

Complexity and Irony in Policing And Protesting: The World Trade Organization in Seattle

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Introduction

DURING A LARGE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION in Seattle, tear gas fired by police affected many WTO delegates, shoppers, and city officials, but was relatively ineffective against protesters who had brought their own gas masks. As a result, police escalated their use of force, including the use of rubber bullets to disperse crowds. Initially, as police pushed against the lines of demonstrators, the nonviolent activists closed ranks and locked arms tightly. The more the police pushed, the more resilient the line became. However, the demonstrators' success in blocking police and WTO delegates also inhibited other demonstrators from moving to new locations and blocked their own medics from reaching the injured. The degree of secrecy accompanying the preparations of both police and protesters, while believed to be strategic, also inhibited cooperation with allies.

These examples illustrate an ironic perspective on protest, which we develop below. Briefly noted are commonly heard explanatory stories about the Seattle events, along with some of their limitations. We suggest that a neglected perspective involving irony is needed to understand the complexity of these events. We then detail police and demonstrator activities on the first day of the WTO meetings, noting organizational, planning, and tactical efforts. We identify 10 forms of irony inherent in the structure of the situation or that may emerge from interaction. These factors bring a significant degree of indeterminacy and trade-offs, no matter what decisions are made. We conclude with suggestions on limiting violations of constitutional rights and police and demonstrator violence. Our method involves

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interviews, news accounts and other documents, e-mail discussion lists, videos, and direct observation.

Four Stories About Seattle

Police and demonstrator interactions during the 2000 Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) protests can be viewed through multiple lenses involving political-economy, rationalization, and the supposed irrationality of crowds. These yield varying explanatory and evaluative conclusions.

The initial story involves police as the first line of defense of a capitalist economic system and the protest of subordinates as a natural consequence of structures of inequality. The WTO, after all, is a loose coalition of world businesses. The laws on the books and those given enforcement priority do not equally reflect all social interests, even if they exist within an ethos of universal enforcement, which in principle focuses on behavior, not the characteristics of those against whom the law is enforced.¹ On balance, police actions tilt decisively in favor of the more powerful, who have a disproportionate role to begin with in defining what the law will be and how it is enforced. In Seattle, the focus of law enforcement was on trying to insure conditions that permitted global business to do business. Their focus was not on investigating legal and moral crimes against labor and the environment, conditions in poor countries, or questionable alliances between businesses and governments.

However useful as a stage setting, a broad political-economic approach has limitations. Many Seattle protest groups did reflect the unprivileged, such as the poor and those in developing countries, but many other protest groups, such as those concerned with environmental issues,² were hardly disadvantaged in traditional economic terms.³ Such an approach tells us little about variation within and across demonstrations, and it cannot explain police protection of demonstrators or repression of protest demonstrations in noncapitalist societies. Neither can it account for the often competing and conflicting interests of diverse elites by economic sector, institutional affiliation, and region. Many Seattle residents viewed the mayor and police chief as relatively progressive, rather than as draconian enforcers of a 19th-century capitalist order.

The next two stories involve the development of rationality, bureaucratization, and professionalization, which are associated with modernity. Strategically and tactically, the behavior of police and demonstrators is seen to involve the application of the most advanced means. Calculation and technology, rather than tradition, are the basic guides and there is faith in scientific approaches. In this struggle, one or the other side (most often the police) will sometimes have the organizational resources to prevail.

In the case of police, the story here is one of the failure of implementation. Police are seen as simply not having been good enough to get the job done. They lost control and lost due to a lack of police professionalization, along with

inadequate budgets and planning at best, and incompetence at worst. This is an “if, only” story. It is assumed that if the police had known what they were doing, had had better training, coordination, resources, and planning, it all could have been avoided. This essentially optimistic administrative view is reflected in various official postmortems (Carter and Brunner, 2000; McCarthy and Associates, 2000; McCarthy, Loudon, and Kolman, 2000; Quenzer, 2000). Better prepared and more experienced police as in Washington, D.C., or in larger cities such as New York, would have known what to do and avoided the problems.

A third story might be called “the demonstrators won.” Demonstrators enjoyed strategic and tactical successes since they were smarter and more prepared than their adversaries (Carter and Miletich, 2000; Quenzer, 2000). They were better organized and more professional than the police were. They were able to shut down a major part of the city, stopped some WTO meetings, received widespread national and international attention for their cause, and were able to portray themselves as police victims. Moreover, they knew how to exploit their advantages and the contradictions in the system.

Both of these broad approaches can help in historical contrasts,⁴ but as with the first approach they are too sweeping to account for the variation over time and place within a large set of events such as Seattle’s. For example, police have been praised for using restraint in many settings, as shown by the low number of serious injuries to demonstrators and no deaths (McCarthy, Loudon, and Kolman, 2000; Cabrera, 2000). Further, demonstrators were not always successful, particularly in preventing property damage and managing the media. The engineering cause-effect mentality here, which assumes that social systems are closed and that interventions will have adequately predictable results, is only partially supported by reality’s richness and surprises. There are many choices, whether explicit or implicit, that may carry unwanted consequences. The rational approach reflected in the two stories above is best viewed in probabilistic terms and usually involves trade-offs.

A fourth view, largely discredited among scholars, but accepted by many in the public, involves the notion that people in crowds are irrational and explosive and that anything can happen once the group is stimulated. Headlines such as “Chaos Closes Downtown” (Sunde, 1999) and “Count Down to Chaos” (*Seattle Times*, 1999), as well as television reports of rampant vandalism exemplify this sensational mass media view. Once the fury of the crowd has been unleashed, events are assumed to be random, chaotic, and destructive. Although some people do get carried away, this perspective ignores the significant organization, patterns, and rhythms seen in the demonstration. Examples that challenge the chaotic perspective include the thousands of well-trained demonstrators who engaged in civil disobedience as members of affinity groups and the peaceful AFL-CIO march involving thousands of unionists into the disputed sector surrounding the WTO.

Contrary to many media reports and some critics, the vast majority of those who participated in the demonstrations were not marginal, alienated, mentally ill,

out-of-control lawbreakers, but students, teachers, grandparents, farmers, physicians, lawyers, and members of unions, human rights, environmental, or religious groups. Saying this of the majority should not imply that we deny that a minority did behave in unscripted, disorderly, and destructive behavior — contrary to the organized protest plans. By observing that large, well-publicized mass demonstrations will draw a variety of participants (some with motives apart from, or independent of, those characterizing the organizers and lacking in restraint), we are alerted to the heterogeneity of such gatherings and the difficulty of “one size fits all” tactics.

The Battle in Seattle

The protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle during the week of November 29 through December 3, 1999, provide a case study for better understanding the ironies that often accompany mass demonstrations. The demonstrations occurred during the business week following Thanksgiving, one of the busiest shopping times of the year. During that week, most WTO delegates stayed in hotels within walking distance of the Seattle Convention Center, where the meetings were to be held. Together, protesters and police paralyzed the business district for three days, shut down the WTO Ministerials, and called international attention to the issues raised by the WTO meetings.

