

## Pig Tour - reports from the tour-stops

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This page offers a short report of every stop that we made on the pig tour that A SEED organised in June 2009. A report in German can be found on the website of Nandu, our German partner in this project.

Later, we will publish a more substantial analysis on this website of what we experienced and saw during the many visits we paid to local action groups that are protesting against the pig farms. We can also get cracking with the new video-letters concerning the situation here in Europe: there's plenty to do! Keep an eye on A SEED's website for updates on the campaign against huge farms.

### 31st of May &ndash; 1st of June in Appelscha

Our fellow protesters from the Netherlands are on their way by now. The first stop was at the Pinksterland-days; a festival in Appelscha (a town in the province of Friesland), where we held a workshop.

The majority of the audience was aware of the problems with factory farming and the massive production of crops for export in South America. The video-letters were very well received, and most of the attendants were not aware of the activities of Dutch pig-farmers in the eastern part of Germany.

On the 1st of June we make the long journey to the north-eastern part of Germany. It's not yet clear where we can pitch our tent tonight, but we will undoubtedly be welcomed in Alt Tellin, the village close to the site where the Dutchman Straathof wants to build the largest pig-farm in Europe.

### 2nd of June &ndash; Introductions and practical preparations in Alt Tellin

After months of preparations we're finally all together: the people from A SEED, from Nandu and the two people from the Widerstandshaus ('house of resistance') close to the location where the largest pig farm in Europe is slated to be built this year. The Dutchman Straathof wants to keep more than 10.000 sows here &ndash; as if he hasn't got enough pig farms already! (see earlier action reports).

It's a beautiful and peaceful area in Mecklenburg. Quite a few people with alternative lifestyles live in the region. Since land and buildings are cheap, it's still possible to build up something beautiful there without having to earn too much money. Of course, not everyone is content here and the percentage of people currently unemployed is very high. Still, at least 60% of the inhabitants of Alt Tellin and neighbouring villages are against the construction of this pig farm. Everyone knows how much the farm will stink and how many trucks on the road will be the result.

The locals give us a lot of help with the last preparations for the tour. We have another look at the play and the presentations are given the finishing touches. As of tomorrow, we will finally be heading for the town squares and the venues.

### 3rd of June Greifswald - Agrokultis on the Baltic Sea

Greifswald is an old Hanzestad (i.e. city belonging to an alliance of cities around the Baltic Sea) that has had a university since the 15th century. At the moment, the ecology- and agricultural colleges are very popular. Students from the west also flock to these faculties since life here in the east is so much cheaper and because it's situated in a beautiful environment. An alternative group of students, the Agrokultis, have invited us to stop by. This group is also engaged in the struggle against the new Straathof pig farm in Alt Tellin.

At the Fischermarkt we had our first performance of our street-play. The audience was not very big, but this doesn't matter so much for a try-out performance. The performance went fairly well, although various parts of the play could be performed better and more quickly.

{youtube}PrTWR2Z2JmM{/youtube}

### 4th of June - Demmin

Demmin is a bit boring, but it is the town that is situated most closely to the planned pig farm in Alt Tellin. Our street play was sadly rendered impossible due to the rain. Also, we had been directed by the authorities to a small square which had about one passer-by every 15 minutes. When we were walking through the town in costumes and carrying our portable exhibition, we were stopped by the police. Apparently, just walking around constituted a massive disruption of the daily grind.

The info-meeting was comparable to the one we had in Greifswald; the audience was interested and well-informed of the building plans. Again, the talk was primarily focussed on the remaining possibilities for protest.

We interviewed a couple of people from the countryside-cooperative Ulenkrug and the 'Aktienetwerk Mondiale Landbouw' (Action Network Global Agriculture). At Alt Tellin, a woman talked about local experiences with the use of pesticides around her house, which was recorded in a video-message. Her four-year-old son with asthma is always affected immediately when pesticides are used in his vicinity. The location of their home is comparable to the situation in Paraguay: large fields on three sides of their house, at a distance of about 10 metres to the house.

