

JOURNAL OF RESISTANCE STUDIES

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**All contacts regarding the Journal:**

**[editor@resistance-journal.org](mailto:editor@resistance-journal.org)**

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EDITORIAL

# An invitation to Develop “Resistance Studies”

**Stellan Vinthagen**

*Endowed Chair in the Study of Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Resistance.  
Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*

No society can be understood without accounting for its power structure. In many respects our world is structured by frozen power relations—that is, by one or another form of domination. Power undeniably forms, permeates, and encompasses our social interactions. We do well to analyze the dominating structures, discourses, and practices that shape our societies, prescribe our identities, and hold us prisoners, but we must do a great deal more than that to keep these forces in check.

In seeking to create a more humane society, we cannot allow exploitation and violence to continue to run rampant. We need *resistance* toward the dominant structures that build our world along the lines of capitalism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, racism, casteism, militarism, authoritarianism, and all their unholy kin. In order to effectively resist in ways that foster social change and ever-expanding human liberation, we need to learn from both previous and ongoing struggles all over the world. We need to accrue *resistance knowledge*. We need to understand how power and resistance interact, and how they factor in the struggle for social change.

The *Journal of Resistance Studies* has been created to do all of that by encouraging the formal development of resistance studies. Researchers in many disciplines have studied historic and contemporary instances of such public, collective, and often violent mobilizations as riots, guerrilla wars, revolutions, and social movements. Influenced by E. P. Thompson’s ‘history from below’ or ‘people’s history’, Ranajit Guha and others in the early 1980s formed the Subaltern Studies

Group to approach South Asian history from the perspective of the masses, not the elites. When in 1986 political scientist James Scott wrote *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, his focus on such ‘everyday forms of resistance’ as foot-dragging, pilfering, feigned ignorance and the like led to much new research.

All of this work, however, never cohered into an independent research field, probably because the authors worked and published in widely different disciplines. At the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, Mona Lilja and I therefore began researching and networking around ‘resistance studies’. In 2006 our effort began taking shape. Over the years an international peer-reviewed, open-access journal (*Resistance Studies Magazine*, 2008–13), a global research network (*Resistance Studies Network*), a website ([www.resistancestudies.org](http://www.resistancestudies.org)), and Sweden’s first anthology of resistance studies (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2009) have all emerged, and public seminars and several international workshops have been developed. We also got major research funding, especially the RESIST research program *Globalization of Resistance* (2011–15).

And the word is spreading. A new resistance group was formed at the University of Sussex in 2013, and the recent conferences of the International Studies Association have reflected a strong and growing interest in all aspects of resistance. In 2014, I was named the inaugural holder of the first faculty position anywhere devoted to resistance studies: the Endowed Chair in the Study of Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Resistance at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, in the United States.

‘Resistance studies’ is both more than and different from what other disciplines have seen it as being. It combines several theoretical traditions, including the state-oriented, structuralist, and public scope of ‘contentious politics’ (itself a combination of social movement studies, revolution studies, and studies on guerrilla warfare, civil warfare, and terrorism). It also includes informal ‘everyday forms of resistance’ within subaltern studies, the history-from-below movement, and ‘autonomist’ approaches to radical politics within post-Marxist and poststructuralist studies. Resistance studies should also draw on the many specialist fields that at least tangentially engage with it: gender studies and feminism, queer studies, peace studies, political science, sociology, critical race studies, anthropology, pedagogics, psychology,

media and communication studies, critical legal studies, heritage studies, design and crafts, and so on.

These many disciplines, models, theories, and discussions relate because ‘resistance’ challenges all forms of domination—not just the particular territorial configuration of power relations that we call ‘the state’, but the exploitative practices, commodification, fetishism, alienation, and economic injustices of capitalism, the discursive truth-regimes and normative orders of status quo, and the gender, race, status, caste, and taste hierarchies of the sociocultural sector. When activists resist patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism, or any other nexus of intersectional power relations, not only is the state questioned, challenged, and undermined, but so is power as such.

We therefore must not limit our research to particular forms of resistance—riots, protests, sabotage, strikes, social movements, revolutions, mimicry, ‘talk-back’, slander, work-slow and the like. We must also take on the whole range of resistance articulations. We need to consider the subject in all of its manifestations, mechanisms, actors, techniques, and dynamics, and in all of their historical, cultural, and political contexts.

Moreover, along with Foucault we should assume that power and resistance are always interlinked. The concept of ‘resistance’ is meaningless and impossible to understand in isolation from those of power or domination. For two significant reasons, however, we need to break with Foucaultian tradition by shifting our focus from ‘power/(resistance)’ to ‘resistance/(power)’. First, since we know less about the resistance side of the complex power/resistance nexus, we need to pay more attention to it. Second, power can never be fully understood without relating it to resistance; failure to do so can lead to systematic distortions that exaggerate power and underestimate the potential of resistance.

In comprehending resistance and power in their many forms and manifestations, we need a forum for presenting and discussing our perspectives, arguments, and findings. The *Journal of Resistance Studies* provides such a forum. As an international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed scientific journal, it explores unarmed resistance with a focus on critically understanding resistance strategies, discourses, tactics, effects, causes, contexts, and experiences.

Our aim is to promote the understanding of how resistance can undermine repression, injustices, and domination of all kinds, and how resistance might nurture such forms of autonomous subjectivity as constructive work, alternative communities, and oppositional ways of thinking. We invite the submission of articles, book reviews, and opinion pieces.

Our core topic, 'resistance', will be covered in a broad sense, focusing on all kinds of unarmed resistance by diverse means and techniques. Though we do not invite analysis of purely military means, we are interested in relationships and tensions between armed and unarmed resistance. Our empirical examples will include those that combine means and those in which sporadic organized violence occurs in otherwise nonviolent struggles.

There are other outlets for critical studies of wars and terror. This journal exists to fill a gap and develop a neglected area: resistance by *other* means.

The *Journal of Resistance Studies* welcomes critical reflections, evaluations, theoretical developments, or empirically based analysis. We encourage broad critical discussion on the possibilities, forms, conditions, and problematics of 'resistance'. We will avoid dogmatic agendas, will not favor any particular framework, and will encourage debate on definitions of 'resistance'.

Our long-term ambition is to help develop a heterodox scientific field of 'resistance studies', one that critically engages with and learns from other relevant fields that discuss similar phenomena. It will, however, apply such key concepts of its own as activism, contention, deconstruction, disengagement, disobedience, disruption, encroachment, identity politics, insurgency, mimicry, multitude, performativity, protest, queering, rebellion, refusal, riot, revolution, and social movement.

We confidently assume that the forces of order, control, and regime stability already study resistance in order to develop the means to stop, manage, manipulate, or undermine it for their own purposes. Such efforts amount to a dark mirror-image of our own by studying resistance in order to facilitate repression, pacification, and assimilation.

The aim of developing resistance studies, of course, is to better understand resistance, but such knowledge, like all knowledge, can be bent to serve a particular interest. We cannot write or talk from a 'neutral' place. We are always interest- or value-oriented. Our interest needs to be critical and emancipatory, and therefore in principle it must be on the side of the subaltern and resistance, and against domination. I hope that the critical assessment of what constitutes 'emancipation', either in particular contexts or in general, will always be debated within resistance studies and never be given or received as set dogma.

The *Journal of Resistance Studies* exists for those interested in how human liberation can be furthered with the help of creative innovations and mobilizations of unarmed 'resistance'. Such gains call for collaboration between academics and practitioners. The journal will need to find ways to include experience-based knowledge gained by a generation of activists and to transform research discourse into effective resistance. This could, for example, be attempted through thematic issues of the journal with evaluation reports from seasoned activists or by through collaborative workshops and special issues created by activists. We have yet to determine how best to do this and are open to suggestions. Be assured, however, of our deep determination to infuse theory with action, and practice with analysis.

Several challenges, questions, and problems face us in social-scientifically investigating 'resistance'. Among them: Has 'resistance' already been adequately studied by other social-science fields, with results couched in terms other than those we use or fully comprehend? Can vastly different concepts, models, and theoretical frameworks from other established disciplines be introduced into a new specialist field? How can we successfully unite, gather, and systematize enough to create a field of resistance studies, yet avoid making the field homogenous and mainstreamed? Is the focus of 'resistance studies' too broad to be tenable (since resistance can exist in all kinds of social relations), or is it actually too narrow (since it is just one part of complex dynamics that shape social relations)? How do we combine theoretical depth and analytical sophistication with practical resistance skills and advice for resisters? Does a research program that strives toward emancipation by encouraging appropriate resistance tactics and strategies risk becoming too normative? What ethical standards are possible and necessary for resistance research? Is there a need for a

special 'code of conduct' to keep our knowledge from unwittingly assisting repressive forces, state surveillance, elite interests, or other hostile opponents of resistance mobilizations? Do we need our own version of the Hippocratic oath? (Perhaps someone would like to write a proposal of such an oath or code for resistance researchers by way of initiating a discussion in the journal.)

The questions go on. Can resistance be studied with the same sort of methodology as other forms of social science, or does it demand a particular set of research methodology of its own? Does the attachment to 'emancipation' put the field at risk of developing a new kind of ideology that blinds us from the necessary critical attitude and willingness to be open to unexpected and uncomfortable revelations? How do we deal with the resistance of non-emancipatory mobilizations? How do we bridge activist-community knowledge, discourses, interests, and needs with those of academics? How do we bridge the vast and different scientific fields and disciplines and find academic communities able to collaborate and develop interdisciplinary projects? How do we nurture trust and collaboration with activists and movements while at the same time critically examining their potential ineffectiveness, contradictions, or hypocrisies? Is there any kind of resistance that is able to resist domination effectively without producing new problematic power relations? Is it possible to develop an emancipatory ontology, epistemology, and methodology within academic institutions that have emerged from and are structured by power interests?

These are some of the questions we would like to see explored in the journal. There are surely many more, but these are enough to make the main point: there is a need for a systematic, collective work to develop a new scientific field able to provide relevant knowledge on how power and resistance shape social change. Without a serious effort to address these challenges we will be irrelevant to movements, networks, organizations, and individuals attempting to engage with the systemic repression, domination, and violence that plague our societies.

The *Journal of Resistance Studies* hopes to foster critical discussions, reflections, and meeting points between different research fields, theoretical traditions, methodological approaches, and area studies of resistance. We fully recognize and respect the fundamental

interdisciplinarity of the study of ‘resistance’. Without broad communications between disciplinary traditions and collaborations that move beyond established mono-disciplinary frameworks and develop new concepts, models, theories, and claims, there will not be any ‘resistance studies’.

I hope to see a new academic mobilization in which we as social scientists assist those social forces that ‘from below’ work to increase human liberation—a mobilization in which we abandon the present service and production of management knowledge for state authoritarianism and biopower, corporate marketing techniques, the refinement of the military death machine, and state terror-driven counterinsurgency in order to help mobilize a liberationist social science.

Such a science will need to avoid becoming an instrument of elites, the state, capital—or, for that matter, the liberation movements, which need no academic amplifiers to echo their rallying cries. Reducing academics to a choir of megaphones would be boring and a waste of energy, and would betray our professional role and intellectual tradition by surrendering our tools of critical social inquiry. We can best serve liberation struggles by critically analyzing their strategies, effects, and functions as part of ongoing dialogue and collaboration with those seeking emancipation.

I hope to see solidarity and dialogue flourish among academics and between academics and activists. I hope to see encounters between the comparative, critical, and empirical social science developed by engaged academics and the experience-based, practical knowledge so hard won by activists. I further hope to see ‘resistance studies’ emerge as the critical friend of resisters worldwide who are contributing to human liberation and emancipation.

Ultimately, what resistance studies becomes will depend on what we all bring to it and what we make of what we find. Resistance researchers of all lands, unite! Make the *Journal of Resistance Studies* an example of engaged social science, one that makes a difference and shows how we academics can support the global struggle against domination.

## Resistance Studies: A Note, A Hope

John Holloway

*Professor of Sociology at the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades in the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico*

### I

Ayotzinapa. There is no other way at this moment to think about resistance studies. Ayotzinapa: supreme expression of the horror that we are resisting. La Escuela Rural Normal Isidro Burgos is a rural teachers' training college in Ayotzinapa in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, from which a number of students went on the evening of the 26 September to the nearby town of Iguala to collect money to attend a national demonstration. They were attacked by the local police, three killed, forty-three arrested and disappeared. In the hunt for them many clandestine graves have been found with hundreds of bodies. Twenty-two thousand people have disappeared or been disappeared in Mexico in the last few years. Horror.

