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## **“Don’t Get Arrested!” Trust, Miscommunication, and Repression at the 2008 Anti-G8 Mobilization in Japan**

*Transnational coordination and communication have become increasingly important themes in scholarship on social movements. The alterglobalization movement is one of the most globally networked movements in recent history. As part of its repertoire, every year thousands of people travel from around the world to protest the G8, the gathering of the world’s eight most powerful leaders. When the G8 came to Japan in 2008, local activists decided to organize a mobilization similar to those previously held in Western Europe and North America. The shift from Europe to Japan, however, proved more difficult than anticipated. I explore three factors that together hindered the mobilization: trust, miscommunication, and state repression. Through an analysis of action planning meetings, I explore how interpersonal trust combined with dynamics of individual and collective risk to shape relations of inclusion, exclusion, and hierarchy. I describe the interplay among trust, miscommunication, and repression to show how interpersonal trust undermined the movement’s own goal of prefiguring more horizontal political structures and, paradoxically, expanded the impact of state repression by creating an individuation of responsibility that implicated movement actors themselves in narrowing the forms of protest available.* [transnational social movements, democracy, (dis)trust, (mis)communication, repression]

Global coordination among movement actors has been an important theme in anthropological scholarship on social movements. From the 1960s, to the “alterglobalization” movement of the early 2000s, and to the assembly and occupation-based movements of the 2010s, a key theme of this scholarship has been how social movements create new forms of network-based and horizontal democracy that reject the centralized and hierarchical political logic of the nation-state (Graeber 2009; Juris 2008; Maeckelbergh 2009; Razsa and Kurnik 2012). As this scholarship shows, however, this rejection of hierarchical political organization is itself a contentious process that is rarely enacted without conflict and power struggles. Drawing on ethnographic examples from the internal organizing process of the “No! G8 Action Japan” network, I show how three factors—trust, miscommunication, and state repression—combined during the mobilization to undermine the movement’s goal of creating a horizontal political process and, paradoxically, served to exacerbate state repression. Specifically, I explore four dynamics that emerged during the 2008 anti-G8 mobilization: (1) how the relative lack of generalized trust in horizontal politics played out among the movement actors; (2) how the local movement actors’ response to this lack of generalized trust was met with appeals to relations of *interpersonal* trust; (3) how attempts to create interpersonal trust failed (due to scale and miscommunication); and (4) how, when interpersonal trust failed, movement actors’ attempted to assert control, which in turn reinforced

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hierarchies and exacerbated repression. These political dynamics are not limited to the anti-G8 mobilization in Japan; they manifest themselves in many transnational mobilizations, even if they take slightly different forms in other times and places. My intention is not to argue that the mobilization in Japan went wrong, but to explore the complex dynamics of large transnational mobilizations when there is a high level of repression and a lack of generalized trust among movement actors.

I contextualize this one mobilization in relation to nearly ten years of participant-observation in alterglobalization movement mobilizations around the world. The 2008 anti-G8 mobilization was only one of at least ten antisummit mobilizations that I actively participated in between 1999 and 2009, and I relate the experience of the 2008 anti-G8 mobilization in Japan to the patterns of behavior found at similar mobilizations in previous years. The choice to emphasize the global context of the Japanese anti-G8 mobilization is motivated by the movement actors themselves, who repeatedly expressed their view of the 2008 mobilization as part of a global process. The anti-G8 mobilization in Japan was intentionally modeled on the German mobilization in 2007, and it was explicitly framed as a *global* mobilization. In the year leading up to the G8, Japanese activists traveled across Europe, the United States, and Asia on an “infotour” to encourage activists to come to Japan for the G8 summit. Those present at the meetings and events I describe below, therefore, did not all share the national historical context of Japan; instead, they shared only the history of past antisummit mobilizations. However, even this transnational history of summit mobilizations was not equally shared by all; as Tominaga (2017) shows, many of the Japanese participants had little or no knowledge of previous antisummit mobilizations. This disjunctive history is central to the analysis offered here. In order to understand the relationship among trust, miscommunication, and repression, and how these dynamics impacted the movement’s ability to achieve its aims, I not only draw on the movement’s transnational history but also on two aspects of the Japanese context: the dramatic history of internal conflict among social movements and the particular characteristics of policing and law enforcement in Japan.

### **Horizontal Politics and the Alterglobalization Movement**

For more than a decade, the alterglobalization movement organized large-scale mobilizations at the summit meetings of multilateral organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund/World Bank, and the G8.<sup>1</sup> There is no *one* way to characterize the highly diverse alterglobalization movement; however, a common repertoire of action did develop based on a set of values and tactics that traveled with the movement from one location to the next. In the case of the G8, the summit meetings rotate among the eight member states. In the years prior to the G8 in Japan, the G8 had been in Germany (2007), Russia (2006), the United Kingdom (2005), the United States (2004), France (2003), Canada (2002), and Italy (2001). In all cases, the movement actors organized (large) protest events, and in some cases they planned for more than two years. This organizing usually involved frequent international, regional, and local meetings, the creation of a vast independent media infrastructure, setting up medical and legal support systems, holding action trainings, and designing the physical and political infrastructure for alternative villages on large campsites to host the thousands of people who come from abroad.

Ethnographic accounts of the alterglobalization movement have all emphasized the prefigurative dimension of the movement, in which movement actors attempt to reinvent democracy (Graeber 2002) by developing structures of decision making based on transnational, antihierarchical networks (Juris 2008) instead of on nation-states (Maeckelbergh 2011). For each mobilization, organizers spent extensive time designing structures of

political decision-making because they believed that the political system they created within the camp was a reflection of the more horizontal and empowering form of governance they wanted on a global scale. In the United Kingdom, for example, “it was explicitly decided [that] one of the most important aspects [of the camp] is creating a convergence space where there are new experiences of collective self-management.”<sup>2</sup> The model of collective self-management in the United Kingdom was as follows: each camp subsection, or *barrio* (neighborhood), had its own morning meeting to discuss important camp-related and action-related matters. The subsections would send one or two delegates (temporary representatives with no decision-making power) to the larger campwide meetings, of which there were two types: logistical matters and action planning (Maeckelbergh 2009). These delegates would then report back to the smaller *barrio* meetings and then take concerns and ideas raised back to the campwide meeting.

