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worldwide process. The acronym PGAE in this text refers to PGA in Europe. Needless to say, this text does not purport to establish any kind of orthodoxy, neither regarding the history of PGAE nor regarding its political goals. No one is empowered to act as a PGAE spokesperson. No one can represent PGAE. The comments outlined below should therefore be seen as one point of view among many, and a partial one at that. It is the point of view of a handful of committed individuals engaged in the broad, complex and fascinating process that is PGAE.



**PEOPLE'S  
GLOBAL  
ACTION**

**EUROPEAN GATHERING** AUGUST - SEPT **2006**

**PRESENTATION DOCUMENT**  
LYON - DIJON - FRAYSSINOUS - BELLEVUE - TOULOUSE



# PGA — EUROPEAN GATHERING

FROM AUGUST 19TH TO SEPT 3RD, 2006

[HTTP://PGAConference.org](http://PGAConference.org) — [HTTP://StampPoivron.org](http://StampPoivron.org)



## PRESENTATION DOCUMENT

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JUNE, 2006

## BONUS TRACK: SANS-TITRE NETWORK HALLMARKS

★ Sans Titre is a network composed of individuals and local groups, which transfers information, shares projects and actions on a local, regional and worldwide basis.

★ We are in favour of self-government and try to regain control over our lives, means and places of existence. We do our best to put our ideas into practice and feel rather fulfilled with both our ways of life and our political struggles, which are resolutely united: planting and collecting vegetables; reading newspapers, making one; learning how to make jam; making love; laughing between friends; supporting struggles and developing solidarity close to us as well as far from us; type down the summary of a sans-titre meeting which lasted for ages; opposing commercial trade?

★ We are facing a set of domination and discrimination systems. States and capitalism are nowadays indissociably linked and working hand and glove. Both, for instance, are deeply rooted in patriarchy and male domination. We reject them at large and try to understand them by tearing their mechanisms apart and spotting their participants.

★ Within western societies, both historically and at present, sciences and research are profit-driven. Irrational faith in progress and scientist ideology, which are driving industrial societies, lead us all to jeopardize our lives, our organism and our means of existence through hazardous experimentation. They make us more and more dependent on industry and consumption goods. As needs induced by our consumption society become more complex and diverse, industrial societies prove to be less and less compatible with local alternatives based on a respect for humanity and environment. This derives from the basic fact that these societies imply total control over our own tools and resources.

★ Lobbying, representation, as well as any form of association with the State or its institutions turn out to lead to a dead-end. They can only strengthen the latters and neutralize any real desires for change. We are in favour of active desertion and autonomization, disobedience and effective action. We intend by these means to inform as well as to induce economical and political confrontational situations. We are liable to choose direct means of pressure or opposition towards ruling powers.

★ Sans-titre admits no hierarchy. We make decisions collectively through debates, trying to bring them to consensus. A decision can only be individual and implies only individual responsibility. Local groups and individuals keep their autonomy. Sans-titre does not represent anybody and no one might represent Sans-Titre.

★ Sans Titre is fighting. Sans Titre is thinking and proposing. Sans Titre does not take itself seriously. Sans Titre is autonomous. Sans Titre creates its own media. Sans Titre does not exist, and everything's fine till now. Oi.

Contact: [stamp@poivron.org](mailto:stamp@poivron.org)

French-speaking area, implicated in a variety of different collectives, some of which relate to Sans Titre. We have formed on an affinity basis, because we share certain practices and a certain history of working together. We are a group specifically formed in view of the forthcoming European PGA conference. We work independently of, but also in interaction with, Sans Titre. This is to say that some people involved in Sans Titre do not wish to become involved in organising the conference, which will therefore be the result of work performed by an autonomous group connected with Sans Titre. STAMP is open to those not linked to Sans Titre. (See notes on forthcoming meetings and list of contacts).

