys converge towards the Poitou, marking their passage on the way through inventive initiatives that shed light on opaque basin projects, and defend healthy water and land management.

THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT!

A BIT OF ADVICE FOR SELF-MANAGED CONVOYS

PLANNING PROCESS:

To organize this convoy, it is better to start well in advance by distributing the tasks involved amongst yourselves. The duration of the convoy depends on your starting point and the time you want to take before arriving on July 17 in the Poitou. How long organizing takes will also depend on the geographical proximity of the organizers, the strength of contact networks, what materials are available to you (bikes, tents, means of communication...) and the specifics linked to the environmental issues you are confronted with. Taking campsight locations into account will be important as you are travelling (urban, mountainous, humid...). You can also opt for a "light" convoy version, where participants are autonomous, which will reduce the logistics of your project.

STRUCTURE YOUR CONVOY

First of all, how many of you will there be? How many of you are available to organize the convoy, before, during and after the convoy takes place? A small team in charge of coordination will need to rely on each local organizations' cooperation to fully take responsibility for the convoy, paying particular attention its structure. Your team can be made up of mentors from different organizations or teams can organise thematically: canteen, bike repair, journey, bivouacs, etc.

CHOOSE YOUR MODE OF TRANSPORTATION: WALK, BIKE, KAYAKS, TRACTORS!

All means of transportation are viable for coming to the Poitou. It's up to you to choose the most relevant one.

If you come by bike:

The recommended distance per day: 50 kilometres maximum. Remember you will need to be able to repair bikes during the convoy and ensure your safety on the road.



CONVOY MENTORS:

Convoy mentors should work in pairs. They ensure that the convoy travels smoothly. They must know the day's program, the routes to take, the places to take a break. It is preferable that they be in constant communication with each other, in order to know if something is happening upstream or downstream. They are the ones who can guide the rearguard. They must also ensure communication with participants (remaining kilometres, events on-route, anecdotes, slogans, etc.) using megaphones. It is a good idea to be equipped with walkie talkies to communicate with the different components of the convoy (lead car, mentors within the convoy, sweep vehicle, infirmary, etc.) + a means contact through encrypted messaging with the camping locations.

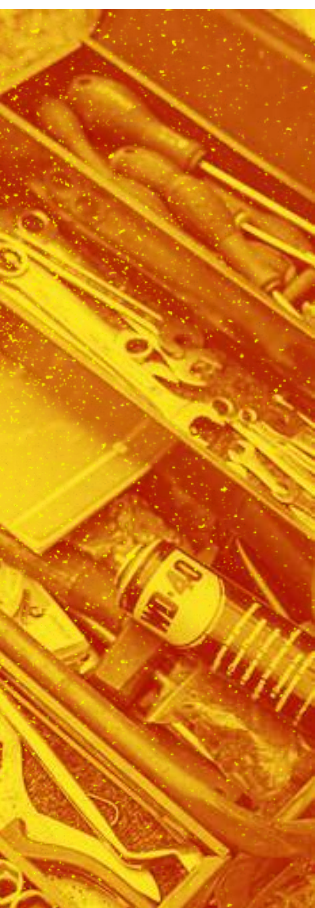
THE FRONT GUARD AND REARGUARD

On the road, you are exposed to danger on a bike and must properly ensure the safety of the convoy. The role of the rear/front guard is very important. It can be a permanent or rotating role. Their objective is to ensure safety at intersections between groups. At the front of the convoy, the front guard blocks crossroads roads (there must always be at least a team of 2) and wait for the arrival of other guards to take over. Thus, all crossroads are blocked. It is important for communication to be fluid in order to call on guards when passing through villages with many roads. The lead car can announce, via talkie walkie, the number of crossroads that need to be blocked upstream. Guards must be ready to face angry motorists. They will need to communicate and mediate to avoid angry reactions from blocked motorists. That is why it is important to block the road with your bike, not your body. A leaflet explaining the reasons for your convoy should be printed ahead of time and distributed along the way. Likewise, guards should wear visible yellow vests. Recruitment of front/rear guards can be done daily during the briefing at the start of the day, before leaving.

BICYCLE REPAIR:

During the journey, bicycles may break down. Here are several suggestions for repair:

- A towed trailer and the back of the convoy takes all the broken bikes, and the associated participants are transported to the next campsite. The repair is carried out on the campsite by a dedicated team. This method ensures that no one is left behind and avoids having cyclists far behind the convoy. But this also requires specific logistics (tractor, trailer and collective transport vehicle)
- A large repair team ensures that the bicycles are repaired on the side of the road. This method is logistically lighter but requires a large repair team and can lead to repair-rushes that are difficult to manage.
- Cyclists may be responsible for repairing their own bicycles. You will then have to remember to check the bikes carefully before departure and ensure that everyone has the necessary equipment. The risk here is leaving participants behind if the repairs are too extensive which will slow down the convoy.