One important element of horizontal politics as practiced by the alterglobalization movement is its insistence on resisting uniformity. Each anti-G8 mobilization involves people from many different political backgrounds, usually dividing the movement into at least three strands that are quite autonomous from each other: (1) the traditional left (communists of various sorts, trade unionists, and other like-minded people), (2) the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and (3) the autonomous groups (anarchists, independents, autonomists).<sup>3</sup> Normally, these groups develop independent plans of action. The larger NGOs and traditional left groups might plan a march through the city center, while the autonomous groups (together with some NGOs) might plan a large-scale blockade of the conference center, and still other autonomous groups might plan a direct action to emphasize property destruction against corporate businesses. Normally, all of these actions would happen in the one-week time frame of a summit, and the participants (sometimes begrudgingly) would divide up time and space to make room for different actions. Attempts to limit the diversity of actions would be experienced as centralized power exercised by some over others and, therefore, considered to be antithetical to the horizontal ethos of the movement. The movement even coined a term for this form of politics: “diversity of tactics.” After the first large alterglobalization movement mobilization—the 1999 anti-WTO mobilization in Seattle—a conflict arose between the Direct Action Network (DAN), which had created action guidelines, including a clause against property destruction, and the people who defended the use of “black bloc” tactics to cause financial loss to corporate businesses through broken windows and graffiti.<sup>4</sup> Hurl (2005) argues that although DAN’s decentralized consensus model was quite successful, it was still “unable to deal with groups that did not adhere to the guidelines. There was no mechanism in place to deal with difference.” Diversity of tactics became a strategy for dealing with difference in a way that allowed for the “strategic organization and coordination of action” in a context in which “the authority of any decision-making body could not be taken for granted” (Hurl 2005).

These movement repertoires were developed over time in Latin America, Europe, North America, and to a lesser extent in parts of South Asia and Africa. As I explore below, the transfer of these repertoires to Japan exacerbated certain problems that are present at all transnational mobilizations.<sup>5</sup> This was by no means the fault of the Japanese organizers—quite the contrary. It was the result of structural dynamics inherent to the mobilization process that are worth exploring to understand the problems that can emerge in transnational organizing. One dynamic that permeates all of the examples below deserves to be addressed directly because, while it is unique to Japan, it holds important insights for transnational organizing everywhere: the emergence of a divide between “international” and “local” (in this case, Japanese) participants. The use of these terms during the 2008 anti-G8 mobilization was pervasive, and I reproduce this terminology in my account, but I also

aim to show that these terms were never an accurate depiction of the divisions that led to conflict. As I will show, from the point of view of the organizers (those who had been involved in planning the mobilization over the long-term), the main divide was between people whom they knew and trusted and those whom they did not. One reason why the divide emerged in terms of internationals and Japanese was that most (but not all) of the untrusted were unknown to organizers because they were not from Japan. Those from abroad who were known to the organizers were in a privileged position of having their trust, and often functioned as mediators between unknown internationals and those heavily involved in the planning process.

Being unknown, however, was not in and of itself a problem. The problem arose when someone was unknown *and* an advocate of autonomous actions outside of the predetermined “official” action plan.<sup>6</sup> Normally at antisummit mobilizations, those who have not previously been involved in determining the action plans have ample room to plan their own actions; this expectation is taken for granted as part of the “diversity of tactics” logic. This freedom to take action is of particular importance to the autonomous strands within the alterglobalization movement. A more accurate description of the divide, therefore, would be one between those who wanted to take autonomous action and those who feared that autonomous actions would be dangerous, especially when carried out by unknown (and untrusted) people.

### **The 2008 Anti-G8 Mobilization in Japan**

#### *The Sapporo Action: Don't Get Arrested!*

On the evening of July 3, 2008, two days before the big day of direct action in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo, in Hokkaido, “No! G8 Action Japan” held a meeting at the Sapporo convergence center to update everyone, especially the foreigners, on the action plans. The Sapporo direct action was considered the main day of action and was expected to be large and radical. In the crowded center, filled with people sitting in rows and rows of chairs and with many others standing in the doorway and along the walls, people from No! G8 Action Japan introduced the plan with the aid of two interpreters.<sup>7</sup> They gave all the important practical information: what, when, where, and how to get there. We were told that the plan was to hold a “Peace Walk” through the city center. The action was described as follows:

The Peace Walk will try to push the limit of legality. We are expecting eight thousand to ten thousand people to come. It will be the biggest day of anti-G8 action. Because we are among ten thousand others, we are safer.<sup>8</sup> We're at the bottom of the first unit with the sound car. The JCP [Japanese Communist Party] will be able to support us [points to the drawing on the white board of the second block behind the back of the first block]. We'll try to expand the demo so that they [the police] don't squash us in so much. We got warnings in Tokyo [at an anti-G8 demonstration a few days earlier] from the police for pushing too much. In Japan we can only be four people wide. The demonstration will last an hour. Are there any concerns or questions?

There were many concerns and questions. The first and most obvious question was: “What is the aim of the action?” The answer confounded the crowd: “Don't get arrested!” We found ourselves in a so-called direct action planning meeting in which the action plan was to walk and the action aim was to not get arrested.

