The need to document, evaluate, and develop actions and strategies of resistance

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In this issue we have articles that again expand, develop and clarify what resistance studies are about. The number of academic fields that include research on resistance is growing rapidly. The multidisciplinary and critical literature review done by Sophie Del Fa, Geneviève Boivin, Ann-Sophie Boily, and Ève Leclair shows how resistance studies are integrated into close to twenty different disciplines.

Since we started working on our first issue almost a decade ago, we have seen it as a core task of JRS to help establish the research field as it rapidly grows in popularity. New academic courses have started at several universities, and in recent years new books and articles have continuously been published. It has been fascinating, interesting and joyful to read submissions analysing and discussing resistance studies from new perspectives. As editors, we have tried not to overlap too much with neighbouring academic fields—for example peace studies, social movement studies, anthropology, psychology and philosophy. Many excellent submissions have been turned down due to a lack of specific focus on resistance studies. On such occasions, with some encouraging words, we advise the author(s) to submit to a more appropriate journal.

In the same period, parallel to the development of academic resistance studies—and just as important—we have seen several new movements, campaigns, tactics, strategies and acts of resistance.

Within the climate movement, new spectacular forms of actions have been developed. As the existential threats of global warming escalate, the desperation among those who are engaged will certainly result in more radical forms of actions.

Using superglue to make it difficult for police to remove activists from art centres, public transport vehicles, and highways are just a few examples.

Blocking sports events and throwing tomato soup, paint, and mashed potatoes on art objects have hit the headlines in many mainstream media.

Attacking famous art pieces in museums has initiated public debates as well as internal discussions in the movements. ***Just Stop Oil*** have done similar actions in recent years. When their activists have been arrested for attacking art they argue:

> We are in a climate catastrophe, and all you are afraid of is tomato soup or mashed potatoes on a painting, I'm afraid because the science tells us that we won't be able to feed our families in 2050 [...] This painting is not going to be worth anything if we have to fight over food (Jones 2022).

Attacks on paintings and sculptures are nothing new (Treisman 2022). When the suffragette Anne Hunt (also known as Margaret Gibb) used a meat cleaver to destroy the portrait of Thomas Carlyle on display at the National Portrait Gallery in July 1914, the reactions in the media were furious. The bourgeois upper class was more upset about the destruction of paintings than the refusal to give women the right to vote (Brown 2018).

After three paintings were destroyed by a women in the Dore Gallery, a letter was left at the gallery explaining her reason for the action: 'We have tried all other ways', she wrote. 'We have been too ladylike in the past. Now we are going to fight, and you can allow us to be killed. Others will arise to take our places. I have joined in the war' (Crokett 2018).

In 1964, members of the anti-authoritarian Situationist Movement decapitated a statue of the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen as a protest against whaling (Morris 2017).

In 1974, a disabled women sprayed red paint on the case protecting the Mona Lisa on display in Tokyo. This was done to protest a policy barring disabled persons from the showing on grounds they 'slowed up the crowed' (Crokett 2018).

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*, one of the most famous anti-war works of art, became the site of one such protest during the Vietnam War (Selvin 2020). In 1974, the Iranian artist/activist Tony Shafrazi wrote with a red spray can, 'Kill Lies All' in massive letters across the Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*, as it hung in New York's Museum of Modern Art. It was a protest against the US war in Vietnam (Kaufman 1974).

In 2013, Paul Manning from Fathers4Justice was arrested on suspicion of gluing a four-inch photograph of a boy to an oil painting by John Constable in the National Gallery (Dutta 2013).

These actions are all serious attempts to awaken more people to the atrocities and injustices, in the hope that the attention will have an impact on those whose decisions are causing the problems. It is easy to understand the impatience and the willingness to press for more attention.

A similar desperation can be expected from parts of the climate movement. Some strategic questions should be asked by every stakeholder:

Will such actions remain mainly nonviolent, open and public? Or will we see parts of the movement go underground and turn violent?

Parts of the student protest movement in West Germany from the 1960s concluded that the elite did not take seriously their demands on issues like feminism, racism, anti-imperialism and the removal of the old Nazi elements. Speaking after the police killed Benno Ohnesorg during a demonstration in West Berlin, Gudrun Ensslin said 'They'll kill us all. You know what kind of pigs we're up against. This is the Auschwitz generation. You can›t argue with people who made Auschwitz. They have weapons and we haven›t. We must arm ourselves!' (Marcuse 2001, p 314).

