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**Title: The Polis of 'Global' Protest: Policing Protest at the G8 in Scotland**

**Abstract:** Protests at recent international summit meetings have prompted assertions about 'global protest' and 'global civil society'. In this paper we provide a detailed and contextualised analysis of the 2005 G8 summit in Scotland focussing on the dynamic interplay between police and protestors. We argue that local variables were critical to the experience of this manifestation of 'global protest'. Focusing on the policing of events in Edinburgh we highlight the pre-conceptions and assumptions (frames) underpinning police operations and contribute to more interactive understanding of police/protestor relations. Protest emerges in relation to the 'polis' (simultaneously denoting both the political community and the police), and neglecting this relationship leads to incomplete analyses. In concluding we consider the implications of our research for the policing of political protest.

**Key Words:** Policing, Protest, G8, Globalisation

## **The Polis of ‘Global’ Protest: Policing Protest at the G8 in Scotland**

### **Introduction**

In July 2004, the G8 group of world leaders announced that it would hold its next meeting in the Gleneagles Hotel, Scotland. Immediately, ‘there was an outpouring of you know: Genoa, Evian, Seattle’ (White, interview<sup>1</sup>). G8 summits have become so synonymous with violent clashes between police and protestors (in the media imagination at least) that the mere listing of previous venues was sufficient to raise the spectre of disorder. Genoa and Seattle in particular have become bywords for violent clashes, and the Scottish and British press reprised all the horror stories (complete with pictures) in the build up to the meeting in 2005.<sup>2</sup>

Such stories assumed particular prominence because Scotland’s police forces have little history in dealing with mass public disorder. In terms of political protests:

‘Not much has happened here ... just the odd bits and pieces which everyone thoroughly enjoyed and no-one got hurt. The G8, however, is of a very different magnitude. For a start we are talking about 10,500 cops coming up [from throughout Britain]’ (Ross, interview).

Such interviews unsettled our intended research focus on global protest and broadened the scope of our enquiry to encompass the social context within which protests are played out. Della Porta & Fillieule (2004: 217) highlight the mutually constitutive interplay between policing and protest and argue that policing is a critical factor in social movement action. Crucially the police should not simply be read as an

extension of the state, but must be comprehended as actors with their own attitudes and perspectives.

Framing, in social movement literature, refers to the meaning-making work of activists and opponents and highlights the interactive processes through which events, people or situations are interpreted (Snow 2004: 384). Frames highlight specific aspects and provide actors with narratives that make sense of a situation and constitute action orientations (Snow 2004: 384-6). They may be mapped onto power asymmetries, and Drury et al. (2003) show how police frames which cast an entire crowd as hostile can obscure internal differences and, when acted upon, become self-fulfilling. Our research shows how protest policing was framed by narratives relating to the (il)legitimacy of the various protestors which influenced subsequent interactions between police and protestors.

The run up to the G8 summit saw some emphasis given to a *Scottish* approach to policing. Whilst the actual existence of this was contested by interviewees, the phrase highlights the significance of locality. We recently (Gorringe & Rosie 2006) argued that the activists protesting at the 2005 summit were embedded in a ‘national’<sup>3</sup> context influencing not only who attended demonstrations but also their modes of organisation and mobilisation. Here, in emphasising police (‘polis’ in colloquial Scots) actions and perspectives we hope to provide a more complex account of the way in which (global) activism is mediated in and through specific places, social relations and political structures. We offer a corrective to romanticised and sweeping accounts of the global justice movement which assume the presence of a global civil society and gloss over localised interactions, and contribute to the growing number of

ethnographic accounts charting the interplay between protest and policing (e.g. Sheptycki 2005; Ellison & Martin 1999; Della Porta 1998).

The paper draws on research conducted before, during and immediately after the Gleneagles summit. We interviewed strategically placed police officers and protest participants, conducted conversations with dozens of protestors, collected a 'snapshot' survey of the largest demonstration, and undertook a review of newspaper coverage. This data is complemented by participant observation at key protest sites and events in early July 2005. Whilst in no sense comprehensive, our combination of methods offers a basis on which to consider the interplay between police and protestors in shaping the course of G8 protests.

### **Global Protests?**

Hubbard & Miller posit the existence of a 'truly global struggle' against neo-liberalism, noting that G8 summits 'cannot now take place without the presence of demonstrators' (2005: 230). Whilst some (e.g. Mayo, 2005) link this to the emergence of 'global civil society', others are more cautious. Diani (2005: 65) insists that 'the embeddedness of actions conducted on global issues ... is strongly mediated by the features of local civil societies and political systems'. Our research corroborates this analysis in that the 2005 protests followed a 'national' as much, if not more, than a 'global' logic (Gorringer & Rosie 2006).

The upshot was that 225,000 people marched through Edinburgh without a single arrest. The predominance of NGO and Church groups on the march had a bearing on the experience, and this constituency was no accident. Make Poverty History (MPH)

was a meticulously planned 'set piece', carefully coordinated with the police and deliberately distancing itself from previous summit protests (Dickinson, interview). Ideological commitment to a 'diversity of tactics' (including violence), which characterised past confrontations (Juris 2005), was actively discouraged and alternate forms of political expression were marginalised.