This statement resulted in raised eyebrows as confusion swept across the room. The person sitting next to me leaned over and whispered sarcastically, “If the main goal is ‘don't get

arrested,' don't I have a better chance of achieving it if I just stay at home?" The immediate reactions in the room, and the discussions in the hall after the meeting, indicated that he was not the only one who felt this way. The reactions ranged from those who felt this was a flawed action plan to those who felt it was pointless, reformist, and anything but radical.

Normally at antisummit mobilizations, direct action would call for a blockade, the point of which is to shut down the summit by blockading access to the conference venue, or, if this was not possible, to cause a major disruption to a side event or to business-as-usual in the city center. In any case, it would involve selective disregard for the law by claiming and holding public space in a way that was disruptive. In the United Kingdom, for example, at the 2005 anti-G8 protests, the action plan involved a decentralized network of affinity groups blockading all the major roadways leading to the summit location in Gleneagles. We knew that the world leaders would arrive by helicopter but reasoned that they could not meet without support staff (translators, catering, security, media, and so on). In order to make the blockades effective, affinity groups of five to twenty people left the camp the night before and spent the night hiding in the rain-drenched woods close to strategically chosen roadways, onto which they emerged in the early morning hours ready to blockade. An extensive communications infrastructure was set up to coordinate between the affinity groups, but each group decided autonomously what type of blockade they would enact on their portion of the roadway.

The suggestion, therefore, that the main day of direct action should be a "peace walk" in which the goal is to avoid arrest, and during which we would all stay within police lines, came across as counter to the point of the mobilization, which would normally be to shut down or at least disrupt the summit itself. Four days later, after most people had moved from Sapporo to the campsite near Lake Toya, which was closer to where the G8 was meeting, another action planning meeting met the same confusing fate. This time, however, the miscommunication and conflict had to be resolved before any action could take place.

### *The Train Action*

It was 10 a.m. in the Toyoura camp on Day 1 of the G8 summit. The meeting in the convergence hall had gone around in circles. Half the camp had left an hour earlier on the preplanned action—a twenty-kilometer walk heading closer to, but still very far from, the hotel at which the G8 leaders were meeting. Those who stayed behind continued to discuss a more 'effective' action, which had been suggested the previous night: take the train to the Da-te camp (another anti-G8 campsite). This was considered a more effective action because the police were blocking the road to the train station and the demonstration would have to go through a police line in order to take the train. The idea was to use the action to draw attention to the heavy police presence at the camp. The goal was either to force the police to let us take the train, which we were legally allowed to do, or, if we were denied that right, to confront and expose the police repression. There would be a lot of media present.

Although the dividing line between those who supported the official twenty-kilometer walk action and those who wanted to do a more confrontational action was not strictly between people from abroad and people from Japan, this division was perceived because of the way the discussion developed. Throughout all of these discussions, there was an underlying irony in the fact that many internationals were not willing to risk arrest because the consequence would have been twenty-three days in detention, which would have meant missing their flights home, while many of the Japanese were actually risking arrest despite repeatedly warning the internationals against it. The meeting had two facilitators and three

excellent volunteer interpreters—two native English speakers and one native Japanese speaker who lived in the United States. Although I do not speak Japanese, I had been in Japan, had taken part in the mobilization longer than many of the other foreigners present, and had an overview of the situation and good contact with people on all sides of the discussion. I could tell that although the interpretation was excellent, it was not enough to bridge the communication gap. For example, the meeting began with an appeal for solidarity from one of the organizers:

“The people who left this morning [on the twenty-kilometer walk action] were angry. If you don’t want our support or solidarity, then what’s the point of working together?”

The response from one of the internationals was:

“We need to realize that working together does not mean doing the same things.”

What these two quotes together expose is the different set of assumptions held by movement actors on the meaning of solidarity and collaboration and how solidarity is built among movement actors. Within the logic of horizontal politics, solidarity is built through decentralized autonomy: each group determines its own course of action, and the planning meetings coordinate the separate actions. Movement actors who were accustomed to horizontal politics, therefore, interpreted the organizer’s comment as a way to exercise control because asserting the need to do the same thing was antithetical to the horizontal ethos. It effectively closed the space for autonomous actions and ran counter to the idea of a diversity of tactics. However, from the perspective of the camp organizer, it was meant as an appeal for collaboration and the expectation of a shared concern for everyone’s personal safety, especially the person whose name was on the campsite rental agreement.

In Japan, motivation for building coalitions was partly to provide protection from state repression; building coalitions, therefore, meant creating solidarity in the form of unity. On my first day in Tokyo, I was told by one of the No G8! Action Japan organizers that their inability to build coalitions in the past had resulted in more radical factions of the movement being isolated and targeted by the government. In his perception, coalitions were important to avoid isolation of groups within a larger movement and, therefore, coalition-building meant creating unity. This was a different notion of “solidarity” than that underlying the decentralized horizontal action structures of the alterglobalization movement.

The fact that movement actors in Japan were justifying the need for solidarity-as-unity by referring to the immanent threat of state repression is crucial for understanding how the dynamics of trust, miscommunication, and repression present themselves during transnational mobilizations. In the “train action planning” meeting, the fear of repression was expressed as follows:

We need to think about the fact that if anyone is arrested, then that will provoke the police and they will come to the camp and search tents. We [the local organizers] will not be able to give full legal support. If somebody is arrested we have to put energy into the arrests and not the camp. . . . The risk of taking the train is not only for those taking the train, it is for all of us. They [the police] will raid the camp and search tents. Please understand the legal consequences of this choice.

