

There is a saying in Latin America that “the revolution is the work of the ants.” It is the everyday work we do together, moving obstacles that are bigger than ourselves, that succeeds in crumbling the big, overwhelming nightmare that sometimes makes us feel powerless as individuals. Ants accomplish amazingly large tasks by working together, and are a powerful symbol of collective power in the face of corporate control of air, land, water, culture, public services, and life itself.



CROSS-POLLINATING THE GRASSROOTS

The Beehive Design Collective is a wildly-motivated, all-volunteer, activist art collective dedicated to “cross-pollinating the grassroots” by creating collaborative, anti-copyright images for use as educational and organizing tools. We work anonymously as word-to-image translators of complex global stories, gathered through conversations with affected communities.

Since 2000, we have disseminated more than 150,000 posters throughout the Americas, entirely by grassroots, hand-to-hand distribution! Our graphics have tackled issues from globalization, trade, and resource extraction, to energy, biotechnology, and climate change.

We strive to create holistic and accessible images that inspire critical thought and strategic action.

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The Beehive Design Collective's FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS NARRATIVE

the First Poster in a GRAPHIC TRILOGY...

FREE TRADE AND THE GLOBAL RESISTANCE TO CORPORATE COLONIALISM



www.beehivecollective.org

A narrative tour through the Beehive's first large scale graphics campaign, the beginning of a trilogy of graphics about corporate globalization in the Americas that was followed by Plan Colombia (2002) and Mesoamérica Resiste (2013)...



THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

...never heard of it?

The heavily contested, and now collapsed, Free Trade Area of the Americas was a proposed international trade agreement that aimed to eliminate the remaining "barriers" to the free flow of money, goods, and services across borders in the entire Western Hemisphere (excluding Cuba) in an attempt to create

ONE huge, integrated web of "open markets." It was first introduced at the 1994 Summit of the Americas, soon after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and was negotiated in private for a decade.

We made the FTAA poster as a mobilizing tool in the lead up to mass demonstrations against the negotiations of the FTAA that happened in Quebec City in 2001. We reprinted the poster for the protests against the next round of talks in Miami in 2003. The FTAA finally reached an impasse and stalled out after the last attempt at negotiations that took place in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 2005, also amidst large protests.



In our most recent reprint of the poster, we changed the banner at the bottom to read "la lucha sigue contra todos los TLCs" (the fight continues against all free trade agreements). Since the collapse of the FTAA negotiations, the US has continued to push forward bilateral trade agreements (which means between the US and one other country, like Colombia, Panama, and Korea) and regional trade agreements (like in Central America). Most recently, a new, sweeping free trade agreement called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has been in the works, that would include at least 12 countries, including the US and Asian and Latin American countries. Like the FTAA, the TPP is being negotiated in private and the US is pushing for fast-track approval of the plan.

This is a map of interconnections, which allows the viewer a moment to find oneself in the bigger picture of the time in which we are all now living. By literally putting everything on the same page, we strive to break down the mindset that these are "single issues." You can use this poster as an introduction to the many different issues that come up in discussions about free trade, and to talk about how social, political, economic, and environmental issues are all connected and impact each other. This graphic is also a celebration of global resistance to the neoliberal model of development behind free trade agreements, and can be used to spark storytelling and sharing of strategies and tactics.



The **Ants of the Resistance** are busy mobilizing to fight the situation and speak truth to the power of the spiders, judges, and worker bees. Above and below ground, on the front lines and behind the scenes, the ants are organizing and tapping into creative traditions to fuel their resistance. The above-ground resistance has swelled to an uprising, as harvester ants approach from the North and South of the Americas in an attempt to regain the resources that have been stolen from them.



Ants marching in from the left are the **ants from the Global South**, symbolizing the inspiring and powerful struggles of groups such as the Landless Workers Movement in

Brazil (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, or the MST) and the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. With babies on their backs, carrying farm tools and musical instruments (including pots and pans), these ants are making themselves heard. They are documenting their own realities through movements like the Chiapas Media Project and also communicating with ants from the North. Meanwhile, a surly little ant spray-paints "Autogestión" on the symbolic wall, meaning "self-management" or "self-birth."



Rushing in from the right side is the **Northern resistance**, armed with some of the tactics of the youth involved in the North American anti-globalization movement. They are catapulting a pie as the Biotic Baking Brigade, a tactic to identify specific people whose greed is causing immense suffering and symbolically "assassinate" them, clown-style!



The radical cheerleaders are gearing up for a pissed pep-rally with political rhymes...making space for a little "black bloc" tactics in their march (well, most ants are always dressed in black)... Some ants are making music and parading on stilts, others are doing Capoeira and plotting for a Critical Mass bike ride. One ant has just finished a puppet and is taking it to the streets for some guerilla theater.