Horror that turns into rage, into a huge wave of “¡Ya Basta! Enough! No more!” throughout the country and far beyond, with protest after protest after protest after protest calling for the return of the students. “Fue el Estado. It was the state.” Horror into rage into a thing of beauty, a cry of dignity. That is resistance. That is our resistance.

There is no neutrality, no standing by and looking on, no objective observation. The rage rises up from inside us. There is no ambivalence here. It is a scream of “NO.” Ayotzinapa says loudly, “Clear ambivalence out of the way!” What worries me about the term “resistance studies” is that it is ambivalent. It could be understood, especially in a university context, as “studies about resistance,” studies in which we take movements of resistance as our object and analyse them objectively. Such an approach would be a lie because there is no way in which we can stand outside the social conflicts that constitute society. Even worse, it would be a lie compounded by self-betrayal, because most of us who study movements of resistance do so because

we feel part of such movements. Much better to think of our studies as resistance studies in the sense of being part of the struggle against capitalism. Much better to let our studies burn with the fury and horror and hope of Ayotzinapa. For, of course, Ayotzinapa is not just Ayotzinapa, it is Guantánamo, it is Iraq, it is Palestine, it is the 300 African migrants drowned in the Mediterranean last week, it is, it is...

It is better to say clearly from the beginning that the aim of what we are doing is to strengthen the struggle against a hateful system. No ambivalence. The complication comes from the fact that the ambivalence of the term “resistance studies” may be useful, or even necessary, in order for us to do what we want. I assume that many or most of the readers of this journal work in a university context. Universities are capitalist institutions, whether they are public or private, in much the same way that states are capitalist states. They depend on capital for their income, and they are under pressure to educate students who can integrate themselves into the world of capitalist reproduction. It is unusual for a university rector or principal to take a public stand against capitalism, however progressive he or she may be (I have heard it only once, and it literally changed my life). Critical, anti-capitalist thought walks in the opposite direction. In all the world, there is a strong tendency to expel critical thought from the universities. For this reason, those of us who are very clear that our starting point is a scream of rage against capitalism may feel under pressure to dress our work up as something else: as an objective study of “social movements” or “resistance movements.” Although I understand the pressures, the danger of succumbing to them is that we produce studies that are dishonest, sterile and do nothing to strengthen the struggles that were our starting point. It is better to be clear, at least to ourselves, about the contradictions of the situation in which we work—better not to gloss them over, but confront them directly.

Turn the university upside down. To think of resistance studies in a university context as part of the struggles against capitalism means that we subvert the university. We walk in the opposite direction, we study against the murderous system in which we live, rather than for it. We turn the university upside down: not necessarily by gaining control of the university and turning it into an openly anti-capitalist university: this may be possible (as was the case in the university where I work, the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla for some years in the 1970s and

1980s), but is bound to be contradictory, in much the same way as the attempts to turn the state against capital are contradictory. It seems much more practical and more fruitful to try to create cracks in the university, spaces in which we say openly that the only purpose of scientific work is to try to secure a future for humanity, and that this means understanding our scientific work as part of the struggle against a system that is destroying us.

Such cracks differ in size. They may be whole departments, or just small groups of researchers: I have the good fortune to work in a postgraduate school where we probably all understand our work in these terms. Even within the general neo-liberal clampdown on critical thought, I suspect that there are a growing number of such spaces within the universities of the world, as students carry their anger into their studies, their anger against a repugnant, obscene, failed system.

Scream, then. Throw away ambivalence. Say with confidence: the only scientific question left is, How do we ensure a future for humanity? And this includes: How do we get rid of the system that is destroying us? How do we think of our studies as part of the struggles against capitalism and to create a different world?

## II

Resistance speaks of aggression. We resist because we are attacked. This is not about inequality and social justice; it is more than that. It is about being attacked and defending ourselves and, what's more, trying to halt the aggression. The attacks come in many guises – Ayotzinapa, the destruction of communities to build highways or open mines, the closing down of schools or hospitals, the firing of workers – but it is more than that. The society in which we live is built upon antagonism, a movement of attack-and-resistance. Capitalism is constituted by antagonism. The core of this, as Marx suggests in the first sentence of *Capital*, is the fact that richness exists in the form of commodities, things to be bought and sold. This means that there is a constant movement of commodifying our products, of measuring the social value of our activity in money, of monetising all social relations: a fierce aggression that goes to the root of what it means to be human. This world of commodity and money (or, more accurately, commodification and monetisation) has as a precondition the separation of people from the conditions of being able to produce for

themselves individually and collectively and hence being forced to sell their creative abilities as labour power in the market, the starting point for the daily repeated attack on people that forces them to get out of bed at a certain time each morning and go and dedicate their days to the expansion of the wealth of those who exploit them. This constituting aggression of capitalist society has a driving dynamic: the pursuit of profit. "Accumulate! Accumulate! That is Moses and the Prophets!"

The movement of aggression-and-resistance: class struggle, in other words. Yet starting from resistance (rather than rebellion or revolution, say) has the great advantage of pointing to the fact that class struggle comes from above. Capital is aggression, a movement of attack that constantly uproots our lives, seeks to subordinate all our activity to the logic of money, the logic of profit: to which we say No. "No, thank you very much, but we would prefer to carry on as we were." Or, more ambitiously: "No, thank you very much, we do think there is a need for change, but change as we determine it, not as profit determines. We shall take control." Very often, and with an increasing vehemence that reflects the increasing desperation of capital's pursuit of profit, the response from the other side is quite simply, "We don't care what you want, out of the way of the onward march of Progress!" It is this "out of the way!" that led to the tragedy of Ayotzinapa: the students of the rural training colleges have a long history of fighting for an education that responds to the needs of the students, a concept that comes into stark confrontation with the educational reforms being pushed through by the Mexican government with the aim of providing the proper conditions for the expansion of capital. It is the same "Out of the way!" that explains the imprisonment in the state of Puebla (where I live) of more than forty social activists for no other reason than that they have opposed the onward march of Progress in the form of building a gas pipeline around the edge of the volcano, opening gold mines and destroying farming communities, building a Disney-type theme park around a pyramid. "Out of the way!" gathers speed in the same way as the production of cars or computers gathers speed: the rule of the commodity is faster, faster, faster, and leaves no time for listening to anybody.

Resistance overflows, and must overflow. A resistance that focuses just on one particular manifestation of aggression may be

successful in defeating that attack but it does little to address the fact that society is structured upon aggression. Or rather: it is difficult to imagine a resistance that does not spill over. A struggle to stop a school closure, however much those involved just concentrate on that particular school, lights up the sky like a beacon and stimulates other parents and children faced with school closures. The struggle to stop the privatisation of water in Cochabamba fifteen years ago has been an inspiration in the struggles against water privatisation in all the world. The Zapatista uprising has made the sun shine for millions in pain.

Resistances resonate, and perhaps the changing forms of resonance is one of the most important themes to be explored by “resistance studies”. I suspect that this resonance is primarily non-institutional, that struggles in one area (spatial or not) inspire or stimulate struggles in other areas not as a result of party organisation or committee meetings but that the spread is primarily through word of mouth, songs, theatre, poetry, communiqués, books, concerts, PhD theses, intergalactic conferences: all or some of these making contact with the constant goading of capital’s repeated attacks on our ways of living.

Resistance overflows in another way too. It becomes more than resistance, pushes that which is resisted aside and says, “No, we shall do things our own way.” The focus shifts from a direct confrontation to the construction of an otherness. The Zapatistas are the shining example of this: especially since 2001, when the attempts to get the government to implement the measures they had already agreed to finally break down, the Zapatistas have concentrated on just getting on with it, constructing the world they want to live. Many movements have reached the same conclusion: in many situations the best way of resisting is simply to live the world that we want to create, the world that does not yet exist and therefore exists not-yet, as dream, as project, as struggle. Resistance spills over into revolution: the attempt to stop reproducing the existing sociality that is based upon aggression (capitalism, in other words) and to replace it with different forms of sociality, different ways of bringing our activities into interaction, forms of sociality that, for the moment at least, can only be experiments, projects, possible steps towards building a world of many worlds. The study of resistance becomes a thinking about revolution, about how we

can get rid of the social organisation that is destroying us and construct other, more sensible ways of living

### **III**

Welcome, then, to the new Journal of Resistance Studies! May it strengthen resistance to the global project of death and destruction, and may it open paths of hope!

## DISCUSSION

# How Resistance Can Save Peace Studies

**Richard Jackson**

*The National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago, New Zealand*

### **Abstract**

For the most part, peace studies has assumed that violent conflict and injustice require ‘peace,’ ‘conflict management,’ and forms of liberal interventionism from external actors. The consequence of this unquestioned assumption has been to prioritise external actors, top-down processes, governance and conflict mitigation – often at the expense of social justice and local actors. A shift in analytical focus, terminology and epistemology towards the theory and practice of ‘resistance’ has the potential to re-focus the field on local agency and priorities, local and everyday forms of peace, the role of power dynamics in conflict and peace, structural violence, solidarity, anti-violence and social justice. Generating such an epistemic and practice shift will be challenging, as it will entail de-privileging the field’s position, empowering the other, abandoning Eurocentrism and putting immanent critique, radical activism and other-led research methodologies at the centre of its practices. A number of key dangers will have to be avoided along the way, including co-option into system-maintenance, the lure of violent resistance, pushback from liberal sensibility, the loss of access to powerful actors, the fragmentation of the peace studies field, and potential marginalisation in the neoliberal academy. However, on balance, I argue that the shift towards resistance has the potential to save peace studies by recovering its radical critique of violent global structures and practices, and its normative commitment to emancipation.

## Introduction

Although this article is addressed largely to those critically-oriented peace researchers 'who have been searching for intellectual roots and whose work reflects a continuing struggle to develop a radical alternative in international relations and peace research' (Reid and Yanarella 1976: 317; see also Schmid 1968), I hope that it can also be of use in provoking deeper and more widespread debate about important issues relating to the underlying purpose and approach of the peace studies field as a whole. As such, it is designed to be deliberately provocative and somewhat polemical, and response and commentary is warmly welcomed. At the very least, the article is a reaction to Patomaki's (2001: 724) assertion more than a decade ago that 'there is a constant need to reflect upon the grounds, meaning and methodology' of peace research. Compared to other fields, broad, critical self-reflections on the state of the field are fairly few and far between within peace studies. Perhaps a little more harshly, Jutila, Pehkonen and Vayrynen have provocatively written about the 'corpse of Peace Research' which, they argue, requires 'a dose of critical theorising as a therapy for a body which, according to our diagnosis, has no pulse' (2008: 623). They are suggesting, I believe, that there is an urgent need for new kinds of critical theorising to revitalise a field which is arguably trapped, at least in many of its core activities and approaches,<sup>1</sup> in a stagnant, system-maintaining/status quo/pacification/stabilisation orientation. For example, while other fields have embraced the present historic moment of global and locally-based resistance, a great many

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1 There are a growing number of openly critical peace scholars, and peace-oriented scholars on the edge of the orthodox peace studies field, who both identify as peace scholars and who also take an openly critical approach to common understandings of the subject. The criticisms of the field contained in this article are primarily directed at the orthodox peace studies field who dominate the textbook market, the primary peace studies journals, and who have the largest peace studies programmes at major universities. They are not aimed at individual scholars, in any case, but are intended to generate productive debate.

mainstream peace studies scholars are conspicuous by their absence<sup>2</sup> and appear content to continue quietly working away on helping conflicting parties to communicate better and learn to understand each other's point of view, or supporting peacebuilding activities which might be more accurately described as counterinsurgency (See Turner 2015) or stabilisation activities.

The main argument of this article is that, broadly speaking, it seems fair to characterise peace studies as resting on an underlying assumption that intense forms of violent and nonviolent conflict, cases of structural injustice and oppression, and social turmoil requires some kind of dialogue-based 'peace process' between the parties, a form of 'conflict management' by external parties, or forms of liberal interventionism by international actors in order to return these societies to a condition of order, stability and long-term 'peace' (most often defined in liberal terms)(see Richmond 2008). The direct consequences of this assumption have been, among others, to prioritise the role of external actors in top-down conflict intervention processes, good governance-based programmes, conflict mitigation, pacification/stabilisation, dialogue and negotiation, liberal peacebuilding, and the like, in research and practice.