When some key activists moved from public protests to underground activities, violent activities became part of their repertoire of actions. The film student and long-time activist Holger Meins produced his short feature *How to produce a Molotov cocktail,* and it soon became very popular. When the *Red Army Faction* was founded in 1970, they described themselves as anti-imperialists engaged in resistance against what they saw as the fascism in West Germany. Their political development is well documented through their public statements and communiqués.[1]

Can similar development be expected within the environment/climate movement?

When Dave Forman and Bill Haywood published *Ecodefense: a field guide to monkey wrenching* (Foreman and Haywood 1987), some took up the idea of hammering nails in trees to prevent forest companies from cutting down trees. Others destroyed construction machines and trucks by putting sugar in the fuel or iron filings in the oil. The majority of the environmental movement did not follow these ideas of sabotage. The impact of Andreas

[1] Collected here: https://socialhistoryportal.org/raf

Malm's (2021) *How to Blow up a Pipeline* is too early to say.

A key strategic question is whether such escalation of these conflict techniques results in an actual change of policies and reduces the harmful impact on nature and the climate. Nonviolent escalations of conflicts have historically had a positive impact on many social movements (Sørensen and Johansen 2016); some would say nonviolent escalation has been necessary. To what degree and in which contexts sabotage can help movements to achieve their goals is not adequately researched and analysed.

Therefore, one important question is if sabotage in the meaning of 'deliberate and malicious destruction of property' is a wise tactic for activists of today and the decades ahead.

The Plowshare branch of the peace movement used similar techniques when they 'disarmed' weapons and weapon systems. Long imprisonment did not prevent them from continuing, and they inspired many more to be engaged in the broad peace movement. In South Africa, Gandhi encouraged activists to burn their registration cards after the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act of 1908 was passed. British cloth was burnt in heaps during the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements organised by Gandhi in the struggle for the liberation of India. Draft-card burning was a symbol of protest performed by thousands of young men in the United States and Australia during the war in Vietnam. In 1989 people successfully started to dismantle the Berlin Wall and destroyed the barrier that had divided the city since 1961. Not all of these examples were labelled sabotage in the media, but they fit the definition of sabotage mentioned above well.

In addition to research and academic analyses, there is a need to have more in-depth political discussions about means and ends. What is wise? What is effective? What can be counterproductive?

In a situation when most politicians in power positions pretend that their policies and decisions will be enough to prevent catastrophic global warming, yet a near consensus among experts is telling us that what has been done is far from sufficient, desperation is a sane reaction to these obvious public lies. Statements from politicians like 'we are doing all we can, and will reach the goals of a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius from the Paris agreement' are just not true. How can this desperation among concerned activists be channelled into the wisest reactions?

It should not come as a surprise to anyone that experiments with more radical forms of actions will continue.

The delicate balance between getting attention and getting the message through has always been crucial for social movements (Johansen and Martin 2008). The broad climate movement has used a wide variety of tactics in its overall strategy to change the present escalation of a suicidal climate policy. Many of the recent actions have succeeded in getting worldwide attention. Will that change into a growing, stronger and more effective movement? The radical flank effect, as described by Haines (Haines 1984), gives a clear indication that radical and provocative actions can result in more participation in the broader movement. We need to see to what degree it will be the case for the climate movement.

Will the latest development help to get the message out and support an informed public debate? History shows us that spectacular and provocative actions have contributed more attention to the struggle and affected legislation (Walgrave and Vliegenthart 2012). However, there is an obvious need for more research on the relations between resistance techniques/strategies and the outcome.

Within the opposition in Iran, we have seen a new generation of activists taking to the streets facing brutal security forces and extreme punishments. After the death in police custody of the Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, huge crowds of young female activists took to the streets without the veil, and they attracted media attention globally. In a society where the regime has not only banned women from appearing in public without covering their hair and skin, having also made contraception illegal, lowered the marriage age of girls from 15 to 9 (Asghari 2019), and banned women from various fields of study and professions, the death of Masha Amini has become a turning point for the opposition. With their brave public demonstrations they are confronted with extremely violent police and security forces, rape and other forms of torture in prison. Will this brutality and public execution backfire and contribute to the removal of the theocracy?

Collecting empirical material from the ongoing protests is crucial for future research. Interviews years later and even contemporary media reporting can only be a complement to collecting first-hand sources as it happens.

In Ukraine, the many nonviolent actions that only occasionally reach headlines abroad deserve to be well documented, analysed and evaluated. The report by Felip Daza Sierra (Sierra 2022) is a good start for such a work.

The experiences from these types of strategies could be valuable for future campaigns. For that to happen, it is crucial to document and evaluate these actions and their impact on stakeholders.

Journal of Resistance Studies will welcome articles analysing the empirical material that is now available after some years of experiments in the many modern movements. We are also open to shorter comments and essays discussing strategies and outcomes.

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