Much of the protest impact in Seattle, Genoa, Cancun and Davos stemmed from the accommodation of a variety of activists, causes and methods. In freezing out radical voices, MPH focused attention on certain issues but contributed to a de-legitimisation of anti-systemic protest. Shunned by MPH (and dismissive of its rationale), radical actors organised alternative protests. The disparate strands of the loosely aligned 'Global Justice' movement were, thus, sequestered into separate spheres - rendering the Gleneagles summit an ideal setting for the analysis of protest policing. Studying variations in policing over the course of a specific protest 'moment' (Earl & Soule 2006: 146) illuminates the embeddedness of protest politics and the significance of specific police frames.

Earl & Soule (2006) have recently outlined a 'police-centred explanation of protest policing'. They examine how institutional and organisational characteristics of police agencies affect police attitudes towards situational protest dynamics. Countering the argument that threats to political elites predict repressive policing, they emphasise police fear of 'losing control'. They (2006: 150) argue that missile throwing and protest size are most likely to trigger a police response when perceived as 'cues signalling losses of control'. Whilst their argument echoes Waddington (1998), 'situational dynamics' are not objective. Rather, they filter through pre-conceived

police understandings (or frames) pertaining to the protestors and the scope for trouble. Police, thus, do not 'see blue' in every context. Whilst Earl and Soule note the importance of *organisational* differences, we would follow Della Porta and Reiter (1998) in stressing cultural and attitudinal variations.

McDonald (2006) cites 'action and experience' as the hallmarks of contemporary 'global movements', identifying cultural factors which explain differences between US and British activist identities and campaign objectives. There is, however, a striking absence of conflict or political authority in his analysis (which is relevant only to democratic regimes). Where *repression* is the dominant motif of police authority, activists can be denied the recognition and reciprocity required for a collective identity to emerge or for action to be sustained (Sheptycki 2005: 345; Ellison & Martin 2000: 690). There are no index entries for 'policing' in McDonald's book though, as Della Porta & Fillieule (2004) point out, even law-abiding protests disrupt routines and highlight the issue of policing. Policing cannot simply be equated with repression since police may also facilitate and/or channel protest (Earl 2003; Della Porta & Reiter 1998).

Gillham & Marx (2000: 212) note that protests encompass a 'significant degree of indeterminacy and tradeoffs' by protestors and police. Their study of protests in Seattle highlights a multitude of factors – police training and attitudes, the legal context, media presence - which affect how a global protest event unfolds. Given that the police are key intermediaries and that the style and form of policing impacts on protest, any study of protest events must be contextualised within specific socio-

political relations and must incorporate an analysis of the frames adopted by police as well as protestors.

Whilst Della Porta & Reiter (1998: 5-6) observe a 'progressive assimilation of policing styles', the residual traces of distinct 'national' models and the variability of responses means that policing is never uniform. Despite such cautions there is a tendency for analysts to be insufficiently attuned to local specificities and adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to policing. Della Porta & Fillieule's (2004) account of 'British' policing, thus, obscures internal differentiation such as the suggestion of a distinctly 'Scottish' approach. Reicher et al. (2004) emphasise the need for nuanced understandings in charting police authorities' differential understandings of protestors. Discussing changing understandings of crowd psychology in police ranks, they emphasise the need to dispel the dangerous conflation of a 'single mass of people' with a 'single psychological crowd'. This reference to police attitudes and assumptions raises the critically important variable of 'police knowledge'.

Della Porta & Reiter (1998) argue that abstract police approaches are filtered through specific police cultures and forms of knowledge which frame protest events. *Police knowledge* refers to the way that police understand both their role and the situation they confront, and draws on police *culture*, the set of assumptions shared by officers (ibid. 22; Della Porta 1998: 229). Officers intervene on 'the basis of their understanding of the situation' rather than through blind adherence to regulations and police knowledge thus mediates protest encounters (Della Porta & Reiter 1998: 22-3). Whilst Marx (1998: 259) argues that increasingly sophisticated intelligence enables police to be more discriminatory and selective - 'rather than stereotyping all



demonstrators ... they can be focused on those groups thought most likely to behave violently' - such discretionary power means that certain groups may be branded as illegitimate 'troublemakers'. Subsequently, regardless of how protestors perceive themselves, police authorities may develop 'short-hands' about categories of people and their behaviour.

