Convergence space: process geographies of grassroots globalization networks

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This paper considers grassroots globalization networks, which comprise a diversity of social movements working in association to engage in multi-scalar political action. Drawing upon David Harvey’s notion of militant particularism (regarding the problems of effecting politics between different geographical scales), and recent research on networks and their relationship to places, the paper analyses People’s Global Action, an international network of social movements opposing neoliberal globalization. From an analysis of the process geographies of People’s Global Action, the paper proposes the notion of convergence space as a conceptual tool by which to understand and critique grassroots globalization networks. The paper argues that contested social relations emerge in such convergence spaces and considers the implications of these for theorizing such networks, and for political action.

**key words** convergence space grassroots globalization networks process geographies

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revised manuscript received 31 March 2003

The tears of Prague

Following months of preparation, a four-day alternative summit on globalization, and several days of workshops and strategy sessions, 26 September 2000 had arrived. Thousands of people had assembled in Prague’s Namesti Miru (Peace Square), under blue skies and a warm sun. Activists from around the world, from different struggles, had gathered together in a show of solidarity to protest against the 55th annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The crowd moved off as one, but soon divided into three different prongs (the ‘Peelovska’ tactic): one across the Nusle Bridge, which led to the conference centre, two others on either side of the bridge down into the valley. The demonstrators were met with tear gas and water cannons, concussion grenades and batons, armoured vehicles and heavily armed riot police. Molotov cocktails were thrown, barricades burnt, the annual meeting disturbed. Amid clouds of tear gas and the incendiary sharing between social movements and other resistance formations.

While solidarities across borders are not new phenomena, present international alliances are characterized by the means, speed and intensity of communication between the various groups involved. Gill (2000) has argued that such alliances pose the question for political theory of how to imagine and theorize new forms of collective political identity and agency. In this paper I contribute to this task, by considering recent theoretical approaches to networks, and work by David Harvey regarding the problems of effecting politics between different geographical scales. Using these insights, I then analyse the People’s Global Action (PGA) resistance network that forms part of the many-faceted phenomenon of ‘grassroots globalization’ (Appadurai 2000) that has emerged to counter neoliberal globalization. In so doing, I will focus upon what Appadurai (2000, 7) terms the ‘process geographies’ of grassroots globalization networks, i.e. their multi-scalar, dynamic, processes of interaction and relationship. I also discuss how these are entangled by powers to dominate and resist (see Sharp et al. 2000). From this
study, I will propose the notion of convergence space as a conceptual tool by which to understand and critique grassroots globalization networks. In so doing, I will address some of the problems that emerge in such convergence spaces and consider the implications of these for the prosecution of political action. First, I will briefly outline the economic regime that grassroots globalization networks oppose.

Neoliberalism and its discontents: counter-Empire?

The ideology of neoliberalism articulates an overarching commitment to ‘free market’ principles of free trade, flexible labour and active individualism. It privileges lean government, privatization and deregulation, while undermining or foreclosing alternative development models based upon social redistribution, economic rights or public investment (Peck and Tickell 2002). Nevertheless, neoliberal globalization is neither monolithic nor omnipresent, taking hybrid or composite forms around the world (Larner 2000).

Peck and Tickell (2002) argue that neoliberalism has seen a shift from ‘roll-back neoliberalism’ during the 1980s – which entailed a pattern of deregulation and dismantlement (e.g. of state-financed welfare, education, and health services and environmental protection) to an emergent phase of ‘roll-out neoliberalism’. This emergent phase is witnessing an aggressive intervention by governments around issues such as crime, policing, welfare reform and urban surveillance with the purpose of disciplining and containing those marginalized or dispossessed by the neoliberalization of the 1980s.

In both phases, neoliberalism entails the centralization of control of the world economy in the hands of transnational corporations and their allies in key government agencies (particularly those of the United States and other members of the G8), large international banks, and international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These institutions enforce the doctrine of neoliberalism enabling unrestricted access of transnational corporations (TNCs) to a wide range of markets (including public services), while potentially more progressive institutions and agreements (such as the International Labour Organization and the Kyoto Protocols) are allowed to wither (Peck and Tickell 2002). Neoliberal policies have resulted in the pauperization and marginalization of indigenous peoples, women, peasant farmers and industrial workers, and a reduction in labour, social and environmental conditions on a global basis – what Brecher and Costello (1994) term ‘the race to the bottom’ or ‘global pillage’. In response to this, new forms of translocal political solidarity and consciousness have begun to emerge, associated with the partial globalization of networks of resistance, such as PGA (see below).

Hardt and Negri term the emerging global economic system ‘Empire’ and characterize it as ‘a decentered, deterritorializing apparatus of imperial control’ (2000, xii). Characterized by an absence of boundaries, they argue that there is no place of power – constituted by networks, it is both everywhere and nowhere, a non-place. However, geopolitical and geo-economic power does get territorialized in certain places. For example, the United States – as the world’s only superpower with military bases in at least 59 countries – wields an immense influence on international relations and, through its control of the IMF and World Bank, the global economy (Blum 2000; Mertes 2002).

Hardt and Negri (2000) and Hardt (2002) also argue that resistance to ‘Empire’ constitutes a counter-Empire, not limited to local autonomy, but one that thinks and acts globally, effecting a politics of association, rather than a series of discrete local actions. In short, resistance must create a ‘non-place’ – everywhere and nowhere – from where alternatives to Empire are posed (Hardt and Negri 2000, 205–18). The problem with this formulation is that it ignores the geographical contexts and contingencies of political action. It seems to pose resistance as practising a reactive politics that mirrors ‘Empire’, rather than articulating a different kind of spatial politics. In this paper I will argue that, rather than constituting a ‘non-place’ of resistance, grassroots globalization networks forge an associational politics that constitute a diverse, contested coalition of place-specific social movements, which prosecute conflict on a variety of multi-scalar terrains that include both material places and virtual spaces.

Grassroots globalization

The growth of anti-neoliberal globalization protests – and the networks that participate in them – has excited much academic and media attention in recent years. They have been conceived of as ‘grassroots globalization’ – attempts by marginalized groups and social movements at the local level to forge wider alliances in protest at their growing exclusion from global neoliberal economic decision-making. While establishing global networks of action and support,
they attempt to retain local autonomy over strategies and tactics (Appadurai 2000). Recent research on such challenges to neoliberal globalization has included work on ‘transnational advocacy networks’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998); transnational consumer networks and the labour movement (Evans 2000); and anti-corporate movements and globalizing networks (St Clair 1999; Gill 2000; Brecher et al. 2000; Klein 2000 2002; Starr 2000; Bircham and Charlton 2001; Mertes 2002). Two particular themes emerge as central to this research: an emphasis upon the heterogeneity of grassroots networks resisting common opponents; and an affirmation of the importance of the politics of scale.