If you come on foot : Recommended distance per day: 20 kilometers maximum. Unless you want to walk a long time, you will necessarily have to start from a region close to the Poitou. Depending on the routes taken, it will also be necessary to pay attention to the safety of the convoy.

CONVOY MENTORS :

See the first part of the bicycle convoy paragraphs above. Walking presupposes choosing a starting point that allows participants to arrive and return by train or car, either after the convoy or after the week of action.

If you come by car/tractor : For those of you who are coming from far away, a car convoy can be a good alternative. Recommended distance per day: it's up to you, depending on the distance to cover and the actions/meetings you want to set up during the convoy! We suggest arriving at camp sites around 4 p.m. max.

CONVOY MENTORS :

Think about the means of communication between the front and the rear of the convoy group. Please note: walkie talkies have a range which can be more or less limited

If you come by kayak : Recommended distance per day: 15 kilometres maximum. Don't hesitate to take example from the trips on the Sèvre Niortaise and Clain organized by BNM.

CONVOY MENTORS :

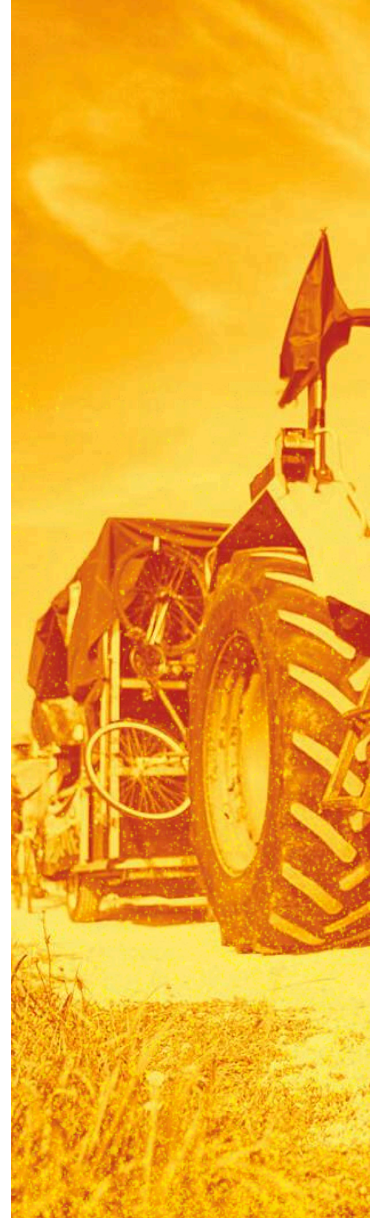
See the first part of the bicycle convoy paragraphs above. Plan for your communication methods to be waterproof though!

Plan and verify the route :

Once on the water you will have to pass through locks or thresholds which sometimes require carrying kayaks on the banks. It is good to know the layout of your route. It is very often possible to find the topographic map guides of local waterways on local canoe/kayak committee websites. Do not hesitate to rely on nature guides or experienced local inhabitants.

Suitable gear :

We obviously recommend waterproof gear, suitable shoes, and equipment protection. Have waterproof pockets or zippable pockets, such as freezer bags, to distribute. People who are uncomfortable traveling by waterway are advised to wear a life jacket.



Build your alliances

Traveling together builds solidarity. Are there any alliances you would like to weave with others in your area ? This might be the perfect time to invite active local unions and ecologically minded groups near you who are versed in civil disobedience. There may be local farmers' networks that are motivated to join you rather than stay passive. There may be mobile soup kitchens that could provide you with meals at open rates.

