Performing Boundaries in the Global Justice Movement
Evidence from the Mobilization against the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm 2007

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- D R A F T , P L E A S E D O N O T C I T E -

Abstract

Scholars tend to treat social movements as unitary phenomena. Even though the diversity of activists, groups and networks involved is acknowledged in theory, it is neglected in most scholarly practice. However, differences within movements are meaningful for activists and the collectivities they are part of. They are constantly reaffirmed in action. Drawing on the research for my PhD thesis about different protest rationalities within the Global Justice Movement, this paper reconstructs the performance of boundaries between different strands of the movement. The use of words, images and tactics reveals a fine-grained structure of social movement collectivities, which emphasize or de-emphasize boundaries towards (1) other parts of the Global Justice Movement and (2) reference groups such as political decision-makers, police, and journalists. The aim of this paper is to take a closer look at boundary processes in the complex setting of diverse social movements. It focuses on the case of the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, in 2007. The case was chosen, because the international summit triggered resistance across the German left ranging from anarchist groups to Christian aid organizations. This scenario allows mapping different reactions to the triggering event and the construction of difference across different social movement collectivities. In order to identify the manufacturing of boundaries, the paper draws from a qualitative analysis of mobilization posters and written documents, interviews with activists and protest performances.
1. Introduction

When we speak about a social movement, we engage in a social construction. A movement is imagined as such by activists, by the authorities, by journalists and by social scientists. Yet, all these groups are aware that the reality is more complicated. Movements consist of different episodes and collectivities that are connected by a - sometimes vague - common cause. The parts constituting a movement as a whole typically have very different and even contradicting characteristics. Activists who form part of one movement may be radicals or reformists, movement events may include petitions to decision-makers or assaults on the same people.

Although there is broad agreement about the complexity of social movements, scholars tend to treat them as monolithic phenomena. They suggest that social movements act in a certain way or develop specific relations to their environment. The notion ‘movement’ as such suggests unity where there is in fact diversity. It glosses over internal differences and struggles. However, these differences are real. They give evidence of the variety of motives and rationalities behind social movement activism. And they have a life of their own. This is the subject of this paper.

Research in social movements stresses the importance of collective identities for the generation and development of collective action. Defining a collective “we” and contrasting it to “them”, an out-group that is responsible for a grievance, is considered a basic feature in the cognitive production of a movement. The movement might thus build on an overarching collective identity. But if groups within a movement differ significantly in their approaches to social change, it will be shot through with more specific, compartmentalized identities, which are generated in interaction both with other collectivities within the same movement and with the environment the movement encounters. Most researchers understand the construction of a collective “we” as a process that separates a movement on the one side from its environment on the other side. This paper stresses the dissimilarity of boundary lines and the dynamics of boundaries within a movement.

Based on this interest, I focus on a recent social movement that is characterized by a large degree of diversity: the global justice movement. Some of the players in the wave of protest that started in the mid-1990s were explicitly created as global justice organizations and networks. However, the movement they form part of is more of a meta-movement that ties together activists and organizations from different preexisting movements such as the labor movement, the environmental movement, the women’s rights movement, the interna-
tionalist movement and others. This movement of great diversity should be a case in point for internal difference.

In a qualitative content analysis of mobilization media and protest performances I aim at identifying the construction of boundaries of global justice collectivities. These boundaries are considered as marking difference vis-à-vis both the movement’s environment and other movement actors. The material is restricted to what was probably the most important mobilization of the global justice movement in Germany, the protests against the Group of Eight (G8) meeting at the Baltic Sea resort Heiligendamm, in June 2007. No less than seven alliances catered for activists with different tactical and ideological preferences, mobilizing for separate and joint protest events. The protests summed up to more than 1,000 events in over two years.

In the following I develop a concept of performing boundaries in social movements. With this conceptual background I take a closer look at mobilization texts and images as well as protest performances staged during the anti-G8 campaign. I finish the paper with a reflection on boundaries and difference within social movements.