The heterogeneity of grassroots globalization networks

Grassroots globalization involves the creation of networks: of communication, solidarity, information-sharing and mutual support. The core function of networks is the production, exchange and strategic use of information – for example, concerning oppositional narratives and analysis of particular events. Many information exchanges are informal, such as by telephone, e-mail and the circulation of newsletters and bulletins through a variety of means, including by hand, post and the Internet. Such information can enhance the resources available to geographically and/or socially distant actors in their particular struggles and also lead to action (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The speed, density and complexity of international linkages have grown dramatically in the past 20 years. Cheaper air travel and new electronic communication technologies have speeded up information flows and simplified personal contact among activists (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Ribeiro 1998; Cohen and Rai 2000). Indeed, information-age activism is creating what Cleaver (1999, 3) terms a ‘global electronic fabric of struggle’, whereby local and national movements are consciously seeking ways to make their efforts complement those of other organized struggles around similar issues. Such networks, greatly facilitated by the Internet, can, at times, enable relationships to develop that are more flexible than traditional hierarchies. Participation in networks has become an essential component of collective identities of the activists involved, networking forming part of their common repertoire of action and recruitment (Melucci 1996; Castells 1997).

In particular, grassroots globalization is resulting in the forging of new alliances – what Esteva and Prakash (1998) consider a pluriverse of interests – as different social movements representing different terrains of struggle experience the negative consequences of neoliberalism (Wallgren 1998). By identifying structures of power within the global political field, social movements have established common targets of protest, exemplified by the anti-WTO mobilizations in Seattle in 1999, and the anti-World Bank and IMF protests in Prague in 2000.

Such protests have been celebrated for bringing together formerly disparate and often conflicting groups, such as trade unionists, environmentalists, indigenous people’s movements and non-government organizations. Underpinning such developments is a conceptualization of protest and struggle that respects difference, rather than attempting to develop universalistic and centralizing solutions that deny the diversity of interests and identities that are confronted with neoliberal globalization processes. Hence:

an international process of recomposition of radical claims and social subjects has been under way, a process which is forcing every movement not only to seek alliances with others, but also to make the struggles of other movements their own, without first the need to submit the demands of other movements to an ideological test . . . [the] premise of recomposition is the multidimensional reality of exploitative and oppressive relations as it is manifested in the lives and experiences of the many social subjects within the global economy. (De Angelis 2000, 14)

Within these coalitions, a variety of cultural and identity issues remain important (e.g. gender), but these are now being reframed within the context of broader critiques of the operation of economic and political systems, and they rejoin more traditional ‘labour’ and (re)distributive concerns about working conditions in the global South, the effects of mobility of capital, and job security in the global North, etc. While struggles in the global South have always tended to have a materialist focus, identity politics in the global North have begun to rediscover a materialist critique (Crossley 2001). This has further enabled a ‘coalition of difference’ to emerge. However, because the globalization of protest involves the penetration and multiplicity of forces at local, regional, national and global scales, such a multiplicity raises the possibility of alliances that contain various contradictions (Chin and Mittelman 1997). For example, place-based gender relations within particular social movements may be at odds with those of other movements, in other places, with whom they participate in struggle. This raises questions
about how social movements act effectively in coalitions across diverse geographical scales.

**The scale politics of grassroots globalization networks**

The consolidation of a global system of financial regulation has prompted the ‘upscale’ of previously local struggles between citizens, governments, and transnational institutions and corporations to the international level. Klein (2002) has argued that such a globalization of protest has, during spectacular protests such as occurred in Seattle in 1999, focused upon targets that symbolize global economic power: the WTO, the IMF and TNCs like McDonalds and Nike. She notes that such demonstrations represent the convergence of many different movements each with different goals and targets, but with a shared common cause: to resist the neoliberal agenda. Many of these movements, although engaged in grassroots globalization networks, nevertheless remain local or national based, since this is where individual movement identities are formed and nurtured.

Castells (1997) conceives such struggles as representing defensive responses to the network society. The cultural and economic specificity of particular places is deployed as part of a broader articulation of resistance to the space of flows, i.e. capital investments and developments increasingly detached through the use of information technologies, from the social constraints of cultural identities and local societies (Castells 1997). However, struggles can be both offensive and defensive – e.g. the Zapatista peasant insurgency in Chiapas, Mexico (Routledge 1998) – and Castells’ formulation creates a binary between local and global processes.

Rather, when local-based struggles develop, or become part of, geographically flexible networks, they become embedded in different places at a variety of spatial scales. These different geographic scales (global, regional, national, local) are mutually constitutive parts, becoming links of various lengths in the network. Networks of agents act across various distances and through diverse intermediaries. However, some networks are relatively more localized, while others are more global in scope and the relationship of networks to territories is mutually constitutive: networks are embedded in territories and, at the same time, territories are embedded in networks (Dicken et al. 2001). Of course, movements that are local or national in character derive their principal strength from acting at these scales rather than at the global level (Sklair 1995). For example, transnational corporations such as Nestle, McDonalds and Nike have usually been disrupted primarily due to the efficacy of local campaigns (Klein 2000). Even where international campaigns are organized, local and national scales of action can be as important as international ones (Herod 2001). For example, the Liverpool dockers’ international campaign was grassroots-instigated and coordinated (by Liverpool dockers) and operationalized by dockers beyond the UK working within established union frameworks (Castree 2000).

Space is bound into local to global networks, which act to configure particular places. As a result ‘each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations’ (Massey 1994, 156), and hence places can be imagined as ‘articulated moments in networks of social relations (Massey 1994, 154). Moreover, while networks can create cultural and spatial configurations that connect places with each other (Escobar 2001), so can particular places be important within the workings of networks. For example, in his research on the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, Fernando Bosco (2001) shows how collective political rituals enacted in different places across space (e.g. the public meetings of Madres in plazas across Argentina) enabled the sustainability of different movement communities and movement identities. By reinforcing moral commitments and group solidarity, activist’s identities were maintained both within particular groups and between movements and activists in wider solidarity networks.

Bosco argues that the identification with particular places can be of strategic importance for the mobilization strategies of particular resistance movements. These can contribute to the construction of strategic network ties with other movements in the same locality or in other localities. Activists may deploy symbolic images of places to match the interests and collective identities of other groups and thereby mobilize others along common cause or grounds. Hence the ties to particular places can be mobile, appealing to, and mobilizing, different groups in different localities (Bosco 2001).