#### **A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THOSE INVOLVED IN STAMP FOLLOWS BELOW**

★ *The University Liberation Committee, the CUL is a group of people, not only students, who wish to go towards autonomy and to spread it through the development and sharing of theories and practices attempting to conciliate both offensive desire and building...*

★ *Longo mai, a thirty-year-old rural-based movement consisting of a group of farm cooperatives, involved in producing food, clothes, radio programmes, printed works and actions. Some two to three hundred people live in Longo Mai connected cooperatives.*

★ *La Friche, in Lyon, an artists' living-space housing, amongst others, political groups such as Le Reso (militants and artists) and Collectif des Resistances (an informal anticapitalist group that has for the last three years organised Lyons' Festival des Resistances).*

★ *ACOBI, a collective producing spectacular, non-commercial video*

★ *Espace Autogéré des Tanneries, an anarchist action and living space in Dijon, established 1998.*

★ *a feminist group which organised a women-only, feminist and Lesbian route for the permanent caravan over a three-month period:*

★ *CEMEA, a popular education movement and new education movement*

★ *the people of the Grenoble, Geneva, Lyons, St Etienne and Lausanne squats, with their infokiosks, their free zones, their cyber-spaces, their experimental discussion groups, their workshops and their wide range of actions.*

★ *CLAG, the Lyons post-Genoa Collective.*

★ *A self-managed creche on the outskirts of Ales.*

★ *Itinerant individuals stopping wherever the requirements of building work, other activities or just friendship take them.*

★ *Print, a hacklab, developing free software and encouraging popular, political access to computer systems.*

## **WHAT IS PEOPLES GLOBAL ACTION?**



### **Historical perspective on pga europe**

You may have heard the name Peoples Global Action, but you may not quite know what political dynamic and what groups it includes. So here is a quick flashback, in light of the preparation of PGA Europe's Belgrade conference, scheduled for summer 2004, and also to help further develop structures for communication and exchange among anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist movements. This text focuses on introducing PGA Europe, but occasionally extends to cover the general history and worldwide process. The acronym PGAE in this text refers to PGA in Europe. Needless to say, this text does not purport to establish any kind of orthodoxy, neither regarding the history of PGAE nor regarding its political goals. No one is empowered to act as a PGAE spokesperson. No one can represent PGAE. The comments outlined below should therefore be seen as one point of view among many, and a partial one at that. It is the point of view of a handful of committed individuals engaged in the broad, complex and fascinating process that is PGAE.

### **From the earliest days to counter-summits**

In the wake of the Zapatista insurrection in January 1994, in Mexico, a number of encounters took place. Among these were the famous Intergalactic Encounters against Neo-Liberalism and in favour of Humanity, held first in the Chiapas and subsequently in the Spanish state. The political context was glum. The Wall had just fallen and free-market capitalism was - however briefly - triumphant. The indigenous peoples of the Zapatista movement had created a shock of hope. It ran round the world. It was in the aftermath of these encounters that the idea of a worldwide network for coordination and information exchange among activists first arose in theoretical discussion - and then in practice. One early goal was to attack the World Trade Organization. The First Worldwide Peoples Global Action against WTO and free trade conference



took place in Geneva, in February 1998. Several hundred representatives of peoples movements from around the world gathered. They managed to agree on a political manifesto (1). Amongst the participants were *Canadian Postal Workers*, *Earth First* ecologists, French farmers and anti-nuclear campaigners, Maori, Uwa and Ogoni people, Korean trades unionists, North American native womens organizations, radical Ukrainian eco-people, and peasant movements from all continents. Their manifesto covered such issues as the use of direct action as a means of political struggle; the establishment of an organisational principles based on decentralisation and autonomy; and building direct democracy alternatives. This entire structure was to be moved forward by 12 different groups, called *convenors*, distributed regionally throughout the planet.

## Convenors

Convenors are collectives acting as contact, information, and coordination points. They co-organise global and regional conferences and used to put out the calls for Global Days of decentralised Action (GDA), notably on the occasion of WTO summits. In the first convenors committee there were 3 from Latin America, 1 from western europe, 1 from Eastern Europe and 2 from Asia. At the time of writing, there are sometimes several convenors per region, especially in Latin America.

Convenors share their workload with other collectives. The earliest European convenors were Reclaim the Streets, a group with its roots in radical ecology and road protests that had helped renew anti-capitalist direct action techniques, notably through the use of street parties as blockades and by establishing connections with workers organisations such as the Liverpool dockers or London Underground workers. In Asia, convenership work has been done by organisations like KRRS, an Indian farmers union with a membership of several million, best-known for setting fire to Monsanto GM crop fields, and the National Alliance of Peoples Movements, a national platform of grassroots movements from the whole country (which includes Narmada Bachao Andolan, the National Fisherfolk Forum, the Union of Landless Labourers of Andhra Pradesh, etc). The current Asian convenor is the Krishok Federation (the landless or otherwise marginalised peasant movement) from Bangladesh. In Latin America, PGA has gathered very diverse cultures and backgrounds, from CONFEUNASCC, a small-

from Southern countries, travelling through Europe in protest at neo-liberal centres of power and the activities of agribusiness corporations).