Two major protest events started the paralysis on November 30. The first event was the downtown demonstration or “direct action,” where thousands of well-trained activists engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience that effectively closed the core of the city and prevented delegates from attending the WTO meetings. The other major event was a march and rally sponsored by the AFL-CIO. Tens of thousands of representatives of unions and environmental and religious groups congregated for a four-hour stadium rally with music and speakers. Flanked by AFL-CIO marshals wearing fluorescent orange hats, they marched through a three-mile corridor to the city center that was filled with affinity groups, media personnel, bystanders, and police. Many of the marchers then joined in what had become a battle between demonstrators and police.

The troubles in Seattle began around daybreak on a cold and drizzly Tuesday, November 30 (“N30” to the demonstrators), when thousands of nonviolent protesters filled the streets surrounding the entire Seattle Convention Center and effectively blocked downtown streets, sidewalks, and hotel doors. They made it impossible for most WTO delegates to enter the opening rounds of discussions. Weeks and days before, protest organizers had made it clear on web sites, during large public teach-ins, and in nonviolence trainings that the primary purpose of the demonstrations was to “Shut Down the WTO!”

Many of the demonstrators belonged to one of several hundred affinity groups.⁵ These groups were trained and loosely coordinated through the Direct Action Network (DAN), “a loose coalition of community organizations and

international sponsors who worked together to mobilize the direct action...” (Guilloud, 2000: 94). DAN organizers had divided the area surrounding the Seattle Convention Center into 13 “wedges” or “pieces of pie” to be filled by 10 to 20 affinity groups each (Crass, 2000: 49; Lojowsky, 2000: 13). Each affinity group consisted of five to 20 people with some commonality, such as a shared workplace, ideology, lifestyle, friendship, participation in other protest events, or attendance at the same university. These groups gave themselves elaborate names like Lesbian Avengers, ACME Collective, Bananarchy Movement, Portland Spuds, and STARC Naked.⁶ Affinity members “worked together, participated in training together, and supported each other through a variety of autonomous actions” (Guilloud, 2000: 95). To participate in the N30 action, affinity groups agreed to four simple guidelines: (1) to refrain from violence, physical or verbal; (2) not to carry weapons; (3) not to bring or use illegal drugs or alcohol; and (4) not to destroy property (Starhawk, 2000: 47).⁷

Using a consensus decision-making model, members of individual affinity groups selected the pie slice they would occupy and the tactics they would use in the blockade. After long deliberations, each affinity group sent a spokesperson or “spoke” to late-night “spokes council meetings.” The meetings were held at “420,” a vacant warehouse rented by DAN as a central gathering place for training, strategizing, making giant puppets, and practicing street theater.⁸ At the spokes meetings, affinity group representatives used the same democratic consensus model to hammer out details for the action. The primary purposes of the meetings were to ensure that all pieces of the pie were adequately covered and to keep the affinity groups informed about important issues, such as the number of people risking arrest. At these meetings, spokes were discouraged from reporting on their group’s tactical plans. This ensured that meetings remained public and yet maintained a level of secrecy, lessening the concern that police could gather sufficient intelligence information to effectively undermine the overall action. To gather such intelligence, police would have needed to infiltrate hundreds of groups, which for reasons of policy and logistics did not occur.

Affinity groups often formed into clusters (e.g., the Cowborg Cluster and Black Bloc) to spread the responsibility of blocking an intersection or a series of doors to a building. Some affinity groups engaged in street theater, while others “locked down” in intersections by forming a circle and linking their hands inside six-inch-diameter PVC pipes. Many carried large hand-crafted puppets, while some drummed on five-gallon buckets strung around their necks. Others danced to music provided by a brass band in one location and a van blocking an intersection with a powerful sound system in another. Still others made up “flying groups” that quickly moved to locations where they were most needed (Starhawk, 2000: 47; Ruckus Society, 2000).⁹

At approximately 9:00 A.M., outside the Sheraton Hotel, where Secretary of State Albright was staying and was prevented from leaving (Carter and Postman,

1999), and near the Nike retail store that was later vandalized, police in full body armor and gas masks, overwhelmed and frightened by the number and preparedness of protesters (Cabrera, 2000), tried to disperse the growing crowds by jabbing and pushing the sitting and prone participants with long batons and by spraying them with pepper gas¹⁰ from pressurized canisters (Seattle Police, 1999; Indymedia, 1999b).¹¹ Some demonstrators followed the advice offered in their nonviolent training classes and put goggles on to protect their eyes and wrapped bandannas soaked in vinegar around their mouths to neutralize the chemicals. A smaller number of protesters quickly donned gas masks. Activists sitting at the front of police lines pulled themselves into tighter formation by wrapping arms and legs together, and put their heads down. Although many of the unmasked demonstrators standing further back temporarily dispersed, these police tactics proved largely ineffective, especially in disbanding those at the front of the crowd near the police line. Eyewitness accounts, as well as Seattle Police Department¹² and Independent Media¹³ video footage, show that police atop armored personnel carriers and on the ground continued to spray the protesters and began hand-lobbing smoke and concussion grenades, shooting canisters of pepper and tear gas, and firing volleys of rubber bullets and bean bags into the crowd (Indymedia, 1999b; Seattle Police, 1999; Swart, 2000: 53).

These tactics worked well enough to make a path that allowed some vehicles to leave the Sheraton parking garage. “Street Medics” wearing hand-painted red crosses and protective gloves quickly treated protesters and bystanders who had been sprayed with pepper and tear gases. The medics had backgrounds in emergency medical care (physicians and paramedics), as well as in alternative treatments.¹⁴ Earlier workshops at the DAN 420 headquarters concentrated on ways to treat demonstration-related injuries. This proved to be very useful knowledge as the day continued.

News of the violence erupting outside the Sheraton quickly spread to participants blocking other sectors of the city who communicated by rollerblade, bicycle, two-way radios, and cell phones. This information was then disseminated by word of mouth and over bullhorns. Flying squads replied by moving to the street outside the Sheraton. The squads included members of the Black Bloc, a loose affiliation of anarchist affinity groups and individuals, many of whom had agreed not to engage in “property transformation” unless police engaged in violence first (Swart, 2000: 53; AFSC, 1999).¹⁵

The Sheraton assault was not atypical of police efforts at clearing demonstrators from other sites. Police used the same nonlethal weapons at other locations (Lojowsky, 2000: 13–15; Hough, 2000: 39; Quenzer, 2000). In almost all cases, police were unsuccessful at effectively moving the crowds more than a few blocks from their original lines. Such unexpected police actions did have the effect of significantly angering the crowd. Organizers had been assured at earlier pre-protest management meetings with police officials that nonviolent protesters

would be arrested en masse, long before the use of chemical irritants and other nonlethal weapons, should that become necessary.¹⁶ Police, for their part, seemed surprised and angered because protest leaders had assured them that demonstrators would engage in scripted civil disobedience resulting in arrest. Thus, both police and activists believed that the other side had reneged on their promises (Postman and Carter, 1999; Cabrera, 2000).

Shortly after police attempts to gain ground, in what appeared to be a preplanned and relatively organized fashion, a small number of youth (the numbers reported vary from 25 to 200) — many of them dressed in black clothing and masks, and some claiming membership in the Black Bloc cluster — began spray painting graffiti on downtown buildings. The newly painted signs, often initialed with the anarchist “A,” contained messages such as “we are winning.”