However, because places are important loci of collective memory, then social identity and the capacity to mobilize that identity into configurations of political solidarity are highly dependent upon the processes of place construction and sustenance (Harvey 1996). Such particularities of place may come into conflict with those of other places, for example due to different place-specific under-
standings of gender relations. As a result, these may vitiate against multi-scalar mobilizations and pose important problems for the development of grassroots globalization networks. To discuss this issue requires a consideration of the work of David Harvey.

**Militant particularism/global ambition**

Borrowing a term from Raymond Williams (1977), Harvey argues that place-based resistances frequently articulate a ‘militant particularism’ (1996–2000). This is where the ideals forged out of the affirmative experience of solidarities in one place have the potential to get generalized and universalized as a working model for a new form of society that will benefit all humanity – what Harvey terms ‘global ambition’. However, Harvey notes that militant particularisms are often profoundly conservative, resting upon the perpetuation of patterns of social relations and community solidarities. He wonders whether there is a scale at which militant particularisms become impossible to ground let alone sustain. Indeed, he argues that

Anti-capitalist movements … are generally better at organizing in and dominating ‘their’ places than at commanding space. ‘Regional resistances’ … can indeed flourish in a multitude of particular places. But while such movements form a potential basis for that ‘militant particularism’ that can acquire global ambition, left to themselves they are easily dominated by the power of capital to coordinate accumulation across universal but fragmented space. The potentiality for militant particularism, embedded in place runs the risk of sliding back into a parochialist politics. (Harvey 1996, 324)

Successful international alliances have to negotiate between action that is deeply embedded in place, i.e. local experiences, social relations and power conditions (for example, see Routledge 1993), and action that facilitates more transnational coalitions. Social movements, according to Harvey, can either remain place-based and ignore the potential contradictions inherent in transnational coalitions (e.g. concerning different gender relations within participant movements) or treat the contradictions as a nexus to create a more transcendent and universal politics, combining social and environmental justice, that transcends the narrow solidarities and particular affinities shaped in particular places. In short, movements need to develop a politics of solidarity capable of reaching across space, without abandoning their militant particularist base(s) (Harvey 1996, 400). This is especially pertinent for those militant particularisms that arise to protest those disguised particularisms – such as masculinism and heterosexism – that masquerade as universal (Fraser 1997).

However, even if social movements are capable of reaching across space, differential power relations exist within the functioning of the networks that are created. Particular actors are often dominant within networks, due to their control of key political, economic, technological resources (Dicken et al. 2001). Moreover, different groups and individuals are placed in distinct (more or less powerful) ways in relation to the flows and interconnections involved in the functioning of resistance networks. Thus, while the working of networks involves the intermingling of geographic scales, contradictions and tensions remain – either tied to the militant particularisms of particular movements or in the placing of specific actors within the network.

Drawing upon these theoretical debates concerning heterogeneity and scale politics in the practices of grassroots globalization networks, I now consider a specific network, People’s Global Action (PGA). On a methodological note, I do not write on behalf of PGA. Rather, I present my interpretation of PGA from my limited involvement in the network, and discussions and interviews with some of its activists during that involvement. I attended the PGA international conferences in Bangalore, India, in 1999, and Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2001. I have also participated in the organization of a tour of Colombian activists through Europe in 2001 to highlight the impacts of Plan Colombia upon the country’s people. Since 2001, I have acted as a support group member for PGA Asia, conducting a preliminary networking tour through South and Southeast Asia in 2002.

**People’s Global Action**

The PGA network owes its genesis to an international encounter between activists and intellectuals that was organized by the Zapatistas in Chiapas in 1996. At the encounter, the Zapatistas’ Subcommandante Marcos declared that those present would construct an intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism.

This intercontinental network of resistance, recognizing differences and acknowledging similarities, will search to find itself with other resistances around the world. This intercontinental network of resistance is not an organizing structure; it doesn’t have a central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist. (Marcos 2001, 13)
In Spain the following year, the idea of a network between different resistance formations was launched by ten social movements including Movimento Sem Terra (Landless peasants movement) of Brazil, and the Karnataka State Farmers Union of India. The official ‘birth’ of the PGA was February 1998; its purpose was to facilitate the sharing of information between grassroots social movements. The PGA organized an alternative conference (at the 1998 Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Geneva) between social movements from Asia, Africa and Latin America that called for resistance to neoliberal globalization.9

The broad objectives of the network – enshrined in a series of hallmarks (see below) – are to offer an instrument for coordination and mutual support at the global level for those resisting corporate rule and the neoliberal capitalist development paradigm, to provide international projection to their struggles, and to inspire people to resist corporate domination through civil disobedience and people-oriented constructive actions (see PGA website). PGA has also established regional networks – e.g. PGA Latin America, PGA Europe, PGA North America and PGA Asia – to decentralize the everyday workings of the network.

PGA uses the Internet as a prime means of communication and coordination – through its website and various activist mailing lists. Through these technologies, the PGA network, amongst others, puts out the calls for the recent global days of action against capitalism, such as the protests in Prague on 26 September 2000. The PGA network is facilitated by a Convenors’ Committee, which comprises social movements within the network. The current Committee comprises movements concerned with ethnic, women’s, labour and indigenous issues. The Committee organizes the PGA conferences (see below), decides about the use of resources, advises local organizers about technical and organizational questions, and decides about the content of PGA’s information tools.

In practice there have been problems with the workings of the Convenors’ Committee. First, the convenors have not been able to take the time to fully assume their responsibilities, owing to the exigencies of movement work in their respective localities. Second, the convenors have had great difficulty in functioning at a distance, having problems of access to necessary information, as well as language and cultural problems. The process has tended to remain haphazard, abstract and dependent on e-mail access.

Hence much of the organizational work of the PGA network has been conducted by Support Groups of activists who have helped organize conferences, mobilized resources (e.g. funds), and facilitated communication between Convenors and information flows between the participants of PGA. The Support Group activists are mostly based in Europe, but some are located within the other PGA ‘regions’. According to participant activists, PGA represents a space of convergence between different grassroots movements, wherein the interactions between movements and their politics of association are facilitated.

The process geographies of PGA

The collective visions of PGA

In networks comprising diverse social movements, it is crucial that there are certain unifying values – what I would term collective visions – to provide common ground from which to coordinate collective struggles. In PGA, the militant particularisms of movements find their global ambition in the hallmarks and organizational principles of the convergence. The hallmarks of the PGA, cited in the PGA website, are as follows:

1. A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; and all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalisation.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy. (Taken from the PGA website: www.agp.org).
The organizational principles deal with how the network functions – concerning its conferences, convenors, projects etc.