- ★ Counter-summits, such as Davos in 2001 and Prague 2000.
- ★ Coordination of Global Days of Action within French-speaking Europe including Seattle 1999 and Mayday 2000.
- ★ The Anti-Capitalist Caravan in 2000, involving street theatre, organised debates and actions aimed at mobilising opinion against the World Bank and the IMF.
- ★ A caravan highlighting the situation in Colombia with the Afro-Colombian organisation, Proceso de Comunidades Negras, in 2001.
- ★ Co-organisation of the No Border Camp in Strasbourg in 2002, including self-built infrastructure equipment, self-managed logistics and experiments in direct-democracy decision-making for 1984 people over ten days.
- ★ Various coordinated actions connected with a range of solidarity campaigns and other themes.
- ★ A Permanent Caravan, in which various teams relayed each other in order to maintain a permanent, nomadic presence throughout France and organise discussion meetings, workshops, building projects and coordinated actions in town and country.

Sans Titre works on an affinity principle. It is about creating exchanges and strengthening solidarity between diverse poles of resistance, islands dotted around the French-speaking archipelago; it is about coordinating local initiatives and making madcap projects happen («Let's make a caravan that works by combusting brushwood, let's make an airship»). Sans Titre is about the exchange of subversive cultures, about everyday living, about profound thoughts on the goals of our lives and the aims of our struggles. Sans Titre is about the bad guys of capitalism with their men in uniform, about bosses, science, industry, patriarchy; it's about nature, farming, washing-up water, compost-based toilets, diversity, managing one's own everyday existence, one's own dreams, about emancipation and happiness - all of the above contained with a determinedly horizontal decision-making process, ornamented with sudden acrobatic pyramids and the whiplash of erupting controversy.

STAMP, the current convenor of European PGA, is thus composed of a group of people from a range of different places within the

# STAMP, SANS-TITRE... WHO'S THAT?



**S**ans Titre is a network of groups and individuals committed to autonomous and alternative spaces (whether in an urban, squatted or rural environment) as well as to anti-capitalist or anti-authoritarian struggles. Sans-Titre has gathered on a two-monthly basis since the Intercontinental Caravan of 1999. Many people have become involved in PGA through their involvement in the Sans-Titre network. The basic principles upon which these two networks are founded have been similar from day one. Sans Titre has no members and no representatives, though it does proclaim a set of hallmarks of a sort, known as a charter.

Over the years, Sans Titre, which prefers to see itself as an iconoclastic non-network, has always led a nomadic existence, moving through a variety of friendly spaces, including squats in Grenoble, Lyons, Dijon, St Etienne and Lausanne, as well as farms in the Jura region of eastern France, in the Aveyron region of central France, in the Belgian Ardennes, in a village of the French Ardennes and in Longo Mai's Provencal hills, each meeting designed to marry the festive and the subversive.

Every SansTitre meeting provides an opportunity of spending four or five days together, of meeting new people, but also of developing joint actions and planning new living-spaces; each meeting provides a time for theoretical discussion, a time for games and for collective building work and for informal exchanges on the evolution of people's everyday lives. Sans Titre also publishes a bimonthly bulletin, each edition of which is edited and printed in a different location. This bulletin contains a combination of d-i-y pages, theoretical texts and information about past or future actions. Sans Titre meetings are attended by a highly variable 7 to 77 people, depending on the agenda, the location, the timing and individual mood.

Sans Titre has participated in many collective or shared actions, including:

- ★ The Intercontinental Caravan (450 representatives of movements

scale farmers union in ecuador, Movimiento de la Juventud Kuna, the Bolivian cocalero movement in Chapare, to the Colombian Process of Black Communities.

## And so resistance became as global as capital

**I**n May 1998, the first fruits of PGA were seen in four days of worldwide resistance against the G8 summit in Great Britain and the WTO summit in Geneva, which was the second Ministerial Conference since the creation of the WTO, and a celebration of 50 years of GATT and post-World-War-II capitalist world order. This was the first of a long series of counter-summits. It included some of the hottest protests that Geneva had ever seen and in Birmingham participants in the G8 summit were forced to stage a secret evasion to escape a newly occupied city. Meanwhile, some 200,000 Indian farmers demonstrated to demand that the WTO be dissolved.