The last sentence in this statement is crucial. It represents a further disjunct in that this particular organizer assumed that the international activists did not *understand* the risks they were facing, not that they were *willing* to take these risks. Two of the specific risks that the organizer was trying to communicate to the larger meeting were that, first, the action choices of some within the group would have collective consequences for the whole group (“the risk . . . is for all of us”), and, second, that the organizers had reached capacity and could not do all the jail and legal support work that would be necessary in the case of arrests (“we will not be able to give full legal support”). Although collective punishment is becoming an increasingly popular policing tactic for protests in Europe and North America (Fernandez 2008; Scholl 2013), this was believed to be a characteristic specific to Japan of which foreign activists might not be aware. Three important assumptions, therefore, were implicitly shaping the conflict at the train action planning meeting. First, the assumptions that the protestors from outside of Japan did not realize that their choice of action would be dangerous and that they were unaware of the consequences their actions might have for themselves or others. Second, the assumption that if they knew it was dangerous or understood the consequences, they would not do this action. The third assumption was that the Japanese organizers would need to personally take care of those who got arrested (“If somebody is arrested we have to put energy into the arrests and not the camp”). This last assumption is tied to the small scale of the mobilization (hundreds instead of tens of thousands of people) and to the notion of solidarity implicitly being invoked: it revolves around everyone taking the same course of action and being responsible for each other’s actions.

As the discussion heated up, two of the most outspoken figures, each arguing on the opposing sides of the discussion, left the room. I followed them outside with an interpreter to see if we could address their specific concerns. Once outside, the communication was easier than in the large meeting, and we were able to establish that the person responsible for the camp believed that the train action would lead to an open confrontation with the police. He said, “I know how the police work in Japan, and there is no chance that the action will reach the train station without literally going through the police lines.” He pleaded with me, “Tell them it is dangerous to go beyond the police line!” A confrontation with the police, he reasoned, “will lead to many more arrests than we are able to handle.”

Despite the assumption that risk would deter action, at most mobilizations the choice of action is rarely deterred by the question of risk; instead, people often intentionally choose to take an action that they know is dangerous because they believe it is effective or that it is important to confront authorities, whether that be the police, the courts, or the politicians. In the United Kingdom, for example, in addition to the main planned action of decentralized blockades, described above, another group organized a more spontaneous action that involved openly marching out from the camp in the middle of the night in a militant protest to confront the police. The protest was partially an attempt to reach the M9 motorway to add to the decentralized blockade action, but if the only aim had been to blockade the road, they would have left the camp quietly the night before to get close to key intersections, as the other groups had done. Instead, an important aim of this large march was to offer a strong response to mounting police repression by directly confronting the police. Those who participated were under no illusion that it was risk-free. In fact, they knew it was a dangerous tactical choice, so much so that the march was dubbed the “suicide march.” Still, those who participated were willing to take the risk because they believed that confronting police repression was politically important. As one participant of this march recalled:

We marched right up to the [police] lines and began smashing through with stones and sticks. The police were not prepared at all for such determination, and after thirty seconds they scurried away. When their retreat was obvious, I heard a thick German accent scream, “DEESS ISS HOW VE DO IT!” (Tina, 2005, capitalization original)

The idea that “this is how we do it” sums up the collective ethos of the march, and simultaneously invokes the idea that this form of confrontational defiance is an important “tradition” of alterglobalization protest, one that was being invoked and undermined by the train action planning meeting in Japan. The train action, however, was different for several reasons. First, no one intended to have an open confrontation with the police; even those advocating for this action were planning to retreat if the police refused access to the train station, in part because most people were not willing to risk arrest and in part as a compromise with those who were against the train action. Another major difference between the suicide march in the United Kingdom and the train action in Japan was that in the United Kingdom they had the numbers required to overwhelm the police and the infrastructure required to offer legal support in case the march had ended in mass arrests. This type of confrontational action would not have been possible in Japan, and both the internationals and the Japanese organizers were aware of this fact. Nevertheless, without explicit reassurance that those proposing the train action understood the limitations of the Japanese context—in terms of numbers (power imbalance vis-à-vis the police), in terms of who specifically would bear the brunt of the consequences (the Japanese organizers), and in terms of the modest support infrastructure that was in place—the specter of such an action loomed large. The person advocating for the train action, however, promised: “We are in no way intending to confront the police. We are just going to walk down the road to the station—without banners so that it cannot be interpreted as a demonstration—and if the police block us, we will stage a media spectacle about freedom of expression and turn around and come back to the camp”.

Once this was personally guaranteed in a face-to-face conversation, and on the condition that people would legally support anyone who was arrested, the camp organizer was persuaded not to block consensus on the train action. At the same time as this private negotiation, the train-action planning had carried on in the meeting, except now the entire group was outside preparing the action. The call for consensus on the action occurred in a large circle of people by the gate of the camp. As one of the main concerns with the action proposal was the shortage of people to do support work in the case of arrests, the facilitator put the question to the whole group to see who among the internationals were willing to stay in Japan and do legal work. Many hands went up, including mine. Instead of simply trusting the commitment of the many people who just volunteered, the camp organizer came to me (with the aid of an interpreter), and as someone he trusted, he asked me directly to promise to take personal responsibility for any internationals who might be arrested. I was very surprised by this request, as it felt like an enormous weight to put on just one person, but all the work I had put into improving communication and trust among the various actors over the past weeks would be destroyed if I said no. So I said yes. He then put out his hand, looked me in the eye, and we shook on it. It felt like I had signed the agreement in blood. He had demanded trust from me, and I was bound into this relationship—not as someone who adheres to certain political ideals, but in a deeply *personal* capacity. I now had to ensure that no one was arrested or be prepared to stay in Japan indefinitely to coordinate support activities. With this one handshake, he invoked a relation of interpersonal trust that transferred his individualized, personal responsibility for the actions of others (forced upon



him by the state) onto me. Now I was also personally responsible for others, and it was up to me to keep everyone under control. In an instant, my interest in diversity of tactics went out the window and I suddenly had to quell a desire to “police” the demonstration, a desire that I had never felt before in nearly twenty years of social movement organizing.<sup>9</sup> This individuation of responsibility is a common tactic of state repression in any country, but what made it work so well in this case was the use of interpersonal trust as an organizing mechanism.