My argument, following those of earlier critical peace scholars (see Schmid 1968, eg), is that this broad orientation has de-valued and de-centred the crucial *positive* role of conflict, the need for a greater focus on structural and cultural violence over direct violence, the centrality and agency of local actors and values, social justice, revolution, self-determination, emancipation and other system-transforming values and vocabularies of knowledge and practice. As a result, in many respects, peace studies has functioned as a conflict-

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<sup>2</sup> This criticism does not apply to the growing group of scholars dedicated to documenting and better understanding nonviolent movements, although there is an urgent need to critically assess whether this body of research is normatively motivated by social justice, or whether in its desire to maintain social scientific objectivity it continues to function in a system-maintenance, problem-solving way to, for example, furnish the authorities with greater knowledge for the purposes of deterring, preventing, suppressing or punishing nonviolent resistance movements which challenge the status quo.

suppressing, system-maintaining field which largely treats conflict as a 'problem' to be solved, and which is ultimately oriented towards maintaining the current global and domestic status quo – albeit with a limited number of relatively minor 'reforms' within a broader liberal system.

In response, my modest proposal is that the field needs to adopt the ontology, epistemology, pedagogy, terminology and values of 'resistance'<sup>3</sup> as a kind of theoretical shot in the arm to turn it away from its problem-solving, status quo, pacification/system maintenance orientation. I suggest that adopting 'resistance' will bring back into focus a number of important values and concepts, and provide the analytical tools necessary for kinds of conflict analysis which takes seriously the role of inequality, power, domination, oppression and historical-materialist conditions of economic and social organisation in generating intense class and sectional conflict and structural violence. It will also re-focus attention on power asymmetries, the much-greater lethality and destruction of structural and cultural violence, the key concept of justice, the necessity of abandoning the morally dubious but dominant approach to neutrality in conflict management, the importance and role of (nonviolent) resistance in achieving social justice and local peace, and the key issue of pacifism and anti-violence, among others.

This is not to say that embracing the theory and practice of 'resistance' is without risk or danger, or that it is the only solution to the problems of the field. A number of challenges will have to be carefully negotiated, including the twin temptations to either embrace violent revolutionary action or to reject the idea of 'resistance' outright because of its connotations with violent activities. However, at this juncture, turning to 'resistance' and accompanying conceptions of 'emancipation' could help to save the field from its current epistemic malaise and system-collaborator function. In the following section, I briefly discuss some of the main problems with the current state of peace studies in relation to the issues raised in this introduction. This is followed by an overview of my modest proposal to introduce the theory and practice

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<sup>3</sup> See the Resistance Studies Mission Statement available online at: [http://resistancestudies.org/?page\\_id=24](http://resistancestudies.org/?page_id=24)

of resistance to peace studies. Following this, I have a short discussion of some of the key dangers and challenges to be avoided in this process of epistemic and praxiological transformation. The article concludes with some discussion of how we might practically take this proposal forward in the near future.

## **The Problem with Peace Studies**

This broad assessment of some of the field's main problems as they relate to the question of resistance derives from my own research review in writing an introductory conflict resolution textbook (see Bercovitch and Jackson 2009), an initial although admittedly unsystematic survey of a number of popular peace studies handbooks and textbooks,<sup>4</sup> a similarly unsystematic survey of some of the core journals in the field, broad personal observations of many peace studies panels, seminars and lectures over the past few years, and a number of published papers which also attempt to make an assessment of the broader field and its current characteristics (see Schmid 1968; Krippendorff 1973; Reid and Yanarella 1976; Neufeld 1993; Patomaki 2001; Julita, Pehkonen and Vayrynen 2008). The assessment I make here summarises some of the more wide-ranging criticisms of the field I have provided elsewhere (see Jackson 2015a). Importantly, my characterisation of the field is not meant to imply that peace research is either monolithic or excessively dominated by a completely hegemonic, status quo-oriented, 'orthodox' approach. What has sometimes been called 'radical peace theory' (Neufeld 1993: 176) has been a small but notable part of the field since its very beginning. The field is also fairly diverse in other ways and has its share of critical voices, rebels, factions and internal disputes. Crucially, this assessment also does not imply a 'bad faith' model in which individual scholars are to blame for deliberately choosing a system maintenance orientation, or deliberately adopting a problem-solving, pacification, or stabilisation approach. Rather, I am simply attempting to paint in broad brush strokes some of the issues which beset the field when viewed from the perspective of

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<sup>4</sup> The peace studies/conflict resolution textbooks I examined included: Barash and Webel 2009; Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman 2009; Deutsch, Coleman and Marcus 2006; Jeong 2006; Webel and Galtung 2007; Wallensteen 2012.

how academic fields function within society, and the ideological role they acquire in relation to power-knowledge structures.

Taking such a perspective, one of the most serious problems is that the field appears to have largely bought into a ‘problem-solving’ orientation<sup>5</sup> which broadly accepts the present international and domestic status quo (viewing it as the best of a set of other immanently possible but normatively inferior alternatives), and which therefore aims to ‘solve’ the problems of conflict, political violence and disorder because they appear to challenge the imperfect but nonetheless tolerable status quo.<sup>6</sup> In the context of peacebuilding efforts in Palestine, for example, Turner argues that ‘there is a deep structural symbiosis in the philosophy and methods of counterinsurgency and peacebuilding that lie in securing the population against unrest through the implementation of governance, development and security strategies that instil acquiescence and ensure control’ (Turner 2015: 97). Or, as Schmid puts it, ‘*Conflict in peace research is something to be “solved”*’. No peace researcher has, as far as I know, studied how to sharpen conflict relations’ (Schmid 1968: 228; original emphasis). Schmid goes further to suggest that such a stability and order-oriented approach ‘is a biased view not scientifically warranted’ (Ibid), because, he argues, conflict is a necessary pre-requisite for the kind of revolutionary systemic change required to end structural and cultural violence and move towards a condition of positive peace and social justice.

From this perspective, the antipathy of the field towards the expression of intense social conflict, and the constant efforts (including in its primary discourse and theoretical concepts) to manage or resolve conflict, is an ideologically tainted (if unconscious) orientation towards

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<sup>5</sup> The notion of ‘problem-solving’ as employed in this paper should not be confused with the Problem-Solving Workshop approach of the field. It refers rather to Robert Cox’s (1981) distinction between problem-solving and critical theory forms of social science.

<sup>6</sup> At the same time, forms of violence and militarism which do not challenge the status quo but rather restore or reinforce the status quo, such as humanitarian interventions, peace enforcement operations, Security Sector Reform activities, and the like, appear to have unquestioned support from large sections of the peace studies field.

the pacification and stabilisation of the current system. It could in fact, be argued (if we are to take Schmid's contention seriously), that peace studies has a mandate to try and sharpen and intensify conflict in many cases, in order to transform the unjust, violence-generating structures of the current system. Obviously, as I argue in this article, this would entail a re-focus and re-engagement with the theory and practice of resistance.

In other words, the problem-solving approach, far from being value-free social science, is (intentionally or unintentionally) value-laden in favour of the status quo with its inherent structures of power, domination, suppression and oppression. Moreover, it constructs a disciplinary discourse with narrow boundaries of appropriate debate, discussion and research, and an accompanying set of silences and subjugated knowledges. For example, in the conflict analysis section of the field, there is an excessive focus on endogenous conflict generating factors – including social-psychological factors at the group and individual levels, and domestic factors at the state level – rather than exogenous factors such as external interference by Western powers, the economic conditions imposed by the Western-imposed neoliberal global economy, imperialism, militarism, the arms trade, and the like. Whether this is the result of the methodological limitations of positivist, especially quantitative studies (see the discussion below), or simply bias against studies which would implicate Western foreign policies and consumption patterns, the effect is to narrow the parameters of research and practice.

Certainly, unlike resistance studies<sup>7</sup> and critical international political economy (CIPE), peace studies appears to have played, with only a few notable exceptions, little or no role in the recent Occupy Movement or the anti-globalisation movement before it – as a part of research and practice against the oppressive and conflict-generating effects of neoliberal capitalism. Instead, scholars in the field can most often be found working side-by-side with officials in development programmes based on neoliberal economic models, or in activities

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<sup>7</sup> See the Resistance Studies Network organized out of the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg ([http://resistancestudies.org/?page\\_id=26](http://resistancestudies.org/?page_id=26)).

which mostly ignore the roots of structural violence in peoples' lives and simply seek to alleviate some of the symptoms of historical-materialist oppression.

In part, this broader problem-solving orientation of the field is directly related to the dominance of the positivist social scientific paradigm. Assessing the state of research presented in the field's premier journals – the *Journal of Peace Research* and the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* – Julita, Pehkonen, and Vayrynen argue that:

A large part of the disciplinary body as presented in the major journals has remained in a state of stagnation where 'normal science' prevails without any willingness to analyse the foundational categories, the researcher's own positions in relation to these categories, and the social and political practices PR discourses produce and participate in. (2008: 639).

Within this paradigm, research questions and research design tend to proceed on the narrowly determined basis of positivist ontology and epistemology, and in a power-knowledge arrangement in which the positivist method appears to be the sole bearer of 'scientific' legitimacy. Understandable as an initial attempt to generate legitimacy in direct relation to the parent field of IR and to policy-makers, and considering the origins of the field in Europe and North America, this condition nonetheless has resulted in a general failure to reflect on foundational categories and the broader discursive practices that the field is caught up in – and indeed, any of the other meta-theoretical issues raised by the so-called 'critical turn' in the social sciences, including the relationship between knowledge and power and the normative ends of social science.

Moreover, part and parcel of problem-solving, and similar to other fields such as terrorism studies, peace studies is beset by the so-called 'fetishization of parts' problem (Wyn Jones, 1999; see also Toros and Gunning 2009). This concerns the tendency to study political conflict and violence separately from the social movements, state structures, political conflicts, culture, history, contexts, and international relations within which it occurs. This problem is, in turn, partly a consequence of other weaknesses, including the broader absence of engagement with social theory, fairly rigid disciplinary boundaries and the lack of theoretical cross-fertilisation, and the positivist

methodological orthodoxy noted above. At the very least, the requirement of defining, isolating and measuring precise ‘variables’ for statistical research into ‘causal mechanisms’ necessitates isolating research subjects from their broader context, culture, history and historical-materialist conditions.

This is perhaps part of the explanation, in my view, for why peace studies lacks a theoretically and empirically developed explanation of power, domination, oppression and mostly importantly for this article, resistance. Most glaringly, it lacks a critique of how capitalism as a system generates direct, cultural and structural violence,<sup>8</sup> and how the state is the principle institution of capitalist structural violence, and indeed, the principle cause of direct violence over the past few hundred years. As Rummel (1994) demonstrated some time ago, modern states have been responsible for the deaths of 170-200 million people over the past century, *not including* wars they have also engaged in which have killed a similar number. Meanwhile, the state-regulated and supported global capitalist system generates 30,000 – 40,000 preventable deaths from poverty-related causes every day, while cultural and structural violence causes hundreds of thousands of deaths per year from domestic violence, suicide, crime, work-related accidents and the like. In the 1970s, some peace researchers controversially estimated that structural violence resulted in 18 million annual deaths.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of the veracity of this figure, there is little doubt that entire regions of the world, as well as geographical areas within developed states, experience long-standing generational poverty which is implicated in a plethora of social ills (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009), and at present, wealth inequality is at unprecedented levels and threatens to unleash deep economic crisis, mass instability and violent conflict. This simple empirical observation would suggest that a major critique of the neoliberal state, and a questioning of its ability to generate positive peace, would be in order for any scholars interested in making the world less violent and more peaceful.

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<sup>8</sup> For such critiques within Security Studies and IR, see Roberts 2007, Leech 2012.

<sup>9</sup> This figure is discussed in Gleditsch, Nordkvelle, and Strand 2014: 149.

However, no reader will discern the role of the state, neoliberal capitalism or inequality in the production of mass violence and death from the popular peace studies textbooks or handbooks, or through reading its central journals. Instead, peace studies has a well-established set of micro- and meso-level explanations which appear to locate the primary causes of violent conflict within human individual or group behaviour (such as the widely employed social identity theory), or in domestic structures internal to specific states and groups (such as poverty, lack of democracy or ethnic divisions) (see Gleditsch, Nordkvelle, and Strand 2014). At the very least, the ‘fetishization of parts’ problem limits and distorts our understanding of conflict, violence and peace, and provides a poor basis for future research. At its worst, it provides legitimation for remedial policies which only deal with the symptoms of different forms of violence, and may, in fact, function to reinforce the systemic basis of the violence.