The PGA hallmarks articulate certain unifying values that create common ground but allow for the diversity of (local) alternatives, projects, tactics etc., since no single agenda could contain such different militant particularisms. Indeed, such unifying values tend to be interpreted by participant movements in the context of their differing local realities (Alger 1997). However, the unanimity of the hallmarks masks various contested social relations within the network that I will discuss below. In terms of practical politics, this has meant that PGA has adopted, through its third international conference in Bolivia, a series of Global Sustainable Campaigns, which movements can collectively participate in, while responding to the particularities of their local/national circumstances. The four campaigns focus on militarism, paramilitarism and state terrorism; territory and sovereignty (e.g. issues of land and water resources and indigenous rights); privatization; and the construction of grass-roots alternatives to the capitalist system and the strengthening of local initiatives and struggles.

Each PGA regional network is in the process of discussing the processes by which they intend to participate in these campaigns. In certain ways, the hallmarks and campaigns – as collective visions – represent the kind of universal politics that Harvey (1996) discusses as crucial to the formation of transnational solidarities.

Processes of facilitation and interaction in PGA

PGA is concerned with five principal processes of facilitation and interaction between movements. It acts as a facilitating space for communication (e.g. using letters, e-mail, websites, newsletters, telephone, fax and face-to-face meetings such as conferences); information-sharing (e.g. concerning the effectiveness of particular tactics and strategies, knowledge on place-specific legal issues and local geographies etc.); solidarity (e.g. demonstrations of support for particular struggles such as protests, letter writing campaigns etc.); coordination (e.g. organizing conferences, meetings and collective protests etc.); and resource mobilization (e.g. of people, finances and skills).

PGA is organized primarily through the Internet via its website (www.agp.org) and various e-mailing lists. In addition, PGA organizes international and regional meetings, conferences and caravans. Rather than what Cleaver (1999) would term an ‘electronic fabric’, the Internet acts as a communicative and coordinating thread in the PGA network, which weaves different place-based struggles together so that they may converge in virtual space.

The PGA website is translated into seven languages and provides information about the history of the network; PGA international and regional conferences; various actions and initiatives that the convergence has organized; upcoming events; and reports on struggles from around the world. There are several e-mail lists that provide spaces for discussion, communication, information-sharing and coordination. Many activists participate in these discussions in PGA Europe, although PGA Asia and PGA Latin America tend to witness less activist participation. Although mass movements participate in these regional networks those with e-mail contact who tend to participate in PGA discussions are usually only individuals (often members of the Convenor’s Committee) who can communicate in English and who have access to the Internet.

The reliance on the Internet to organize grass-roots globalization networks raises other problems. First, is that of the circulation of excessive amounts of information, or ‘information blizzard’ (Critical Art Ensemble 1994, 132), which in certain crisis situations can become amplified when activists resort to all means available: letters, faxes, telephone calls, e-mail and personal visits (Ribeiro 1998). Second, the abstract, disembodied character of Internet discussions (and protest post-mortems) can accentuate what become quite vitriolic debates (e.g. concerning particular tactical approaches to protest events) that might otherwise reach compromise if conducted in a face-to-face manner, with the attendant visual and verbal clues and nuances. As Ribeiro notes:

Trust, friendship, reputation, predictability, hierarchical position within a social network, and even charisma are elements of political activity that certainly cannot be reduced to technologies of communication. There are features of face-to-face interaction (gestures, tone, pitch, indexicality) and even of telephone conversation that are highly informative; these features are concealed in computer-based interactions. (Ribeiro 1998, 341)

For it is unlikely that trust between individuals who have not met can be fully developed over the Internet. The depth of trust required to plan, and conduct, political action together is place- and face-based (e.g. see the discussion of ‘homeplace’ in hooks 1991). In other words, it is dependent, in part, upon movement’s militant particularism.
Sustaining collective action over time is related to the capacity of a group to develop strong interpersonal ties that provide the basis for the construction of collective identities (Bosco 2001). PGA has periodic international and regional conferences and meetings that provide material spaces within which representatives of participant movements can converge and discuss issues that pertain to the functioning of the network. Such conferences and meetings also enable strategies to be developed in secure sequestered sites, beyond the surveillance that accompanies any communicative technology in the public realm. Moreover, such gatherings enable deeper interpersonal ties to be established between different activists from different cultural spaces and struggles. At the international conferences, meetings are held primarily in English or Spanish (with the one being translated into the other). Translation clusters are also formed where the conference proceedings are simultaneously translated into the languages of the other people who are participating.

PGA also organizes activist caravans. These are buses of activists from various struggles around the world, which visit social movement struggles in countries other than their own. These caravans have a certain historical precedent in the solidarity convoys that took North American activists to Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala during the 1980s. These convoys brought humanitarian aid to communities in those countries, and articulated opposition to US government policies in the region – particularly the US government support for the military juntas in El Salvador and Guatemala, and for the contra war attempting to destabilize the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua.

Rather than being forms of political tourism, the PGA caravans are organized in order for activists from different struggles and countries to communicate with one another, exchange information, share experiences and tactics, participate in various solidarity demonstrations, rallies and direct actions, and attempt to draw new movements into the convergence. The emphasis on such processes is the two-way communication regarding struggles, strategies, visions of society, and the construction of economic and political alternatives to neoliberalism. The caravans have included an Intercontinental caravan in 1999, which brought 500 Asian farmers to tour Europe; a United States caravan that culminated in the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999; and caravans before and after the PGA conferences in Bangalore, India (1999), and Cochabamba, Bolivia (2001). In addition, there have been speaking tours (e.g. that which brought Colombian activists from the Process of Black Communities to Europe in 2001), and workshops and seminars, concerning neoliberalism and its alternatives, on several continents.

Despite these initiatives, there are concerns within the network that certain individuals and groups sometimes block information flows, marking out certain channels of communication and coordination as their own, thereby marginalizing others while asserting their discursive dominance within the network. At the PGA conference in Cochabamba, it was noted that the PGA Support Groups had a great, if not disproportionate, amount of discursive and material power within the network. This was due to them doing much of the work unable to be completed by the Convener’s Committee, their extensive activist contacts and their ability to raise funds for political actions and conferences.

The discursive dominance that individuals have in relation to these flows and inter-connections is because different groups and individuals are placed in more or less powerful ways in relation to such flows. This is augmented by differences in the material power enjoyed by certain activists concerning mobility. Some activists are more mobile than others in at least two ways. First there is differential access to contemporary communications technologies such as the Internet. Huge inequalities of resource access exist between activists in ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ states, and between activists within states – for example, in ‘Southern’ movements, between movement leaders and the movement masses (Slater 2003). Even many of those movement leaders in the South who have access to the Internet frequently have to use (relatively) expensive Internet cafes in order to communicate within the PGA network.