Protest organizers had publicly promised that they would not engage in vandalism, though they acknowledged they could not control the behavior of every person in the street (Postman and Carter, 1999). Their purpose was to protest the WTO and call attention to their grievances, not to trash the city. Seattle Police (1999) and activists’ (Indymedia, 1999b) videos, as well as eyewitness accounts, indicated that most of the more disorderly behavior (breaking windows, graffiti, and throwing things at police) began once police used force to disperse, rather than arrest, nonviolent activists blockading the streets, doors, and sidewalks.¹⁷

Police squads, led by senior officers, continued their efforts to clear the streets and human barricades from doorways, with momentary success. At 11:00 A.M., realizing they had spent most of their chemical irritants, police stopped their advances and in some cases even retreated. Additional tear gas and pepper spray were hurriedly obtained from other municipalities.

During the police assault, the number of vandals increased, as did the intensity of their attacks. Just before police slowed their attack around 11:00 A.M., small groups began breaking windows of retail stores such as Nike and The Gap, using hammers and crowbars concealed inside backpacks, as well as newspaper boxes and heavy steel grates protecting trees. Retail stores owned by multinational corporations believed responsible for human rights abuses and global environmental degradation were targeted. With little success, some demonstrators opposing the vandalism tried policing the more disruptive activists by actively interfering with those breaking windows and by reminding them that this was a nonviolent demonstration. Such efforts at control were met with shouts and cursing. (For example, a middle-aged woman who pleaded for calm was told by a young tagger, “fuck off lady. It’s do-gooders like you that keep this system rolling.”) Groups of officers often stood by and watched (Indymedia, 1999b; Seattle Police, 1999). Police claim they were unable to make arrests because they were understaffed, told to hold skirmish lines, and inhibited by the human barricades and massive number of people in the streets (Egan, 1999; McCarthy and Associates, 2000; McCarthy, Loudon, and Kolman, 2000). By noon, police estimated that 25,000 to 50,000 demonstrators,

delegates, and bystanders filled a 15-block perimeter around the Convention Center.¹⁸ By late afternoon, there were likely over 30,000 protesters downtown, and perhaps as many as 45,000 (CNN, 1999; Cabrera, 2000; Verhovek, 1999).

While many WTO delegates remained blockaded in their hotels, some were able to exit. However, they were prevented from entering the meetings because of the human barricades set up at intersections immediately outside the entrance to the security area cordoned off around the Convention Center. Video footage shows that at first, delegates looked surprised or even amused when they were prevented from entering the meetings. They did not appear to be too concerned about their safety. As the day continued, however, some delegates became frightened, angry, and frustrated. Police report that throughout the day, they rescued delegates from unruly protesters. Some delegates tried to break through the human barricades. One delegate (or possibly a body guard, it is unclear which) brandished a handgun in plain view of police and tried to break through the protesters' line. Demonstrators grabbed his gun hand and tackled him. Police quickly doused the protesters with pepper spray, which allowed the man with the gun to slip through the line of frightened protesters before any shots were fired (Indymedia, 1999b; McCarthy and Associates, 2000: 137).¹⁹

During these challenging hours, the chief of police and other authorities wrestled with how to open access to the Seattle Convention Center for delegates to enter the WTO meetings. They also had to decide what to do with approximately 25,000 to 50,000 additional demonstrators, mostly union members, religious people, and environmentalists, who would participate in a permitted march scheduled to leave a nearby stadium at noon.²⁰ Through radio reports, those at the rally shared periodic updates about blockade developments. They learned that police had used chemical irritants and rubber bullets in an unsuccessful bid to disperse the crowd. The march was scheduled to proceed three miles from the stadium and pass by the downtown center that was now blocked by lines of protesters and police.

City officials had to decide whether to cancel or redirect the march. By allowing the march to proceed, they would double the number of people in the already packed city center. Yet if they decided to cancel or redirect the march, already overwhelmed police would likely have to face a large, hostile, and potentially disruptive crowd, angry over being denied what they saw as their First Amendment rights. They might block police resupply lines and exits, or disregard police orders to disperse and further enlarge the blockades. As the marchers slowly emptied the stadium and passed through the corridor of union marshals, it was still uncertain whether the march would proceed as planned.²¹ Authorities let the march proceed on its scheduled route, hoping the more moderate marchers would stay out of the blockaded area and perhaps even attract some of the bystanders and exhausted blockaders away from the contested area (Carter and Postman, 1999; McCarthy and Associates, 2000).

As the large crowd marched past the city center, it became clear that police and demonstrators had clashed and that property destruction had occurred. At one place just north of the city center, union marshals appeared divided over whether to direct people away from the blockades, or back to the stadium. How many marchers continued back to the stadium or joined the downtown blockades and whether weary bystanders and demonstrators actually left because of the march is unclear. It appears that the downtown crowd had begun to thin after the noon hour, though most of the human blockades held long enough for the first day's rounds of WTO meetings to be canceled. The thinning may also have resulted because police, after being restocked with chemicals by 2:00 P.M., again began filling the streets with thick clouds of gas and white smoke. These clouds mingled with black smoke rising from fires in dumpsters that had earlier in the day been rolled into intersections as barricades restricting police movement. In later e-mail discussion lists, protesters claim that some of the dumpsters caught fire from tear gas and smoke grenades. Others appear to have been started by demonstrators who were celebrating the canceled meetings and impeding the removal of the dumpster barricades (McCarthy and Associates, 2000).

At approximately 3:00 P.M., construction workers began quickly boarding up the few broken (and many more unbroken) windows before nightfall, when the possibility of looting would be greatest. By 4:00 P.M., demonstrators and bystanders began hurriedly leaving the central city. At the same time, people who were clearly not involved in the demonstrations passed by the retreating demonstrators and entered the contested area from the south. An official from the White House demanded that city officials clear protesters from the city center or risk having the WTO Ministerials canceled (*Seattle Times*, 1999). At 3:25 P.M., Mayor Paul Schell, after a short, but heated meeting with Governor Locke, the Secret Service, FBI, and state and local officials, decided to announce a state of emergency (*Ibid.*). The announcement was made at 3:32 P.M. and a 50-block section of the city was placed under curfew from 7:00 P.M. to 7:30 A.M. (Quenzer, 2000). The emergency declaration included a call for 200 National Guard troops and 300 State Patrol officers to assist Seattle Police in support roles. On the following day, city officials made this area a "no protest zone," meaning that no person or group could enter the zone with the intent to express dissent against the authorities or the WTO. Moreover, possession of gas masks by non-law-enforcement personnel was declared a felony (Carter and Postman, 1999; Postman and Carter, 1999; McCarthy and Associates, 2000).²²

As onlookers and looters entered the city from one end, and as blockaders continued to release each other's arms and move to shelter and food, exhausted Seattle police, as well as a significant number of Sheriff and State Patrol officers who had joined in policing earlier that day under a mutual aid pact, pushed demonstrators east and north away from the center city. The King County sheriff had prestaged two platoons of officers the night before the demonstrations because

he believed they would be needed to forestall a disaster (McCarthy and Associates, 2000: 36). A contingent of State Police had directed traffic exiting the I-5 freeway and protected the freeway from demonstrators wishing to create a massive traffic jam. After crossing the I-5 and marching to within three blocks of the DAN warehouse, a crowd of several hundred demonstrators stopped and faced the police. As night fell, the police began firing tear gas and concussion canisters to force the group onto Broadway, a main street in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. There, retreating demonstrators met other activists who had also been pushed onto Broadway from other parts of the city below.