Similarly, the dominance of ‘normal science’ has resulted in a certain lack of direct engagement with the primary subjects of peace studies, namely, the people, usually oppressed subaltern human beings who are the victims of systemic structural, cultural and direct violence. This is not meant to discount the fieldwork or social psychological experiments which make up a great deal of peace studies research. Rather, it is to suggest that much more quantitative and experimental research occurs in peace studies, as judged by research published in the leading journals, than in-depth, contextualised, face-to-face ethnographic research in which the subjects are allowed to speak for themselves or participate directly in the construction of the research process itself. Importantly, the increasing emphasis of ‘the local’ – what some have referred to as ‘the local turn’ (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013) – is starting to noticeably change this aspect of the field.

However, it nonetheless remains a problem that the field is largely characterised by Western or Western-educated scholars studying non-Western ‘others’ with social scientific methods (and subsequent policy recommendations) that often preclude the voice of the ‘other’

being heard during the research process.<sup>10</sup> This missing ‘subaltern view of peace’ (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013: 764), and the problem-solving and stability and control orientation of the field, probably helps to explain why there are so few peace studies centres located in the Global South (Schmid 1968: 221), despite the fact that this is where much of the conflict and peace activity being studied is located.

Another criticism of the peace studies field can be termed the ‘embedded experts’ or ‘organic intellectuals’ problem, whereby influential scholars have close ties to power holders, work directly on behalf of state or intergovernmental organisations and constitute a kind of epistemic community directly linked to state or intergovernmental power.<sup>11</sup> Such networks are arguably maintained through the operation of fairly closed, self-referential systems of knowledge production which frequently functions to exclude scholars with critical or counter-hegemonic views,<sup>12</sup> and subjugate alternative forms of knowledge. But it is also a function of the dominance of state-centric, problem-solving perspectives among many scholars in the field, particularly those with a background in governmental service<sup>13</sup> or from a positivist research tradition. It results in the kind of narrowing

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<sup>10</sup> This problem has been thoroughly problematized by critically oriented scholars in relation to liberal peacebuilding, such as Roger Mac Ginty, Oliver Richmond, Michael Pugh, David Chandler, Jenny Peterson, Mandy Turner and others. These scholars are representative of the ‘critical turn’ which is gathering pace in peace studies, although it is largely confined to the United Kingdom and parts of North America.

<sup>11</sup> In relation to the same problem within terrorism studies, see Burnett and Whyte 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Reid (1993) has demonstrated how this functions within the terrorism studies field. More research is required to confirm and analyse it within the peace studies field.

<sup>13</sup> Some of the most influential peace studies scholars in the United States, for example, are former employees of the US government, and there are a number of well-known conflict resolution university programmes based in Washington that primarily serve the State Department and other government institutions.

of research and debate I have already noted, as well as providing a legitimisation function for state policies directed at stabilisation, conflict mitigation, humanitarian intervention and liberal peacebuilding. In particular, a deleterious consequence of this kind of frequently unhealthy relationship is the prioritisation of research topics tailored to the demands of policy-makers for practically useful knowledge during stabilisation, counterinsurgency or post-conflict peacebuilding operations.

The reality is that a great many peace studies institutes, centres and scholars are closely linked to states and international organisations through peacebuilding programmes, policies and training programmes, or through consultancies, and they receive large amounts of funding from official sources. Arguably, they are part of a wider epistemic community which functions on the basis of a consensual definition of the 'problem' of conflict and violence, and a commonly agreed set of remedial policies. In other words, it can be reasonably argued that peace studies frequently functions as a form of ideology – in the way it works to maintain hegemonic stability, sustain dominant economic relationships, and promote certain kinds of material and class interests. Schmid's assessment remains pertinent today: 'peace research has adopted a system perspective and a value orientation which is identical with those of the existing international institutions and lies very close to those of the rich and powerful nations' (1968:221). Hansen concurs, suggesting that 'conflict resolution could potentially be seen as a tool of "the establishment" in attempting to pacify conflicting parties, potentially undermining the attempts of marginalized populations in attaining social justice' (2008:410).

As a consequence, a great deal of contemporary peace studies research is explicitly tailored to policy demands and interests, or at least, towards the provision of policy advice, either to Western states, international organisations or Western INGOs and their donors – such as, for example, the large literatures within peace studies on security sector reform (SSR), negotiations, third party intervention, peacebuilding, and dealing with spoilers, among others. On the other hand, very little research is oriented towards providing advice to local non-state actors, groups and movements seeking to resist state oppression or overcome the structural and cultural violence imposed by states and international institutions. In fact, there is research within the

field which is aimed at overcoming or subsuming local resistance to peacebuilding (see Galvanek 2013), and dealing with so-called ‘spoilers’ who refuse to participate in internationally-sanctioned peace processes. From this perspective, there is little doubt that peace studies is a largely state-centric field which performs a legitimising function to much Western and official conflict intervention.

This is not to suggest that policy relevance or official funding ought to be completely abandoned or eschewed in favour of solidarity with local resistance movements, or that peace studies ought never to legitimise official programmes and policies. Rather, it is to reflect on the dangers of being seduced by proximity and access to power, and the impact this can have on research and practice. It is also to highlight the deep structure of the field and its institutional bias towards official actors – arguably, its bourgeois character – and the simultaneous failure to orient its research and praxis towards the oppressed, the disenfranchised, and the downtrodden subaltern.

In sum, there are a number of important reasons for believing that as a field of research, teaching and practice, peace studies is in great need of some critical theorising in order to revitalise its original promise as a revolutionary vehicle of social progress. My simple suggestion is that by adopting the epistemology and values of ‘resistance’, we can inject some life-giving criticality into the mostly pulse-less body of peace studies.

## **The Promise of Resistance**

Notwithstanding the burgeoning literature on nonviolent movements (see Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Schock 2013; Chenoweth and Cunningham 2013; Nepstad 2011; Roberts and Ash 2009; Stephen 2009), which as I have noted may or may not be emancipatory in any case, it is safe to say that very few self-identified peace studies scholars have endeavoured to study peace and conflict through the theoretical and conceptual lens of resistance as it has been

studied in other related fields,<sup>14</sup> with its accompanying conceptual vocabulary of power, domination, oppression, subjection, class, direct action, counter-conduct, revolution, justice, emancipation, and the like. This is both cause and consequence of the problems noted in the broader field in the discussion above. Here, I want to suggest that an explicit commitment to adopting the language, ontology, epistemology and praxis of ‘resistance’<sup>15</sup> could potentially reinvigorate the critical orientation of the field, enhance its analytical purchase and save it from some of its more debilitating features. Among other possible outcomes, some of the most obvious potential positive benefits would include the following.

First, a refocus on resistance would by necessity entail a serious engagement with the concept and analysis of ‘power’: its nature, types and forms, how it operates and its disciplinary and constitutive effects on agents. It would, in other words, force the field to develop a strong and explicit theory of power – a theory it arguably lacks at present in relation to both conflict analysis and conflict resolution. In turn, focusing on power would by necessity entail a stronger critical engagement with neoliberal capitalism and historical materialist theories of class and state power. To date, Galtung’s (1971) seminal article on imperialism remains one of the few serious attempts by a self-proclaimed peace studies scholar to seriously engage with the broader historical material roots of oppression, structural violence and war.

Second, and directly related to this, a strong engagement with the theory of power (as a corollary to the concept of resistance) would force a more widespread and serious consideration of the central role

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<sup>14</sup> There are important exceptions, such as Mac Ginty 2011, 2012a, 2012b, Richmond 2011, 2012, Turner 2011, and scholars associated with the Resistance Studies Network organized out of the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg ([http://resistancestudies.org/?page\\_id=26](http://resistancestudies.org/?page_id=26)) – among others.

<sup>15</sup> For a useful overview of the academic literature on resistance – its definition, theories, types, and outcomes – see the Resistance Studies Mission Statement available online at: [http://resistancestudies.org/?page\\_id=24](http://resistancestudies.org/?page_id=24). See also Amore 2005.

of different forms of power in generating (or suppressing) conflict and violence. This would, in turn, bring much-needed clarity and theoretical sophistication to conflict analysis – a section of the peace studies field which is arguably locked into a limiting and theoretically underdeveloped focus on micro- and meso-level processes at the expense of macro-level factors, historical context and broader socio-economic processes. In part, this weakness is a consequence of the narrow positivist, and especially quantitative, focus of much research in this area. For example, while there is a large literature within conflict analysis on the correlates of levels of poverty as measured by GDP per capita, resource scarcity and other quantifiable meso-level variables, with violent conflict (see for example, Collier and Hoeffler 2002; Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom 2004; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000; Fearon 2004), there is rarely any accompanying explanation or analysis of the way in which Western dominated neoliberalism, Western-controlled markets and terms of trade, the disciplinary practices of the Western-dominated International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the practices of aid, development and debt, the influence of the cultural ideology of capitalism, class politics, or the nature of modern state-building, among others, constructs and reinforces the country-level poverty which is being correlated with war outbreak.

Directly related to this, the refocusing on resistance and power would bring back the importance of the concept of ‘structural violence’ to peace studies. As recently noted in a review of the field (Gleditsch, Nordkvelle, and Strand 2014:150), Galtung’s original formulations of the linked concepts of structural and cultural violence (see Galtung 1969, 1990) have received little serious empirical or theoretical attention in the intervening years, and are rarely used as an explicit analytical framework within peace research. Instead, the field has almost solely focused on the problem of direct violence, and in most cases, following International Relations, the problem of war (terrorism is now also a growing focus of the field)(see Buhaug, Levy, and Urdal 2014).

It has been suggested that this failure to follow Galtung’s theoretical lead is related to the inherent difficulties of studying structural violence in a meaningful manner using quantitative methods in order to uncover causally significant relationships. I would argue that there are other theoretical and conceptual tools for analysing structural and cultural violence, and that the privileging of positivist methods is

part of the ideology of peace studies and its status quo orientation. A refocus on resistance can furnish theoretical and empirical resources – through a focus on class analysis and revolution, for example – for excavating the bases and processes of structural violence and oppression, and the forms of resistance generated by it.

Third, a more theoretically and empirically sophisticated conflict analysis would then have a major impact on the subsequent practices of conflict resolution, particularly in relation to the established conflict resolution norm of third party neutrality. This is simply because ‘a neutral stance, without an analysis of power between the parties in conflict, can obfuscate the power differential that exists between parties in conflict and actually undermine the efforts of oppressed people by tacitly or explicitly supporting the prevailing ideology and social order oppressing them’ (Hansen 2008:412). The mainstay of third party neutrality, in many conflict contexts, actually functions to reinforce the status quo and unwittingly oppress the very people it purports to serve. This is certainly the case in terms of the Israel-Palestine conflict, a focus of a great many peace studies scholars who nonetheless continue to attempt forms of reconciliation and conflict resolution based on the implicit assumption that Palestinians and Israelis represent two equal parties in a conflict – rather than a situation of colonial dispossession and oppression by one powerful party against a much weaker party who employ a range of resistance strategies.

Related to this, it would also force the field to reconsider its dominant approach to, and treatment of, so-called ‘spoilers’ in peace processes. Instead, of reflexively viewing certain ‘spoiler’ groups as either irrational or illiberal actors violently opposed to peace, they would be investigated in order to determine whether they in fact, represent legitimate resistance to what are actually coercive processes driven by outside actors, or represent constituencies or issues which have been marginalised in the peace process. At the very least, the adoption of the theory and practice of resistance would force a reconsideration of the discourse surrounding ‘spoilers’, particularly to the extent that this discourse functions ideologically as a discursive tool of power and domination.

Fourth, in terms of conflict analysis and conflict intervention practice, a focus on resistance has the potential to re-focus attention

away from high-level elites, public officials and top-down macro-level processes, towards local actors, local agency and more bottom-up, societal processes. On one level, such a refocus has the potential to transform the peace studies 'self' by tempering or even deconstructing the unspoken assumption at the heart of a great deal of peace studies research and practice that 'we', the developed, civilised global north, have a responsibility to resolve the problems – including the destabilising violence – of the underdeveloped, global south. In other words, a focus on resistance, particularly the everyday, hidden resistance (Scott 1985) of ordinary people, has the possibility to temper the Eurocentrism and paternalism which is frequently part and parcel of peace studies by revealing the multiple and ingenious ways in which many ordinary people survive and thrive under immense pressures and constraints. At the same time, it also has the potential to analytically refocus attention on the ordinary, everyday actors who make up the majority of the world's population but whose lives and agency are largely ignored through an analytical focus on elites and armed actors, thereby revealing hidden processes and making research less one-dimensional. Additionally, a focus on local actors has the potential to actually empower them through greater recognition, partnership and collaboration in peace research and practice.