## **Dynamics of Trust, Miscommunication, and Repression**

### *Trust*

The choice of the camp organizer to rely on specific trust in an individual rather than a general trust in the group is indicative of a larger dynamic often present within social movements, but which raises specific limitations for horizontal and transnational movements. From Day 1, it was clear that personal trust was highly valued in the mobilization in Japan. In conversations with local organizers, I was repeatedly told that they knew they could trust me, and was often asked if I could please talk to the other internationals to make sure that they could be trusted, too. I was able to build these relationships because I had arrived in Japan earlier than many of the others, and organizers’ trusted friends had vouched for me. After I had gained a basic level of trust, I could use my skills from past mobilizations to contribute actively to this mobilization, despite not speaking Japanese. This, in turn, led to many one-on-one conversations in which people explained what they were thinking and feeling, building even more trust. This approach, however, was a selective allocation of trust, in which I had to personally earn people’s trust through my words and actions.

Movement actors and social movement scholars frequently cite trust as an important factor in social movement organizing (della Porta 2012; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2004; Polletta 2002). Trust is widely viewed as essential for the successful functioning of organizations (Six 2007), the economy (McEvily, Perrone, and Zaheer 2003), and group processes (Dirks 1999). Although once established it might be useful in some movement networks, in transnational mobilizations the specific *type* of trust that is created is of critical importance to understanding its political value. At a transnational mobilization, there are many people who have never met before and who will work together for a short period of time, leaving little opportunity to build strong personal relationships. When such relationships can be built, as some internationals were able to do in Japan, and as I was able to do to some extent, they function as a mechanism of exclusion because they can only be established with some people and not others.

Organizational theory divides trust into two forms: interpersonal and generalized (sometimes called social, public, or institutional trust). Ellwardt, Wittek, and Wielers argue, “Trust within organizations . . . can either relate to the general functioning of a firm or to the reliability of particular individuals” (2012, 523). Additionally,

[Generalized trust] is impersonal and not related to specific social exchange relationships between people. Instead, it is rooted in the employee’s belief about an organization’s functioning and their assessment of whether the organization meets its contractual and moral obligations toward its employees. (524)

Stolle (2002) argues that “attitudes of generalized trust extend beyond the boundaries of face-to-face interaction and incorporate people who are not previously known” (397), which allows “citizens to join their forces in social and political groups . . . to come together in citizens’ initiatives more easily” (398). Interpersonal trust, by contrast, “only

include[s] people one personally knows and those individuals who fit into a certain social identity category that one holds” (398). Dirks (1999) defines interpersonal trust as “a belief about the dependability of the partner and the extent to which the partner cares about the group’s interests” (446), while Ellwardt and colleagues (2012) define it as a relation with “particular others . . . embedded in the contexts of friendly and frequent relationships” (526). Interpersonal trust-building is perhaps possible within long-standing organizations, but transnational mobilizations create short-term social relationships among thousands of people mediated through multiple languages, and the range of clues on which movement actors can draw to build trust are limited. For transnational mobilizations, therefore, interpersonal trust built between individuals is a poor substitute for generalized trust, which can be attributed to thousands of people.

In the case of the 2008 mobilization, however, as difficult as it was to build interpersonal trust, it proved less difficult than building generalized trust. Normally most people who attend such a mobilization have previously attended meetings run by similar horizontal principles, and they are able to generalize the trust they have in those meetings to an international context. In Japan, this previous experience was lacking for many participants. The examples of the action planning meetings show how whenever a plan was discussed, the tendency of the organizers was to discourage radical action, as in the request “don’t get arrested.” This was experienced by many of the participants as an attempt to limit the space for autonomous action, which was perceived as an exercise of hierarchical control. Such a request mirrored the tactics of large NGOs or traditional Left organizations that attempted to control protests at past antisummit mobilizations. Those who felt the organizers were curtailing the space for action, therefore, rebelled against this attempt by pushing the limits set and by asserting their autonomy. Both of these moves—pushing for more radical actions and planning actions independent from the main action plan—increased fear and distrust because it rejected solidarity-as-unity in favor of the common horizontal approach of solidarity-as-coordinated autonomy. The different assumptions about solidarity were key terrains of miscommunication, thereby further undermining the ability to build either interpersonal or generalized trust.

### *Miscommunication*

Miscommunication during the anti-G8 mobilization in Japan stemmed from two key factors: linguistic difficulties (that is, a shortage of people who spoke both English and Japanese fluently) and a lack of shared movement history. Most people from abroad did not speak Japanese, meaning that much communication between international activists and Japanese activists was mediated through volunteer interpreters, who, as described earlier, were bilingual activists. There was almost no direct communication between many movement actors, making the task of governing villages according to horizontal principles difficult. A multilingual environment, however, does not automatically create this problem. Antisummit mobilizations across Europe are also multilingual events, but there is usually an abundance of English-speaking activists and volunteer interpreters to facilitate communication effectively, if imperfectly. As Doerr (2012, 2013) shows in the case of the European Social Forum, when translation is practiced as an explicitly political act of horizontal prefiguration, in which the power of language is acknowledged and leveraged, then translation can make the decision-making process more horizontal. Unlike the European Social Forum and World Social Forum (two other gatherings of the alterglobalization movement), however, antisummit mobilizations do not have an organized volunteer interpretation system. The main language for meetings is often English, which results in the marginalization of

people who do not speak it, although this rarely inhibits effective organizing at the level of the whole group. At large assemblies, people normally sit in small groups clustered by language, and volunteers do simultaneous whisper interpretation. As meetings get larger, there are also more people who can provide interpretation. In Japan, however, the number of bilingual participants remained low throughout the mobilization.