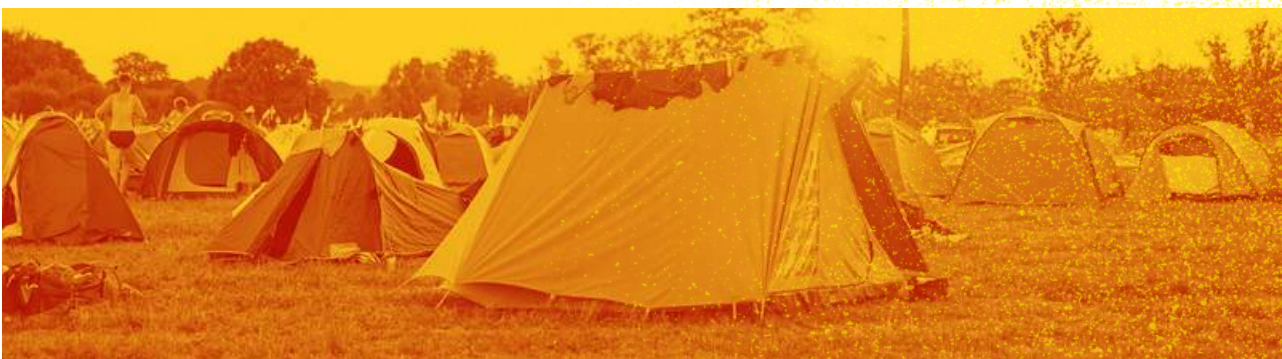


Choose your itinerary

Your itinerary can travel through emblematic locations that illustrate the issues surrounding water by following rivers, passing through politically or symbolically pertinent sites or building awareness of natural environments. Remember to calculate into the itinerary halts, meals, setting up and lifting camp.

FINDING CAMPSIGHTS

You'll need to find a place to rest every evening. It may be worthwhile to get into contact with the local farmers' networks along the way. They may be willing to put the convoy up for the night on their land or put you in contact with movement friendly municipalities or shared living spaces.



THE LOGISTICS



It might be helpful to have a team dedicated to the logistics that travels along with the convoy to provide transportation for food, drink and any heavier material like marquees. You can also see if other like minded groups are willing to take charge of your arrival, meals and camp location.

FOOD

Depending on how the convoy takes shape, meals can be handled in different ways:

- Participants can bring their own food that they carry themselves. In this case, a mobile food kitchen for breakfasts and snacks would be enough and organizing would mainly involve pinpointing reststops along the way.
- Or, a mobile food kitchen could supply all meals in which case they would need to quickly know how many participants there are to plan for enough meals for the whole trip.

This could either be the moment to either contact an existing mobile food kitchen or set one up for yourselves with the appropriate material for the occasion. If you opt for the latter it will be essential to make sure the places where you will be camping can comfortably accommodate your arrival with a mobile food kitchen *From experience, setting up and folding a kitchen every day is challenging but can be done. It's the welcoming capacity that is most important.*

Any variation on those two themes are possible depending on your needs, your means and your desires. You can also check whether the sites you have planned to camp on can provide the evening meal.

AND DRINK

Everyone's thirst will need to be quenched while on the road.

If you are convoying by bike, a tractor could pull along water tanks with the convoy. This would give you a some autonomy during rest breaks but would involve the logistical effort of finding suitable water sources at which to fill the tanks up should they run out). On foot, your itinerary will need to regularly pass by water sources (fountains, public toilets, etc.).

DRY TOILETS AND SHOWERS

Remember to provide dry toilets and showers in each camp area. You can contact nearby social cohesion organisations or cultural festivals to see if they can lend some (be careful, dry toilets are in high demand during the summer). Otherwise, it's up to you to build them over a weekend of collective construction! For showers, access to running water at the camp sites is a plus. All you have to do is think about buckets and creating separate shower spaces.

PLAN YOUR MARQUEE, CHAIRS, TABLES,

Depending on your program and the camping locations found, it may be worthwhile to take marquee type tents with you (so you may gather in the evening and/or set up the mobile food kitchen), as well as to travel with tables, chairs and a sound system. You may try contacting equipment shares, municipalities or friendly associations who already have this equipment along your planned route – which would allow your convoy to travel more lightly.



HEALTH CARE

INFIRMARY

Be sure to have good first aid kits and people trained in medicine for minor road injuries. Disinfectant, dressings, saline solution, arnica gel, tick removers... And also burn cream, sunscreen and extra caps! Depending on how you travel, there may be an infirmary vehicle with medics who take turns following the convoy. The vehicle can pick up and take care of people who are injured or too tired to go on and bring them to the camp site. In the event of a serious cycling/kayak/foot injury, it may be good to have a person chosen to liaise with emergency services. This person must be mobile and reachable at all times.



ANTIREPRESSION AND NEGOTIATORS

It is important to train participants ahead of time in order to reduce legal risks linked to the use of digital technology and in the event of taking action.

Furthermore, there is a possibility you will encounter police roadblocks or controls. It is relevant to have people on your team who will be responsible for negotiating with the police, the Prefecture and municipalities, especially if you travel on highways by bike without having declared your itinerary to the prefecture, for example.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT :

At the very least, plan an action/convoy debrief for participants, not long afterwards. A small group of people trained in active listening can also take over individual listening sessions during the convoy. What resources are available for collective care and support? An action debriefing protocol is available online on the [bassinesnonmerci](http://bassinesnonmerci.com) website.