In the **underground**, ants carve the words "Global resistance to corporate colonialism" in the anthill tunnels below the city. The industrial grid of the spider's web (power lines, water mains, and fiber optic internet cables) have replaced the roots of what was once healthy soil.



The ants are hacking into this grid to power their organizing networks and create their own independent media, broadcasting their struggle for truth on pirated airwaves in defiance of the dominant paradigm. Many of the ants are working to undermine the web's power structure by dismantling the system with its own tools.

The underground resistance is also tirelessly reclaiming the soil and water and saving and planting seeds. These agents of compost understand that to build a new world from the ashes of the old, we must create sustainable technologies and tools to carry us into the future society we are working to create.



As the spiders feverishly weave their webs and extract resources for the sake of profit and short-sighted economies, they are using up and contaminating the Earth's water supplies. While drought and extreme weather are getting worse due to climate change, and many people around the world don't have access to clean drinking water, the spiders are draining the oceans and rivers through two giant spigots.



Between the spigots, two spider cops in riot gear are hanging a banner quoting the World Bank that reads, "THE NEXT WORLD WAR WILL BE ABOUT WATER." On the Arctic poles, icebergs are being dragged away in chains by barge in reference to several corporations' interest in buying up icebergs in order to access precious fresh water for thirsty computer manufacturing. A pile of discarded computers, the technology obsolete after only a year, points to startling facts about how much water is used by the computer industry. As the Earth's water is being drained into the grid of the metropolis, it is pumped through the machines of resource intensive industries that keep the system running.



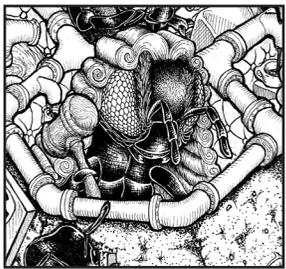
Throughout the city, and around the clock, the **office worker bees** are busy earning away, each one of them locked into a cubicle in the hi-rise hives. Addicted to coffee and Coca-Cola, the worker bees are glued to their computers, the engines of globalization.

Lightning-speed technology allows billion dollar investments to enter and leave a country in a matter of hours.

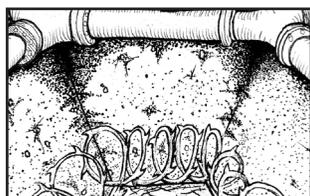
Two **Monsanto bees** are depicted on either side of the city in their ivory towers of science brewing up another batch of NutraSweet, instead of honey, to keep the bees buzzing in their production cells.



Presiding over the entire system from the center of the hive are the **Tribunal Bees**, the unaccountable decisionmakers of secret courts in which, under free trade agreements, corporations are able to sue national governments for any resistance they encounter to free trade. World Trade Organization courts have sided with corporate interests in every environmental case which has come before them. NAFTA courts have forced countries to pay "damages" to multi-billion dollar corporations to "compensate" them for imaginary future profits they might have made, were it not for laws safe-guarding labor rights, public services, and the environment.



The metropolis and its inhabitants are encased in a thick concrete and razor wire wall, like the barriers that are erected wherever the FTAA, WTO, World Bank or IMF meet. Walls are built to keep dissident voices from being heard in the proximity of these secretive trade meetings held in the name of the people of the Americas. Protestors are detained at the very same borders that free trade open for corporate interests. The physical dismantling and breach of these boundaries during protests is a powerful example of collective direct action.



Planet Earth is in the center of this map, surrounded by three giant spiders of development, militarization, and corporate media who have taken control of the web of life around us. They are spinning out mega-infrastructure projects for trade, taking over the land and paving the way for implementing the free trade agreements. A few of the details on the map are the NAFTA and Pan-American Superhighways as well as dry canals (freight rail lines connecting deep-water ports on both coasts) that are part of a regional development plan for southern Mexico and Central America formerly called Plan Puebla Panama (PPP).



The **Development Spider** is extracting natural resources as it decimates the land, consuming forests with chainsaw teeth. One arm is drilling oil in the Arctic and the other is drilling oil offshore to power the concrete spinning machine that weaves roads, power lines, and pipelines.

The **Militarization Spider**, with a bandolero of hypodermic needles and an American flag bandana, has machine guns trained on Central and South America. Imperialist intervention in the region has gone by different names over the years: anti-communism, the drug war, and anti-terrorism, to name a few. Plan Colombia was the name of a US-backed military operation under the guise of the Drug War, using US tax dollars to arm the notoriously brutal and corrupt Colombian armed forces. This multi-billion dollar operation (ultimately considered a failure) involved massive aerial spraying to destroy coca crops, with toxic herbicides created by the corporation who brought us Agent Orange... Monsanto.