Linguistic limitations not only created the problem of mediated communication but they also made task allocation and trust-building nearly impossible. Those arriving from elsewhere usually help with kitchens and with food, meeting facilitation, waste removal, media outreach, camp security, action training, and, perhaps most importantly, planning actions and doing legal support for those arrested. In Japan this decentralization of tasks was almost impossible because too few internationals spoke Japanese. A lack of task decentralization undermines horizontal politics because taking on specific tasks is how people shift from the role of participant to organizer. Miscommunication, therefore, made the divide between organizers and participants unbridgeable, locking this hierarchy into place. This was particularly visible in Japan because many of the foreigners who traveled to Japan were people who normally play organizational roles. After the first informational meeting for foreigners, one such person commented, "I didn't expect to be told what was being done for me but also what I can do." In response to this meeting, which had downplayed the practical problems of securing a campsite for the alternative village, another person said, "It would be better if they talked to us about the problems so that we can contribute to solving them. That's better than trying to reassure us by saying that they will solve the problems." The impossibility of allocating tasks meant that Japanese organizers were in an unprecedented situation for antisummit mobilizations: as more people arrived, rather than relieving the pressure on local organizers, infrastructure for participants became yet another thing that had to be organized. This increased the workload of local organizers, who were stretched to their limits, and it frustrated those who wanted to contribute.

The above descriptions of action planning meetings not only show the limits that linguistic difficulties placed on trust-building but also how miscommunication can be exacerbated by the presence of different sets of assumptions on movement politics due to a lack of shared movement history:

International activists intended to do actions according to the established practices of the autonomous section. As the Japanese movements had never experienced that, "No! G8 Action Japan" then referred to the activist infrastructure of the past summit protests. . . . "No! G8 Action Japan" set up the infrastructure, such as an activist camp, legal watch, the counter forum, as well as housing sites. (Higuchi 2012, 470)

Higuchi claims that these infrastructures were "completely new" to Japan and that they were a "first trial" (470). He describes how No G8! Action Japan was "established in April 2007 by eight founding members right after the[ir] participation in movements around the 2007 Rostock G8 [in Germany]" (469). These eight members were among the only local organizers within the autonomous strands of the movement in Japan who had previously participated in an antisummit mobilization, and none had ever hosted such a mobilization. The organizers of the Sapporo camp echoed this inexperience when they opened a meeting with the disclaimer, "This is the first time that there will be a mass protest against an international meeting. We have never experienced political camps before."

The important point here is not that the 2008 mobilization represented a shift of the alterglobalization repertoire from Europe to Japan, but rather that this shift exposed an

important dynamic of transnational mobilization that previous shifts had not, namely that shared histories, norms, and beliefs are as essential to building trust as they are to avoiding miscommunication.

### *Internal Strife and State Repression*

Miscommunication, however, was perhaps not the most significant impediment to building generalized trust; in order to understand the desire for solidarity-as-unity expressed at the train action planning meeting, I now turn to the question of which risks were perceived to be behind the idea of separation-as-division within the movement. The dominant historical narrative about Japanese social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, especially the student movements, is one of extreme violence between the police and protesters as well as among the protesters themselves. The history of *uchi-geba* (internal conflict) was repeatedly brought up in my conversations with local organizers as important for understanding how Japanese movement actors related to one another. Uchi-geba was a period of violent and bloody struggle within the student movement (Shimbori et al. 1980, 139), which resulted in the destruction of property, physical injuries, and even deaths (Ames 1981, 87). Steinhoff (1984) gives a sense of the extent of this violence: “Between 1968 and 1975 there were 1,776 internal factional disputes which came to police attention because of their violence. They involved 4,848 injuries, 44 deaths, and 3,438 arrests” (182).

This history of conflict meant that vaguely shared political ideals could not become the basis for building generalized trust, and thus it increased the importance of building interpersonal trust. It also threw a wrench in attempts to create a movement that was tolerant of diversity (Higuchi 2012, 473). Faced with a lack of trust in horizontal politics, a lack of trust in each other (perhaps even a latent fear of violence from each other), and pervasive miscommunication, building such a large, inclusive, and autonomous movement was unusually difficult. When I tried to encourage mutual trust among participants, I was told, “I don’t know him; I know you, I trust you.” Any chance of overcoming these difficulties was hindered by the threat of police repression. As the perceived risk from outside the movement increased, so too did the problems of trust, miscommunication, and conflict.

During the anti-G8 mobilization, movement actors spoke about state repression as a real and impending threat. This expressed fear was reinforced by our daily experience. From the airport to the streets, the authorities made it clear that protesters were not welcome. For the G8, there were warning posters and banners all over the city asking people to be vigilant and to report political activity to the police. Although it is common during any G8 protest to have heightened border controls (in Europe, the Schengen treaty is usually suspended, and people who are known to the authorities are refused entry), in Japan many of those arriving at the airport, including myself, were held for hours before being granted entry; others were deported upon arrival.

Repression in Japan emphasized overt surveillance (presumably combined with covert surveillance) characterized by a visible police presence in everyday life, psychological pressure, and the threat of collective punishment (that is, punishing friends or family for someone’s actions).<sup>10</sup> There were teams of “secret police” who regularly followed us around the city and were present en masse at demonstrations. Some of these teams were anything but secret in their obvious uniform of matching plain clothes, little hats, notepads, and pencils, but their obviousness was part of the intimidation factor. Steinhoff describes the history and evolution of this approach to policing in Japan, arguing:

[The policing] stigmatizes demonstration participants and sharply separates them from the mainstream of Japanese public life, discouraging public attention to or participation in their causes . . . [and] divides protest movements internally, decreasing support for groups that operate at the prevailing limit of tolerated dissent, and gradually constricting the limit itself. (2006, 387)

Those that the activists called the “secret police” Steinhoff calls “a large elite plainclothes security police force whose main activity is the surveillance, investigation, and arrest of political radicals” (389). During and prior to the G8, movement actors tried, but usually failed, to remain under the radar of police surveillance. One of my earliest notes I made in Japan was regarding the trip from the airport with local organizers and how they were looking over their shoulders to check for “secret police.”