Della Porta & Fillieule (2004: 226) note that police stereotypes commonly include a threefold division of activists into 'genuine' protestors; 'troublemakers'; and the 'rent-a-mob'. This directly affects the style of policing encountered and the forms of protest tolerated. The question is: how are such categorisations formulated, and are they widely diffused? Whilst recent studies suggest that Western democracies increasingly adopt 'negotiated management' styles of protest policing (Della Porta & Reiter 1998), O'Neill (2004: 245) notes the persistence of national policing styles. This paper considers both the diffusion of policing strategies and the impact of sub-state police frames on one particular manifestation of 'global protest'. We begin by charting senior officers' strategic objectives and orientations, before analysing the underlying assumptions that framed the interplay between police, protestors and media during three demonstrations in Edinburgh prior to the Gleneagles summit. In conclusion we reflect on the data and draw out the implications.

### **'Polis'-ing Global Protest?**

Interviews with senior police officers in Scotland made it clear that their self-image and professional culture assumed the persistence of national styles and that sub-state (Scottish) features informed local policing. The relative restraint of police forces in Britain (and particularly Scotland) compared to continental Europe was a recurrent

theme. ‘In Europe, I’m sure you’re well aware, you know, it’s confrontation, big sticks’ (White, interview):

The alternative is the way they do it on the Continent ... You line the police on the road, the Bürgermeister has the authority to say ‘this is the line’. And on that line they put up enormous steel barricades ... And if public come over that barricade, they are met with overwhelming force from the police, with tear gas, water canon, rubber bullets the lot ... *We* deal with it differently (Dickinson, interview).

These interviews reinforced distinctions between militarised *gendarmerie* and the ‘community bobbies’ characteristic of Britain (Della Porta & Reiter 1998). When pressed on ‘Scottish policing’, however, it became clear that this was understood as a variant of a democratic ethos emphasising ‘facilitation of peaceful protest’. Each of our interviewees stressed the need for communication and de-escalation.

Problems can escalate when they are not dealt with at a tactical level. Let’s suppose an operational officer gets a custard pie in the face from some clown and, quite understandably, drags him over the barrier and a ‘thing’ goes off. Someone [a senior officer] on CCTV sees what’s happening. Saying ‘get a PSU [Police Support Unit] in there quick’ is the *wrong answer*. Get him out of there. An officer’s been pied by an eejit [idiot] and is boiling about it – get him out of there cool him down (Ross, interview)

In terms of the G8 protest held in Auchterarder (close to the Gleneagles Hotel), Chief Constable Vine stressed that: ‘My officers were under instruction, strict instruction, that we wanted a pleasant, carnival atmosphere’. He highlighted three operational priorities:

Firstly, don’t exacerbate a situation where none occurs. Officers should be able to take a bit of ribbing and teasing and so on. Secondly, if we immediately resort to arrests and so on, then we are faced with a logistical problem ... Thirdly, we wanted to facilitate protest. It is good for mainstream politics to enter into dialogue and facilitate people in expressing their views (Vine, interview).

Our police respondents attributed their understandings of crowd behaviour to experience: ‘The police are not narrow-minded – they instinctively know how to deal with people. OK, they may not have studied issues or have a detailed analysis. Academics study, but cops *experience*’ (Ross, interview. See also Della Porta & Reiter 1998: 27). We heard numerous statements about, and examples of, accommodation of protest objectives and to this extent G8 policing in 2005 reflects broader trends toward negotiated management (cf. Waddington & King 2005, Reicher et al. 2004). Adherence to such strategies in principle, however, does not ensure their observance.

### **Police Perceptions**

The main G8 related protest in 2005 was the Make Poverty History (MPH) march in Edinburgh. MPH was both the largest, and the first, demonstration that week, taking place on the Saturday before the summit. Thus, it promised to ‘set the scene’ for

subsequent protests. Well before the march, however, outlines of the action to come could be discerned: categorisation of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ protestors had begun, and the likely modes of intervention had been mapped out. In the following account we focus upon three consecutive protests in Edinburgh: the massive MPH march on Saturday (2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005); a more modest ‘Stop the War’ march on Sunday; and the more radical and ‘anarchist’ Carnival for Full Enjoyment on Monday.

In relation to MPH, officers spoke of the police role as extending beyond crowd control to ‘crowd management’ and ‘welfare’, the event requiring management and facilitation rather than *control*. Significant trouble was not expected: ‘If anything happens [that weekend] it will likely be after the Stop the War (STW)<sup>4</sup> rally’ (Ross, interview). Even here, however, it was anticipated that trouble might be no more than ‘a couple of drunken brawls’ (Ross, interview). Already, though, we see how police knowledge acts as an intervening variable between the principles and practice of ‘negotiated management’. A key differentiating aspect between the two events – both were marches along a negotiated route, ending with a rally at an agreed location – was the police view: ‘... we’ve [Lothian & Borders Police (LBP)] got an history in Edinburgh of Stop the War coalition not doing what they had agreed to do, acting in an inappropriate way, not being trusted’ (Dickinson, interview).