And just to distract you and make you think everything is okay, there is the **Corporate Media Spider**, "Johnny Q Big Guy"... He's clutching onto the earth with Nike teeth and hooks, as television and the NASDAQ blind his eyes. Sprouting from his well-funded back is a media tower with a Disney satellite dish radiating signals, forming yet another invisible web that constantly surrounds us. At exponential rates, this king of spin is churning out a web of generic, corporate-controlled culture, with copyright signs and UPC codes for music notes... pop culture produced for commerce, not community.

The three spiders collaborate and depend on each other, driven by their shortsighted urgency to control resources and expand markets. Meanwhile, they are busy polluting and privatizing things that we absolutely CAN'T live without - like the air, land, and water.

Caught in the web of globalization, which glistens with droplets of precious water, are the cocooned victims of so-called "free" trade. These animals represent specific struggles against the corporate control of life and appear as constellations against the night sky, telling the stories of today's global economy.



On the far left, a **howler monkey** spun in the thread of sewing machines represents the plight of maquiladora (assembly plant) sweatshop workers, who suffer inhumane working conditions, meager pay, and a climate of violence against labor organizers. After NAFTA was signed, “free trade” between the US and Mexico (combined with militarization

of borders) resulted in massive job loss in the US and the creation of pools of cheap labor in Mexico. Free trade law endangers workers’ rights, calling them “barriers to trade.”



The **crow** is trapped behind the bars of the rapidly growing prison industrial complex. Racial profiling, inadequate legal representation, and racist drug sentencing laws conspire to create a shameful scenario in which the US incarcerates a greater percentage of black men than South Africa did under apartheid. Privatization of schools, healthcare, land, and water lead to displacement and impoverishment of people throughout the Americas. Prisons end up being holding cells for those denied sovereignty and equal access to resources and opportunities. Meanwhile, these populations serve as free labor to the corporate owners of prisons.



The **sheep**, tempted by the carrot on a stick, and now bound by the chains of debt, has been forced into the system of privatized education. Another aspect of the free trade model is selling off all types of public services, including education, to the highest bidder. The result is

a system which views students as customers, future employees, and captive markets for advertisements. Such a system has no interest in giving the non-wealthy access to education, teaching creativity or critical analysis, or placing long-term social goals ahead of short-term profits.

Above the sheep, a sick **frog** is caught up in the system of privatized health care and patented medicine. Corporate healthcare companies deny life-saving drugs and treatments to those who can’t pay, while drug companies are stealing and patenting traditional indigenous medicines. Frogs have permeable skin and are a sensitive indicator species.



This sick frog is telling us about what’s in store for all life on the planet due to pollution, habitat loss, and climate change. The frog here is also a reference to vivisection and testing on animals in the pharmaceutical industry.

The **sea turtle** is a symbol of ecology and environmental crises. A casualty of industry, the turtle is tangled in the binds of a fishing net. She is also caught in the ironic trap of the “six-pack ring,” a symbol of how the horror of ecological devastation can be reduced to campaigns about “doing your part” to ease the guilt of being a consumer on a dying planet. Today we are in the midst of the 6th mass extinction of species this planet has seen - this one caused by humans. Scientists say we are on track to lose up to 50% of all plant and animals species by the end of this century. If we want to protect biodiversity on this planet, we need to do more than just clip the rings on our plastic trash.



The **monarch butterfly** is a victim of the genetic pollution caused by biotechnology. Cocooned in manipulated DNA strands, she is wearing a gas mask to avoid the genetically engineered corn pollen that is deadly to monarch caterpillars.



The **rabbit**, a campesino with patented GMO seeds falling from his hand, is up against the pressures of big agribusiness. He is tangled in the pesticide hose from his backpack sprayer, which he is forced to use in order to compete in the free market. Ironically, the same rich nations that are pushing to eliminate all barriers

to trade also heavily subsidize their agricultural sectors. After NAFTA, subsidized corn from the US flooded the Mexican market at below the cost of production, causing local markets to crash and forcing small farmers off their land.

The **polar bear**, surrounded by pipelines, speaks to the environmental racism in oil extraction on indigenous lands in the Arctic and throughout the Americas. Once oil and other resources have been extracted from the land, oil companies move on, leaving a wake of environmental devastation.



The **bison**, confined by the barbed wire of borders, represents the hypocrisy of the free trade model which advocates for the free flow of investment capital but strict borders for people. At the same time NAFTA was being put into place in 1994, Proposition 187 was threatening to take away health care and education from the children of undocumented workers in California. Hundreds

of people die each year attempting to cross the increasingly militarized border into the US. Post-9/11 “security culture” continues to target and persecute immigrants, while citizens of rich nations and personnel from multinational corporations are given unlimited freedom to pass through borders.