Second, there is differential financial resource availability between activists and between social movements, concerning the ability to travel across continents to particular actions, meetings and conferences. For example, while certain European support group activists have been able to visit movement struggles in Latin America and Asia, few of the activists involved in these movements have the financial resources to travel outside of their countries. At both the PGA conferences in India and Bolivia, PGA has attempted to address
the contradiction of wealth disparities within the network by having the air fares of ‘Southern’ activists subsidized by relatively wealthier ‘Northern’ movements within the network.

Nevertheless, such disparities can lead to the emergence of an elite group of mobile ‘global’ activists who enjoy the privileges of e-mail, mobility and certain financial and discursive power (regarding funding of the ‘anti-globalization movement’, see Harding 2001). Certainly, activists are able to use skills that they have learned during political organizing in their local struggles during their participation in global networks. For example, consensus methods of group decisionmaking have been translated from European-based struggles to international conferences (see below). Moreover, existing local, regional and national friendship and activist networks are re-deployed at the international scale for the purposes of global networking (Smith et al. 1997). Processes of interaction get stretched out across greater distances for such activists, potentially making ‘global’ arenas of political organizing more like a new ‘local’ arena of action for them.

The multi-scalar politics of PGA

The sustainability of a sense of collective identity when in a spatially extensive network such as PGA is based upon gatherings in particular places (e.g. the regional and international conferences, see below). In addition, the routes of the PGA caravans focus around those places where there are social movement struggles occurring. Caravans attempt to create a multi-scalar politics of solidarity through communication and support actions within particular countries between activists from those and other countries involved in different struggles. For example, the Latin American caravan in 2001 comprised activists from struggles in Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, North America, Australia and New Zealand. They left from the PGA conference in Bolivia and visited peasant and indigenous movements in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. Such an initiative required massive coordination by the various local-based groups who were organizing the specific elements (e.g. meetings and rallies) of the caravans’ activities. In the aftermath, regional strategy meetings of those groups who were involved have been organized to plan for future protests and initiatives.

Places have been used strategically to sustain networks such as PGA. For example, specific symbolic sites have been chosen for the location of the PGA international conferences. The PGA conferences in Bangalore and Cochabamba were chosen partly because they had been the sites of successful resistance by popular mass movements against transnational corporations pursuing a neoliberal agenda. In the case of Bangalore, Monsanto and Cargill had both faced successful opposition to their attempts to introduce GM cotton-seeds and field trials in the Indian state of Karnataka, by the Karnataka State Farmer’s Union – the host of the PGA conference. In Cochabamba, Bechtel Corporation faced successful opposition to their attempts to privatize the city’s water supply by a popular coalition of students, business people, labour unions and peasant movements. This included the Six Federations of the Tropics (coca farmers) who jointly hosted the PGA conference with the National Federation of Domestic Workers.

These conferences have differential impacts upon the struggles that occur in those places where they are organized. When movements act as hosts for PGA international or regional conferences, their struggles are given a certain amount of national and international projection (e.g. through the media) as a result. Moreover, the grassroots members of a movement can receive a boost in morale when activists from around the world visit, and articulate support for, their struggles. For example, at the PGA conference in Cochabamba, conference delegates visited the coca-growing region of Chapare to show solidarity to peasant farmers. These farmers are resisting the Bolivian government’s participation in a United States government initiative called Plan Dignidad (Plan Dignity), which calls for the eradication of Bolivia’s coca-crop, and hence coca-growing peasant livelihoods (Interviews, Cochabamba 2001). However, such projection of struggles may not always have positive effects. For example, following the solidarity rallies in Chapare, there was increased state repression of coca-farmers once the conference had ended and the international delegates departed.

In addition to organizing conferences and caravans, PGA has also participated in broader networks of struggle, exemplified by transnational collective rituals, wherein geographic scales of protest become mutually constitutive. Transnational collective rituals may take the form of globalized local actions that are political initiatives that take place in different locations across the globe in support of particular localized struggles, or against particular
targets. These can occur simultaneously or at different times. For example, the PGA ‘speaking tour’ of Colombian activists entailed a series of workshops and seminars in various European countries (e.g. Scotland, England, Spain, Germany), in cooperation with many non-PGA political groups, in support of the activists’ social movement, the Process of Black Communities, and its struggle for self-determination in Colombia.

Alternatively, transnational collective rituals may take the form of localized global actions that are political initiatives whereby different social movements and resistance groups coordinate around a particular issue or event in a particular place. For example, PGA has been partly responsible for putting out the calls for, organizing and participating in, the recent global days of action that have occurred in response to the meetings being held by the G8, WTO, IMF and World Bank.

During the global days of action, the particular places of protest – Seattle (against the WTO in 1999), Prague (against the World Bank and IMF in 2000) and Genoa (against the G8 in 2001) – became the primary sites of resistance for many different movements for certain moments in time. These places became ‘articulated moments’ (Massey 1994) in the enactment of global networks such as PGA.

These places also acted as the hosts for the conference deliberations of global institutions such as the World Bank, WTO and IMF, as well as the governments of the globally dominant national economies (i.e. G8). Hence they also became the sites in which opposition to these institutions and their policies could be articulated. Ironically, these places represent precisely the non-place of Empire’s global power, in that the conferences of international institutions such as the WTO could have been held anywhere. Indeed, as global days of action have witnessed certain successes (e.g. in Seattle), so, global institutions have trawled the planet for increasingly inaccessible locations in which to hold their meetings.13

The global media attention that attends such meetings also affords media attention onto the messages of the protestors. As a result, the protests have been able to expose the functioning and policies of these institutions, making them more open to critical analysis by the media and the public.14 Moreover, the siting of protest at the same times and places as these meetings of global institutions and governments sends a powerful symbolic message to them that they can no longer conduct their business as usual – wherever they meet, they are likely to be faced with noisy, colourful and informed opposition, articulating economic alternatives to neoliberalism. In this sense, grassroots globalization networks attempt to be spatially ubiquitous, exemplified (with some hubris) by the PGA slogan ‘We are everywhere’.

By virtue of their participation in protests and activities in the field of global power, grassroots globalization networks such as PGA are also contributing to the process of globalization. By protesting against global institutions such as the WTO and World Bank, and demanding change, such networks constitute themselves as active citizens on the global political field, and generate a public sphere for that field – in other words contributing towards a global civil society (Crossley 2001).