In 2003 anti-war demonstrators disrupted traffic over three days of spontaneous activism in Edinburgh that saw route plans discarded, roads blocked and police stations picketed. STW deviated from the consensus-based mode of politics dominating protest in Scotland, buoyed, in large part, by the significant presence of school-age activists.<sup>5</sup> Within these modestly expanded parameters of protest, the

established repertoire served as a constraint (cf. Tilly 1986: 390), and activists remained peaceful and negotiated with police authorities. Nevertheless, the deviation from prevailing norms ensured that STW were classified as ‘troublemakers’ in 2005. Della Porta & Reiter (2005: 21) note how ‘defeat’ can lead the police to make tactical and structural changes. A pre-history of political engagement pre-disposed police to adopt differing particular perspectives and to act in particular ways in relation to certain protest constituencies in 2005.

Such differences in policing were not lost on the protestors. As a leading Edinburgh activist told us: ‘I mean to be honest with you the policing on the Saturday [MPH] and the Monday [The ‘carnival’] was as much of a contrast as I think you’ll ever see’ (Fox, interview). Part of the reason behind this, as one officer explained, was that ‘we didn’t have the same trust in planning with them [other protestors] as we had with Make Poverty History, who were excellent’ (Dickinson, interview). Far from an undifferentiated and uniform confrontation with ‘the state’, it is clear that the various G8 protests were negotiated on the ground in interactions between a discretionary police force and diverse protest groups.

Global protest, thus, is mediated through locally specific police/protestor relations. This is further reinforced by the fact that the media remain ‘national’ (rather than global) in scope. Media representations are not uniform, and influence the atmosphere within which protest events occur. Juris, for example, notes the starkly divergent responses of Italian and Spanish media to the Genoa summit protests. ‘The media did not just report on the space of terror in Genoa, they helped produce it’ (2005: 426). In

the context of sensationalist predictions of disorder in the Scottish and British press, there were fears that these could become self-fulfilling prophecies.

In the run up to MPH many newspapers voiced fears about ‘baying mobs’, ‘bedlam’ and ‘riots’ (Gorringe & Rosie 2006). ‘Anarchists’, primarily associated with protest events on Monday, also featured prominently as ‘militants’ who – it was feared – would ‘hijack’ other demonstrations. In the asymmetry of representations, media are powerful actors and not only produce ‘the space of terror’, but provide frames that make sense of events. Altheide (1997: 648) notes the ubiquity of a ‘problem frame’ which promotes fear. ‘Anarchists’, in much of the press, were routinely framed in terms designed to inculcate fear. Police preparations displayed an acute awareness of this and employed newsletters, websites and press conferences to correct misleading information. In Auchterarder a dedicated full-time officer was installed a year before the summit as ‘a G8 community spokesman ... to liaise with locals and alleviate their fears’ (White, interview). A key rationale for this posting was to combat the effect of sensationalist media accounts amongst local people:

I knew that the press would resort to outlandish claims if not pure invention and people would get more and more scared in response to the scare stories. So [the officer] was on hand to deal with people’s concerns (Vine, interview).

Police were determined to keep Auchterarder and Edinburgh ‘open’ and deprecated alarmism about protest violence. Auchterarder’s liaison officer told us that:

Some are saying they are not going to do that much business this month and so they are going to board up and go away. Those in involved in the retail business are not best served by that. From my point of view I think it's quite sad, that somebody wants to board up (White, interview).

The police themselves, of course, are not immune to sensationalist reporting and media accounts colour their preconceptions and attitudes: 'Cops read papers too' (Ross, interview). Officers were convinced that some protestors *were* out to cause trouble: their fear was that exaggerated predictions of violence and disorder would attract a certain type of protestor. Alongside the 'genuine' protestors and the 'troublemakers', officers (echoing Della Porta & Fillieule's threefold categorisation) were 'leisure protestors, there for a ruck [confrontation]' (Ross, interview).

Many of the preconceptions that we encountered in police interviews centred around the concept of legitimacy (cf. Della Porta & Reiter 1998). Asked whether he would draw any distinction 'between legitimate protestors who use the [established] channels, and others, non-legitimate, who don't', Tayside's Chief Constable was emphatic: 'Oh Yes!' (Vine, interview). He insisted that efforts to establish contact with such actors were rebuffed. The upshot was a differentiation between the 'good' (consensual) campaigners; more radical – but basically law-abiding – protestors [such as G8 Alternatives, 'managed by people ... who know what they are doing' (Ross, interview)]; and the 'anarchist' fringe: 'Criminal Tourists I've called them, it is a nice phrase that captures much of what they are about' (Vine, interview). The illegitimacy of certain protestors was firmly established *prior to* the actual summit:

The Make Poverty History lot are largely a peaceful group. They have largely achieved their objectives already, because that's what everyone is talking about. It's on the agenda. Globalisation ... well people are talking about climate change which *they say* they are interested in. But anarchist groups, they are just there for a ruck (Ross, interview).

Whilst Marx (1998) argues that targeting 'likely troublemakers' permits a more open and facilitative approach to 'legitimate protest', such broad-brush characterisations can translate into action-orientations. In sum, well before G8 protestors mobilised, police 'knew' who they were and how to deal with them. This knowledge fed off the media circus attending each global protest event, but was more immediately fostered by local media, police culture and police/protestor interactions. Next, we consider the extent to which these pre-established frames influenced protest policing.