Fifth, the refocus on resistance would entail supplanting and transforming the current implicit (and explicit) values in the field of stability, order, neoliberalism and system maintenance, to a new set of normative values based on social justice, liberation from oppression, fairness, equality, consultation, empowerment and democratic participation – or, what the critical literature often refers to as 'emancipation'. Here, and following Ken Booth, I understand emancipation to mean a process (rather than a preconfigured endpoint) of trying to construct 'concrete utopias' by realising the unfulfilled potential of existing structures, freeing individuals from unnecessary structural constraints and forms of violence which would inhibit their ability to realise their potential for the full enjoyment of being human, and the deep democratisation of politics and the public sphere (see Jackson et al 2009; MacDonald 2009; Alker 2004). Such an emancipatory praxis would have clear and serious implications for the way in which peace studies engages with states, international organisations and other powerful actors, and the way it currently

participates in conflict intervention activities based on neoliberal economic theories, forms of militarism and liberal democratic governance.

Sixth, a focus on resistance (and emancipation) would force the field to confront the key question of physical/military violence – an issue that has not yet received the attention it deserves, with few exceptions (see Jabri 1996; Mantena 2012), if the widespread acceptance of humanitarian intervention, state building, stabilisation, peacekeeping, SSR and the like is anything to go by (see Jackson forthcoming). In fact, there appears to be an obvious ideological bias that operates in the field, whereby state violence is widely accepted as legitimate by definition, whereas all forms of non-state violence are condemned, even when employed in situations of intense political oppression and as a means to liberation, social justice or defence against genocide. This is an indication of the implicit state-centrism of the field and its acceptance of the state as a legitimate institution, despite the state's historical record of violence, death and destruction – and an indication of the unquestioned acceptance of the doctrine of legitimate violence.

For a number of reasons, a refocus on resistance would also necessitate a serious engagement with the nature of violence and what it does (see Arendt 1969) – its disciplinary and constitutive functions, its potential, its limitations as a political instrument, and so on. While the growing literature on nonviolent movements has started to touch on this question inasmuch as debates over principled versus pragmatic nonviolence have started to take place, in-depth critical engagement with the ontology of political violence has been rare. This is part of the reason why so many peace studies scholars see no problem in supporting peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, SSR, stabilisation programmes, and the like. The serious question of whether emancipation can ever be achieved by violent means – given that violence is constitutive of the actors who practice it, that it can never be emancipatory to its victims, and given the ethical incompatibility between violent means and peaceful ends – has not yet been adequately addressed in terms of the field's support for international conflict intervention efforts and processes such as the Responsibility to Protect.

Seventh, a refocusing on resistance, particularly in terms of peace practice, would help to put into effect Schmid's suggestion that the *promotion* of conflict is a necessary means of transforming unjust structures and ending forms of violence. In fact, a refocus on resistance would have the crucial effect of transforming or reinventing what we mean by 'peace' itself, the central concept of the field. In particular, it would entail a serious engagement with the notion of agonistic peace, which Shinko conceives of as 'a particular type of resistant response... characterised by the search for difficult truths'. She suggests that the main aim of the agonistic encounter lies in 'the unmasking of political violence... in order to alter power relations', and that it functions 'as a constant reminder of our own complicity in the perpetuation of structures of domination and moral hierarchy' (Shinko 2008:478-490). In other words, agonistic politics embraces conflict and resistance as a necessary part of dealing with all forms of violence, oppression and injustice, and it takes seriously the under-appreciated issue of power and its effects, as well as the persistence of difference and radical disagreement.

At the very least, a focus on resistance draws attention to the reality that 'peace' is a contested (Richmond 2008), ideologically loaded term, and that there are numerous forms it can take – such as 'hybrid peace', 'local peace', 'everyday peace', and 'post-liberal peace', among others (see Mac Ginty 2010, 2014; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Richmond 2013). Focusing on resistance, including the resistance that local actors often mount to imposed forms of 'liberal peace' administered through international agencies, can help to rid the field of the implicit assumption that there is one kind of morally superior, liberal peace that all other societies ought to adopt and work towards.

Eighth, a refocus on resistance as theory and practice will draw important analytical and practical attention to the ways in which Western states and institutions, including corporations, resist popular pressures to demilitarise, regulate the arms trade, reduce inequality, transform carbon-based energy systems, promote gender equality, eradicate institutional racism, and deal with those systemic aspects which generate conflict and structural violence. It could thus help to refocus the activities of peace studies away from its relentless intervention into the problems and conflicts of the other overseas, and towards the transformation of the conflict and violence-generating

aspects of Western states themselves. That is, it could refocus peace practice from its ubiquitous involvement in the conflicts of global south, most often on the back of neoliberal exploitation and military penetration of those societies, towards the internal transformation of violently interventionist, militaristic, exploitative Western states – a case of dealing with the plank in the self’s eye before attempting to take the splinter out of the other’s eye.

For example, it is arguable that the most effective action which peace studies scholars from Western countries could take in relation to the oppression of the Palestinians is not to travel to Palestine and lead reconciliation or development activities, but to try and force Western governments through vigorous, direct, nonviolent action to end military and political support for the continued annexation of Palestinian land. Similarly, ending the weapons trade by Western countries would go a long way to preventing and ending violent conflicts in the global south – perhaps even further than the dialogue and development-based activities currently so popular in the field. Instead of field trips to post-conflict global south countries, peace scholars could take their students to an arms trade fair to protest, raise awareness and advocate for arms controls, or to parliament to protest unfair trade practices or military intervention.

A final important effect of re-focusing on the research and practice of resistance would be to transform peace studies pedagogy from its current problem-solving educational orientation towards a kind of ‘problem-posing education’ in which ‘students learn to deconstruct the societal ideology affecting them in their everyday lives, see how it inhibits attainment of their interests, and visualize possible societal changes that could better serve their interests’ (Hansen 2008:408). This would necessarily entail providing students with a language and set of conceptual tools for understanding the ‘problematics of power, agency, and history’ (Macedo 1993:17), and for developing appropriate modes of resistance and emancipatory action in their everyday lives and careers. Such forms of critical pedagogy are inherently praxiological because ‘when individuals reach critical consciousness, it allows them to become subjects in their world, actively and consciously co-creating it, rather than passive “objects” who accept their social reality’ (Ibid). Crucially, from this vantage point, it also means accepting that ‘education is... a subversive force’ (Shaull 1993:29), and the goal of

teaching is in part to radicalise the student because ‘the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it’ (Freire 1993:39).

Clearly, at the present juncture, such a critical pedagogy is far removed from the current mainstream teaching of peace studies, which is largely focused on abstract theorising, (largely positivist) methodological training, the accumulated empirical findings of the field, inter-personal conflict resolution skills training, professional certification, and the like. Moreover, it is frequently oriented towards skills-based preparation for a career in the official, state-linked aid and development or conflict resolution sectors (see Mac Ginty 2012c; Autesserre 2014), as opposed to the activist-based, social justice oriented arena which a critical pedagogy teaches.

## **Challenges and Dangers**

Generating such an epistemic and practice shift towards resistance, particularly the resistance of the subaltern other, will be immensely challenging to the field, in part because such a move will entail de-privileging the field’s position in relation to power, and its current hierarchical relation to the other. In effect, it will entail giving up some power, both material and epistemic, in order to support and empower the other. And it will involve abandoning Eurocentrism, and in a radical transformation of approach, putting immanent critique, radical activism and other-led research methodologies at the centre of its research practices. In this transformation, a number of key dangers will have to be avoided along the way.

In the first instance, the fear of using the terminology of ‘resistance’, ‘revolution’, ‘revolt’, ‘class’, ‘capitalism’, ‘imperialism’ and similar terms which imply conflict, disorder, challenge and explicit normative values will simply have to be overcome. In other words, we must expect that there will be resistance to ‘resistance’, emanating from a conscious or unconscious liberal sensibility and reinforced by the ideology of positivist social science which insists that it is the role of the scholar to simply study the world objectively, not improve it.

At the same time, it will be important to avoid the co-option of the language of resistance to a liberal agenda, or a tokenistic adoption of its theory and practice which does not touch the core theories and

practices of the field. Salutory lessons can be taken from the way in which ‘peacebuilding’ has been co-opted by various international actors as a cloak for neoliberal governance, or the way in which the ‘sustainable development’ and ‘human security’ agendas have been co-opted by the IFIs and other international agencies and actors since the 1980s. Indeed, Cynthia Weber (2014) has argued that critical IR theory itself has been ‘gentrified’ over the past few years, a process that peace studies clearly went through long ago. The danger here is that a new focus on resistance, if it fails to radically transform the field, and if scholars do not maintain high levels of critical reflexivity and commitment to the values of resistance, could also gentrify and then become system-validating rather than system transforming. Borrowing from Noam Chomsky, a tokenistic commitment to a kind of largely symbolic, nonthreatening ‘resistance’ could end up functioning as a way of manufacturing consent for the current system.

Closely related to this, there is a more obvious danger that research on ‘resistance’ will be monitored and exploited by the authorities to better understand and deal with – through more effective deterrence, diversion or suppression, for example – emerging forms of resistance. It will be necessary to develop a set of transparent research ethics for ensuring that we don’t put into the public domain or allow our data to be vulnerable to surveillance when it could be exploited to counter resistance movements and harm activists.

A focus on resistance also risks the lure of employing violence as a resistance strategy, particularly if it is not accompanied by a rigorous critique of violence as a political instrument. The reality is that, accompanied by a sophisticated understanding of violence in all its forms, there is no reason at all why ‘resistance’ should necessarily entail the use of violence. In part, this fear – that ‘resistance’ can only really mean violent action, or that empowering resistance is little more than encouraging actors to be violent – is likely one of the reasons why the field has not yet fully embraced the concept. However, this is a narrow and inaccurate understanding of the diverse and broad notion of resistance and the forms it can take, and indeed the empirical record of successful nonviolent resistance, and such misconceptions must be vigorously challenged.

Another risk, as the field re-orientes from stabilisation to conflict generation, and from seeking every opportunity to assist the powerful to seeking to assist the oppressed instead, is the certain pushback that will come from the authorities and the social and economic institutions which currently dominate society. As a field, peace studies will need to be ready to be re-labelled as radicals, rebels and dissidents, and viewed as a genuine threat to the current order. This inevitable collision will produce casualties, as the powerful seek to discipline and control radical peace researchers. One major consequence may be the loss of access to the powerful, and the loss of resources from research and practice programmes which the powerful are no longer willing to support.

There is also the risk, as has occurred to some degree in cognate fields such as terrorism studies and security studies, that the peace studies field will bifurcate into two or more divergent camps based on those who see the role of peace studies as to conduct 'value-free' social science directed towards controlling and resolving conflict, versus those who see the role of peace studies as a kind of 'outsider theorising' aimed at generating conflict and resistance as a pathway to transforming oppressive and violence-generating structures. This is the danger of splintering the field. Although there are genuine advantages to a heterogeneous field in which no single form of 'peace' dominates, but in which different conceptions of 'peace' are continually tested and debated, there is also the danger of dissipating energy in internal debates and competition. Efforts to bridge intellectual gaps, continue respectful dialogue, and build coalitions for the purposes of resistance campaigns, must continue to be made between peace scholars of all types.

Finally, there is a danger of marginalisation in the neoliberal academy. As universities are neoliberalised, and more deeply enmeshed in state programmes of homeland security, pacification and system stability, a field which has openly adopted a combative, critical, conflict-generating stance will no doubt find itself under pressure to conform. Unless peace studies scholars can make the case that siding with the oppressed and generating pressure for radically progressive social and political change will benefit all, and is part of the academic remit in any case (as critic and conscience of society, for example), then such a radical turn may have deleterious consequences for its programmes and scholars.

## Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have attempted to make the argument that peace studies has a number of quite serious and debilitating problems, particularly in terms of its underlying conservatism and system maintenance orientation. Many of these problems, I have argued, could potentially be resolved if the field embraced the theory and practice of resistance. Specifically, I have tried to suggest that a shift towards resistance has the potential to help the field recover its original radical critique of violent global structures and practices, and its normative commitment to emancipation. However, I have also argued that the positive benefits of embracing resistance are also accompanied by some risks and dangers. Nevertheless, on balance, I believe that the opportunities far outweigh the potential dangers, and the most important question that remains is: how should we go about generating such a radical transformation in the field?

I do not have all the satisfactory answers to this question by any means, but my experience in generating a new kind of 'critical terrorism studies' in the broader field of terrorism studies offers some potential possibilities (see Jackson 2015b). In the first instance, taking this project forward entails provocations and polemical interventions in order to create a widespread debate. In other words, scholarly interventions by way of panels, seminars, conferences, workshops, articles, blogs and taught courses are required to uncover blind spots, open up new questions and make provocative suggestions. In addition, the institutionalisation of new academic structures, such as the launch of the peer-reviewed *Journal of Resistance Studies*, can add credibility and generate new relevant research. The establishment of a Resistance Studies section, working group or network within established peace studies organisations could also promote this function, and should be explored.