In those days, the dynamic remained locally-based. PGA-initiated Global Days of Action were decentralized events. One of the most impressive was J18, on June 18th 1999, an anti-capitalist day to correspond with the G8 summit in Cologne. Actions were organized in 72 different locations, including the arrival in Cologne of the Inter-Continental Caravan for Solidarity and Resistance (formed by grassroots groups from India and other Southern countries) and a festive occupation of the City of London which ended with the financial centre being ransacked by a few thousand demonstrators. During this period, the expression anti-capitalist made a massive return both among militants and in the media. The slogan Capital is global, the struggle is global was put into practice.

**I**n Seattle, in November 1999, the closure of the ministerial conference of the WTO showed the effectiveness of combining the many different direct actions - sometimes highly coordinated, like the blockades of all the streets leading to the summit - that were organized by small affinity groups. There were solidarity actions in more than 70 countries. The so-called Battle of Seattle which had radicals at its forefront, was nonetheless quickly exploited by traditional leftist citizen reform groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which

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sought to use it as a creation myth for their new strategies of power-sharing among trade bodies and civil society. In September 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank summit in Prague, Czech Republic, was PGAs chance to see how well actions using a diversity of tactics, such as street parties -dancing and mobile confrontation (*the pink line*), sabotage (*the blue line*) and confrontational civil disobedience (*the yellow line*), could complement each other. There was also a multitude of preparatory initiatives, such as the caravan against capitalism, a roving series of actions in French-speaking parts of Europe, initiated by the Reseau Sans Titre (the Untitled Network).



The counter-summits and global protests rapidly transformed into occasions for mass convergences of activists from all over, and these convergences have continued to this day, despite the precedent set by the ominous repression during the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy. Today's counter-summits bring together a spectrum of groups, political parties, and civil society NGOs that is much broader than just the ensemble of groups involved with PGA. Indeed, it is often forgotten that the original impetus behind these counter-summits came from radical groups opposed to lobbying and who denounce the welfare-state and parliamentary democracy as much as (neoliberal) capitalism.



Presently, *convenorship* has been taken over by STAMP, a collective of french-speaking activists, partly emerging out of the Sans-Titre network (that lives around both urban squats & collective rural projects). STAMP wishes to handle the conference in a decentralised fashion, focusing on DIY construction, collective management of logistics, stressing the importance of practical skill-shares, as much as theoretical exchanges, for the next PGA european encounters, that will take place from August 19th to September 3rd across France. \*You\* can also get involved in this exciting preparation process, by e-mailing [stamp@poivron.org](mailto:stamp@poivron.org) ! Besides that, you can find some complementary documents on these encounters, on STAMP, as well as articles on the global PGA process on the following sites:

- ★ <http://pgaconference.org/>
- ★ <http://stamp.poivron.org/>
- ★ <http://www.agp.org/>

#### notes:

- 1 <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/en/pgainfos/manifest.htm>
- 2 « Tyranny of structurelessness » by jo freeman
- 3 [http://old.pgaconference.org/\\_postconference/\\_pp\\_plenarydecision.htm#P3](http://old.pgaconference.org/_postconference/_pp_plenarydecision.htm#P3)
- 4 <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/dijon/report.htm>
- 5 <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/cocha/principles.htm>
- 6 <http://www.agp.org/>
- 7 Mailing-list subscription pages:
  - [https://squat.net/mailman/listinfo/pga\\_europe\\_process](https://squat.net/mailman/listinfo/pga_europe_process)
  - [https://squat.net/mailman/listinfo/pga\\_europe\\_resistance](https://squat.net/mailman/listinfo/pga_europe_resistance)
  - [https://squat.net/mailman/listinfo/pga\\_europe\\_discussion](https://squat.net/mailman/listinfo/pga_europe_discussion)
- 8 For a detailed analysis of racism within PGA, see the Peoples Global Radio interview with Maria Teresa Santana, at <http://www.all4all.org/2002/09/377.shtml>



In terms of contents, there was once again an abundance - sometimes too chaotic for some -- of workshops, screenings, various discussions. Let's keep in mind that a number of debates & shoutouts since Leiden had brought the creation of a group on gender issues. Though questioning power structures & domination within our own groups & networks always brings its share of reluctance & tensions, a fruitful cooperation between feminist collectives from Serbia and collectives from other European countries allowed a whole day to be dedicated to antipatriarchal struggles & gender issues. It led to the creation of womyn-only, gay, lesbian & transsexual space within the conference. Though it still happens to be controversial throughout Europe, there also was a men meeting for discussing sexism & challenging masculinity. This moment began with a presentation of a Serbian group opposing male violence against womyn. They organise encounters and speak about a «hot» recent history of propaganda, war & masculinist cultures, in a country whose old patriarchal structures, orthodox church and abrupt switch to neo-liberalism increase marginalisation of womyn; in a country where participants to the last lesbian & gay pride were horribly beaten up by nationalist groups. This was an occasion to discover groups like Azin, who breed projects of collaborative activities between womyn in rural environments, using methods that stand close to self-management and horizontal processes (funded by benefits coming from copyright exploitation of a song from Abba - long live disco!