#### 5th of June &dash; Neubrandenburg

An info-evening in a real Autonomes Jugend Zentrum (autonomous youth centre), painted an atmospheric shade of black, with a lot of stickers on the walls and a lot of civil disobedience as concerns the ban on smoking. After a nice bite to eat from the people's kitchen, the venue was getting steadily more crowded. The audience listened attentively and there was a good discussion. There were some disagreements when someone from the Burgerinitiativ (citizens' initiative) of Alt Tellin took the floor. On the 7th of June, there were local elections in Germany, but not everyone agreed that the parliamentary road was the right one for civic organisations. Generally, the elections sowed dissent in several places: initially, the protest against huge farms brings cohesion to the community, but when active people start working for parties that all assert that they are the most opposed to the farms, things start to go wrong. In this youth centre, both types of German antifa come together: the vegan anti-speciesists, and the Nazi-hunters that believe animal rights to be basically a topic for the extreme right. It was quite funny that half of them hoped that we would be able to convince their carnivore comrades. If we succeeded in this is not clear.

#### 6th-8th of June &dash; Berlin

On Sunday the 7th of June, the yearly environmental festival took place near the Brandenburgertor. Thanks to the bad weather, we could not match the 100.000 visitors that had attended the festival last year. Nonetheless, we had a large audience for our street play. This meant that performing was a lot more fun and a lot easier. The flyers were also rapidly distributed. We were not just preaching to the converted. Next to the smaller environmental clubs and the small-scale farmers with their own stalls, there were also many a-political environmental NGOs, large stalls with 'environmentally friendly' cars and expensive bicycles, and many stalls with sausages and other types of meat. We found it odd that Nandu was not allowed to sell seitan-burgers in the midst of all this barbequing and grilling: due to the lack of a tap close to the stall, this was deemed to be unhygienic. However, this meant we were free to snack on the seitan-burgers ourselves for the next two days.

The info-meeting on the 8th was frequented by a relatively young audience, including several acquaintances and a regiment of action-clowns that had just returned from an action against the deportation of 100 Vietnamese people. Despite the fact that they did not succeed in actually preventing the deportation, it was still a good action, which focussed attention on the harrowing asylum-policy of Germany and the EU.

#### 9th-10th of June &dash; Haßleben / Templin

The huge farms near Haßleben have a long history. As long ago as the seventies, the GDR set up a large-scale meat industry. Around 1980, the huge stables and manure-basins were built at Haßleben. The idea was to eventually house 170.000 pigs. Due to the fall of the communist regime, that amount was never reached. In the time of the GDR, unlike in current times, all the fodder was produced regionally, including the proteins.

A couple of years ago, the compound was bought for a trifle by the Dutch pig farmer Harry van Gennip. Initially, he had plans for about 85.000 pigs. Due to the resistance to this plan and the amount of litigation, he lowered the amount to 67.000, although the amount of breeding sows, hence the amount of piglets, has remained the same. The only difference is that the piglets are deported somewhat earlier to other fattening farms. A small part of the stables is already in use.

This time, the street-theatre took place on a small square next to the church. As during the rest of the first week, it was very windy, which made performing rather difficult: it was tricky ensuring that we were audible, and our leaflets were swiftly scattered by the wind. The same applied to the palm grease for the quizmaster, to ensure that the wheel of the free market would come to rest after being turned on the compartments of the right players. Here, the main criticism came from a group of old women who would not hear of any complaints concerning the mega-stables. Possibly this was due to some GDR-nostalgia or distrust of know-it-alls from abroad, since there were no actual arguments forthcoming.

#### Pro-schwein

A group at Haßleben that did proffer some arguments for the utilisation of the old mega-stables is the Pro-schwein ('pro-pig') group. They are pleased with the direct and indirect jobs that van Gennip says he will create, and one of the members of the group is already working for him. Their presence did not, however, end up in shouting or heckling, but in a respectful discussion. The pro-schweiners were also moved by the messages from Paraguay: 'Of course the fodder for cattle should not be produced in such a fashion!' However, they do not see it as the responsibility of European pig-farmers to combat this production. When it was said

that the current volume of meat-production is only made possible by an import achieved at the cost of local food-production and the environment, they were left speechless. All the other people in the room were vehemently opposed to the plans of Van Gennip. Van Gennip pays attention to PR and sponsors the local football-club and the nursery. Proschwein also receives money from him for their materials and other costs that they have to make.