Second, critical peace scholars need to adopt the language and theory of resistance and embed it into their research, teaching and practice, and thus help to normalise the concepts as an accepted way of being a peace researcher. Adopting the language of resistance will, in time, be transformative and constitutive of a new subjectivity and kind of scholarship, which will in turn impact upon students and fellow scholars. In particular, the authors of peace studies textbooks and

handbooks need to be encouraged to include chapters or sections on resistance, and journal editors need to invite articles and special issues on the topic. Part of transforming the discourse will also initially entail abandoning those terms and forms of language which reinforce the dominant values and perspectives of the field. This includes popular terms like 'conflict management', 'conflict management', 'conflict settlement', 'spoilers', 'mediator neutrality', and the like. As I have argued, such language reinforces the epistemic orientation of the field towards problem-solving, conflict suppression, stabilisation and system maintenance.

From this perspective, it is also important to recognise that generating epistemic and cultural change within a field of study will not happen by itself; rather, it requires a group of dedicated individuals to actively play the role of 'change agents' or a kind of 'norm entrepreneur', in part by demonstrating new ways of speaking and acting. In part, this article is a call for both senior and emerging peace scholars to take the lead in making these kind of changes.

Third, it will be important for critical peace scholars to not only engage theoretically and academically with resistance, but to seek out opportunities to engage in the everyday *practice* of resistance and to assist actors who are engaged in resistance campaigns, both hidden and public. In other words, notwithstanding the risks involved and taking all due care to protect activists from official intimidation and interference, it will be important to forge connections with the resistance movements and activists and become involved in the ongoing struggles for social justice, arms control, environmental protection, anti-racism and the like, in addition to, or as an alternative to, all the work that peace studies scholars currently do with official actors and organisations.

Finally, it will be important to take the theories and arguments about resistance, structural violence and emancipation out of the academic enclave and into the public sphere. It will not be sufficient to limit efforts to reforming academic practices and altering the theories and research practices of the field; instead, broader social transformation needs to be engendered, which can only be achieved through some kind of 'public intellectual' engagement (see Oslender 2007). This necessarily entails engaging with the mainstream media, social media and other public platforms, and becoming involved in

public activities and debates. It may also entail writing in different ways for audiences outside of the academy, such as fiction writing (see Jackson 2014).

In the end, given the current historical juncture in which the theory and practice of resistance is spreading across the globe, and in which climate change, inequality and militarism are provoking more and more resistance from a plethora of local and international groups and movements, there is no better time than the present to seek to transform our field in the way suggested in this article. If we don't embrace the theory and practice of resistance, we not only risk perpetuating the field's unfortunate function as a gentrified, system-stabilising and maintaining force, but we risk being overtaken and left behind by historical movements and forces which are transforming the global academic and political landscape in any case. Importantly, the growing interest in nonviolent movements within peace studies and IR, albeit from a largely quantitative social scientific perspective, nonetheless provides an intellectual opening for exploring the theory and practice of 'resistance' within the academic context.

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# **Citizen Science as Resistance: Crossing the Boundary Between Reference and Representation**

**Christopher Kullenberg**

*Dept. of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of Science, University of Gothenburg*

## **Abstract**

This article analyses citizen science as a resistance practice with regards to the contradictions that emerge when scientific methods are used for political struggles. Departing from how science and politics are constructed as a contrast, as recently put forth by philosopher Bruno Latour, the scientific method for creating reference and the political method for gaining representation are analysed as they are articulated in citizen science. This evokes further contradictions between local acts of resistance and the global aspirations of scientific methods, challenging both the particularity of micropolitics and the universality of science. Building on previous case studies of citizen science practices, a number of conclusions are drawn regarding the potentials and dangers emerging from a science that takes place in the peripheries of established institutions. The article concludes that citizen science can be a very successful resistance practice, as long as it is able to produce novel facts that still adhere to scientific methods and standards and remains connected to the established institutions of science.

## **Introduction – From Toxic Rain to Scientific Papers**

In 1994, a gooey rain poured down on the residents of Crockett and Rodeo, California. After drying up, the rain left a sticky layer of an unidentified substance everywhere. Soon, hundreds – what later became thousands – of local residents fell sick with respiratory problems, skin irritation and nausea after a sixteen day release of what was subsequently identified as “catacarb”, a toxic catalyst used in oil refinery processes. The nearby refinery from where the chemical had originated

was run by Unocal (merged into Chevron Corporation in 2005), but the company acted as if nothing had happened (Hallissy, 1997; Nijhuis, 2003). However, the local residents – some suffering from chronic conditions because of the toxic release – had no definitive proof that Unocal was responsible and, thus, could be held liable.

A year later, attorney Edward Masry and his research assistant Erin Brockovich<sup>1</sup> began funding the development of a ‘bucket’ that could be used to collect air samples around the Unocal refinery. These buckets were based on a much more expensive instrument called the Summa canister, a standardised device used by scientists for grabbing air samples. The Summa canister cost around \$2000,<sup>2</sup> but the buckets made by Masry’s team could be built for merely \$125, significantly lowering the costs for independent air grabs (O’Rourke and Macey 2003: 388–90). In total, 30 buckets were distributed to citizens of Rodeo, who began monitoring the air quality on a regular basis. Partly due to the merit of the buckets, the 1997 lawsuit against Unocal resulted in a settlement where 6,000 residents received \$80 million in compensation for their injuries (Nijhuis, 2003).

The buckets were later improved by Denny Larson, the program director for *Communities for a Better Environment*, who reduced the cost of the units – and more importantly – Larson organised the residents in teams called ‘bucket brigades’ (O’Rourke and Macey, 2003). The concept quickly spread to other local communities, and in 2003 there were about 25 bucket brigades (Nijhuis, 2003). The buckets were approved by the US *Environmental Protection Agency*, which was an important step towards standardising the instrument and, consequently, the method of bucket brigades, hence, increasing the legitimacy of the procedure (Ottinger, 2010). In 2014, the results of samples collected with the help of buckets near oil and gas production plants across five states were published in a peer-reviewed journal, which concluded that

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<sup>1</sup> Brockovich was made famous with the 2000 biographical film bearing her name, which documented her first lawsuit against the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, the price for a ”bucket” today is \$75 and a Summa canister \$2000, see <http://labucketbrigade.org/content/bucket>, retrieved 20150123.

there were potentially dangerous concentrations near the compounds, and that '[c]ommunity-based research can provide an important supplement to state air quality monitoring programs' (Macey et al. 2014: 1). Following a series of trials and validations, the buckets had become scientific. What started as a community reaction to a toxic release had progressively evolved into a *citizen science*, which was producing measurements that were accurate and systematic enough to be published as 'proper science'.

Nevertheless, this type of monitoring – sometimes referred to as community environmental policing or 'civic technoscience' (Wylie et al. 2014) – entails an inherent contradiction. In a local act of resistance, the bucket brigade activists turned to methods and instruments borrowed from a *scientific* method that creates *chains of reference* (Latour, 2013). However, grabbing air samples in the field, bringing them to a laboratory for tests and publishing the results involves more than the creation of instruments that can be freely improved and modified without patent restrictions.<sup>3</sup> By turning to science, the *local* act of resistance necessarily takes a detour to *global* epistemic standards that are of a different mode and are measured according to very different criteria.

Before analysing the phenomenon of citizen science as resistance, however, a brief discussion on the multiple meanings of the term citizen science is needed. Thereafter, I will proceed to analyse the phenomenon of citizen science through the conceptual lens of what Bruno Latour calls 'modes of existence'. Then, departing from a recent article by Dan McQuillan (2014) on the counter-cultural potential of citizen science, which re-opens the conceptual duality between 'Royal science' and 'nomad science' as expressed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the early 1980s, I will discuss where citizen science as resistance is situated in relation to established institutions of science. Finally, I will look more closely at the way citizen science as a resistance practice defines, envelops and renders visible different territories to uproot the distinction between local and global. This way, it will be possible to map out a bit more accurately the limits and possibilities of citizen science as a form of resistance.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://publiclab.org>, accessed 20150125

## Three Meanings of the Concept of ‘Citizen Science’

The concept of ‘citizen science’ is ambiguous, and there are at least three ways of understanding what it is all about. For the sake of clarity, and to provide substance to the arguments at hand, I will briefly describe all three of them, even if my analysis of specific cases of citizen science as resistance is limited to the third and last type.

The first meaning of citizen science encompasses a trend that has gained momentum in recent years and can be seen as a new wave of citizen science, arising in the form of large-scale research enterprises, predominantly in the natural sciences (Silvertown, 2009; Cooper et al. 2007; Cohn, 2008). Two projects that are often used as exemplars of Internet-based ‘mass-participation’ of volunteers in science are *Galaxy Zoo* and *Ebird*, where amateur astronomers and ornithologists, respectively, are invited to help scientists classify images of galaxies generated by various telescopes and to collect observations of migrating birds in various habitats. In this way, the abundance of data generated from research projects can be classified by volunteers as accurately as by professional scientists (Lintott et al. 2008) in a cost-effective manner (Bonney, 2009; Franzoni and Sauermann, 2015). Even if this type of citizen science has become highly visible only in the past few years, as Internet technologies have made possible an ubiquitous infrastructure for recording observations, this ‘genuine amateurism’ traces its form back to hundred-year old practices of mass observations, often exemplified with the National Audubon Society’s yearly ‘Christmas Bird Count’, starting in 1900 (Bonney et al. 2009: 978), but also in the conception of the ‘gentleman scientist’, who is often seen as integral to the scientific revolution, where figures such as Charles Darwin were devoting their lives to a true pursuit of knowledge rather than personal profit (Silvertown, 2009: 467).

Partly overshadowed by the contemporary ‘hype’ generated by the first type of citizen science presented above, there is a second meaning of the concept, which concerns ‘scientific citizenship’ as a deliberative and democratic phenomenon. A key reference here is Alan Irwin and his 1995 book *Citizen Science: A Study of People, Expertise and Sustainable Development*, which departs from the sociological framework

of risk and reflexivity, inspired by such theorists as Beck, Giddens and Bauman. However, Irwin breaks with this tradition when it comes to scientific knowledge, and instead adopts an ‘anti-essentialist’ perspective, inspired by the sociology of scientific knowledge, which allows for the inclusion of more heterogeneous forms of knowledge (Irwin, 1995: 169). Thus, the notion of citizen science designates, in Irwin’s terminology, ‘a science which assists the needs and concerns of citizens /.../ [and] implies a form of science developed and enacted by citizens themselves’ (Irwin, 1995: xi). Through an active scientific citizenship, public participation in ‘extended peer review’ and by setting up ‘Science Shops’ where citizens and scientist could meet to research common problems, the gap between ‘lay’ and scientific knowledges could begin to diminish. For Irwin, the notion of citizen science rather denotes a relationship, or an interface *between* the citizen and science, and ‘how [...] the scientific citizen [is] being constructed within current policy and decision processes’ (Irwin, 2001: 4).

In a similar fashion, Brian Wynne approaches the incommensurability between expert and lay knowledges, where ‘non-institutional forms of experience and knowledge’ (1996: 49) are contrasted with the standardised measurements of established science. Wynne argues that ‘lay people have legitimate claim to debate those assumptions [of expert knowledge]’ (1996: 59) to attend to their local needs, rather than being run over by experts who conceal the inherent uncertainty in scientific knowledge by presenting it as objective and unproblematic. Following this line of thought, citizen science is a matter of scientific citizenship, where different kinds of knowledges contest each other.

The first and second meaning of ‘citizen science’ are sometimes combined in order to justify the democratic potential of citizen science, even when citizens do not have any influence on the objective of the research process (Riesch and Potter, 2014: 109). From a policy perspective, it would be killing two birds with one stone if science could simultaneously invite the masses to participate in research via the Internet and bring about increased participation and democracy. This is, however, not where we find citizen science as resistance.

As already introduced in the beginning of this article, there exists a third form of citizen science, which can be understood as a novel form of resistance. It is recognised by three primary properties. First, in

this form, citizens are the *primum movens* (Callon, 1986) of the research process, in the sense that they are the ones taking the initiative to formulate the problem under investigation. In other words, the research questions are created by citizens outside the institution of science, whereas the two previous forms, as described above, have their starting points in problems already defined by established scientists. Second, citizen science as resistance responds to a local problem that usually (but not necessarily) affects people's everyday lives in a more or less direct way. Common cases include environmental matters or corporate misconduct that have negative impact on a particular state of affairs in a localised context. I will return to the issue of particularism below, but for now it suffices to note that there is a tension between a 'local' problem and the 'global' strategy of using scientific methods.