2. Boundaries and collectivities within movements

Contentious politics is about boundaries. Boundaries and related conceptions of difference map the cognitive terrain for collective action. To make sense of the world and to create diagnostic, prognostic and motivational resources (Snow & Benford 1988), activists draw a line between “us” and “them”, between “just” and “unjust”, between “legitimate” and “illegitimate”. Rohlinger and Klein (forthcoming) consider such boundaries as the “scaffolding” of a social movement, providing structure and stability. Although the term scaffolding suggests a static structure, Rohlinger and Klein agree with other scholars that the construction of boundaries is an ongoing, deliberate process. Conceptions of difference might build on pre-existing divisions such as class, race, or gender, but they are not primordial. Rather, they result from political agency. Defining boundaries is part of social movement activists’ political agenda. Activists mark differences in a political conflict and seek to make them salient to fellow activists and a larger public. McAdam et al. (2001: ch.5) call this kind of boundary work the mechanism of “category formation”, a process by which activists define what is at stake and who should be considered as friend or foe.

Category formation is a mechanism that plays a key role in the shaping of political actors. Boundaries in contentious politics are constitutive of and bound to a collectivity (Taylor & Whittier 1992: 111). This aspect of social movements has been extensively discussed un-
nder the label of collective identity (Polletta & Jasper 2001; Snow 2001; Flesher Fominaya 2010). Melucci (1989, 1996) introduced the notion of collective identity to the study of social movements with a constructivist approach. In this perspective, the imagination of a collective identity and its boundaries are understood as processual and flexible. Or, as social psychologists and anthropologists put it, identity is a matter of boundary processes, rather than boundaries (Jenkins 2008: 127).

One of the tenets of the collective identity approach is that the self-definition of a group implies difference to an out-group. It separates those who are to be considered as part of a collectivity from those who do not fit or those who are to be fought against. Such notions of collective identity, what Polletta and Jasper call “a perception of a shared status or relation” (2001: 285), are a prerequisite for sustained collective action. Gamson (1991: 27) sees the creation of a collective identity as “one of the most central tasks” for social movement activists.

Implicitly or explicitly, many authors conceive of collective identity as a feature of a social movement as a whole. This is also the level on which boundary processes are located: a social movement community, it is assumed, defines itself in opposition to its adversaries or to society at large. However, assumptions about the collective identity of a movement are in conflict with the constructivist perspective that highlights the fuzziness of the term “movement”. If social movements are temporal alliances of different, sometimes antagonistic collectivities scholarly attention should also be on exclusions and boundaries within a movement (Gamson 1997, Ibrahim 2011). Although the diversity of identities within a social movement is a widely acknowledged problem, contributions that tackle this challenge are rare. Carroll and Ratner (1996, see also Rupp & Taylor 1999), for instance, highlight the linking of different identities in the process of building a collective identity. For the purpose of this paper, it is important to note that different identities can only be bridged to a certain extent. The bridging by appeal to an overarching identity does not foreclose the continuity of difference. Boundary processes structure not only the relationship of movements and their environment, but also movements as a “multipolar action systems” (Melucci 1989: 25-30).

As a matter of fact, collective identities and boundary lines are by no means coherent across a movement. Who is considered an enemy? What is rendered as unjust? Which activities are seen as legitimate? All these are contested questions. Different collectivities within a social movement find diverging answers to these questions. The split between radical and reformist parts of a movement is only the most obvious difference. Activists who feel close to either strand of the movement share a specific conception of protest that goes along with related boundary processes. Reformists and radicals define adver-
saries in different ways, they mark difference to the status quo more or less articulate and they sponsor distinct repertoires of action to express their criticism (Teune 2012). It is struggles over such boundaries which make differences within a movement visible and salient.

Before we look at the empirical case of the Heiligendamm mobilization, the focus is on three conceptual questions: What are the conditions of the processes during which boundaries emerge? How are boundaries within a movement connected to boundaries between the movement and its environment? How do boundaries become visible?

The dialectic of boundary processes

If collective identities and boundaries are conceived as transactional products of political agency, the process during which they emerge is necessarily complicated. In order to shed light on the making of boundaries and related collectivities, we can assume a twofold dialectic: (1) boundaries are both a prerequisite and a result of collective action, and (2) boundaries emerge from spontaneous conceptions of difference while at the same time they are shaped by external attributions.