#### Potatoes for activists

At Templin, we spent the night in Lokomotive Karlshof. This is a group experimenting with non-commercial agriculture. But it is a serious experiment: last year, they donated (inter alia) 14.000 kilograms of potatoes to people from the left-wing scene in Berlin. They do not want money for their products, but that doesn't mean there is nothing that they want in return. Everyone who wants to support them can come help, as much as they can, or donate money. They manage about 40 hectares of land, four small workers' houses and a few large stables and sheds. This summer they are planning to do up the old farm with the help of a lot of friends, in order to render it suitable for living in. They will be helped in this project by a large group of Wandergesellen (journeying apprentices), who are professional carpenters travelling on their apprenticeship, and who often work on alternative projects. See the website of Lokomotive Karlshof.

#### 11th-12th of June &ndash; Immenrode / Nordhausen

In Nordhausen, the Dutchman Van Asten already has a company of about 60.000 pigs (150.000 a year). Close to the village Immenrode, which is located about 20 kilometres away, he wants to build another stable for about 20.000 pigs. Apart from any other reasons to oppose the construction of this farm, the location of this farm is even more unfortunate than usual: it concerns a small plateau in a glim-area. The water, hence the noxious elements of the manure, come back out of the ground in the valley below fairly quickly. This pollutes the water of the small river and the land around it. We were warmly received by a delegation including no less than one mayor and two former mayors (in fact, every dirt-bucket of a town has a voluntary mayor, so it wasn't as spectacular as it sounds). The current mayor had confiscated a house for us in a beautifully situated bungalow-park in which mostly school kids ran around. The manifestation in Nordhausen was not such a success. The discussion around the large company of Van Asten seemed already settled in his favour, while Immenrode is too far away for the people of Nordhausen to bother about. Generally, the people on the streets seem quite uninterested.

The info-evening in the city hall of Immenrode was well-attended and interesting. At the start of the evening we performed our street-play again. This time, the mayor played the part of the neighbour, and she performed her part with great enthusiasm. Pig-farmer Van Asten is also still active in the Netherlands. For this reason, people were extra interested in our stories about the stunts Van Asten has pulled, as well as about other pig farmers in the Netherlands. In addition, we were asked to elaborate on the connection between animal husbandry and climate change. The production of meat and dairy is responsible, world-wide, for 18% of all the greenhouse gases (CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents). This is more than all traffic and transport taken together (14%). Especially the transformation of forest and swamps into land for agriculture and the farting, pissing and burping of all the animals are responsible for these gases. All in all it was a fairly long evening, but nobody was complaining.

#### 13th of June - Kooperativa Haina

On Saturday we had the day off, in the sense that we had no appointment with a citizens' initiative group. There was, however, a summer-party in a commune in the area. Here, we set up our exhibition (including our peepbox-cinema) and apart from that, set out to enjoy ourselves. It was an inspiring place to be, in a small green valley without any other houses nearby. As early as 1993, a group from the pirate-radio of Erfurt had bought an old water-mill here with a few hectares of land. In the GDR-time, it was a small holiday destination. They have a vegetable garden, some pigs and a herd of goats. The goat cheese is sold door-to-door. Kooperativa Haina has a website.

#### 14th-15th of June - Alkersleben / Arnstadt

At Alkersleben we were very warmly received by a large deputation from the Citizens' Initiative Group. The Dutchman Poels has already started building a farm here for 22.510 pigs. The local population, however, has not given up the fight. Next to the usual theatre performance and info-evening, they had set up a whole programme for us.

#### Schloß Tonndorf

Situated on a hill next to the village of Tonndorf lies an ancient castle, which was purchased by a group of more than 30 adults and quite a lot of kids three years ago. A part of the commune works away from home, but quite a few of them are occupied with the maintenance of a large orchard, keeping bees and a vegetable garden, as well as a nearly extinct type of sheep. People keep themselves busy with opposition against gen-tech and large-scale agriculture in the area. At the moment, it's almost impossible for new small-scale farmers to purchase land. The group wants to change this situation. More information is to be found on the website of Schloß Tonndorf.