Third, citizen science as resistance has an emancipatory goal rather than one that can be measured in terms of scientific output. The goals may include winning legal battles, influencing policy making, putting an issue on the political agenda or promoting human rights. Even though scientific methods are utilised, the results are usually not meant to be evaluated primarily by scientists. Instead, the 'detour', via scientific institutions (such as laboratories, journals, scientific experts, etc.), is usually taken for instrumental reasons only. A scientific publication adds to the credibility of the data collected; laboratories contain the most exact instrumentation and in some cases certain expertise only resides inside academia.

However, what differs from other forms of resistance is the 'science' in citizen science. In this article, I will further explore how citizen science, as it emerges locally from the bottom-up, seems to *transcend its local context by using scientific methods*. This quality does not make this third type of citizen science inherently scientific, or inherently democratic. Neither can it be reduced to the two forms already presented. Rather, the tension between local and global, between particular and universal, creates a trajectory that may lead both to new and unexpected scientific and democratic experiments, which need to be explored in greater detail. However, it is insufficient to analyse this third form of citizen science merely as political activism, using scientific methods. It is insufficient because modern societies – or *modernity* – prevent science and politics from intermingling freely, even though they are constantly mixed up and confused. Citizen science as

resistance breaks these unspoken rules, but to understand how that happens, the demarcation between science and politics needs to be analysed in greater detail.

## 1. Reference and Representation

The buckets that were introduced in the beginning of this article are important for highlighting a special kind of movement, which is exploited by citizen scientists in their resistance practice, namely, the ‘short-circuiting’ of political representation by scientific reference. With this, I do not mean the symbolic dimension of the buckets, even though they appear both in the name and the logo of the ‘Bucket Brigades’. Instead, it is the use of scientific instrumentation for creating what Latour calls ‘chains of reference’ (77) which, once they have been made to work in the hands of citizen scientists, make possible a powerful political trajectory. It is worth examining some of these instruments a little closer, because without them a ‘political message’ has little more to offer than the words that compose it. With instruments, even cheap ones, a few illuminating cases show that citizen scientists can make remote states of affairs speak in a much clearer voice by turning to scientific facts.

The primary problem of scientific instrumentation is, however, that it is inaccessible to most community groups for several reasons. Not only does laboratory equipment belong to the most expensive types of technologies, it is also the most controlled form of instrumentation, requiring a constant calibration and maintenance in order to follow the standards of science (Latour, 1987; Ottinger, 2010). But when they work – or rather, when they are made to work – they can act as powerful vehicles of political action. This phenomenon was explicated in Latour’s seminal work *We have never been modern*, in which he analyses the invention of the air pump by Robert Boyle in the 1600s, and consequently, the emergence of the scientific method as we recognise it in modern societies:

In their common debate, Hobbes’s and Boyle’s descendants offer us the resources we have used up to now: on the one hand, social force and power; on the other, natural force and mechanism. On the one hand, the subject of law; on the other the object of science. The political spokespersons

come to represent the quarrelsome and calculating multitude of citizens; the scientific spokespersons come to represent the mute and material multitude of objects. The former translate their principals, who cannot all speak at once; the latter translate their constituents, who are mute from birth. The former can betray; so can the latter. In the seventeenth century, the symmetry is still visible; the two camps are still arguing through spokespersons, each accusing the other of multiplying the sources of conflict. Only a little effort is now required for their common origin to become invisible, for there to be no more spokesperson except on the side of human beings, and for the scientists' mediation to become invisible. Soon the word 'representation' will take on two different meanings, according to whether elected agents or things are at stake. Epistemology and political science will go their opposite ways. (Latour, 1993: 29)

From the scientific revolution and onwards, the modes of veridiction<sup>4</sup> – the acts of speaking truthfully – that were applied in political representation and scientific reference, respectively, have been kept strictly apart. Scientific reference, in the modern world, would only be measured against its capabilities to tell the truth about the natural world, whereas political representation would be limited to the possibility of speaking for the human multitudes. Science and politics were attached to different 'felicity and infelicity conditions /.../ [that] make it possible to contrast very different types of veridiction without

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of veridiction was used by Foucault to clarify the difference between statements (as such) and the practice of *making* statements, to '/.../' distinguish what is announced from the act of enunciation. In the same way, when someone asserts a truth, one must distinguish the assertion (which is true or false) from the act of truth-telling, from the veridiction' (Foucault, 2014: 19-20). The usage is similar in Latour insofar as 'mode of veridiction' begins to designate a performative speech act, as Austin (1962: 14) defined in his 1955 lecture series "How to do things with words", which inspired both

reducing them to a single model' (Latour, 2013: 18). This separation – or purification – of two different modes of existence that have to be judged against different criteria has progressively intensified in modern societies, to the extent that scientific knowledge is usually found wrapped in a narrative of objectivity where facts are kept at a safe distance from politics. Conversely, political representation is kept at an arm's length from scientific facts as 'scientific rationality' is usually regarded as fundamentally undemocratic. This contradiction is, however, what gives citizen science as resistance a particular opportunity.

This is where the instruments used in citizen science take on an interesting role as mediators between these two incommensurable modes of veridiction. Instruments enable local groups to take a shortcut (or a detour, it depends on the level of effort needed) towards political representation by using scientific facts – or reference – as a leverage point, even though it contradicts the ideal of purity of keeping science and politics apart. For example, in London there is currently a campaign to stop the construction of a new tunnel under the river Thames. The No Silvertown Tunnel group has thus begun to measure levels of nitrogen dioxide to halt the political decision. In a recent call for participation, the campaign organisers wrote:

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Foucault and Latour. But the Latourian notion is radically extended in comparison to both Foucault and Austin in one important regard. Latour's modes of veridiction are not limited to the relation between subjects and language. Instead, it forms an 'existential' concept that extends beyond strictly human forms of enunciation and goes further than asking only 'how subjects are effectively tied within and by the forms of veridiction in which they engage' (Foucault, 2014: 20). For example, knowing about far-away galaxies involves telescopes, computers, scientists and means of processing digital images. The mode of veridiction we apply to the truth or falsity of such knowledge is not restricted to speaking, but rather involves everything from lenses and microchips to the hypotheses formulated by the scientists. In other words, Latour extends modes of veridiction to include not only the conditions under which subjects are able to speak truthfully, but also to the assembling of objects that make such statements possible.

Results from the study will be used in the campaign against the Silvertown Tunnel, which is being proposed by TfL [Transport for London] with the support of Newham Council and Poplar & Canning Town MP Jim Fitzpatrick. / .../ Earlier this month, London's deputy mayor for transport, Isabel Dedring, admitted to MPs that City Hall's planned river crossings would lead to a "doubling of traffic" on local roads. We're looking for volunteers who can spare a couple of hours next week to help us install tubes that can measure levels of nitrogen dioxide in the air – and who can spare a couple of hours in early March to take them down again.<sup>5</sup>

By mounting diffusion tubes on lamp posts in the streets of London and leaving them to collect air over a month's time, the No Silvertown Tunnel campaign has been able to measure levels of nitrogen dioxide for three years, showing that they exceed the EU standards of emissions considerably, sometimes even twice the limit for what is considered habitable.<sup>6</sup> But the results of the diffusion tubes are not only treated as matters of fact about which substances are present in the London air. What is 'in the air' has also, as shown in the quoted passage above, become a political *matter of concern* to the Transport for London, a member of parliament and the deputy mayor for transport and everyone who follows the No Silvertown Tunnel's instructions on how to write a letter to 'your representatives'.<sup>7</sup> What is 'in the air' is determined by diffusion tubes that are mounted in the streets and sent off to a laboratory, then returned as data that can be projected on a map and compared to standards determined by a European Union directive; a chain of reference that has been assembled and made to

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.silvertowntunnel.co.uk/>, accessed 2015-02-26.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.silvertowntunnel.co.uk/our-study/2014-silvertown-tunnel-pollution-study-results/>, accessed 2015-02-26.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.silvertowntunnel.co.uk/say-no/how-you-can-stop-the-silvertown-tunnel/>, accessed 2015-02-26.

work. This activity – reference as resistance – is what distinguishes citizen science from other campaigns. Representation is not a direct relation between the campaign organisers and a large number of people that have to be convinced to support your cause, but instead, representation takes a detour via matters of fact that *translate* molecules in the air into a local injustice that can be acted upon at a later instance.

In environmental activism, it seems like the citizen science model proves quite successful. To define a problem, to give it certain gravity, creating reference sometimes has greater weight than public outrage and fury. However, reference is also both tiresome and usually expensive to create. Consequently, Wylie et al. who have analysed the US-based community Public Lab, argue that laboratories need to be accessible to the citizen scientists, not as displays of scientific progress, but as live instruments that can be used for ‘civic technoscience’:

We challenge the academy to similarly adapt, and to open its doors to supporting civic technoscience. Imagine networks of skilled technicians in chemistry labs — also citizens of technoscience — volunteering their knowledge. The academy could also open doors to facilities such as photographic darkrooms, and could give public access to tools such as spectrometers during off-peak hours. The majority of laboratory equipment is after all often purchased with public money through government grants. (Wylie et al. 2014: 123)

Citizen scientists still depend on laboratories and standards that are outside their immediate context. The Louisiana Bucket Brigade sends their air samples to a California lab, each unit of analysis costing \$500, where ‘[t]he air from the bag is run through a Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer, which compares the “fingerprints” of the sample with the fingerprints of about 100 toxic gases in the computer library.’<sup>8</sup> In other words, the mobile and lightweight buckets and diffusion tubes still depend on remote laboratories. And it is because of these laboratories that the citizen scientists can compare

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.labucketbrigade.org/content/bucket>, accessed 2015-02-28.

their sampling instruments with the standards already defined by ‘proper science’ and their much more expensive technologies (see Ottinger, 2010: 260-261).

Citizen science and the creation of chains of reference may, however, take on a slightly new meaning when applied in different political contexts. The Thai Baan citizen scientists of the Mekong River, who are struggling to resist dam constructions and blasting of the rapids to enable heavier boat traffic, have found the approach of research to be efficient means of resistance as a complement to protests and occupations. By approaching the imminent ecological crisis (see Ziva et al. 2012) with scientific means, ‘[m]any view Thai Baan research as a safer and potentially less politically sensitive way to empower communities’ because ‘[s]cience is often assumed to represent the neutral voice of reason. In the Mekong region, governments are more comfortable speaking about science than they are about political topics such as human rights’.<sup>9</sup> The protests that originated in the ‘Assembly of the Poor’-movement of the mid-1990s (Palmgren, 2008) could thus expand their toolbox with the Thai Baan research, which appears to be less controversial, safer and more comfortable. In a sense, citizen science even appears to be less political – it renders neither protests nor arrests as it reports on facts. Instead, it works as a ‘short-circuit’, which – drawing on the original meaning of this concept as found in electrical engineering – creates a path where there is almost *no resistance*. Scientific facts, once made immutable (which, of course, is a tedious practice), can travel without encountering the usual forms of opposition, thus creating a displacement of what can be contested.<sup>10</sup> As

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/citizen-science-supports-a-healthy-mekong-7759>, accessed 2015-02-28.

<sup>10</sup> This argument is indirectly supported by the negative results that have come out of citizen struggles that have been limited to ‘lay’ knowledges and ‘lay epidemiology’. For example, Lora-Wainwright (2013) shows how Chinese villagers living under severe pollution conditions fell back on individualised strategies of coping, as they were not able to reduce the uncertainty in establishing a correlation between pollution and health risks. However, as Liu shows, reporting on the conditions in the Chinese ‘Cancer Villages’ is sometimes also met with harsh repression and censorship, and both local and

reference detaches from its immediate local context and is circulated as scientific inscriptions, it is possible to speak of a *strategic universalism* (paraphrasing Spivak's (1984) concept of strategic essentialism), where the immutable mobiles (Latour, 1999, 2013) – buckets, tubes or fish statistics – have to be judged according to a scientific mode of veridiction. Tear gas may disperse a crowd of protesters occupying the streets, but to counter facts that arrive fresh from the laboratory, you have to build a *better* laboratory. Scientific reference and political representation, as different modes of existence, take on this contradictory role in some instances of citizen science, as a form of resistance by other means appearing to be perfectly apolitical because it comes in the shape of scientific universalism.