On a more general level, this conference allowed encounters in between Eastern Europe activists, a better understanding of their context & issues, and the beginning of a PGA dynamic in the Balkans, though Western activists remained quite central in a number of key roles for the conference organising process. In terms of collective actions, a few big unifying actions were discussed outside thematic groups, such as the mobilisation against the G8, as well as a day in solidarity with Pachamerica struggles (who work towards radicalising the social movement, notably in Venezuela). New action strategies were also shaped, like «Estafette», which aims at relaying long-term actions in between groups throughout Europe. Unfortunately, one could notice, once again, the gap between the energy that emerged during the conference itself, and its follow-up. Involvement has been way lower for maintaining network structure & materialising projects, outside large unifying events.

## “PGA HALLMARKS”

The purpose of PGA exchanges and the PGA network is to connect local groups that agree with the PGAs hallmarks:

- ★ A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalisation.
- ★ We reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings.
- ★ A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker.
- ★ A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximize respect for life and oppressed peoples rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism.
- ★ An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy. PGA is a tool for coordination, not an organization. PGA has no members and does not have and will not have a juridical personality. No organisation or person represents PGA.

”

## Political evolutions and other kinds of actions

A part from mass events, the frequency of which is determined by big capitalist institutions' calendars, PGA has also been responsible for the development of other processes, that are sometimes less well-known. The Intercontinental Caravan enabled some 400 members of Indian farmers' organizations and some 50 members of other third world peoples' movements to come to Europe and demonstrate outside major institutions such as the WTO, the IMF, the OECD, NATO and so on, as well as outside multinational companies' European headquarters. They destroyed GM crop fields and a state research laboratory. Crucially, the caravan enabled these third world groups to build bridges with a variety of European movements.

PGA-inspired Global Days of Action provided a context within which to develop creative forms of direct action, even for quite small collectives. Thus, street parties, blockages, occupations, anti-capitalist carnivals and so on. The very decentralization and proliferation of contacts between various groups led to the establishment of participative outward communication tools such as Indymedia (There are currently more than 130 separate Independent Media Centers, IMCs, throughout the world, with many more sub-collectives within IMCs as well as rogue IMCs operating independently from the network; Indymedia has been called the largest all-volunteer organization in the world.). Other internal tools such as PGAs' internal lists were developed, providing a noticeboard for actions and analyses round the world.

In July 2002, the international *no-border* camp in Strasbourg, France, marked a coming-together of PGAs' various organizational modes and approaches to anti-capitalism, as well as practical actions centered on the theme of immigration and confrontational border-camping practices that are particular to the international No Border network. The result was the next (shaky) step in the evolving practices of self-management and autonomous living, direct democracy, and decentralized actions, involving 2,000 people over a period of 9 days. This experience would provide a base of experience that helped to launch the other camps and similar autonomous villages that proliferated during the anti-G8 demonstrations in May and June 2003, in France and Switzerland.

PGAs' Second Global Conference took place in Bangalore, India

desk, infopoint, translation, computer networking & open-access space, kitchen, security, communication with locals, media...), with independent meetings, which the 700 conference participants were encouraged to join. An open decision-making & coordination meeting took place each evening, gathering working group delegates, in order to discuss transversal issues and coordinate efforts.

In terms of decision-making related to the PGA network structures, it seemed important not to renew the experience of the 400 people plenary session in Leiden. It had allowed too little space for thought & expression, for those who weren't experienced in the network, and it had been prepared within a small group of «experts». Thus, it was decided to conduct daily working-group meetings on the PGA process, in order to prepare the final assembly. This final assembly consisted in an experiment of a «spokes council», which was considered pretty successful by its participants. The 300 attendees gathered in the same location, split in affinity groups of 10 to 20 people. Each series of thematic proposals that were to be decided upon (global process, actions within PGA, network structures, position towards NGOs, unions & social forums, gender studies) were first discussed within affinity groups, then submitted to a round turn exchange, each group's spokesperson sitting in circle, with his/her group behind. This allowed most attendees to express their view, and to go through an effective decisional process. All in all, this proved to be way more efficient & subtle than most regular general assemblies, in which spectacle and loudmouth generally reign.