(1) Social movements need to define a direction or a target for their action. This implies notions of community and difference. Thus, defining and marking differences are processes which precede episodes of collective action. At the same time, boundaries are made in action. They are practiced and thus reaffirmed when social movements take action. On the level of social movement participants this means that contentious events become catalyzing experiences, which make boundaries plausible and even more efficacious.

(2) Constructing boundaries is not a solitary process. Boundaries are made in interaction. On the one hand, social movement activists are autonomous in their definition of difference. On the other hand, they are subject to and influenced by external ascriptions beyond their control. When an out-group defines certain features or actions of the collectivity as meaningful, this has repercussions on movement activists and the way they conceive of themselves.

Boundaries in interaction

If social movements are understood as a complex web of boundaries, than we can assume that the different boundary processes at play are not isolated occurrences. Quite contrary, they will mutually affect each other in several ways. On the one hand, this applies to bounda-
ries within a movement. Referring, again, to the split between reformist and radical parts of a movement, the definition of a boundary involves parties on both sides. The more explicit radicals emphasize their rejection of a reformist stance, the less likely are offers for collaboration by reformist groups. On the other hand, boundary processes interact also in a trilateral relation between different social movement collectivities and players external to the movement such as governments, police, media, or counter-movements. To take an example from research into protest cycles (see Snow & McAdam 2003), the cooperation of the reformist strand of a movement with government agencies (i.e. watering down boundaries vis-à-vis an adversary) has been reported to coincide with the radicalization of the radical part of a movement (i.e. reinforcing boundaries vis-à-vis an adversary), which in turn is met with an increase in repression by the authorities. The definition of boundaries by one group does arguably have an effect on the room of maneuver for another group. This is particularly so, because boundaries are constructed in a power-ridden setting of political and discursive opportunity (Rupp & Taylor 1999). Social movement activists relate to an environment that facilitates certain forms of engagement and discourages others.

**Performing boundaries**

Boundaries relevant for collective action are constantly reconfirmed and occasionally shifted (Drury et al. 2003; Tilly 2004; Rohlinger & Klein forthcoming). But how are boundaries actually made visible? Boundaries emerge in action, or, put differently, they are performed. Activists become part of a social movement collectivity through "a stylized repetition of acts." (Butler 1988: 519) One approach is to look at the daily life of activists. Horton (2003), for instance, identifies the making of environmental identities in consumer decisions. Another approach is to look at the symbolic demarcations used in different expressions of protest. Engaging in certain forms of action, making use of specific clothing, gestures, imagery, and language activists perform both their collective identity and the boundaries that make it distinguishable from others. If the aim is to find boundaries, one has to look for symbolic boundary markers: notions, images, and performances that are used to declare and maintain difference. These symbols will help to identify boundary lines that are divisive for particular social movement collectivities and structuring for a social movement as a whole.

### 3. Text, image and performance – exemplary identification of boundaries

The following section presents empirical material drawn from a more complex analysis of Heiligendamm mobilization documents.
and interviews. The PhD thesis on which this paper is based included a map of the field of actors in the Heiligendamm mobilization (Teune 2012: ch. 4). The diverse mobilization brought together different collectivities that share specific rationalities of protest. More precisely, for activists in the mobilization the collective identity as member of the global justice movement was superimposed by identities tied to affinity-based collectivities. These collectivities were held together by a shared belief system. Activists who felt part of these milieus agreed on a specific interpretation of the triggering event and a conception of protests and its limits. Roughly, the field of actors could be divided into two internally diverse sub-fields. Within the reformist camp protest was conceived as a chance to address specific problems with a perspective of limited change and to persuade large parts of the populace. The radical sub-field emphasized the need for fundamental change and considered protest as a means to make radical dissent visible. It is impossible to be more specific about involved collectivities within the bounds of this paper. However, the analysis will refer to these groups without further explanation to make the breadth of positions (also within the reformist and radical sub-fields) visible. After a short introduction to the methodological procedures, the analysis presents examples from three symbolic domains: language, imagery and protest performances.