#### Bach-fans against pig farms

At about a kilometre from the stables that is to be built, there is a small church where the composer Johann Sebastian Bach was married. An active group of volunteers has restored the dilapidated building completely. Many concerts are,

and tourists from all over flock to the church. This communal project has united many people in the region and enhanced community spirit. However, no-one can imagine people getting married in the church or listening to music there if, every time the wind blows from the wrong direction, everything stinks of pig-manure.

On the streets of Arnstadt, almost everyone knew of the plans of Poels. We got a lot of positive reactions, and almost no-one was in favour of a large pig-farm in the area. In the evening, the small room in hotel-restaurant 'De Gouden Hoen' ('The golden hen') was filled to the brim with an interested audience. The discussion was primarily concentrated on the problems with manure. The soil in the area is not suitable for a lot of manure and the national legislation concerning the maximum amounts of kilograms per hectare thus makes no sense at all. Additionally, there was a lot of frustration and anger at the passive attitude of most of the population. If everyone is opposed, how can it still be possible that the stable will be built? There was a militant group in the audience that thought that the construction of the stables should still be actively blocked by all possible means. These were mostly people older than 50; the village kids were mostly missing in action that evening.

19th-20th of June - Grubbenvorst / Horst

On Friday night, the 19th of June, we commenced with the info-evening in the village of Grubbenvorst. By contrast to most of the other locations, the community is in favour of pig- and poultry-farms

It was also striking that, while in Grubbenvorst most people were opposed to the advent of the businesses, there was far less opposition in Horst. This is not due to the fact that Horst is farther away from the location. It is probably due to the fact that in Grubbenvorst, there was a multitude of active citizens who from the get-go went from door to door to warn the other inhabitants and to mobilise them, while the citizens of Horst were initially restricted to following the news in their only regional paper.

News Mixed Business (Nieuws Gemengd Bedrijf (NGB)), experiment. A lot of international attention. But isn't it dangerous to put so many pigs and chickens together? Moreover, a lot more industry and a new greenhouse-area is scheduled to come to this area.

24th-25th of June - Maarheeze / Chijnsgoed

The last stop of the 2009 A SEED tour was on the 24th and 25th of June in Maarheeze. On the first night we had introductory talks with some of the most active members of the action group 'Chijnsgoed in Gevaar' ('Chijnsgoed in Danger'). On the 25th we did street theatre in front of the Lidl and Super supermarket stores, along with a photo exhibition in the street. In the evening there was an information and discussion night in de Smeltkroes (a neighbourhood centre) about the implications of the meat industry. We discussed the links between the general (global) story to the local plans for mega-stables in the Agriculture Development Area (LOG) of Chijnsgoed, close to Sterksel.

Unlike the other locations of the tour this area is right in the middle of the Dutch 'pig-breeder homeland', the province of Noord Brabant. On the poor sandy ground pig breeding developed in the 20th century into the horrific present day intensive livestock industry. The pig breeders also produced large families, and the children in their turn all wanted to become pig farmers, so the industry kept intensifying and became (landless) less connected to the land. This was disastrous for the quality of the water, the air and the land in these areas.

In recent decades increasing numbers of Brabant pig farmers moved to other areas in the Netherlands, and later also abroad. But this did not mean the problems in Brabant came to an end. The national policy of the LOG (agriculture development areas) entails that the intensive livestock farms situated close to nature conservation areas must move to areas where the sector is allowed to continue to grow. This may sound alright, but the people living in those LOGs are not exactly happy. Not in the least because most pig farmers use the 'forced' removal to apply for massive expansion of their business. This is also the case in Chijnsgoed: van Asten and van Gennip, who both have terrible reputations in Eastern Germany, plan to build big pig stables right next to each other. Marco van Asten will become the manager of both stables, so in actual fact he can run a business that is twice the official maximum size.

An additional problem in Brabant is that there are so many pig farmers that almost everyone has family ties with pig farmers. This makes the resistance against expansions more difficult and more personal. Fortunately even in Brabant things are starting to move and people are attempting to stop the building of new mega stables through a referendum. During the info and discussion night in the local library it became obvious that not everyone had given up hope in Maarheeze.

More information about the local situation and the struggle of the organisation Chijnsgoed in Gevaar can be found on: <http://www.chijnsgoed-in-gevaar.nl>