GENDER-BASED SEXIST AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

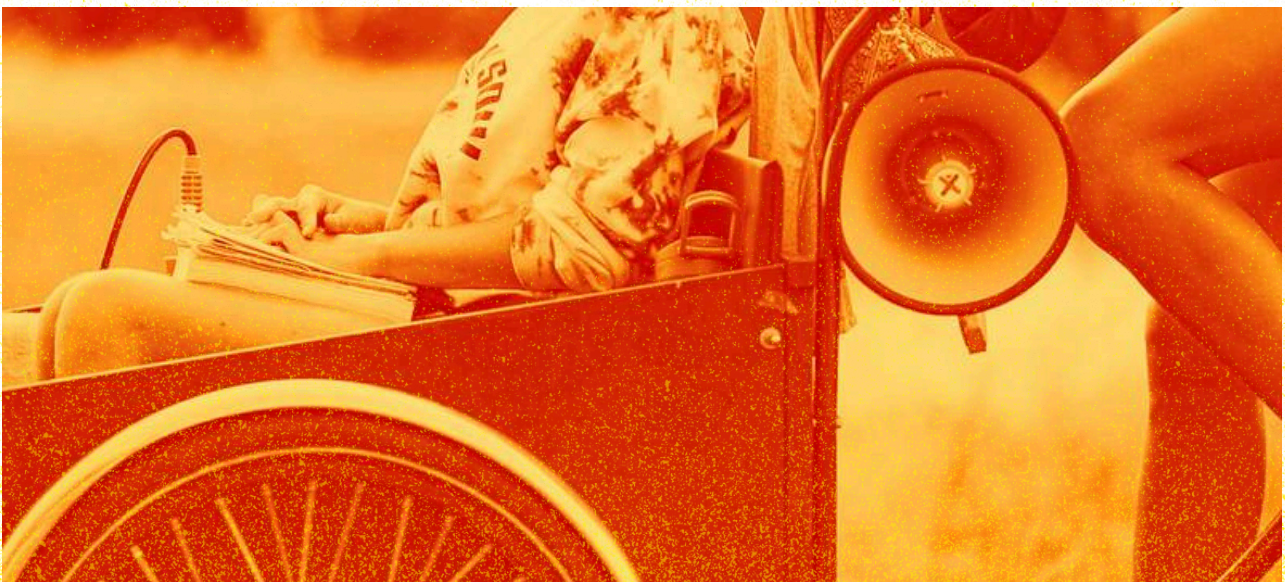
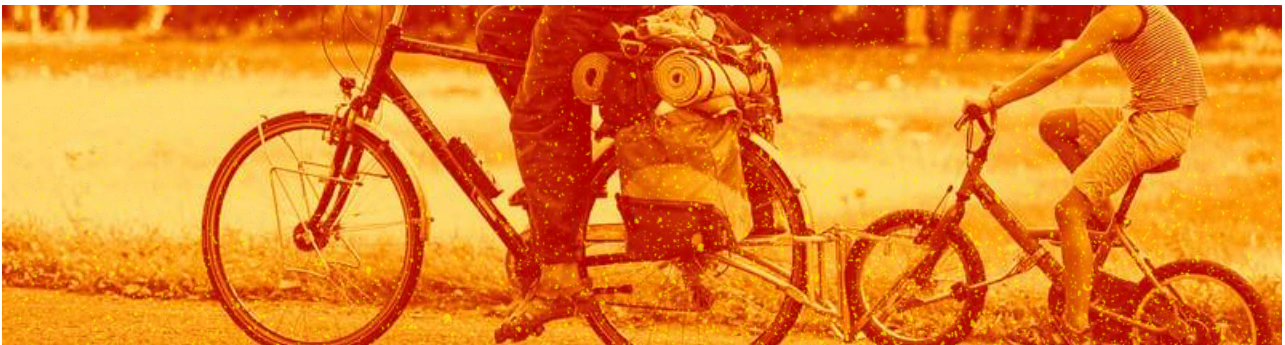
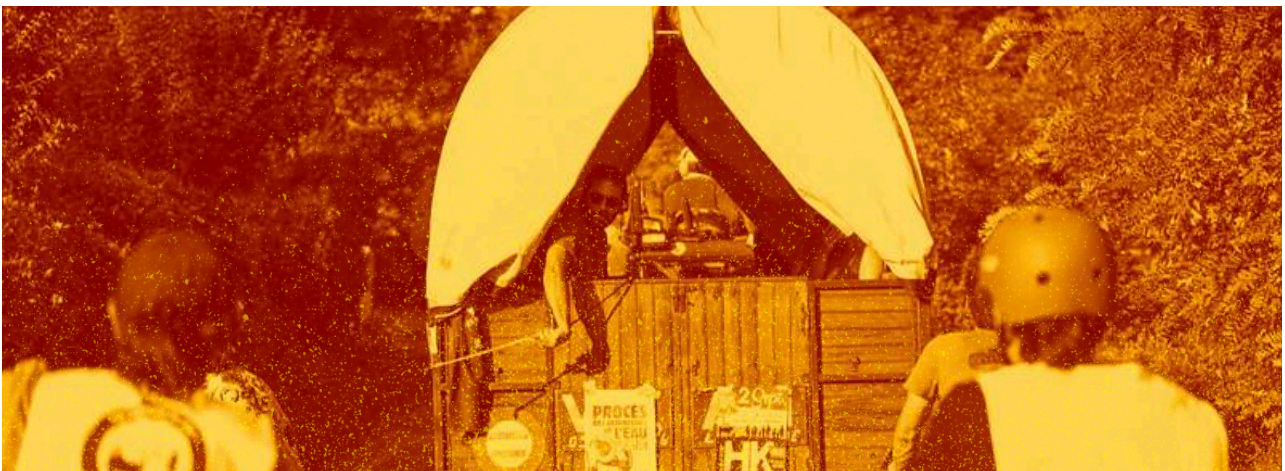
Whatever your convoy and its participants, it's possible that sexist and sexual violence may occur, and it's best to be prepared. We encourage you to address the issue at each morning briefing. Visuals on prevention can be posted in the camp areas. In the event of aggression, a Festivities Fight Sexism brochure (available on the Internet) has been written to help anticipate and manage such situations collectively.