### **Route Marches**

Each day between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, saw protests across central Scotland, from the events in Edinburgh, through 'blockades' of the Faslane submarine base and Dungavel asylum centre, to an activist 'eco-camp' in Stirling, and a concluding protest in Auchterarder. The number and spread of events meant that we could not attend every one. We focus, therefore, on three key events in Edinburgh that we both witnessed directly.

The MPH march was remarkable for the massive turnout and for the disparity between prior fears articulated in the media and the actual event (Gorringe & Rosie 2006). Policing on the day was friendly and relaxed, confirming what our police



informants had predicted: ‘All people will see is Scottish polis in flat caps and yellae jackets. All very nicey-nicey, very friendly – “this way to the toilets madam” -style of policing’ (Ross, interview). MPH’s objectives, organisation and demographic rendered this unsurprising. The family-oriented approach allied to a predominance of NGO and Church groups meant this was as consensual as protest can be and was facilitated as such. Indeed, the LBP website carried a message of welcome to MPH participants from the Lord Provost and Chief Constable of Edinburgh.<sup>6</sup> The efforts made in Edinburgh to enable MPH participants to circle the city-centre (re-directing traffic, blocking roads, erecting signposts, etc.) reflected prior assumptions about the legitimacy of the occasion. Significantly, we contend that existing police frames affected not only the experience but also the interpretation of MPH.

In the congratulatory media coverage of MPH, many accounts gave some space to an altercation between a group of around 60 ‘Black Blok’ anarchists and the police. The group – including many European activists - were identified on the fringes of the march, corralled in a side street, and cordoned off for over an hour:

Those who were surrounded were very apprehensive, because being cordoned off abroad is usually a precursor to the police wading in, laying about with batons and making arrests. Whereas it was never our intention to even arrest them at that point. They were expecting a much heavier response (Vine, interview).

LBP confirmed that ‘serious confrontations’ on the outskirts of the march *could* have resulted in arrests but the police did not want to tarnish the general mood of the day

(Dickinson, interview). Had LBP opted to emphasise disorder, clamp down on 'misbehaviour' and make arrests then media coverage and public opinion might have been swayed and Edinburgh could now feature – to some degree - alongside Genoa, Seattle and other bywords for 'violent' Global protest. Instead, the group was gradually released, photographers were denied easy access to the situation, and the dominant motif of the march remained peaceful bonhomie. These interactions bring police/protestor relations to the fore and introduce local specificities into the analysis of protest policing. Had such an event occurred during other G8 protests the response is likely to have been more robust.

The following day, the unexpectedly small size of the pre-arranged and sanctioned STW rally (approximately 4,000) did not initially entail a proportionate reduction in policing. There seemed to be a much more tangible (and stern-faced) police presence. As the march proceeded without incident, however, there was a marked diminution in police:

The police seemed to revert to the softly-softly approach, and by the time we reached Calton Hill [end point of the march] some were actually smiling and joking with the marchers. By the time the rally was underway I realised that the police had completely withdrawn - I couldn't see any cops at all (Rosie, fieldnotes).

LBP later told us that :

Sunday [STW] was different from Saturday [MPH] only in that on Saturday I was policing for 120 [thousand] and I got 225, on Sunday I forget the numbers, but I think I was policing for something like 25 [thousand] and I got 5. So the ratio of police to demonstrators on Sunday was rather different, and the police were more obvious. Just because of the numbers (Dickinson, interview).

Whilst this explanation rings true, that our respondent immediately thereafter raised the issue of trust accords perfectly with the fact that STW have ‘a history’ in Edinburgh, and (in LBP’s eyes) are not entirely trustworthy. Police melted away *only* when STW showed no signs of the spontaneity of the 2003 protests. The initial police presence, in this light, was also intended to deter any deviation from the prearranged route. Indeed, later in the same interview, we were told that:

Putting the officers out in full protective equipment is a non-verbal signal to say there are some rules out here, and some things you can get away with, but there is a rule here, and the rule is this line of police officers will not let you pass (Dickinson, interview).

Such non-verbal signals were conspicuously absent during MPH, but sterner tests of policing lay ahead. MPH and STW are coalitions cohering around mainstream (albeit contentious) issues. ‘Poverty’ and ‘War’ are uniformly accepted as undesirable and a broad spectrum of social opinion is aligned behind each campaign. On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July, however, the ‘Carnival of Full Enjoyment’ promised to ‘make capitalism history’ and engage in anti-systemic protests. Monday brought police face-to-face with those commonly described as ‘anarchists’ (which, in this context, stands as a

proxy for radical or even violent protestors). Negative police perceptions of these groups, as noted above, cast them as ‘out for a ruck’, ‘illegitimate’ and ‘criminal’. This frame, we argue, helps explain policing on Monday.