A methodological preface
The following analysis goes back to a qualitative content analysis of two types of sources: 200 written mobilization documents such as calls for action, leaflets and résumés and 316 images, mostly posters and photos of banners and protest performances, related to the G8 summit in Heiligendamm 2007. These documents were supplemented with 17 semi-structured interviews with 20 social movement activists, who organized events around the summit.

To identify relevant boundaries, written documents and interviews were processed in a qualitative content analysis following Mayring’s (2007) model of an inductive identification of categories. To facilitate the analysis technically, the documents were fed into an Atlas.ti hermeneutical unit. In a first round of reading in randomly selected documents, categories that captured recurring issues were identified. In the next round, the codes originating from this procedure were reviewed for a second sample of documents. Where necessary, the codes were adapted. In a third step, all the material was coded using the set of categories generated and adapted in the first two rounds of the analysis.

The inductive method to identify recurrent themes in the quotes was a way to structure the vast material. It helped to identify relevant text passages and to pin down relevant boundaries. But it was not used to classify quotes into different values of a category. For instance, the code ‘position’ was assigned to quotes in which protest
groups and alliances defined their political position. Retrieving quotes with this code allowed identifying the spectrum of positions and the relative location of different collectivities on this spectrum.

The language of difference

It is more than a truism that different protest groups have their specific language. The words activists use to describe their activities are an obvious indicator for the imagination of difference. These labels indicate the direction that protest should take and the boundaries that are drawn by taking these actions. They are twofold demarcations towards the G8 as a target and other players in the social movement.

There is not a neat separation between different collectivities in the sense that one concept is used here and the other there. But there are certainly terms that are actively used in one cluster of groups while it is more or less absent in another. The label ‘protest’ seems to be a universal concept that all actors can link to. However, some of the organizations launching activities around the summit did not even use the label ‘protest’ to describe what they were doing. In documents of the church and in those issued by faith-based organizations close to the church, ‘protest’ is a rare occurrence.\(^1\) If it is used it is likely to be found in a general description of the situation, but not activities launched by these actors. An interviewed priest who was involved in the church activities does not refer to his engagement as protest. Rather he sees the church activities as an offer for fellow Christians to think about the problems of globalization without anticipating a position towards the G8. Another group that shies away from using the concept of protest is the organizers of the large concert within the aid and trade umbrella VENRO. In their 36-page résumé of the campaign Global Call to Action against Poverty the term ‘protest’ does not appear at all. The large pop concert, for instance, that was part of the campaign is labeled in the language of PR as: “a topnotch rock event with development policy messages.” Other actors with a reformist stance do consider their activity as protest. It might be substituted by more neutral terms such as ‘actions’ or ‘events’, but the label ‘protest’ is a positive point of reference for many reformist organizations. More generally, the language reformist organizations use does not create distance vis-à-vis the heads of state who meet in Heiligendamm.

In those groups that link reformist and radical strands of the global justice movement, protest is amended by another noun - resistance. ‘Resistance’ pops up in nonviolent groups, in Attac and it is used by

\(^1\) This is not true for action-oriented initiatives in the faith-based milieu. The jubilee campaign and Justice Now define protest as a central feature of their efforts and they use the term without restrictions.
leftist trade unionists. ‘Resistance’ calls on two associations that render it a legitimate approach to change-making. First, it is based in a jusnaturalistic tradition of empowerment of the individual vis-à-vis the unjust state. This tradition is even codified in the German constitution. Second, ‘resistance’ is associated with challenges to the National Socialist rule. With this background it taps into a more general skepticism vis-à-vis the state - boundaries are arguably more explicit in when activities are labeled as ‘resistance’.