The densely populated Capitol Hill area was a natural place for police to direct people. It was likely assumed that many of the demonstrators remaining within the curfew zone were familiar with Capitol Hill, especially if they had received training at the 420 warehouse. Moreover, it was an area where young people typically congregated that was outside the curfew zone. It was one of the only areas police could reasonably use for their Sheriff and State Police reinforcements, many of whom had arrived from the I-5 freeway. Finally, it was an area where a large number of people could be pushed with the least amount of trouble for commuters leaving the city center on ferries to the west and by car and bus to the north and south.

As demonstrators began to be corralled onto Broadway, police became more aggressive and disorder increased again. Police, now resupplied with an abundance of chemical irritants, decided at about 7:00 P.M. that they would disperse the people who had congregated there. For the rest of the evening, police and sheriff's deputies chased demonstrators (and whoever else was on Broadway) back and forth with tear gas and exploding concussion weapons. One Capitol Hill resident stated that "the riot police advanced down Broadway back towards my apartment, firing concussion grenades and tear gas the whole time. From my apartment, you couldn't see Broadway because of all the tear gas in the air" (in Guilloud, 2000: 57).

The clouds of gas drifted into neighborhoods paralleling Broadway and entered people's homes through open doors and windows. During lulls in the action, angry and curious residents walked to Broadway to observe firsthand the tear gas and concussion grenades they saw exploding on the local news and heard through their closed windows. The standoff continued until approximately 12:00 P.M., when police fired a large volley of gas and concussion grenades that dispersed the dwindling group of about 50 people.²³

Inside the downtown curfew zone, police engaged in similar dispersal tactics throughout the night. Besides haggard, yet defiant protesters, they now had to deal with looters, many of whom had likely come to the downtown retail district after hearing reports about the "chaos" encasing downtown Seattle.

In the following days, many additional confrontations occurred between large numbers of demonstrators and police, both inside and outside the no-protest zone. Three days later, the demonstrations and the WTO meetings ended and protesters

sought the release of over 500 arrested demonstrators. Some demonstrators, along with other volunteers and city and business employees, cleaned up graffiti, debris, and broken glass. Exhausted police sought to determine what went wrong.²⁴ The Seattle Police Department's *After Action Report* places most of the blame on insufficient resources and preparation, a coordinated adversary, and the city's Investigation Ordinance that prohibits police from gathering intelligence information from political or religious groups that have not committed any crimes, without approval of a civilian auditor (Quenzer, 2000). Seattle residents asked why such violence and destruction had occurred in their normally peaceful city. Early reports suggested that property damage was \$2.5 million (Flores, 1999). More recently, downtown businesses claim to have lost \$20 million in sales and property damage (Brunner, 2000). One ransacked Starbucks store incurred \$15,000 in damages, mostly due to broken windows and looted merchandise (Fryer, 2000). The mayor and police chief faced strong attacks for being unprepared and naive about the tactics demonstrators would employ, and for not securing enough money beforehand to cover the overall costs for hosting the WTO Ministerials. The City of Seattle is currently seeking federal aid to offset its \$9.3 million cost for sponsoring and policing the meetings (Brunner, 2000). City council members asked for an independent review of the events. At the end of the meetings, the WTO president and the U.S. trade representative together called for a "time out" to assess the future of the organization (Indymedia, 1999b). Protest organizers celebrated and began formulating plans for the next massive demonstration.

Complexities and Irony

Social scientists have long examined the unintended consequences of social action (Merton, 1957; Sieber, 1981; Stone, 1989, 1997). Ironic outcomes are an especially interesting consequence, in which a result contradicts the intent of the action. Marx (1981) has argued that ironic consequences are linked to social trends of increased complexity involving ever more differentiated and specialized, loosely connected systems and increased efforts at intervention. In some systems the complexity is so great as to almost guarantee what Perrow (1984) terms "normal accidents." These may be inherent in the structure of the situation or emerge out of the choices made by actors and their interactions, or they may flow from uncontrollable (and often unthought of, or unexpected) influences outside the local system. Our analysis of the Seattle demonstrations suggests a number of structural and interaction-related ironies, 10 of which are briefly discussed below.

1. *The Spill-Over or Fly Paper Effect*: In this case, an action by either police or demonstrators affects the target group and others as well. An obvious case in policing is the inability of police to keep their tactics from affecting nonparticipants.²⁵ In Seattle, for example, police gassed demonstrators, bystanders, residents on Capitol Hill, downtown employees and small business owners, news reporters, city officials, delegates unable to pass through the crowds, and law

enforcement personnel with improperly fitted or no gas masks.²⁶ Given shifting wind patterns, the instability of tear gas often presents blowback problems, as does protesters throwing canisters back at police.

Many affinity groups were so effective at blockading intersections that they prevented friendly media, organizers, and other demonstrators from moving to other strategic locations. Their blockades also inhibited their own medics and other medical personnel from reaching the injured.

2. *Reciprocal and Neutralizing Effects:* Here the moves of one side lead to similar moves by an opponent (whether offensively, defensively, or both). They are after all joined together, however unwillingly, in a kind of hostile dance. Georg Simmel (1985) noted this more broadly in his observation that parties to conflict interactions come to resemble each other. In a free-market economy with civil liberties, challengers have enormous room to maneuver. As police pushed against demonstrator lines, nonviolent activists held each other's arms tighter, or closed ranks. Rather than causing demonstrators to disperse, police actions strengthened the lines. Anticipation of police use of tear gas meant that many demonstrators brought gas masks and wrapped bandannas soaked in vinegar to neutralize the effects of pepper spray and tear gas.

3. *Escalation Effects:* Through a rough moving equilibrium, escalation extends the level of confrontation rather than leading to the desired goal. In Seattle at the Sheraton Hotel, a central WTO meeting place, thousands of demonstrators blocked the street and all the exits from the building, thus preventing the secretary of state from attending the first day of talks. In response, police used pepper spray and batons to clear the street. Demonstrators responded by rushing flying squads to the location to bolster the blockades, while anarchists spray painted graffiti. Self-styled anarchists took the lead in creating barricades with trash dumpsters. Police then escalated the situation by firing rubber bullets into the crowd. At that point, some in the streets began to break windows with newspaper boxes, grates, hammers, and crowbars. After the curfew was declared later that evening, police chased groups of people through the streets using tear gas and pepper spray. As news of police behavior spread, many demonstrators felt an increased sense of solidarity and a need to stand up to police efforts at control, beyond the original goal of protesting against the WTO. As a steelworker stated at a march scheduled for the next day,

we knew that there was a good possibility that this nonviolent action would be met with violence again. I believe everyone was aware that we had no choice, we had to stand up for our 1st Amendment rights no matter what the cost, even if the cost was our life (Goodman, 2000: 17).