Prevention resources: <https://www.consentis.info>

VALIDISME :

If your convoy involves biking, walking or kayaking, you need to be careful of validism: some people may arrive with the impression that it's a competition, and make comments or "jokes" about other people. In addition, you need to carefully consider the daily distances traveled, the total duration of the convoy, the routes taken and the infrastructures available at the camp sites to ensure that this experience is inclusive.

Resources : Les dévalideuses collective (<https://lesdevalideuses.org>)



CONVOY

LEAVING A MARK

The passage of your convoy should leave its mark. So don't forget to bring stickers, posters and paint to display your best tags during your journey! You can also plan on a symbolic gesture, or build something together that you'll leave behind (cairn, sculpture, etc.).

PROGRAMMING :

Travelling together can also be an opportunity for cultural programming. Plan on documentaries to show in the evening, or send out invitations to choirs and music groups you know. Let them know about the itinerant format, and discuss the locations and technicalities with the host venues to avoid any disappointment. Be aware that schedules may be disrupted by longer-than-expected journies, etc.

ACTION :

Depending on your choice of itinerary, what issues are at hand where you live, it's up to you to decide what actions you want to take. Remember to prepare a legal briefing beforehand, which you can present at the first camp site or on the morning before departure. You can also contact a legal team who will have your back and can answer any questions you may have.

The action framework for these convoys revolves around the mega-basin sector: decision-makers, agro-industry linked to the basin system, the basins themselves, the impact on natural environments... Individuals or farms should not be targeted.

PLAN YOUR RETURN TO THE PARKING LOT

Think carefully about how you're going to get back home after the mobilization. Find out what public transportation is available if you're cycling or walking, and hire buses if necessary.

LIAISING

So that we can communicate about all the arriving convoys, relay anti-repression news and coordinate your arrival on the 17th, you must signal your convoy by writing to the following e-mail address: liaisonconvois@riseup.net. You can also write to us for more specific advice or any other request.



COMMUNICATION :

Remember to plan well in advance so that you can leave with the largest possible convoy! You don't need to have all the details worked out beforehand. A day and time of departure, a location and a few additional details will do for a first poster. You can make your convoy more visible by informing the local press of your arrival at each camp site, by organizing a press conference at the time of departure, and by asking local organizations to relay photos of the convoy on social networks



CE N'EST PAS UN DÉPART
EN VACANCES,
C'EST le CONVOI de l'EAU



BONNE ROUTE ET NO BASSARAN !

USEFUL CONTACTS

Groupe de Liaison : liaisonconvois@systemli.org

Mutmat : mutmat@riseup.net

Réseau mutu : <https://reseaumutu.info/>

Inter-cantines : intercantineouest@riseup.net

Legal : antirep-bassines@riseup.net

Base arrière : https://bassinesnonmerci.fr/index.php/infos_pratiques/