Local organizers were subjected to extensive surveillance in the lead-up to the G8 protests, a factor that helps to explain the concern expressed when radical or autonomous actions were mentioned. Tominaga (2014) describes the experience of one core organizer whose “flat is considered ‘a secret base of operations’ by activists, as well as by policemen” (1787). In her interview, the organizer says, “I spent two years setting up the activists’ camp. I coordinated with foreign protesters, city governments, and other Japanese activists. . . . However, many policemen seemed to follow me after July. I feared they will capture me during the demonstration” (quoted in Tominaga, 1787). This fear led him to not take part in the protests.

In order to undertake the task of legal observer (one of the roles for which I volunteered), I attended legal trainings with lawyers and activists, at which they explained the law enforcement and legal systems in Japan. We were told, “When they arrest you, they can hold you first for forty-eight hours, then they get an extension for twenty-four hours. If they decide to keep you in custody, they can hold you for another ten days, with an extension for another ten days.” In practice, police held people for much longer: “Sometimes they arrest you for twenty-three days, let you out, arrest you again, etc. No charges.” The legal trainer said that there was a special security force that was “trained by the CIA to be invisible, to break into houses unnoticed.” This was followed by the ominous thought, “They might be in our houses.” At the campsites, camp coordinators warned everyone that “arrests in Japan lead to house searches. Sometimes also harassment of family and neighbors.” We were cautioned that “the practice of house searches after arrest will probably result in police raiding the camp.” At a camp meeting on July 3, one of the organizers told us:

If there are any troubles in the camp, it is not only the campers who will lose a place but [name of the person who rented the campsite] will be in big trouble too. Some people may think it is strange to have all these rules, like no smoking and no graffiti, but we have to do this to avoid trouble with the government for [name redacted].

It was taken seriously that house searches could lead to anti-G8 campsites being raided if anyone residing in the camp were to be arrested. The night after the Sapporo demonstration, at which four people were arrested, two other internationals and I were invited to an emergency meeting of camp organizers, from 1 a.m.–3 a.m., to plan for the likely raid of the camp the next morning. The atmosphere was tense. Everyone was exhausted from a long day of actions, following busy weeks of preparation. We sat around a wooden coffee table in an upstairs room of an old building on the campgrounds. The camp organizers were scared that the internationals would try to barricade the camp if the police came. This

fear was well-founded. Only one year later, at the 2009 anti-NATO camp near Strasbourg, the response to police threatening to raid the camp was to immediately build barricades at each entrance to the camp. Barricading the camp involved massive structures made out of wood and hay bales, with shopping carts filled with projectiles (bottles, rocks, and so on) stored behind the barricades in case the police tried to tear them down. In Japan, however, barricades were considered dangerous. One of the camp organizers opened the meeting by explaining:

Lawyers think that it is likely that police will come. . . . If the police are carrying a warrant, there is nothing we can do. . . . Can't engage them in conflict. . . . The point is not to let people form a barricade. They will get arrested and be held for twenty-three days. Today [at the demonstration] everyone was doing what they wanted, but it was the Japanese that got caught. If there was a scuffle here, it would be me [that would be arrested].

Similar to the sentiment expressed at the train action planning meeting, the unequal distribution of risk was a recurrent theme because organizers felt that internationals did not fully understand the consequences of their actions, and that they especially did not understand who would most likely suffer those consequences.

Although Japan has often been held up as an example of ideal police conduct (Bayley 1976), recent studies show that the Japanese police abuse their authority more often than commonly thought (Miyazawa 1992). Even the most celebratory accounts of policing in Japan conclude that “demonstrators,” “rioters,” “radical youth,” and/or “students” are heavily targeted by police (Ames 1981; Parker 2001) and are “most consistently subjected to excessive force” (Bayley 1976, 167). Structures of spying and social control have been pillars of the Japanese law enforcement system from its inception (Deacon 1982, 158). Prior to and during World War II, there was a “policy of encouraging the ordinary citizen to spy while building up a vast army of snoopers . . . [this] reached its height with the creation of the sinister Neighborhood Association (*Tonari Gumi*)” (Deacon 1982, 158). Historically, practices of neighborhood surveillance were complemented by an elaborate system of “thought control, characterized by excessive intrusion by the police into citizens’ daily lives” (Aldous 1997, 13; see also Ames 1981). Despite attempts at structural reforms post-1945, the US occupation failed to change the repressive practices to which the Japanese police had grown accustomed (Aldous 1997), and “a number of specific features, such as the ‘routine family visits’ of the Meiji era have been carried over virtually intact” (Parker 2001, 31).

Given this context of perceived and actual risk of both state repression and internal conflict, it is not surprising that generalized trust was not present and that relations of interpersonal trust were perceived as essential yet impossible. It is in this context that the story of the train action must be understood as an example of larger movement dynamics of miscommunication, interpersonal trust, and repression. Although the case of Japan was more intense than past mobilizations, it should not be seen as an exception. Transnational movements will always encounter new contexts, and repressive strategies are mounting worldwide. How movement actors respond to problems of miscommunication and repression is of crucial importance. The action planning meetings during the 2008 anti-G8 mobilization show that a reliance on interpersonal rather than generalized trust undermined the horizontal politics of the movement and perpetuated state repression.