This conference took place in a suburban middle-class school of Belgrade. It allowed way more intense cohabitation with locals than Leiden did. A number of activities, discussions & partying moments took place in a stimulating mix of curiosity & tension, in spite of pretty explosive situations, when facing homophobia, lesbophobia, and a certain defiance against us «people from the west» from locals. There were also greater outcomes outside the marginal ghetto, notably through a demonstration & action day carried together with unionists struggling against the privatisation of their factories. Let's not forget a memorable & festive encounter between the «Rhythms of Resistance» samba band and a Gipsy community orchestra, which brought sharing moments & common projects between activists from the No Border network & migrants.



## EVER SINCE...



### Summer 2004: third european PGA conference in Belgrade

The third european PGA conference took place in Belgrade, in summer 2004, thanks to the collaboration of DSM (an anti-authoritarian & anti-capitalist coalition based in Serbia) and a number of activists from other countries involved in PGA.

Due to the relative fragility of activist structures in Serbia, the organisation of this conference was quite a challenge, but was led by the desire to get the european PGA network out of its almost exclusively occidental focus.

The context was both difficult and exciting: a country coming out of war & dictatorship; nationalist movements & very active hooligans; an quickly ongoing appropriation of society by market economy, with most companies & industries being privatized, bought by large occidental groups or shut down; a million of unemployed people, out of 7 million inhabitants.

Without idealizing a particularly rough context, it was exciting to discover a number of things beyond consumer society's mirage: forms of conviviality & social relations, resourcefulness, kitchen-gardens & underground economies, remains of past cooperative & self-managed structures, defiance against NGOs, among other odd social characteristics that are pretty uncommon in western Europe.

In terms of conference organizing, both a theoretical desire and a practical need (little experience from the convenor group) led to further explore participative forms of conference that were already experienced in Leiden. An international preparation group arrived on the spot some 10 days before. Various working groups were created (meeting facilitation, welcoming

in August 1999. On this occasion, the network proclaimed its intention of going beyond free exchange of ideas and information, to promote a generalized attack on capitalism and other forms of domination such as sexism and racism. A decision was reached to clearly identify the differences between PGA and other anti-globalization groups whose ideas are fundamentally opposed to ours such as, extreme right-wing groups, political parties and reformist NGOs. PGAs 3rd Global Conference took place in Cochabamba in Bolivia. It stressed the importance of local and regional processes. Despite these positive developments and after several years of - perhaps too frenetic - activism, a number of criticisms of the organizational modes and political goals of PGA were expressed with increasing force. PGAs European conference at Leiden in August 2002 aimed to confront these criticisms and act on them.

### PGAs 2nd conference

The first European PGA conference took place in the year 2000 in Milan, Italy, and was hosted by the Italian Ya Basta! movement for civil and social disobedience.

The second took place in September, 2002, in the small city of Leiden, Netherlands, and was hosted by EuroDusnie, an anarchist collective, which was a European co-convenor with the *Catalan Movimiento de Resistencia Global* (Global Resistance Movement). Lots of people from across Europe converged to share analyses and discussions; at least 650 were officially signed up, and many more just attended. One of the main points of a conference like this was simply to facilitate face-to-face encounters and to bring to light, even in the eyes of the participants themselves, the existence of a common movement and a common state of mind. The conference was also an opportunity to bring about a common understanding of the forces and struggles represented there, to consider questions the movement faces in common, and then to move forward with concrete proposals in response to the question, What now?

Our Dutch hosts had put in place an organizational structure aimed at ensuring the participation of all those present. All participants were invited to get involved in the cooking and cleaning; preparing and moderating meetings, workshops and discussions; creating a daily newsletter summarizing the outcomes of the discussions and debates. Help was also provided with

transport, particularly for groups from beyond the European Unions Eastern border, by means of a redistribution of Western Europeans registration fees.

The question of who might be admitted to the conference was raised, bearing in mind that the purpose of PGA exchanges and the PGA network is to connect local groups recognizing the founding hallmarks.

There was no strict mode of selection, though registration did include a request for reasons for participating. People were actively encourage to prepare for the conference at a local level. Discussion days were seriously hard work. They mainly took the form of small discussion groups on all the many themes suggested by participants, but also on general strategic questions relevant to the movement as a whole and working groups of PGAE organizational structures. The issue of how discussion should be conducted and how decisions should be reached was the subject of lively debate, with a view to encouraging egalitarian participation and counteracting power-plays. Techniques used include facilitation, hand-signals, small groups, progressive consensus and so on.