Within radical collectivities ‘resistance’ is part and parcel of the active vocabulary. In this subfield, the term is considered as a necessary complement to ‘protest’, because it defines the own position as antagonistic. “Protest and resistance” or “from protest to resistance” are thus widespread topoi. On the one hand, the twin concept marks the breadth of positions within the global justice movement. On the other hand, it underlines the qualitative difference between protest as the articulation of dissent and resistance as a radical stance challenging the status quo. The anti-imperialist Rote Aktion Berlin (Red Action Berlin) refers to the “comrade Ulrike Meinhof”, member of the first RAF generation, who in an apology of armed struggle defined the difference between protest and resistance:

Protest is when I say I don’t like this and that. Resistance is when I see to it that things that I don’t like no longer occur. (Konkret no. 5, May 1968, p. 5)

Another term that links alternative, nonviolent, and post-autonomist groups is the concept of ‘civil disobedience’. In fact, the concept was used strategically in the Block G8 campaign to establish bonds between groups that previously had been estranged. ‘Civil disobedience’ is a concept that has been filled with both liberal and radical democratic theory (Pabst 2012). This ambivalence made it possible to bring together different experiences and traditions of activism. In the context of the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, ‘civil disobedience’ was used primarily with reference to blockades. But it also appears in the context of the destruction of genetically modified crops and in the occupation of the bombing release area Kyritz-Ruppiner Heide. All these mobilizations were joint efforts of reformist and radical groups.

Two notions add to the lexis of the radical strand of the global justice movement. Anti-imperialist groups refer to their activities against the G8 summit as part of a more general ‘struggle’. The use of the term ‘struggle’ links up with armed struggles both in German history and in the Global South. ‘Struggle’ also ties up with the concept of class struggle which is arguably central to the self-defined mission of anti-imperialist groups. The second notion that is used in radical milieus, but only by groups in the tradition of the antifascist movement is ‘rebellion’. In contrast to ‘struggle’, ‘rebellion’ is less connected with a specific form of unrest. Rather, it denotes an episode of an insubordination of the masses that may have transformative conse-
quences. However, both terms imagine an insurmountable difference vis-à-vis the status quo.

When it comes to adjectives describing the upcoming protests, differences between global justice collectivities are even more explicit. The question of violence is the central interpretative pattern in the construction of boundaries that also emerges in the labeling of protests. It takes no wonder that one of the terms endemic to reformist groups is ‘peaceful’. In the calls for action issued from organizations in this subfield of the global justice movement, this specification is notorious. The Global Call to Action against Poverty, for instance calls their concert a “peaceful major event”. As this example shows, the label ‘peaceful’ is a marker, not a necessary addition to specify what the organizations are planning. Describing protest as peaceful is a way to draw a line to other conceptions of protest. While ‘peaceful’ is first and foremost a form of delineation, ‘nonviolent’ is a substantial qualification. It refers to a long-standing concept that defines nonviolent activity as a matter of principle and a form of prefigurative politics. If the notion ‘nonviolent’ is used for an action, it is clear for the reader that participants will follow the principles and organizational logics of nonviolence.

Radical groups are more explicit and also more metaphorical in the characterization of their protest. The vocabulary of the subfield expresses an unruly and offensive stance. The attitude of radical protest is described as ‘determined’, and ‘irreconcilable’. These labels underline the existential character of a protest that is defined in opposition to the status quo. Protest appears as a serious, focused and offensive endeavor. A central aim of radical protest is described with the adjectives ‘unruly’, ‘incalculable’, ‘unpredictable’ and ‘uncontrollable’. Those in power should not be able to control protest or to get a grip on the activity of radical protesters. This semantic field marks a major difference in the positioning of radical and reformist protesters. While collaboration with the authorities is seen as necessary and conducive to reaching aspired goals among the latter, it is deemed perilous and counterproductive by the former. It is rather the unruly characteristics than the power of numbers that allows radical protesters to define their position of power. Finally, the adjectives ‘forceful’ and ‘militant’ mark the way in which pressure should be exerted. The language leaves no doubt that a maximum distance towards the G8 summit and the authorities is part and parcel of radical identities.