These places of protest enter the collective memory of the participants of convergence spaces, thereby reinforcing the moral commitment of activists to their struggles. However, they are different from one another. Protests in particular places will mean very different things to activists than they will to local residents, the police and media etc. For example, for activists, Prague was the site where the deliberations of the World Bank and IMF were disrupted, and where police repression was quite intense. However, for many local residents, Prague became a landscape of fear for the duration of the protests (Interviews, Prague 2000). In addition, different protests will have different meaning for the activists who participate in them. For example, Seattle is remembered as the place where protests disrupted the meetings of the WTO. Meanwhile, Genoa is remembered, in part, as the place where the G8 had to erect a cage around its meeting to keep protesters out, and where police repression resulted in one protester, Carlo Giuliani, being shot dead.

As such, these places become (different) articulated moments in the activity of grassroots globalization networks where opposition to neoliberalism as well as alternative visions are articulated. These can serve to sustain individual movement, and network, identities. The ties built around the symbolism of the places can be mobile – appealing to groups in other localities, thus potentially overcoming the parochialism of militant particularisms (Bosco 2001). This depends upon how places are framed and the interpretation placed upon such places and actions by activists (Snow et al. 1986). Clearly, the interpretation and meanings attached to particular
places, or place-based collective rituals, can potentially encourage the building of alliances between movements and networks.

In the case of Seattle and Prague, global days of action entailed the coming together, in a particular place, of a variety of different and contesting actors including grassroots globalization networks such as PGA, transnational institutions and corporations, government officials, police and the media. At the same time, protests occurred in cities across the globe. Hence, the global days of action in Seattle, Prague, etc. were framed as being the most visible face of grassroots globalization, symbolically representing the struggles of millions of people around the world who were also resisting neoliberal globalization. The symbolic force that the protests in such places have generated has contributed to further mobilizations and the creation of common ground amongst activists. Each global day of action protest serves to inspire the mobilization of dissent at the next, wherever it is sited.

Despite the success of such convergences – not least in the rejoining of the concerns of the politics of identity and redistribution – significant differences remain in the type of specific alternatives to neoliberal capitalism articulated by global Northern and global Southern movements. Northern activists articulate alternatives that are conditioned by their embeddedness within – and alienation from – an already industrialized capitalist society. The fundamental concerns of Southern activists are with the defence of livelihoods and of communal access to resources threatened by commodification, state takeovers, and private appropriation (e.g. by national or transnational corporations). Their alternatives are rooted, in part, in some of the local practices being undermined by neoliberal globalization (Glassman 2002).

Because of this, the PGA hallmarks make a specific call for the articulation of diverse, locally specific alternatives to global capitalism. Within the context of the universalisms of global ambition, the intention is to mobilize the militant particularisms of participant movements in solidarity and coordination with others, for example, via the Global Sustainable Campaigns. This is because, in part, representatives of social movement struggles within PGA have acknowledged that resistance networks had been far more effective at organizing at regional and national scales than they had been at the international scale.

Geographical dilemmas arise in the attempt to prosecute multi-scalar politics because activists tend to be more closely linked to the local, national or regional movements in which their struggles are embedded than to international networks. This is compounded by restrictions on finances, Internet resources and the ability to travel internationally etc. Moreover, much of the energy of movements is taken up with local struggles for survival. For example, in Bangladesh, the struggles of the Bangladesh Krishok Federation are focused upon the rights of landless people and their main struggle is not against neoliberal globalization as such but for basic land rights. Hence the militant particularisms of participant movements may vitiate against full ongoing engagement with the global ambitions of a grassroots globalization network. Having said this, movements may still be able to conduct occasional solidarity actions in their localities (e.g. globalized local actions) on behalf of broader international networks.

The contested social relations within PGA

The PGA network comprises a diversity of movement participants, and subsequently a diversity of organizational philosophies, ideologies, goals and cultural beliefs. As I have argued above, the unifying values that hold this network together are its collective visions – the PGA hallmarks and organizational principles. However, the cohesion of the network depends on the quality and durability of facilitation and interaction between its constituent participants, as well as their ability to devote time and energy towards the network while also being involved in their own local/national struggles.

Concerning the processes of interaction, while their website is translated into seven languages, PGA uses the languages of English and Spanish in the majority of its Internet communications. For example, e-mail communications within PGA Asia that form part of its networking strategies are in English – a language that is neither spoken nor understood by the majority of peasant farmers who comprise the mass base of movements who participate in the network. Moreover, the proceedings of PGA international conferences are also conducted in Spanish and English. Those who could not readily communicate in the dominant languages form small translation clusters in their own languages. This is a practical requirement given the many different languages spoken in the PGA convergence. However, those activists who are bilingual (in Spanish and English) have certain advantages at the meetings and workshops of the conference,
concerning following and responding to the nuances of debates, and the intricate ebb and flow of discussions. In addition, translation into certain common languages raises the possibility of homogenizing different movements’ experiences, and the effacement of important culturally specific differences. Resistance networks can provide alternative channels of communication, whereby particular voices that are suppressed in their own society may find articulation in international networks that can project and amplify their concerns. However, within PGA these remain selective – some voices are still heard at the expense of others.

There is a terrain of unequal power relations at work within PGA, both between participants in the network, and within the movements that constitute the networks. The place-specific hopes and dreams of marginalized folk are not necessarily realized in the collective visions of a network. For, while the PGA hallmarks reject all forms of domination, some continue within the convergence. For example, unequal gender relations persist within several of the peasant movements that participate in PGA. The leadership of such movements continues to be dominated by men, and patriarchal attitudes and actions – particularisms that masquerade as universal – persist within the functioning and organization of the movements. In addition, unequal gender relations often characterize the communities from which social movements draw their membership (Interviews, Bangalore, India 1999 and Cochabamba, Bolivia 2001).

Moreover, global media such as the Internet create gatekeepers, and codes of access and interpretation, that may easily restrict the articulation and circulation of minority voices – e.g. of women and indigenous peoples – through this technology. For example, gender and gender ‘place-based’ experiences are difficult to represent in the cyber-bound discourse against neoliberalism (Belasteguigoitia 1998).

Such powers to dominate are thus entangled with those of resistance within these movements. As a result, networks such as PGA are spaces of resistance/domination (Sharp et al. 2000). In recognition of this continuing problem, gender workshops are organized in all of the PGA regional and international conferences. Such workshops provide spaces in which gender inequalities within participant movements and within the network can be discussed and worked upon.

There are also other questions of power within the dynamics of the networks, some associated with cultural differences between PGA participants. In part, these have resulted from a clash between attempts to establish what Harvey (1996) would term a universal politics within the decision-making processes of the network and the militant particularisms of some of its participants. For example, in the PGA conference in Cochabamba, many Latin American delegates felt that meetings were controlled from a ‘European’ perspective, which was obsessed with particular forms of ‘process’ and ‘consensus’. Some delegates felt that such ‘universal’ procedures were used to discriminate or silence debate, and control the discussion space. Quechua delegates commented that in indigenous meetings participants would often repeat issues constantly, while in international meetings, where there was much participation by ‘Northern’ activists, repetitions by speakers were frequently silenced.