### **Containing the Carnival**

What was later dubbed the ‘Battle of Princes Street’ [Edinburgh’s main commercial thoroughfare] was billed simply as a ‘carnival’. Participants were urged to congregate at noon, but beyond that there was no preordained sequence of events. The absence of any clear focus and the diffusion of activists around the centre mean that it is difficult to construct a coherent account of what happened, but some flashpoints during the day offer an opportunity to assess the situation. Somewhere between 300 and 600 protestors turned up at the allotted meeting place, but swiftly dissolved into separate blocks. One section headed towards the financial district and was very quickly blocked in on a minor street. Those caught up in the Canning Street cordon (including one of the authors) remained penned in for five hours.

In its report into policing on a 2003 anti-war demonstration, the New York Civil Liberties Union urged police to abandon the practice of confining protestors within barricades. Such penning in of protestors means that they are unable to obtain food or water, go to the toilet or go home. When asked about potential erosion of civil liberties, our LBP respondent was frank: ‘The principle is that peoples’ personal liberty gets infringed because there is no alternative. The alternative is to allow anarchy to win and there will be no control in society’ (Dickinson, interview). Police and press reports noted the presence of black-clad and masked activists in the crowd,

but (after initial scuffles as protestors realised they were effectively corralled) there was no violence on the part of either demonstrators or police.

From the perspective of protestors, however, events at Canning Street were confused and confusing. There was no communication from the police on when - or whether - protestors would be allowed to leave. Penning, as a tactic, operates according to a master-frame that views protestors as troublemakers, allowing little differentiation between individuals. Colin Fox, thus, termed the policing a 'disgrace' and spoke of constituents detained in Canning Street without water or facilities (Fox, interview). The circulation of such accounts, as Reicher et al (2004: 569-70) argue, may increase the 'costs' of containment by discrediting and de-legitimising police action.

Section 60 (S60) of the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994 - the control order imposed on central Edinburgh for the duration of the protests - was the basis for the pens. S60, as the legal advice section of activist website 'Urban 75' explains, 'is a new police tactic at major demonstrations used effectively to control, subdue and gain personal information about protesters despite having the extraordinarily limited power simply to "Stop and search in anticipation of violence"'.<sup>7</sup> This highly subjective 'anticipation of violence' affords officers enormous discretionary leeway. Unsurprisingly, therefore, inconsistencies in the use of S60 emerged. One of the authors was dealt with properly: the searching officer identified himself, his number and force before conducting a search for weapons. Two people accompanying the author, however, were not provided with background information, and were 'required' to provide names and addresses, photographed and 'cautioned' not to protest in the near future.

Police discretion, of course, means that the conduct of officers may be subject to variation. ACC Dickinson was open about such discrepancies: 'Inevitably in any unit you have people who are more confident or less confident, people who accepted their training and embraced it, and simply not bothered with it and couldn't care less' (Dickinson, interview). Police attitudes to the carnival, however, did not simply emerge through the muddled interpretation of a control order. At one end of Princes Street, protestors were prevented from spilling out onto an approach road by the mobile barricades of an 'iron horse' – 'a trailer, holding out a metal barrier, which really works, it just seals an area off' (Dickinson, interview). Hundreds of police in protective equipment blocked off each end of Princes Street to prevent a march from heading towards the retail chains. As a 'non-verbal signal' these precautions effectively de-legitimised the protests and resembled the strategy of 'total control' (Della Porta 1998: 250).

A BBC report aptly described the 'Carnival' as 'a day-long game of cat and mouse' (Todd 2005). The protestors' refusal to abide by the rules meant that confusion prevailed. Small bands of protestors clustered at junctions, confronted police and inverted the symbolic order of the city. Most of these smaller events were good-natured and dominated by protestors in colourful clothing, samba drums and clown outfits. Despite the unambiguous nature of the police presence it was clear that there was scope for discretion on the ground. Just beyond the 'iron horse', for instance, police looked on as 30 people occupied a key junction and danced to drums and whistles. Since traffic had already been diverted, the symbolic gesture of defiance was tolerated. At each protest site passers-by, activists and curious onlookers gathered.

Dotted through the crowds, however, were ‘masked individuals dressed in black who had clearly come to show a more aggressive face of anti-G8 protest’ (Todd 2005). Unsurprisingly, where such individuals were clustered the police presence was heaviest. An activist later wrote: ‘The right and ability to protest with passion and relative safety disappeared when ... police aggression was met with the disruptive retaliatory actions of the masked marauders’ (Matheuse 2005: 13).

This was the case on Princes Street where ‘peaceful demonstration turned into an ugly confrontation’ (Todd 2005). Mounted police and officers in riot gear were confronted by protestors – many dressed in black. As the stand-off became heated, hooded activists chanted of ‘*polizia assassini*’ (by reference to Genoa) and pressed forward. There was aggression but, initially, no violence. Throughout a two hour face-off protestors occupied the road abutting Jenners (Edinburgh’s ‘classiest’ store), Marks & Spencer and other retail outlets but made no attempt to attack them. The lack of a clear protest objective seemingly troubled police officers. Uncertain whether to hold the line or retreat there were periodic displays of aggression. At 2.45pm, for instance, as the chanting crowd pressed up against the police line, mounted officers drew batons and thrust forward, scattering protestors into Princes Street Gardens, but the horses were replaced by shield-bearing and helmeted police (Gorringe, fieldnotes).