Even without aggressive actions, mere police presence may unintentionally heighten a sense of resistance in some demonstrators and bystanders. Thus, the very presence of police with heavy body armor, riot helmets, visible weapons, and

running in rank or with armored personnel carriers suggested to some Star Wars storm troopers and a symbolism inconsistent with a democratic society. Interpreting the situation in that way may have led some to participate, or to participate more aggressively, than would have been the case with a lessened or less threatening police presence.

From another perspective, demonstrators may have unintentionally contributed to the escalation in police tactics. Many demonstrators effectively neutralized the use of tear gas by bringing their own masks. Stymied police resorted to weapons such as concussion grenades, rubber bullets, and batons. These, too, were relatively ineffective, due in part to too few police personnel and an initial undersupply of gas. Seattle police had only 400 officers in the streets facing thousands of demonstrators. Moreover, some police platoons quickly exhausted their supplies of crowd dispersal weapons, and many officers used up their individual allotments of pepper spray. Well-trained protesters intent on closing down the meeting had the strategic advantage. Protesters on the perimeter of the pie were able to keep police away from other protesters, effectively blockading the doors, sidewalks, and streets closer to the center. Moreover, the ranks of demonstrators swelled in the early afternoon when thousands of marchers arrived from the AFL-CIO rally. This led city and state officials to call in the National Guard, declare a curfew and no-protest zone, and make it a felony for nonpolice to possess a gas mask.

Within bounded events, escalation may be linear (whether involving a steep or gradual incline). In a curvilinear pattern seen in the urban civil disorders of the 1960s, police under- or over-reaction was associated with a rapid spread of disorder and increasingly more severe police responses. As the number of civilians killed and injured increased and police and the military increased their presence, disorders rapidly declined, although the level of official force required to reach that end left a bitter residue for many people (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968; Marx, 1970).

4. *Non-Enforcement Effect*: A related form involves escalation as a result of underenforcement (Marx, 1981). Aware of the possibility of unwanted escalation, police may have allowed some laws to be broken by the more moderate demonstrators, hoping they would exercise control over more serious violations. Out of similar concerns, demonstrators may not have enforced their own self-policing standards or were unable to control those bent on destruction, which communicated the idea that such behavior was temporarily acceptable. What collective behavior students call an emergent norm appeared (Turner and Killian, 1987). Of course, sometimes this may have the desired effect. Yet the line between too little and too much control is dynamic and difficult to determine in advance.

5. *Excitement Effect*: Dramatic action by one or both sides may attract opponents, allies, and bystanders to identify what is going on.²⁷ The sense that something out of the ordinary is happening may be seductive. The sights and

sounds may operate as a magnet. Helicopters and searchlights, the sound of concussion grenades, sirens, and the sight and smell of gas-filled streets may draw people toward rather than repel them from an event. Demonstrators wearing medic badges, dressed in turtle costumes, parading with banners, colorful puppets, or costumes, and blocking traffic may do the same, or may unintentionally attract police reprisal. Persons with a variety of motives — consistent, inconsistent, or irrelevant to police and demonstrator goals — may be drawn in. For example, police seeking to clear demonstrators from the streets of Capitol Hill drew neighbors into the streets instead, exacerbating problems. Local radio and television news footage portraying the streets of Seattle as chaotic attracted unwanted participants in the form of looters.

6. *Role Reversal Effect*: Demonstrators may police themselves while police do nothing or are themselves disorderly (Marx, 1970; Stark, 1972). Demonstrators protected the Nike and other stores from those trying to break the windows. Security guards hid injured demonstrators from police at Pike Place Market. Such actions are likely related to a strong violation of the actor's sense of justice and appropriateness of the behavior, or in the case of non-enforcement, its absence.

7. *Strange Bedfellows Effect*: The complexity of issues being struggled over may lead to unexpected alliances. Groups whose interests are typically incompatible may find common ground, or at least set aside differences long enough to oppose a common opponent (Coser, 1964). For example, a female union worker, referring to a joint union/environmental group march, exuberantly proclaimed, "Steelworkers and Turtles united at last." In posing for a photo with an environmentalist, Teamster President James Hoffa, Jr., held a sign with the same words (Guilloud, 2000: 77). An Earth First! member at a union gathering argues that the dichotomy between good jobs and protection of the environment is a false one. A steelworker locked out of his job for over a year says that sending jobs overseas isn't fair when similar labor and environmental standards don't exist. Instead, "if you want to pay them the same wages, or take care of their environment, then that's a different story."²⁸

8. *Secrecy Effect*: Because of the need to prevent infiltration or revelation of sensitive information, protesters and police work to hide certain information from each other. Yet secrecy can prevent the flow of information from and to members and allies, just as easily as it inhibits information flow to opponents. This creates a particular tension for demonstrators, who are especially vulnerable to this effect, because they must be more suspicious of unknown people who may be working for police or for rival groups. At the same time, their commitment to democracy and need for resources make them very vulnerable to infiltration (Marx, 1974). DAN organizers were partially successful at avoiding this effect by relying on the affinity and spokes organizational model. This structure worked to the protesters' advantage because it was impossible for police to infiltrate all affinity groups and discover in detail the tactics decided upon. Police or informants who attended

spokes meetings could only ascertain the identity of informal leaders and trainers, and gain very general ideas about the numbers of groups represented, the areas to be blocked, and the time of events. They could not learn about the creative tactics planned by each group, or the numbers of participants involved in the actions.

Although police were better able to hide many of their strategic plans up to the day of the demonstrations, once the actions began, well-organized protesters were able to identify and inform each other about much of what police were doing. Cell phones, police scanners, bicycles, rollerblades, and bullhorns became effective means to reveal police plans. To keep tactics secret, police used jargon and some code words. Given the multiagency involvement, particularly on the second day of demonstrations, these were relatively simple, making it difficult to fully hide personnel movements and strategic actions. The issue of secrecy, with its obvious advantages and disadvantages, nicely illustrates the ironies that may drench such protest situations.²⁹

9. *Prior Reform Effect*: In response to infiltration of protest groups in the 1960s, Seattle adopted one the nation's most stringent restrictions concerning police gathering of intelligence information about protest groups. This includes a civilian audit.³⁰ Civil liberties groups have held this up as a national model. However, this made it more difficult for Seattle police to gather intelligence on what was planned. Other agencies did not face the same restraints and were likely relied upon.³¹

10. *Value Conflict Effect*: The structure of a democratic society legitimates conflicting values through law. The conflict of values infuses many of the above ironies and calls attention to the question, "ironic from whose point of view?" To those involved in the conflict, there may not be much irony in the existence of competing legitimate values, or these may be prioritized. Thus, those exercising their rights of freedom of expression to demonstrate on behalf of protecting the environment, public health, and working conditions interfered with the rights of delegates, downtown employees, and shoppers. One affinity group that was blocking an intersection justified this in chanting, "we don't have a voice, so they won't either." Likewise, to protect the rights of delegates and downtown employees, the mayor established a curfew and no-protest zone, denying protesters the right to be directly heard by those they most wanted to reach. Regardless of the goal, training, or sufficiency of resources, these conflicts remain.