## The tyranny of having no (formal) structure

The balance between formal and informal, in the ways that PGAE works as a network, was another main focus of the structure debates. PGAE has a strong preference for organic and affinity-based relationships. But it became equally apparent that the lack of clarity as to who takes care of what makes the distribution of responsibility overly fluid and makes it unclear exactly how and where decisions are made and makes it difficult for new people to integrate. This in turn leads to informal hierarchies which are particularly hard to read because they are invisible. The challenge is therefore to make it more explicit how the structure works, without rigidity and without falling back into the bureaucratic and authoritarian structures that we have been reflexively conditioned to expect. (2) Finally, the work on the PGAE structures (mailing lists, web-sites, information relay systems, contact lists, and conference organization) should be done in a much more formal and open way... so as to invite many more people to get involved. Faced with the absence of new conveners and the need to clarify the work to be done on the network structures, a new working-group meeting for PGAE was held at the Tanneries, an autonomous self-managed space at Dijon in France in March

time of our actions, and the lack of the constant renewal that is necessary to keep our actions effective. Since Seattle, some activists have argued that we ought to leave the the counter-summits to the unions and the NGOs. Many people who have experience with concrete direct action want to redevelop the element of surprise, using other forms of action and in territories that are less fenced in by the forces of repression. Others say, this is all true, but can we simply abandon the terrain to the cops and reformists, when we know that this huge magnet which we have created is still drawing thousands of people, many of whom are basically looking for us and not for reformist bla-bla. And how can we say that we want to break out of the ghetto and talk with all kinds of people, but not want to talk with people from the base of ATTAC, for example, or other people who come ? The debate continues...

It was also said it was no longer enough to identify the enemy as being mainly made up of bigmultinational corporations and financial institutions. We should refocus our critic of the state and social control. as well as of all forms of domination within human relationships (including consumerism, sexism, racism, discrimination on the basis of sexuality, and other systems of oppression), and of the ways that these systems of domination are integrated in our own realities, in our daily lives and at the various scales of social interaction in which we play a part. By varying our tactics and our fields of discourse, by staying inventive and unpredictable, we can still shake our contemporaries out of their resignation and alienation. People spoke of developing structures to support autonomous communities and self-sufficiency, silly actions and public art, street assemblies, sporadic or permanent caravans, action camps, occupations or new international days of action at places and times of our choosing. The importance of experiments in self-management, of squats and other zones of temporary autonomy, currently under threat in Europe, were stressed. Various forms of camouflage and other anti-repression techniques were suggested in order to avoid the pigeon-holes (or cages) in which they are attempting to contain us, with false claims of terrorism. Without media stars, experts, or professional theoreticians, PGA is moving forward, thanks to the multiple gifts brought to the network by the creativity of individuals, with the goal of creating common frameworks for collective action, among those who have no desire to be recognized within the Left of political parties and institutional labor unions, with their long line of hierarchical and dogmatic organizations.



## OTHER DEBATES IN PROGRESS WITHIN PGAe



### Breaking out the activist ghetto...

The question of how to open up our groups and networks, which can sometimes ossify into closed tribes, rigid in our identity politics, has many facets. How do we break out of the ghetto of hard-line activists who are totally sure of the truth of their mission and the justness of their means, without diluting the radical hopes of our struggles and practices? By casting an analytical eye to the makeup of our meetings, in Europe at least, we can see that they are primarily made up of activist specialists, between 20 and 30 years old (even if there are a few grey heads here and there) and a hegemony of middle-class white folks. These observations reveal the lack of ties to other categories of people, notably immigrants and undocumented migrants, but also more generally the working class. This contradiction is problematic for our struggles, in Europe at least, within a network that calls itself Peoples Global Action. (8)

### Overview of the reflections on strategy...

There were several themes of the discussions and political campaigns opened up during the Leiden conference. However, a few major questions focussed the debates. Here is an overview. The counter-summits and global summit protests, which since 1998 have made up a common playing-field for the movement, have since Spring 2000 been the object of various criticisms: the trap of the spiral of repression, the lack of focus on local struggles, the exploitation of the movement by leftist civil society and reform groups, the search for unitary consensus among the masses rather than fundamental analysis, our loss of the element of surprise, the loss of our choice over the place and