## Conclusion

The case of the anti-G8 mobilization in Japan shows that under state repression, when movement actors at transnational mobilizations resort to interpersonal trust, it can limit autonomous and decentralized action—thereby undermining horizontal politics—and make the movement more vulnerable to repression. Trust is widely thought to be an essential element for mitigating risk in movement organizing and is considered “a vital resource for the functioning of democratic political systems” (Freitag and Ackerman 2016, 1). However, the *type* of trust that is demanded by movement actors of one another makes all the difference. I have argued that interpersonal trust can be detrimental to movement organizing because it creates new dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that undermine horizontal politics. For large-scale, transnational mobilizations, a shared generalized trust in the political process rather than an interpersonal trust in specific people is essential. If the aim is to organize a large mobilization through a model of horizontal (open, inclusive, egalitarian) politics, then trust must be “impersonal and not related to specific social exchange relationships between peoples” (Ellwardt et al. 2012, 524), so that it can be extended to unknown people (Stolle 2002, 398). Interpersonal trust does not allow for this type of collaboration because it is built on specific interactions that individuals have with one another. In Japan, this individualized approach to trust led to a system of trusting some people and controlling others, which undermined the movement’s self-proclaimed goals of embodying an alternative, more horizontal form of democratic decision making.

Although trust is considered a “crucial strategy for dealing with an uncertain, unpredictable future” (Torsello 2008, 514), what I have shown is that *interpersonal* trust leads to an individualized approach to trust that is too readily translated into an individualization of responsibility, in which individuals rather than collectives receive and accept the culpability for each other’s actions forced upon them by the state. When the camp organizer placed his trust in me at the train action planning meeting, he also made me personally responsible, as an individual, for the actions of all those present. The effect of this move was twofold: to make me feel far more vulnerable to state repression and to awake in me a desire to control others and keep them from taking action. The role of trust within transnational movements must, therefore, be examined in relation to repression and dynamics of individual and collective risk in order to assess the unexpected ways in which trust can paradoxically reinforce repression by individualizing risk at the expense of creating strong collective responses. Under state repression, the impossibility of building trust generates a need to control one another and results in movement actors themselves becoming part and parcel of repressive mechanisms.

Finally, problems of miscommunication exacerbated both the impossibility of building interpersonal trust and the individualization of risk. The level of miscommunication in the Japanese mobilization became a political problem not only because those present could not communicate directly with one another but also because of the form this miscommunication took: a disjuncture between political histories. I have shown how activists brought different assumptions to action planning, and that these differences ran deeper than a question of translation. Key moments of miscommunication were the result of different attitudes toward risk and a conflict between solidarity-as-unity and solidarity-as-coordinated autonomy. The desire for unity exponentially increased the importance of communication and agreement among participants. If a decentralized diversity of tactics approach had been applied instead, miscommunication might have led to less conflict. Regardless, what is essential for an understanding of transnational mobilizations beyond the Japanese case is that a lack of a shared historical framework created a communication gap that movement actors were not able to bridge in a way that would allow them to maintain the open and collective form

of horizontal organizing that defines the movement's political practice. Understanding this dynamic is important because the interplay of trust, miscommunication, and repression highlights key limitations of transnational movement organizing beyond the Japanese case, and are important factors for consideration in the search for new ways to challenge power hierarchies under conditions of mounting state repression.

### Notes

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1. While I hesitate to declare the alterglobalization movement “over” because of the power implied in such an analytical move, I do think that movement actors today would consider it to be in the past. The 2017 anti-G20 protests in Hamburg, however, have reignited an interest in the tactic of antisummit mobilizations.
2. Indy Media UK, *International Anti-G8 Meeting Minutes: Tübingen, Germany 26–27 Feb 2005*. <https://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/03/306637.html>. Published March 15, 2005.
3. This subsection of the movement comprises many actors, some who self-identify as “anarchist,” “autonomist,” or “independent,” and some who do not. Among those who use these labels, what they understand these terms to mean diverges; there is no consensus of what anarchism is, or of what it means to be an independent activist. The main element that unites these actors is a desire for a more horizontal political process.
4. There were several antisummit mobilizations prior to 1999, but the idea of an “alterglobalization movement” did not solidify until after the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle.
5. Although the “foreigners” who went to Japan were mainly from Europe and the United States, and it therefore seemed like these “Western” activists were imposing their movement repertoire on the “Eastern” Japanese, the reality is more complicated. First, the tactical repertoire of the alterglobalization movement is not a “Western” import. It originated in Mexico with the Zapatista uprising, and is based on the Hallmarks of People's Global Action Network, which is determined in large part by third world struggles from across Latin America, South Asia, and Africa, together with those in Europe and North America. Second, the other main activity of the alterglobalization movement is to host annual or biennial gatherings called the World Social Forum (WSF), which originated in Brazil and are always held in the “global south,” including India and various locations in Africa. During the 2004 WSF in India, for example, those of us who went early to help organize were all easily integrated into the organizational infrastructure; although conflicts abounded (as usual) between different political tendencies, these conflicts were not perceived in terms of “foreigners” and “locals.”
6. The term “official” here refers to actions planned months or even years in advance at a series of open gatherings, both local and international.



7. When I refer to “interpreters” I mean bilingual volunteers who contributed to the mobilization by using their language skills to help people communicate—this is their political contribution. They are not hired staff.
8. The emphasis on safety is a theme that recurred in many conversations and action-planning meetings, as described in this article.
9. The tactic of using some protesters to police others—by forcing some people to sign permits or register their names—is common everywhere. However, it is usually the more established movement organizations that take on this role. It is almost never the “autonomous” movement actors.
10. Activists often emphasized that the police could arrest your friends and families and hold them responsible for your actions, and thus we had to be extra careful in choosing actions. I have no direct evidence of this happening at the G8 in Japan, but Aldous (1997, 31) demonstrates historical precedent for this kind of policing.

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