This *mise-en-scene* suggests adherence to the principle of de-escalation and indeed, Dickinson described the ‘gold standard’ of policing as resting on three key planks: make contact, ascertain protest objectives and set boundaries (interview). ‘Confrontational policing rarely works’, he insisted, and pointed to ongoing attempts at communication during the ‘Carnival’:

It was very difficult because there was no allocated sort of spokesperson, but we did say ‘if you don’t get contact with the organisers, get contact with the protesters’. And when they assembled on the corner of Princes Street ... that is what we did - go and talk to them: “What you are intending to do? What are you trying to? Where do you want to walk to? ... Etc etc” and help them to do it. Remember, what we actually ended up doing was a procession, with people playing music, lots of costumes, people with balloons around. ... It was only when it deteriorated, when people decided they’re not going to have a procession, they were going to do more difficult things, and eventually just started carrying out deliberate attacks, that the situation deteriorated (Dickinson, interview).

In this frame, shared by junior officers, police attempts to accommodate protest were frustrated, a view. Heading home on the Monday evening one of the authors engaged police officers on Princes Street in conversation:

- Was there really any need for all those riot police?

Yes, definitely. We’re not prepared to stand there and take stuff ... In any EU country there would have been a much more aggressive response (Gorringe, fieldnotes).

Whilst the above accounts indict a few ‘dangerous’ activists, police expectations and reactions helped to shape specific protest response. For example, at 2pm a group of 50



demonstrators (mostly dressed as clowns) faced officers in protective equipment at a road junction.

Suddenly the police turned, ran back to their vans, and left 50-100 rampant ‘anarchists’ in possession of the field. Having briefly chased after the vans waving dusters and flags cheering and shouting: ‘we scared the police off’ - they dispersed and traipsed off looking for more action. (Gorringe fieldnotes).

In this instance, and in others, the police presence *was* the demonstration. Without it, the protest and the confrontation evaporated. Reflecting on this scenario, Dickinson conceded that had police been withdrawn more generally:

It could be there is no target. Equally members of the public might be scared out their wits, and the businesses on Princes Street could have been trashed. Which professional police officer is going take that risk? (Interview).

‘Large-scale public protests’, O’Neill (2004: 245) notes, ‘are among the most volatile of situations authorities confront’. There are, however, a variety of possible responses and much of the policing that we witnessed could be interpreted as aggressive, overbearing and unimaginative. In attempting to clear some areas police aggressively shoved protestors *and* onlookers with their shields, shouting (and swearing) at them to get out of the way (Gorringe, fieldnotes). By early evening local youths had joined the fray, beer-cans and cobbles were thrown, and the police responded by treating those on the streets as an undifferentiated mob. Waddington (1998) and Earl & Soule (2006) note police concerns about order and Dickinson echoed these insisting: ‘the

actual fact is that there were two occasions on Monday when I almost lost control' (Interview).

The use of sophisticated communication strategies are one alternative means that could have been employed, as is the 'non-verbal signal' sent out by officers in 'flat caps'. Unless and until such risks are taken, the prevalent motif of 'anarchist' protests will be confrontational despite police emphasis on 'de-escalation', confirming Waddington's (1998: 139) scepticism about the trend towards more consensual modes of policing. Ambivalence towards the *practice* of de-escalation was dramatically emphasised in Canning Street when, despite a complete absence of provocation or confrontation, officers in everyday uniforms gave way to a line of helmeted and shield-bearing police (Rosie, fieldnotes). We were later told that what had been (quite understandably) interpreted by already-nervous protestors as a calculated aggressive signal was in fact no more than a shift-change of the officers.

Underpinning the democratic approach to policing is communication, but this was markedly lacking during the 'Carnival'. Reicher et al. (2004: 268) note that whilst:

there exist large reserves of armoured vehicles, baton rounds and so on which are hardly ever used ... communicative technologies [such as mobile LED screens or loudspeaker systems] which would probably prove useful in virtually every crowd event are virtually non-existent.

This lack of communication extended to tourists, passers-by and shoppers, some of whom got caught up in the melee or found themselves locked into shops. The absence

of dialogue meant that the mutual antagonism of protestors and police briefly became violent. As police officers with batons moved in on the Gardens, benches, bins and flowers were uprooted and flung at the police. Dickinson insisted that ‘police officers have been seizing weapons - clubs with nails on them, razor bladed belts. We’ve got petrol bombs and acid bombs’ (interview). No such deadly weapons, thankfully, were in evidence on Princes Street. Indeed, some dismayed protestors sought to *replant* the flowers.