2003. It was at this meeting that DSM, a Belgrade-based anti-capitalist group, offered to act as convenors.

Detailed summaries of discussions and decisions made about PGAe process in Leiden (3), which were completed in Dijon (4), are available on the web. They are based on the organizational principles of PGA, which were affirmed at Cochabamba. (5)

### The info points...

To move PGAe forward on a large scale and to promote it on a local basis, the Leiden conference decided to set up several info points, a series of local groups that are involved in PGAe. Each info point group is responsible for spreading information about the conferences, history and projects of the PGA network to people who are interested. These info points are not members of PGA, because PGA has no membership, but they do work to make this network more visible, an important task, considering that the network does not speak as a whole or as an organization. You can find a contact list for these info points on the net. (6)

### European convenors and process group

The role of European convenors was defined at Leiden as organizers of the European conference, responsible for making the network visible and dynamic, as well as maintaining its infrastructures (web site, newsgroups, contact lists) and contacts with the rest of the planet. At Dijon, it was decided that these tasks could be shared amongst different collectives interested in committing to PGA and its structures (with particular reference to infopoints). These collectives constitute the process group. One of the most powerful tools of the network is the PGA web-site (6), which compiles a large number of historic texts, announcements, action reports and reports from PGA conferences. Another tool being developed is the web site <http://all4all.org/>, a thematically-structured global archive project, a forum in which to publish articles on themes and actions. Three mailing lists have been created as communication tools for PGAe...

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★ pga\_europe\_process list is a forum that all of the collectives involved in the PGAE structures and decision-making processes (conferences, lists, web-sites, info points, etc.) should subscribe to.

★ pga\_europe\_resistance list is for announcements of and reports from events and actions.

★ The pga\_europe\_discussion list is for basic texts and debates.

To subscribe to these lists, visit their public info page (7).

## The sustained campaigns

In Leiden, thematic working groups were set up, based on PGA principles. One was on water, and another was on creating alternative forums (hub projects) during the various social forums. Since Dijon, there has been a specific working-group dynamic focussed on gender.

## Finally, what is PGA? A network? A coordination? An exchange?

These discussions posed the question of the possibilities and limits to a network that claims to be based on decentralization and autonomy, which has no official membership, offices, or bank accounts, a network without spokespersons, where nobody speaks in the name of the network or makes decisions on its behalf. The debate on the role of PGAE has continued since Leiden and Dijon, and is still far from being resolved. For some, the crucial point is that, in contrast to political parties and other coordination structures, PGA should not aim to launch action campaigns in its own name, even though the encounters between groups, communication structures, and contact networks that it offers have been able to greatly facilitate the establishment of concrete common initiatives, even recently such as the global day of action in December 2002 in solidarity with Argentinas popular uprising or some of the anti-G8 blockades and events in 2003.

This doesnt mean that PGA conferences, convenors, or simply groups in the network cant take the initiative of launching propositions

or campaigns to the whole network. On the contrary, the originality and dynamism of PGA is that - thanks to a minimal agreement on goals and means of action and coordinated autonomy - it is a network capable of inspiring action. (In practice, the origin of propositions have been quite decentralised. The calls for action during Seattle or Prague for example were first made by local groups there, and picked up after by the convenors.) In contrast to traditional organisations, not only propositions can come from anywhere, but there is also no effort to make the actions appear as an international action of PGA. The action is that of the organisations that take it up, acting locally in their own name. For this reason the network as such goes relatively unnoticed, which does not make it necessarily less efficient than a traditional kind of organisation. It is certainly not PGAEs goal to make consensual decisions on global strategy for world revolution. Apart from the hallmarks and manifesto, PGA groups can disagree on all kinds of things (particular forms of action or going to Social Forums, for instance) without having to split or argue endlessly. Thus some groups can try a political hypothesis and come back to discuss it after.

For some, PGAE shouldnt officially decide anything but its own structure and the manner in which to set up gatherings, lists, web sites, and other means of communication. To people of this opinion, PGAE is basically a means of exchange between various groups who share a commitment to its principles. There is considerable potential here, since it enables regional and global moments of coordination; it provides a means of getting to know each other, of contrasting our various approaches to political theories and struggles, of sharing ideas for action, contacts and resources, of providing ourselves with quality time to judge the success of our actions and to engage in thematic analysis. Despite this emphasis on decentralized and autonomous action, others also feel that, PGAE ought also to be able to regularly find ways to put forward campaigns and coordinated days of action, in its own name.

*The issue remains under discussion.*