As noted earlier concerning processes of interaction, a discursive power is at work as certain processes of political interaction and communication that are used in European autonomist and direct action communities – such as consensus – have been grafted onto PGA’s international conferences in an attempt to establish perceived egalitarian discussion procedures applicable to all. However, such particularisms that are deployed as universalisms have vitiated against the smooth workings of the network precisely because they have transcended important place-specific affinities. Indeed, such attempts at universalism can create a homogeneous activist environment that elides important issues of diversity (Subbuswamy and Patel 2001).

The different ideologies, agendas and strategic and tactical practices articulated within grassroots globalization networks may also cause contestation, for example, concerning the use of violent and nonviolent methods of struggle in different contexts (see Benjamin 2000). Indeed, these differences and their attendant problems are similar to those that exist within particular participant movements, since all forms and scales of political organizing involve contestation and negotiation. However, grassroots globalization networks maintain less everyday interactions between participants, and greater diversity of contesting views and issues, than specific social movements. In response to this, PGA has argued for a diversity of tactics, and has kept the wording of its hallmarks deliberately general so that different movements may interpret terms like direct action in their own ways according to the place- and political-specificity of their struggles.
From the analysis of the process geographies of PGA – as one example of a grassroots globalization network – I want to propose that, rather than constituting a ‘non-place’ of resistance to neoliberal capitalism, such networks can be conceived of as ‘convergence spaces’ that facilitate the forging of an associational politics that constitutes a diverse, contested coalition of place-specific social movements. These coalitions prosecute conflict on a variety of multi-scalar terrains that include both material places and virtual spaces. I propose the notion of convergence space as a conceptual tool by which to understand and critique grassroots globalization networks.

Convergence space

A convergence space comprises a heterogeneous affinity – ‘a world made of many worlds’ (Marcos 2001, 10) – between various social formations, such as social movements. By participating in spaces of convergence, activists from participant movements embody their particular places of political, cultural, economic and ecological experience with common concerns, which lead to expanded spatiotemporal horizons of action (Reid and Taylor 2000). Such coalitions of different interests are necessarily contingent and context dependent (Mertes 2002).

The notion of a convergence space has implications for political agency and for geography. It serves to critique Harvey’s (1996) call for a global ambition of universal values that can transcend specific movement’s militant particularisms. Also, by being deployed to understand specific grassroots globalization networks, the notion of convergence space enables theoretical approaches to networks (e.g. Dicken et al. 2001) to be grounded in the materiality of practical politics. Using the empirical analysis of PGA as a guide, convergence spaces can be conceived as having the following characteristics:

1. **Convergence spaces comprise diverse social movements that articulate collective visions**, to generate sufficient common ground to generate a politics of solidarity, i.e. multi-scalar collective action. These collective visions are representative of a ‘prefigurative politics’ (Graeber 2002), prefiguring not a future ideal society, but a participatory way of practising effective politics, articulating the (albeit imperfect) ability of heterogeneous movements to be able to work together without any single organization or ideology being in a position of domination. Collective visions approximate the universal values that Harvey (1996) discusses. Contrasting, but not necessarily disabling, tensions exist between the articulation of a universalist politics and the militant particularisms of movements within the functioning of convergence spaces. First, certain universalisms can vitiate against the smooth functioning of grassroots globalization networks – as seen in the use of consensus political procedures in PGA conferences. Such universalisms may in fact be particularisms that are deployed as universal which create homogenous activist environments that elide important issues of diversity. Second, the immediacy of place-based concerns – such as movements’ everyday struggles for survival under conditions of limited resources – can mean that the global ambitions articulated by grassroots globalization networks remain unrealized.

2. **Convergence spaces facilitate uneven processes of facilitation and interaction.** The diverse groups and movements that converge in such spaces enact a practical politics consisting of at least five processes: communication, information sharing, solidarity, coordination and resource mobilization. These processes form moving, overlapping circuits – enacted materially and virtually – that constitute convergence spaces. Interactions within virtual space act as a communicative and coordinating thread that weaves different place-based struggles together. These connections are grounded in place- and face-to-face based moments of articulation such as conferences and global protests. However, owing to differential access to (financial, temporal) resources and network flows, differential material and discursive power relations exist within and between participant movements. As a result, processes of facilitation and interaction tend to be uneven.

3. **Convergence spaces facilitate multi-scalar political action by participant movements.** Social movements engaged in grounded material struggles, and articulating place-specific concerns, also actively participate in forging a globalizing network of such struggles. Indeed, particular local-based social movements may develop transnational networks of support as an operational strategy for the defence of their place(s) (Escobar 2001). Certain places may be of symbolic importance in the collective rituals of the network, for example...
as sites for international conferences, or global
days of action (Bosco 2001).

Rather than ‘grassrooting the space of flows’
(Castells 1999), convergence spaces facilitate an
intermingling of scales of political action, where
such scales become mutually constitutive (Dicken
et al. 2001). For example, grassroots globalization
networks prosecute globalized local actions (politi-
cal initiatives which take place in different
locations across the globe, in support of particular
localized struggles) and localized global actions
(political initiatives coordinated around a partic-
ular issue or event in a particular place). These
transnational collective political rituals, exempli-
fied by global days of action, can enable the
sustainability of activist and movement identities,
and practically and symbolically articulate the
common ground shared by different placed-based
social movements. Moreover, in these actions
places become ‘articulated moments’ (Massey
1994) in the enactment of global networks. As
a result of these types of action, there are differ-
ential impacts on particular place-based struggles,
due in part to the extent to which a particular
struggle is projected onto the global arena by
virtue of its involvement in a globalizing network.
However, certain scales of political action may
provide more appropriate means for movements
within convergence spaces to measure their
strength and take stock of their opponents, than
others. For example, many movements in the
global South see defence of local spaces and
opposition to national governments (pursuing
neoliberal policies) as their most appropriate
scales of political action (Mertes 2002). As a
result, geographical dilemmas arise in the attempt
to prosecute multi-scalar politics compounded by
the uneven character of processes of interaction
and facilitation.