Mostly, movement collectivities use a different lexis in parallel, without much conflict. But while the use of the cited labels marks implicit boundaries, activists also struggled explicitly over the use of language. The label ‘nonviolent’ became a subject of discussion in both campaigns of civil disobedience co-organized by non-violent and (post-)autonomist groups. For the latter, the label was not acceptable
because they understood it as a reproduction of a hegemonic concept of violence, which scandalizes violent protest while everyday violence as in wars or border regimes are obscured. While this contention over boundaries caused a split in earlier mobilizations, non-violent and (post-)autonomist activists succeeded in finding a common solution for their campaigns: they defined their actions as ‘non-escalating’, thus avoiding the controversial term ‘violence’.

*Imagining boundaries*

Apart from language, boundaries also become visible in the literal sense. Like language, the imagery of global justice varies significantly. A simple question brings these differences to the fore: who or what is represented and absent in visual mobilization documents? The imagery of radical mobilization documents alludes to the transgression of limits or shows such transgressions. Posters by radical collectivities are loaded with images of confrontation. Particularly the documents authored by autonomist and anti-imperialist collectivities show confrontational protests such as burning cars or stone-throwing activists. The police as an anonymous and threatening force are present in quite a few posters. They represent the protest experience of activists in the radical camp who are confronted with heavy-handed policing. Marking the police as an opponent reflects a boundary line which is irrelevant for reformist groups. It takes no wonder that the police are absent in the imagery used by the latter.

Tools such as wrenches and bolt cutters are prominent are another type of visual markers on radicals’ posters. They signal the preparedness of activists for sabotage and dismantling fences and thus the stance of fundamental opposition. However, there are also examples of a more subtle imagery, particularly in post-autonomist and (eco-)anarchist groups. A poster series circulated by the Dissent! network shows a man in a diving suit in shallow water and in a car (see Figure 1). The photos are combined with the slogan: “auftauchen! für ein ganz anderes ganzes” (roughly: surface! for something entirely different) and the date and place of the official summit (6/6-8/07, Heiligendamm, Germany) with the addition “we will win.” The picture language mirrors the radicals’ focus of intervention. Here and on other posters Heiligendamm is imagined as the

![Figure 1: Mobilization sticker circulated by the autonomist Dissent! network](image)
stage on which protesters can make a difference. In combination with this place, the frogman on the poster turns into a subversive metaphor. Against the background of a summit venue sealed off from its environment by a fence on the ground and by nets in the sea, the frogman suggests the transgression of such limits. This visual language leaves no doubt: the transgression of legal and hegemonic discursive limits is an integral component of the radical identity.

While the imagery of confrontation in radical mobilization documents marks a steep rift between protesters on the one side and governments and authorities on the other side, reformist groups come up with another form of confrontation. The imagery of reformist collectivities is designed to confront political decision-makers with those who feel misrepresented in their policies. One cluster represents people in the Global South who smart under G8 policies. Faith-based and alternative groups, for instance, created giant puppets to be presented during the kick-off demonstration. These puppets are also very present in the mobilization documents of these groups.

Figure 2: GCAAP organizers meet Merkel and Blair (Photo: Federal Press Office, c)

Another cluster of images aims at making popular support for specific claims visible. The jubilee campaign, for instance, invited supporters to leave their signature on giant red balloons which were presented at the joint demonstration on the weekend before the official summit. The campaign Global Call to Action against Poverty presented supporters’ signatures as the climax of the pop concert in Rostock. Dozens of paper boxes were carried onto the stage to emphasize the vast support for the claim to end poverty. Organizers of this campaign also met the German chancellor Angela Merkel before and during the summit. On occasion of the earlier meeting, which included also British Prime Minister Tony Blair, organizers presented the chiefs of government two speech bubbles which said “8 world leaders, 1 million voices, 1 message: end poverty. now.” (see Figure 2) The fact that NGO leaders and pop stars met with those in power was harshly criticized by radical activists. Even though there is no explicit statement in the analyzed documents, it is probably safe to say that radicals did not consider the Global Call campaign to be part of the global justice movement.
Despite the criticism, reformist and radical imageries coexist without much interference. One of the few examples in which the visual mobilization attempts of distant collectivities are cited and commented is a bricolage presumably produced by autonomist activists (see Figure 3). They used the logo for the liberal Global Call against Poverty campaign and combined it with a stylized Molotow-cocktail. The image transports a critique of the campaign, which radical activists considered as tame and fraternizing with G8 participants. The image is an example for the trilateral character of boundary processes. By confronting the politics of petition with the politics of direct action it is a strong marker of difference both towards collectivities with a reformist approach and towards the G8 summit.