Conclusion — Limiting Constitutional Violations and Violence

Although some ironic outcomes seem inherent in complex police-protest situations, this is not to argue that demonstrations must end in violence and denial of basic rights. There is much variation in outcomes. The structure sets broad limitations, but there is still much room for discretion. In retrospect, some actions can be identified that, had they been taken, would have reduced the level of violence and constitutional violations in Seattle. Though some social control

voices call for strong repression in the interest of deterrence and vengeance, that is far from the official point of view. Lacking extreme provocation, when police violence is documented by the media and citizens with camcorders, legitimacy is undermined and a major public relations problem is created for authorities, given the soft control ideologies of the time and the desire to project the image that dissent is protected and change within the system is possible. It may also create liability problems that can bankrupt a city.

1. *Police could have been better prepared in terms of organization, training, and cooperation with other agencies.* This is one of the primary critiques of the Seattle police in two after-incident reports (McCarthy and Associates, 2000; Quenzer, 2000). Both reports stressed that a more developed task-force approach involving multiple local law enforcement agencies, as well as a comprehensive contingency plan, would have been desirable.

2. *Establishment of clearly defined (reasonably contiguous) protest and no-protest zones before the event.* This buffer strategy is a way of partially satisfying potentially conflicting goals. The protest zones established at the 1968 Democratic National Convention and used for the 2000 Republican and Democratic Conventions offer an example. Such zones allow demonstrators to voice discontent, while allowing freedom of expression and movement for their targets, minimizing the need for conflictual police interaction. The failure to do this initially in Seattle meant limitations on the right to protest (as police became more aggressive) and on delegates' freedom of movement. Once this solution was tried the next day, it was too late since demonstrators had already "claimed" what was eventually declared a no-protest zone.

The April 2000 protest in Washington, D.C., against the World Bank and IMF offers a useful contrast. There, police permitted demonstrators access to a much larger area of the city, but denied them access to the area where the meetings were held. Although some protesters felt they had failed because they were unable to stop the IMF and World Bank meetings from occurring, others claimed victory at the end of the day because they had been able to express their grievances to a national audience. On the second day, demonstrations in D.C. were much smaller than the ones in Seattle and there was much less property damage and fewer injuries.

3. *City officials could have implicitly conceded victory to the demonstrators on the first day, even at a cost of some cancelled meetings, instead of using force in an attempt to clear the area.* It takes two to escalate. Of course, police would have sensed this as a threat to their authority and been concerned with backing down, appearing weak, and creating a precedent that might invite subsequent trouble and challenges to their authority. However, it is far from clear that a more limited initial police presence would have led to even more disorder. There are indications that DAN demonstrators would have been satisfied with a one-day blockade of the WTO meeting, followed by a mass arrest (Hyde, 2000; Plante and Dornin, 1999;

Postman and Carter, 1999). Escalation was related to the inconsistent police use of force and to its overall increase.

4. *Violence might have been lessened had police and organized demonstrators more diligently imagined and prepared for a broader variety of possible consequences of their actions.* For example, what consequences flowed from the adoption by the police of a military-style demeanor (heavy body armor, Darth Vader-type helmets that mask the face, and the use of armored carriers)? More broadly, this involves a move toward paramilitary policing (ironically occurring alongside a nonmilitary community-policing model).³² This model has important symbolic value and may set the stage for confrontation and a more pronounced separation of police and public.

5. *The meeting could have been moved.* After realizing that demonstrators were capable of, and intent on, closing the WTO meetings that day, an alternative plan would have permitted city officials to relocate all or some of the meetings.

6. *Police could have followed the previously agreed-upon script.* Demonstrators were expecting to be arrested en masse the first day (Hyde, 2000; Plante and Dornin, 1999; Postman and Carter, 1999). As noted, that was not the case. Even if police were not logistically able to process all the people who were willing to be arrested, arrests would have removed some of them and prevented feelings that an agreement had been violated.

7. *Police accounts could have been more credible as events unfolded.* In an early news conference after police had used tear gas and rubber bullets, officials said that only pepper spray was used (CNN, 1999). Moreover, at a later press briefing, when asked whether rubber bullets had been used, the chief would neither confirm nor deny their usage. Police claimed that force was used only in response to provocations initiated by demonstrators. Although the picture is unclear, considerable evidence suggests otherwise, as noted in well-documented accounts of unprovoked police attacks.³³ The lack of candor by authorities, along with the protesters' belief that police had not kept their word, contributed to the view that police were hardly neutral protectors of the public. It helped solidify a "we" versus "they" mentality and a view of police as aggressors against whom self-defense was necessary.

8. *Preemptive measures might be taken, such as eliminating resources that might be misused.* Thus, newspaper boxes could have been removed, as well as dumpsters (or at least emptied).

9. *The City of Seattle or the State of Washington, perhaps in conjunction with local schools and universities, could have sponsored debates about the issues, moving it to the realm of public discourse.* Doing so would have acknowledged that there are multiple sides to complex issues.

10. *Demonstrators could have taken greater responsibility for the actions of other demonstrators.* Although there was a debate among organizers about the use of nonviolent marshals to help control more disruptive protest actions, it was

finally decided that demonstrators would be accountable to each other through affinity groups, and that affinity groups would be responsible to the larger DAN collective by agreeing to the four guidelines noted above.³⁴ Affinity group workshops included training on ways to keep a group calm, as well as ways to protect members of the group from police. (For example, a tactic for protecting a single protester being beaten by police is to engage in a “puppy pile,” whereby other protesters pile onto the person being beaten and deflect the blows onto themselves.) DAN could have helped to reduce the escalation of violence that day by training nonviolent marshals in puppy-pile-like tactics that could minimize damage to property from demonstrators bent on unscripted destruction. Although this probably would not have prevented property damage and violence against police,³⁵ it could have minimized such actions.

Irony Doesn't Preclude Discretion

We have sought documentation for our description of events, but our basic point is not to offer a history as such. Rather, we view the Seattle WTO protests as a window into broader phenomena. We seek to go beyond simplistic blaming (of which there is plenty, whether involving inappropriate police behavior or irresponsible protest behavior), to noting how the conditions of such protest situations and the choices actors make may have multiple, conflicting, and unintended consequences. The search for heroes and villains may be emotionally gratifying, but it is often self-serving and ideological, rather than reflective of careful empirical evidence.

This is not to justify or excuse unprofessional police behavior or seriously disruptive protest that interferes with the rights of others, particularly when the latter does not involve civil disobedience, with its tenet of willingly accepting punishment as a matter of conscience. At times, criticism is morally, legally, and administratively appropriate. An understanding of the complexity of such events and of seemingly inherent conflicts can help us know when that is the case. It can also help in planning for the protection of future demonstrations. To note the limitations on rational planning is not to call for its abolition. It is to call attention to the complexity of the situation, to the need for a nuanced and empirically grounded approach, and for dialogue among contending parties of good will. Win-win situations are rare in matters of public policy. The inherent conflicts here call for balancing and optimal solutions, rather than those that maximize one value such as absolute order or freedom of expression at the cost of others.

In situations where rights conflict, compromise is usually the best approach. Authoritarian societies are defined by order without liberty. Yet democratic societies can only exist with *both* liberty and order. Machiavelli, in warning against the belief that there are cost-free, “safe” solutions to complex problems, put it well: “we never try to escape one difficulty without running into another; but prudence consists in knowing how to recognize the nature of the difficulties and

how to choose the least bad as good.” Ironically, this may apply to protesters as well as to police. As with the flow of a river, learning to work with and around, rather than against or oblivious to these, is surely one factor in successful social protest.