4. Convergence spaces are comprised of contested social
relations, because of the very different militant
particularisms that are articulated by participant
movements. For example, different groups artic-
ulate a variety of potentially conflicting goals
(concerning the forms of social change), ideolo-
gies (e.g. concerning gender, class and ethnicity)
and strategies (e.g. institutional [legal] and extra-
institutional [illegal] forms of protest). While these
contradictions may act as a nexus for a more
universal politics – as Harvey argues – problematic
issues will continue to arise within convergence
spaces concerning unequal discursive and
material power relations that result from the
differential control of resources (Dicken et al.
2001) and placing of actors within network flows
(Massey 1994). These in turn may give rise to
problems of representation, mobility and cultural
difference, both between the social movements
that participate and between activists within
particular movements. The alliances forged ne-
necessarily involve entangled power relations,
where relations of domination and resistance are
entwined, that create spaces of resistance/domination
(Sharp et al. 2000).

Negotiating difference in convergence
spaces

Convergence spaces function within a penumbra of
differences, conflicts and compromises. As negotiated
spaces of multiplicity and difference, they can be
conceived as dynamic systems, constructed out of
a complexity of interrelations and interactions
across all spatial scales (after Massey 1994). Multiple
differences (and their attendant resonances and
tensions) can be empowering to those conducting
resistance, if the common ground shared by activists
is a global ambition capable of challenging interna-
tional institutions while also empowering local/
national struggles.

Harvey (1996) is correct that for movements to
work successfully together, they need to develop
a universalist politics capable of reaching across
space, without abandoning their militant particu-
larist base(s). Certainly, in articulating the collec-
tive visions of its hallmarks and Global Sustainable
Campaigns, PGA has attempted to create a com-
mon ground for transnational solidarity. Moreover,
by stressing the importance of diversity and differ-
ence (e.g. regarding movement tactics and local
approaches to the Global Sustainable Campaigns),
PGA has also sought to retain the militant particu-
larisms of its participant movements.

However, convergence spaces are also spaces of
contested social relations – not least because of
the persistence of place-specific parochialisms (e.g.
in the form of unequal relations of power and
gender) within participant movements. As a result,
certain universal values may serve to reinscribe or
mask inequalities between actors within a network.
However, this does not necessarily mean that net-
works are unable to function. Rather, as movement-
specific hopes, visions, problems and inequalities
converge, so networks become entangled spaces
of resistance/domination, still able to articulate opposition and alternatives to neoliberalism.

Grassroots globalization networks are, at present, primarily defensive in character, as yet unable to articulate a hegemonic strategy (Sader 2002). The ‘war on terror’ that followed the September 11th 2001 attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, served to initially undermine some of the initial successes of grassroots globalization mobilizations, because it captured public attention, and grassroots globalization networks were ill-equipped to respond to it. However, following corporate corruption scandals such as Enron, the economic crisis in Argentina brought about by neoliberalism, and the over-extension of US militarism, grassroots networks are beginning to regroup and reorganize (Bello 2002).

To be effective in their global ambitions, attention needs to be paid to the internal structures of the movements and groups that participate in convergence spaces, and to their placing within local realities. Attention must also be paid to the effectiveness and character of participant movement links to national organizations, as well as to the dynamic, changing character of their global connections, interactions and relationships with other movements within the network. Universal values are always embedded in, and emergent from, the local and concrete (Reid and Taylor 2000). For collective visions to be able to incorporate diverse militant particularisms, they need to embrace a politics of recognition that identifies and defends only those differences that can be coherently combined with social and environmental justice (Fraser 1997). Only then will the collective visions articulated by the participants of convergence spaces enable the articulation of a more transcendent and universal politics that genuinely articulates social and environmental justice at all spatial scales.

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible by a research grant (SGS/00445/G) from The Nuffield Foundation in 2000 and a research grant from The Carnegie Trust in 2002. Thanks to Andy Cumbers, Julia Lossau, Adam Tickell, my anonymous referees, the participants in the research seminar in the Institute for International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, and the participants in the ‘Alternative Geographical Imaginations’ sessions at the 2003 AAG conference in New Orleans for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Notes

1 During the nineteenth century, international alliances were established in the antislavery movement and the Internationals of the Communists and Anarchists. In the twentieth century, internationalism has been present in the campaign for women’s suffrage, the International brigades (in Spain in the 1930s, Cuba since the 1960s and Nicaragua in the 1980s), trades union activism, and in the anti-nuclear movement.

2 Mobilization around globalization can be dated back to at least 1986 – when over 80,000 people protested against an IMF meeting in Berlin (see Gerhards and Rucht 1992). In the early 1990s, struggles emerged in the United States against GATT, as well as protests by movements such as Reclaim the Streets in Britain (Brender and Costello 1994).

3 This concept takes its inspiration from the convergence centres that have been established at global days of action (e.g. in Seattle 1999 and Prague 2000). These centres are places where activists collect, strategize and prepare for the protests. A preliminary articulation of this concept can be found in Routledge (2000).

4 Grassroots globalization is a more accurate term than ‘anti-globalization’ for what such alliances represent. They struggle for inclusive, democratic forms of globalization, using the communicative tools of the global system. What they are expressly against is the neoliberal form of globalization (see Graeber 2002).

5 For example, through the discursive and material role played by institutions such as the IMF and World Bank in global economic policymaking.

6 This was convened by such groups as Movimento Sem Terra (Brazil), Kamataka State Farmer’s Association (India), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Nigeria), the Peasant Movement (Philippines), the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores (Nicaragua) and the Indigenous Women’s Network (North America and the Pacific).

7 However, there are trust-based relationships within PGA that are not place-dependent. These have been built upon people having got to know one another at conferences, and worked together on particular protests, but who live in different places.

8 There have been three international conferences, held in Geneva, Switzerland (1998), Bangalore, India (1999) and Cochabamba, Bolivia (2001), and regional PGA conferences have been held in Europe (Milan, Barcelona, Leiden), Nicaragua, Panama, Brazil, Bangladesh, New Zealand (Aotearoa) and the United States.

9 The India caravan visited struggles of tribal peoples, fisherfolk and rubber workers in southern India. It included activists from various countries who had attended the PGA international conference in Bangalore.

10 Personal communications: Bangalore 1999.

11 There is some excellent work by geographers concerning the use of space by different groups in the construction of their political strategies (Swyngedouw...
1997; Allen et al. 1999; Herod 2001), and how these may collide with shifting institutional and regulatory spaces at local, regional, national and supra-national levels (Brenner 1998).

12 Internal PGA communication, November 2001.

13 For example, the WTO held its 2001 meeting in Qatar – a state where protest has been deemed illegal, and the 2002 G8 meeting was held deep in the Canadian Rocky mountains.

14 The extent to which such resistance can expose the character, scope and consequences of neoliberalism as a political project remains to be seen (Peck and Tickell 2002).

15 As an English-speaker who also speaks some Spanish, I have been able to participate in most discussions.

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