Craddock smiled modestly and raised his glass of orange juice. ‘Everyone should feel proud’, he said. There had been no tanks on the streets. No one had gone to the firing squad. Apart from the odd demonstrator on the receiving end of a police baton, no one had even been injured. In fact, he said with a wan smile, ‘it was a very British coup’. (Mullin, 1982: 218)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the next significant stage of the story of British anti-capitalist mobilizations: the G8 summit, 1–6 July 2005, held in the UK. The last two chapters focused on the anti-capitalist habitus and how political practices are durable, which leads to ideological competition and conflict between anarchists and socialists in the anti-capitalists movement field. This chapter focuses on the complex interaction between participants in the anti-capitalist, alternative globalization and political fields.

The anti-capitalist field refers to those activists who are active within anarchist and socialist groups. The alternative globalization activists are those including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), church and charity groups. The political field in this case refers to political elites, police, courts, the local council and the authorities more generally. Although, there is a lot of crossover between activists in the anti-capitalist movement (ACM) field and alternative globalization movement (AGM) field there is a boundary between them, since the objectives of the former are more
revolutionary in nature, whereas, on the whole, the latter wish to reform capitalism not abolish it altogether. Where their politics overlap is in their opposition to neoliberalism. As such, for the 10 years before the 2005 summit, it could be argued they were on the same side to a greater or lesser extent. The AGM field is therefore a site of struggle where anti-capitalists and alternative globalization activists meet to counter the social and political forces of neoliberalism. In this chapter, however, we see a decisive shift in politics by AGM activists towards support from political elites, which leaves ACM activists in a disadvantaged position. The demonstrations in 2005 can be contrasted with say the Genoa demonstrations in 2001 that were clearly anti-neoliberal:

Despite two years of counter-G8 preparations and a decade of undermining the G8 governments’ assumed right to impose their collective will on the rest of the planet, the G8 summit was the most politically legitimized, ideologically uncontested gathering in its grubby little history. One statistic tells it all: in 2001, 300,000 people hit the streets of Genoa to protest against the G8, in 2005, the same number came out in Edinburgh to welcome Blair, Bush and co. to Scotland. As far as most of the people who get their news and views from the mass media were concerned, the G8 summit was a high level intergovernmental summit at which world leaders in the North were taking historic decisions to help eradicate poverty and needless deaths in Africa. [The G8] left Scotland with their reputations enhanced, boosted by a chorus of cheers from everyone from international statesmen and newspaper editorials to those meddling rock stars whose vanity project drowned out the dismay of even Make Poverty History (MPH). (Hewson, 2005: 136)

Understanding field dynamics

Fligstein and McAdam (2011) argue that fields may be viewed rather like a Russian doll. The ACM field sits within the AGM field and this sits within the larger political field. As well as outlining the interaction in an empirical sense, this chapter has a wider theoretical purpose; I argue that fields are not necessarily fixed, they are fluid. It is well established that forms of capital may be converted into political and social advantages for certain groups within a field.