NOTES

1. As Zola noted with his comment about how the rich and the poor were equally free to sleep under bridges, we can note that should the rich engage in shoplifting, pickpocketing, or armed robbery, or the poor in embezzlement or tax fraud, they are subject to the same laws. What universalism in all its majesty fails to consider are the differential predispositions of varying social conditions.

2. The literature on new social movements develops the nonclass base of recent movements (see, for example, Melucci, 1980, 1985).

3. However, many such groups claim to represent disadvantaged groups, in noting that environmental degradation often directly affects the poor, e.g., soil erosion from logging and water pollution from factories make subsistence farming difficult and create health hazards.

4. For example, many of the articles in Della Porta and Reiter (1998) note how this focus on rationality, together with a concern for public relations, has led to greater restraint in European police behavior.

5. According to Guilloud (2000: 95) in an anthology composed of eyewitness accounts and reflections on the WTO demonstrations, the concept of affinity groups “began in the Spanish Civil War...as autonomous squadrons of anarchists fighting the fascist Franco.”

6. The Lesbian Avengers, a group of local female college students, participated in the demonstrations shirtless. Some say that their tactics included distracting police. STARC Naked was the affinity group for Student Alliance to Reform Corporations, represented by students throughout the U.S. Despite their name, they kept their clothes on. The ACME Collective was part of the Black Bloc, a cluster of affinity groups that claimed responsibility for much of the vandalism done to downtown corporate retail stores.

7. Obviously, some affinity groups engaged in property damage, particularly those that were part of the Black Bloc. According to one self-proclaimed anarchist, some of these groups agreed not to engage in vandalism until police used force against demonstrators. Although there are conflicting reports about who “fired the first shot” (see Quenzer, 2000, and McCarthy and Associates, 2000, for the police version), there is much evidence to suggest that at many intersections, police used chemical and other nonlethal weapons on demonstrators before anarchists and others began breaking windows (see Notes 15 and 32 below).

8. Demonstrators named the DAN warehouse “420” after its address, 420 Denny Avenue.

9. Seattle police had their own version of a flying group that consisted of 16 uniformed and 14 plain-clothed officers. The purpose of the squad “was to arrest and remove extremists engaged in criminal acts and in so doing, undermine and disrupt their criminal organization.” The team, however, was redeployed to protect delegates before they had the opportunity to “fly” to places where radical demonstrators were engaged in action (Quenzer, 2000: Intelligence Planning: 3).

10. Throughout this essay, we refer to chemical agents, as well as nonlethal and less-than-lethal weapons employed by police, with more common terms like pepper spray, tear gas, and rubber bullets. For a discussion of the problems such common language causes for police legitimacy, see the independent report commissioned by the mayor’s office on the WTO demonstrations (McCarthy and Associates, 2000).

11. Police concern over protecting dignitaries can be an important factor influencing the excessive use of force in protest situations.

12. In the 1960s, the Seattle City Council passed an ordinance preventing police from engaging in preemptive infiltration of suspected dissident groups and filming crime scenes before the fact. Some

of the footage that police gathered for evidence for the current *After Incident Report* (Quenzer, 2000) and the independent report on policing the WTO demonstrations (McCarthy and Associates, 2000) was acquired from local television stations and may also have been acquired from other police agencies that are not subject to the same restrictions. See Note 29 below.

13. Independent Media Center, or Indymedia, “is a grassroots organization committed to using media as a tool for promoting social and economic justice. It is our goal to further the self-determination of people underrepresented in both media production and content, and to illuminate and analyze local and global issues that impact ecosystems, communities, and individuals. We seek to generate alternatives to the biases inherent in the corporate media controlled by profit, and to identify and create positive models for a sustainable and equitable society” (Indymedia, 1999a: 4). Indymedia provided elaborate coverage of the WTO protests. They did this by disseminating thousands of activists’ videos, photos, recorded interviews, and print stories over the Internet, via satellite TV and cable, and in a daily newspaper called the *Blindspot*, which was published especially for the WTO demonstrations. We relied on Indymedia reports and videos as one source among many for our data. Although some critics viewed Indymedia as reflecting the protesters’ point of view, the conventional media sources reflect the perspective of the dominant order. Indymedia’s critique of mainstream media builds on the ideas of Chomsky (1989) and Habermas (1975), who claim that corporate media’s “truth” corresponds with the interests of corporate sponsors, and that a privatized media cannot serve as a free press. Without a free press, there is truly no genuine public sphere. Opponents to the WTO are not the only critics of the media. In a critique from a different perspective, McCarthy and Associates (2000), commissioned by the Seattle mayor to write an independent analysis of the WTO protests, blamed the media for providing coverage that was biased in favor of the demonstrators.

14. Alternative care providers included aromatherapists, herbalists, acupuncturists, and persons trained in Eastern medicine.

15. Some participants in the Black Bloc claim that although police violence preceded their use of vandalism, there was no causal connection between police actions and Black Bloc property damage. These activists, though not surprised that the police used violence so early, claim that they planned to destroy property regardless of police actions because property itself is inherently violent to those who do not own it (see ACME Collective, 1999).

16. See McCarthy, McPhail, and Crist (1999) regarding the systemization of demonstration management techniques or “Public Order Management Systems” (POMS), developed by the Washington, D.C., National Park Police. In this system, protest groups apply for demonstration permits and meet regularly with police before a protest event to decide what actions will take place, thereby minimizing surprise and reducing the likelihood of injuries to police and demonstrators. During these meetings, police and demonstrator tactics are discussed and symbolic arrests are negotiated in advance.

17. Most of the U.S. media did not report that police engaged in violence against nonviolent demonstrators before radical demonstrators began breaking windows, though many imply that police force preceded vandalism (e.g., Egan, 1999). Moreover, during early public briefings, police admitted using pepper spray, but denied using tear gas and other nonlethal weapons (CNN, 1999).

18. An officer waiting on a motorcycle halfway between the stadium and downtown provided this estimate based on official reports being broadcast over the police radio. A CNN (1999) report quotes police as saying that 5,000 to 6,000 demonstrators filled the downtown streets. This seems to be serious underreporting, based on an eyewitness account by one of the authors. See Note 20 about the difficulty in relying on media reports for crowd estimates.

19. McCarthy and Associates (2000: 137) commended the officer who sprayed the demonstrators with pepper spray for “undoubtedly preventing deaths and serious injuries.” Although this may be true, they don’t mention the appropriateness of brandishing a gun when nonviolent people are inhibiting freedom of movement. From video footage it appears that the gunman was not detained or arrested for pulling the gun. McCarthy and Associates also failed to acknowledge that the officer would have likely been even more effective at “preventing deaths and serious injuries” by dousing the gunman instead.