Damage over the course of the ‘Carnival’ and its aftermath amounted to ‘two windows, 200 geraniums and several park benches’ (Dickinson, interview). ‘To those people who’ve seen like political protest, confrontations with the police’, Fox suggested, ‘... it was nothing. It was quite frankly an embarrassment to call it a riot’ (Fox, interview). Matheuse’s (2005: 12) impressionistic account of the day, dubbed it the ‘Carnival of Full Deployment’ and the title is apposite. Of the three protests discussed in this paper the ‘Carnival’ was by far the smallest in terms of numbers and yet provoked the most robust police response. Hundreds of officers, in full ‘riot’ gear were deployed to clear the streets of the city centre.

Underlying the problematic dynamics of the Carnival was the thorny issue of anti-systemic protest. How do you police by consensus if protestors deny your legitimacy, there is no one to talk to, no set plan? Arguably the variable policing over the three days boils down to the difference between a pre-arranged demonstration and the uncertainty of ‘spontaneous’ protest. We contend that a stock of stereotypes, assumptions and identities mediated each encounter, gave each camp a sense of ‘knowing the other’ and imposed certainty on an uncertain situation. The rhetoric of

'soft-hat' policing papered over less nuanced analyses: 'Just as people can feel anonymous in a crowd – the mob if you like, cops can feel anonymous too' (Ross, interview). Implicit here are traces of 'old-school' crowd psychology in which the whole is seen as more than the sum of its parts and processes and identities underpinning crowd formation are sidelined. Official codes of practice, Waddington & King (2005: 501) note, are often observed more in the breach than the practice. Failing to question prevalent stereotypes and perceiving the 'crowd' as an homogenous - and volatile - actor make such breaches more probable. As one respondent opined: 'The force could have done more internally in terms of education and managing people's apprehensions' (White, Interview).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The 2005 G8 demonstrations highlight the significance of police/protestor relations, and how policing is a key variable in 'the instigation or escalation of disorder' (Waddington & King 2005: 501). 'Global protests', thus, are mediated by local social, political and historical contexts such as the identities and frames that inform police/protestor encounters. The dynamics of one event cannot simply be 'imported' into another context. Rather, as we have argued, protests are subject to localised dynamics impacting upon their course, style and representation. G8 2005 (in Edinburgh at least) says as much - if not more - about Scottish (and British) policing, protest and police frames than about international summit protests. In conclusion, therefore, we consider the implications of our analysis at this local level.

Whilst Scottish police forces are infused with the democratic ethos increasingly characteristic of 'Western' policing, this ethos is filtered through specific police

cultures and knowledge. Our findings fit with other research highlighting the asymmetry between police and protestor framings, and the significance of this in explaining the escalation of conflictual situations. Situational analysis must be complemented by attitudinal research. *Localised* interactions between police and protestors, for example, can create a ‘history’ that affects how police and protestors (re)act towards each other (cf. Della Porta & Reiter 1998: 20). Reicher et al (2004) stress the need to differentiate between actors in a crowd *particularly* at the point of confrontation, but whilst differentiation featured in police operations in Edinburgh, at key points on the Monday groups were treated as a dangerous *collective* partly because there was a preconception of ‘anarchists’ as troublemakers. Actions based on such perceptions not only prevented non-hostile elements from leaving, but arguably adversely affected in-crowd interactions (Reicher et al 2004, Waddington & King 2005).

Traditional attempts to communicate through mediators do not work for anti-systemic groups, who often depend on the police to provide a focus (Waddington 1998). Innovatory tactics or communication strategies, however, could have been deployed to diffuse tension and differentiate between those looking for a fight and ‘trapped’ onlookers. Well before the summit a prevalent policing frame stressed that:

The first priority is obviously the security of those attending the summit and not next in line, but alongside that, we have to make sure that the local community are protected and I’m sorry, but the interests of the protestors have to come behind those two issues (White, interview).

Rather than viewing protestors as a 'nuisance' to be managed the above priorities should be understood as interlinked. Edinburgh 2005 did not resemble past summits, largely because of local variables. If aggression and distrust can become self-fulfilling prophecies, so too can facilitation and co-operation.

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<sup>1</sup> A list of cited interviews, and the status of the respondent, can be found at the end of this article.

<sup>2</sup> See Gorrington & Rosie (2006) for more detail on media representations of G8 protest in 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Note that this term is ambiguous in its Scottish context since it can simultaneously denote the UK *and/or* Scotland.

<sup>4</sup> Stop the War is a coalition of left and radical groups united in opposition to the Afghan and Iraqi wars and the subsequent occupations of these states.

<sup>5</sup> These events preceded the research on which this paper is based but both authors were present. See Waddington (1998: 123-4) for an account of how police negotiators 'school' protest organisers in the art of acceptable protest.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.lbp.police.uk/g8/news\\_media/provost.asp](http://www.lbp.police.uk/g8/news_media/provost.asp) (Accessed 14/06/2006).

<sup>7</sup> See 'Legal Advice: Section 60': <http://www.urban75.org/mayday01/s60.html> (Accessed 31/05/06).