**Boundaries in protest performances**

The third domain in which symbolic boundaries become visible is protest performances and the discourse about the limits of legitimate protest. Global justice collectivities define different corridors of action (Teune 2012: ch. 6-7), which means they feel comfortable with a certain set of action forms and they shy away from or oppose using other forms. Confrontational protests are particularly divisive. For radical groups they are a way to perform fundamental difference. Paint bombs, blockades and attacks targeting the police leave no room for interpretation. They mark the status quo as unacceptable and at the same time they allow activists to express and reinforce their stance of difference.

Another way to self-identify as a radical critical community is clothing. The most obvious example for the boundary-setting character of clothing is the uniformly black dress used by parts of the radical left. The kick-off demonstration included two impressive black blocs of 6-10,000 activists. Their appearance was the collec-
tive incorporation of difference, defining a clear boundary between those inside and outside the collective (see figure 4).

Reformist collectivities agree with the authorities, with commercial and public mass media and with large parts of the population in the rejection of property destruction or attacks on the police. They are very explicit about this boundary both in alliance meetings and in public statements. In the context of the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, critics of confrontational protests found several ways to perform this boundary. Organizations and networks of organizers presented the call “no violence” on banners after the kick-off demonstration was saw fights between the police and (post-)autonomist and anti-imperialist activists (see Figure 4).

There are, however, many nuances between the support of and public condemnation of attacks. Two alliances, which brought together radical and reformist activists, found a way to negotiate their conceptions of boundaries. Blockades are a form of protest that connects activists who radically reject the G8 process and the policies it stands for. This is a position held across different and even distant collectivities. In the alternative and faith-based milieu, participation in the blockades was controversial. Pax Christi, for instance, supported the campaigns, whereas the majority of Christian groups and organizations discouraged participation. Post-autonomist and nonviolent groups, in particular, formed the unlikely alliance Block G8. It was possible, because participants could agree on a self-restricting form of blockades. The alliance Block G8 which initiated major blockades of the streets leading to the summit venue, agreed on an “action consensus” defining the range of action forms that would be accepted in the context of the blockades. The action consensus was repeated publicly and practiced in workshops. During the blockades, participants who were about to violate the consensus were reminded of the set of rules.

4. Conclusion

A look at mobilization documents and protest performances of a diverse set of global justice collectivities attests the quality of social movements as “multipolar action systems” (Melucci 1989: 25-30). The language and imagery that activists use and the action they take
uncover practices of distinction. Protest collectivities define a collective identity by marking differences towards other political actors. This may include a strident demarcation towards political decision-makers. But for some actors within a social movement the boundaries towards other movement collectivities might be even more salient than those towards those in power. Differences within a movement are closely related to disagreements about the proximity or distance vis-à-vis the status quo. Performances of boundaries vis-à-vis the G8 meeting range from ultimate difference to shaming and naming to a de-emphasis of distance.

The vast majority of textual and visual documents as well as protest performances on the ground perform boundaries without an explicit interaction with the boundaries set by other collectivities. Interventions, which comment on those boundaries are very rare. However, the boundaries defined at the fringes, i.e. collaboration with G8 summit participants on the one pole and attacks on the summit and the police on the other pole, are provocative and unacceptable for activists at the opposite pole.

Defining boundaries for the own collectivity and challenging those set by others costs a significant part of activists’ energies. These struggles become visible, in particular, when distant collectivities decide to collaborate. The closer and the more explicit this collaboration is, the more are boundaries an issue of discussion. Forging agreements about joint action, engaging in debates about the use of certain action forms, and communicating one’s understanding of limits in the mobilization for protest is hard work. This kind of boundary work is a recurrent element of social movement activity. One of its outcomes is to define who should belong to what activists conceive as their movement (Gamson 1997; Rohlinger & Klein forthcoming).
References