20. Estimates for the union march vary. The same officer referred to in Note 18 said that police estimated 50,000 marchers. Using a rough sampling method, one of the authors calculated 35,000 people marching from the stadium. In interviews and reports, Seattle police lowered their estimates to 20,000 people in the march, while a Secret Service official concurred on the earlier Seattle police estimate of 50,000 unionists and others marching into the city center (Carter and Postman, 1999). These numbers, combined with the 25,000 to 50,000 demonstrators blockading the WTO convention, reflect a very large contingent of protesters. In reporting numbers, news accounts often confounded the two events, making such reports difficult to interpret. A conservative estimate is that 25,000 people participated in each event, for a total of 50,000 protesters. Of these, close to 35,000 had converged on the downtown by mid-afternoon.

21. Using hindsight, reports suggest that Seattle officials should have canceled the AFL-CIO march (e.g., McCarthy and Associates, 2000).

22. The State Patrol and National Guard troops joined the over 400 Seattle officers assigned to WTO duties, as well as over 600 officers from other departments that responded to a mutual aid call around 10:00 A.M. (Quenzer, 2000). In addition, 160 Special Forces troops waited behind the scenes in case they were needed to “perform roles from ordnance disposal to standing by for possible chemical or biological attack by terrorist groups” (Plante and Dornin, 1999).

23. As shown on local Seattle TV newscasts on November 30, 1999, and heard by one of the authors close to the scene.

24. In all, 56 Seattle police reported injuries. The same weapons used to disperse crowds hurt many officers. For example, 17 officers experienced hearing impairment from concussion grenades and other loud devices, whereas four were exposed to tearing agents. Others were hurt through direct interaction with protesters, such as the 15 who were cut or bruised by thrown objects and scuffles with demonstrators. Moving limp and noncooperative demonstrators caused a number of strained backs, hands, and knees as well. Mutual aid officers reported no serious injuries. In comparison, 92 civilians were treated in hospitals, mostly for inhalation of chemicals; the most serious injury reported was a broken arm (McCarthy and Associates, 2000: 224–225; McOmber, 2000; Quenzer, 2000). This likely underreports the total number of protesters injured. Many hurt demonstrators may have avoided local hospitals to evade arrest. In an area of the Pike Street Market that had closed early on December 1, one of the authors watched medics treat a young Canadian woman with a gash running the length of her broken jaw. One of the medics, claiming to be a physician, reported that the woman had either been injured by a projectile fired by police at close quarters, or by falling against a curb as she ran from the pointed weapon. In the confusion of the event, she could not recall the exact cause of her injuries. This woman struggled between going back to Canada for treatment, or going to a local hospital. An older woman being treated by the same medics had been shot in the eye by a projectile, possibly a pea-sized rubber bullet. Although medics claimed she would likely suffer permanent eye damage, it is unclear whether she was treated at a local hospital. This is because paramedics who had been dispatched to the location arrived, but then promptly left after being ordered by police to wait until the area had been cleared of demonstrators. The paramedics left without examining the injured despite the medics’ requests for help.

25. In some cases, the indiscriminate application of a tactic may be intentional. Police may broaden the net in a mass arrest when they are unable to decide who has committed a crime. As has been said about categorical applications, “if you hang them all, you will surely get the guilty.” By arresting everyone, including bystanders and even undercover police, the arresting officers ensure that they do not lose their suspects. Better to make a few mistakes, so the reasoning goes, than to let suspects escape. Broadening the net may be intentional on the part demonstrators, as when they prohibited downtown employees and bystanders from crossing their lines with the intent of educating them about opposition to the WTO. They also were concerned that delegates and police might use deception to avoid the lines.

26. Control agents are ever vulnerable to their own tools (Note 24) — from inappropriate use of firearms in personal disputes to crowd-control techniques such as a slippery goo, which is difficult to walk on, or a high piercing sound that causes anyone who hears it to lose control of the bladder and bowels.

27. This overlaps the spillover category as actions directed at one group unintentionally affect others.

28. This is not an irony in the same sense as most of the above, although it may break with the controller's usual assumptions. It will be interesting to see how long the joining of these groups, traditionally opposed over domestic environmental issues, will remain viable, particularly if the common opponent makes concessions to either side. A related form of strained alliances or competing partners can often be seen among rival police agencies that ostensibly have the same goals. The tensions between the Seattle police and the King County sheriff are an example.

29. Another form of this issue lies in whether a protest group decides to operate openly or clandestinely. The former permits reaching and mobilizing a wide audience, but makes the organization vulnerable to infiltration and disruption. For police (where it is possible as in Europe for racist groups), banning a group runs the risk of increasing its commitment to violence since that is seen as the only way to bring about change. It also increases the likelihood that it will go underground, making it more difficult to monitor.

30. "The investigations Ordinance, SMC 14.12, prohibits the collection of political or religious information for law enforcement purposes unless there is a threat of criminal activity with an immediate nexus to the City of Seattle. Authorization to collect information may be obtained on a showing of reasonable suspicion that the subject of the restricted information has engaged in, is engaging in, or about to engage in unlawful activity in Seattle. Any information collected under the authorization is required to be reviewed by a civilian auditor" (Quenzer, 2000: Intelligence Planning: 4).

31. This involves a value conflict, but differs from some of the others in that when it was created, the contradiction or tension was not envisioned in contrast to the checks and balances in the Constitution.

32. See Kraska and Cubellis (1997), Kraska and Kappeler (1997), and Kraska and Paulsen (1997) on the increasing paramilitarization of U.S. police departments.

33. Members of Black Bloc claim that police engaged in violence against demonstrators before they vandalized property (ACME Collective, 1999; Swart, 2000). Sometime before 11:00 A.M., one of the authors witnessed police use of pepper spray, concussion grenades, and smoke bombs on a crowd of several thousand in front of the Sheraton. No windows in the vicinity had been broken. A police video provides some of the strongest support for the thesis that police engaged in violence before there was wide-scale property damage (Seattle Police, 1999). The video, which has the date and time printed on the screen, shows that police in full body armor and accompanied by an armored personnel carrier began pushing and spraying nonviolent demonstrators with pepper in front of the Sheraton at 9:09 A.M.

Anecdotal evidence includes inconsistencies in police and news reports about when and why the first rounds of pepper and tear gases were fired; numerous reports are being investigated by the ACLU and the Lawyers Guild of police attacks on nonviolent demonstrators and bystanders. Moreover, reports circulated on activist e-mail lists claim that police broke the first windows when they fired tear-gas canisters. Indymedia (1999b) also recorded questionable actions, such as the police gassing of an older African American male who was obviously not part of the demonstrations. Local TV and print media reported on an incident in which an officer sprayed two college student reporters in the face with pepper gas after asking them to roll down the window of their car. There are also many unsubstantiated reports of police carelessness, such as the case where people who attended a debate between Ralph Nader and supporters of WTO policies were indiscriminately gassed as they left the auditorium.

34. At the center of this debate were a number of disagreements, including whether and when property destruction is an ethical, even necessary tactic. One activist disputed automatically labeling vandalism as violence by noting that most people in the West would not say that East Germans acted violently when they smashed the Berlin Wall. According to some anarchists, First World oppression is symbolized by "the golden arches of McDonald's and other corporate stores that are destroying the planet and amassing enormous power at our expense" (Crass, 2000).

35. Police report that demonstrators sprayed them with bear and dog repellent (a form of pepper spray), doused them with urine and horse manure, cursed and spit at them, and tried to incite them to violence when media personnel were present (McCarthy and Associates, 2000; Quenzer, 2000).

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