## 2. Nomadic vs Royal Sciences?

Understanding the construction of scientific facts from a Latourian perspective means making no a priori judgements on essential properties of the 'scientific method'. Rules of method are always immanent to the network of scientists, instruments and institutions that make the construction of reference possible. This way, there can be nothing essentially different with citizen science in comparison with established science, no disagreement in the 'scientific world view'. In other words, if there is a difference in the way citizen science and institutional science is practised, it cannot be settled by claiming that citizen science is of a different 'kind'.

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international NGOs are often blocked from taking action against local pollution disasters (Liu, 2009). As a contrast, International Rivers report on the 'Green Hunan' citizen scientists who monitor the Xian River watershed. By testing the water quality and tracking pollutants they are able to write reports that are then sent to governmental authorities and companies. In one case, they succeeded in closing down the plant of a local company, because simple litmus tests revealed that the plant had secretly discharged pollutants into the river at night. (Yan, 2012). Even though the examples here are few, there seems to be a qualitative difference between reporting on 'lay knowledges' in comparison to using standardised methods of measurement, such as the litmus paper, where the latter – an *immutable mobile* – acts on politics in a much more responsive way (even though pH-values are supposed to be 'free from politics').

However, in a recent article, Dan McQuillan suggests that citizen science, at least ideally, should adopt the counter-cultural approach of 'nomadic science' to reach its full potential. McQuillan writes:

Nomadic science is a form of empirical investigation that has no need to be hooked up to a grand narrative. The concept of nomadic science is a natural fit for bottom-up citizen science because it can valorise truths that are non-dual and that go beyond objectivity to include the experiential. In this sense it is like the extended peer review of post-normal science but without the need to be limited to high-risk high-stakes questions. (McQuillan 2014)

While the concept of nomadic science in Deleuze and Guattari may seem tempting as a way of understanding citizen science as resistance because it draws attention to a community science that (at least initially) lacks the institutional support of established science, I will argue that this approach can be misleading. On the contrary, as attested to in the cases discussed in this article, it seems like citizen science derives its legitimacy precisely from the aspects that define the opposite to 'nomadic' or 'minor' science operating in a 'smooth space'; namely what Deleuze and Guattari called 'Royal science', which creates 'striated', metric spaces (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 398–413) that submit the world to measurable, countable and compartmentalised units. This way, Royal science has the capacity to delimit a space by counting; it can define a territory by its population, a sample of air by its chemical composition or a galaxy by its stars.

This becomes most evident in the cases where citizen scientists actively strive to adhere to the standard measurements of established laboratories. As mentioned above, both the Bucket Brigades and the No Silvertown Tunnel projects depend on laboratory practices, threshold levels and standards of measurement that are already approved and tested by either established scientists or government institutions, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Even if the methods of collecting air samples are unorthodox (see below), their measurements are made to comply with the metric properties of Royal science in order to comply with the mode of veridiction that has already been defined by established science. Not only are their

instruments tuned into the standards set by the EU and the EPA,<sup>11</sup> the very mode of ‘occupying space’ is indeed orthodox in epistemology. Nomad science operates in a ‘smooth (vectorial, projective, or topological) space’ where ‘space is occupied without counting’, whereas Royal science is at work in a striated and metric space where ‘space is counted in order to be occupied’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 399). The spaces that citizen scientists make knowable through their investigations, the spaces that are contested and need to be redefined (in terms of pollution levels), are re-occupied through the very act of counting. The No Silvertown Tunnel campaign measures nitrogen dioxide in cubic metres,<sup>12</sup> so are the results of the Bucket Brigade samples (Macey et al. 2014). The modes of veridiction for citizen science need to be comparable with established science to be regarded as ‘scientific’.

Even in cases where citizens scientists go directly against the science produced by the state, they do not seem to deviate from the metric and striated spaces of Royal science. In connection with the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, the Japanese government avoided publishing their surveys of radioactive downfall. A citizen science group called Safecast then began to construct cheap Geiger-counters, which could measure the radioactivity levels in the areas surrounding the meltdown. Not only did their readings provide much appreciated information to the residents near Fukushima, it also put pressure on the government to release their measurements.<sup>13</sup> However, even in this instance of head-on collision with the state agencies, the citizen scientist appeals to the fundamentally metric empiricism found in the model of Royal science, according to Deleuze and Guattari. Sean Bonner, the Safecast Global Director, responds as follows to a question concerning taking positions:

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<sup>11</sup> See also <http://blog.epa.gov/ej/2014/01/it-doesnt-take-a-fireman/>, accessed 2015-03-02.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.silvertowntunnel.co.uk/our-study/2014-silvertown-tunnel-pollution-study-results/>, accessed 2015-03-02.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/11/07/how-civic-science-changing-environmentalism-279777.html>, accessed 2015-03-01.

- Are you guys anti-nuclear, do you take a position?
- - No, not at all. We just know that there is data that exists and there is data that should exist. And creating it, the data doesn't take one side, one way or the other, so if we can just get the data and give it to the people that are immediately affected by it, then that's a good thing.<sup>14</sup>

The same can be said for citizen science project that approach community monitoring in a similar fashion, such as Mapping for Change.<sup>15</sup> There is a 'neutral empiricism' in citizen science, which makes it very successful in occupying a space and taking it away from the body that had epistemic authority over it before. By counting the pollution and radiation levels according to Royal metrics, the above mentioned citizen science projects have all succeeded in 're-territorializing' a space in their production of a different picture of the state of affairs. This picture may of course be contested, criticised and discredited, but such a trial must take place on the level of established science. When the Louisiana Bucket Brigade contests the claims by Shell Norco about there being no chemical releases in their local community, they do so by displaying air sampling results that belong to Royal science (O'Rourke and Macey, 2003: 391). The results are territorial, metric and civil, against the secretive behaviour of Shell Norco, which prefers working with 'public relations' rather than scientific methods.

McQuillan concludes that '[t]aking a position such as nomadic science, openly critical of Royal Science, is the anti-hegemonic stance that could qualify citizen science as properly countercultural'. This, I would argue, highlights the limitation of thinking of citizen science as 'counter culture'. In the cases discussed in this article, it is not Royal science that is contested. The objects of resistance are the construction of a new tunnel in London, the oil refineries polluting the air in Louisiana, Chinese hydro-electric power plants upstream of the river

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<sup>14</sup> PBS News Hour, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLdOkKAeROg#t=590>, accessed 2015-03-01.

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.mappingforchange.org.uk/>, retrieved 2015-03-01.

Mekong or the Japanese government refusing to publish their findings on radioactivity levels. Royal science is the *means* of resistance for these groups, not the object. Science is not the culture that needs to be countered. Instead of ‘jamming the motor’ of the technoscientific culture (Palmås, 2008), citizen science has opened up a space of experimentation that affirms and remains very much connected to established science. These alliances even extend to the level of technology. As Wylie et al. (2014) show, the DIY aerial maps created by ‘civic technoscience’ activists, had their ‘grassroot maps’ integrated with the Google Map service in 2011, mainly because they provided higher resolution than satellites<sup>16</sup>:

Moreover, grassroots mapping creates maps of a quality such that formal data archives find the maps attractive to curate and integrate with their collections. In 2011 Google began integrating Grassroots Maps, served through Public Lab’s online archive, into both Google Maps and Google Earth (Adams, 2012). The superior resolution of Public Lab images makes them readily distinguishable from surrounding satellite images in Google Earth and Maps (Wylie et al. 2014: 118).

The aerial snapshots, created by Public Lab in order to render visible the environmental hazards and injustices, are projected onto the maps from Google, the leading Silicon Valley cartographer that has a key role in producing the way we understand and navigate in contemporary culture, the contemporary ‘imperial’ map *par excellence*. Moreover, the ‘extreme citizen scientists’ are ‘yoking local knowledge to international expertise’ as a way of expanding conventional science with the collective intelligence of local expertise (Rowland, 2012), and the

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<sup>16</sup> Since the kites and balloons that carry the digital cameras used for creating aerial maps can fly at such a low altitude, the resolution of their images can also be higher than those produced by satellites. For example, Warren (2010: 67) compares maps produced by ‘grassroots mapping’ in Lima, Peru, which have a resolution of 4.4–7 cm/pixel compared to the available Google (satellite) Maps that could only produce a 29 cm/pixel resolution.

Achuar people in the Peruvian Amazon create maps using ‘participatory GIS’ to reclaim their territory from oil drilling companies that pollute the rivers they depend on (Orta-Martínez and Finer, 2010). Through citizen science, they are able to gain the attention from the government and resist the oil industry.<sup>17</sup>

To sum up, citizen science appears to more successful when it conforms to standardised ways of making the world measurable and projectable onto a conventional map. Instead of inventing a qualitatively different science, it takes advantage of already established methods belonging to ‘Royal science’. Thus, instead of countering scientific cultures, it borrows from them, but that does not necessarily mean reproducing them. Despite citizen science using quite conventional methods, it invents novel *questions* that aim for emancipation rather than pure science.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

Citizen science as a form of resistance utilises a contradiction in modern sciences, in which science is regarded as neutral and free from politics while simultaneously being the driving force in the constitution of the societies we live in. By turning to scientific methods in their political struggles, citizen scientists are able to ‘short-circuit’ the conventional modes of seeking political representation and use reference as a mediator in re-presenting the state of affairs that have come under controversy. However, this general phenomenon becomes a lot messier the closer you look at each instance in which resistance and scientific methods are combined. Just like there is no instant formula for a ‘pop up’ democracy, neither does citizen science appear out of thin air, like a Swiss Army knife that retains the same functionality wherever you drop it (see Latour, 2013: 332). Citizen science seems to require at least a minimum amount of recognition of both citizenship and science. But even if such infrastructure is present, citizen scientists always run the risk of being ignored or having their voices being drowned against stronger interests.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://theyee.ca/News/2013/04/26/Activism-Citizen-Science/>, accessed 2015-03-02.

What is novel about citizen science is not the mixing up of science and politics *per se*. Such interminglings already take place in so many forms where scientific expertise informs political decision-making and vice versa. On the contrary, what makes citizen science interesting as a form of resistance is the production of scientific facts *outside* the institution of science. This way, citizen science reshapes the predicament of ‘lay people’ being dependent on the knowledge generated by scientific ‘expertise’. In many of the cases discussed in this article, the citizen scientists have circumvented these two roles – at least temporarily – in their making of chains of reference that bring back data that can be used in political struggles. This, I will argue, requires that we update our understanding of what ‘lay’ and ‘expert’ knowledges entail when analysing citizen science. For example, in Stephen Yearley’s studies of environmental movements and their relationship to scientific expertise (Yearley, 2005), there is a discussion about the problematic relations that emerge between environmental movements and science. This is exemplified with the case of preservation of whale populations, where environmental activists found their arguments against killing whales strengthened by scientific facts that showed declining populations. But, when science later on concluded that the populations were increasing, the environmental movement risked losing their moral argument against whale hunting. In the face of scientific facts, the activists remained powerless, in Yearley’s description, because their ‘lay’ knowledge paled in comparison. I argue that citizen science in its resistance form suggests a very interesting escape out of such sedimented lay and expertise relations. In the citizen science that I have attempted to map in this article, the citizens are the prime movers of the epistemic practice, no longer limited to “contextual” knowledges, which are generated outside of scientific institutions’ (Irwin, 1995: xi). They have collapsed the distinction ‘between formalized science (which often claims to be universal) and the less-systematized (and often ‘local’ – although not necessarily in the geographical sense) knowledges possessed and developed by citizen groups’ (Ibid). Citizen science destabilises the problematic distinction between ‘lay, or “local” knowledge’ versus ‘scientific or universal knowledge’ (Wynne, 1996: 77) because reference – when instrumented and performed transparently – must be judged according to a mode of veridiction that is proper to the sciences. In the case of the whales

(which I will return to below), the moral argument against hunting them will remain contextual, in comparison to the question of how many whales that swim in the oceans. Even though related, modernity still keeps these two questions apart because they cannot be judged according to the same criteria. Citizen science can re-connect them, but only by transcending the role of having ‘contextual’ knowledges. To give weight to the moral arguments, whales must be counted.

This way, citizen science that turns to fact production as a form of ‘strategic universalism’ must be understood beyond the distinction of local and universal knowledges. There is, of course, no such thing as universal knowledge in an absolute sense – reference always has to be enveloped in a network. But, it does not suffice to describe citizen knowledge production as ‘local’ (although all knowledge is local, even when it uses telescopes in orbit to understand the universe), because as we use such terminology we risk reducing these knowledges to ‘traditional’ forms of experience, which are easily discredited by actors that have more epistemic authority. The air samples taken by the Louisiana Bucket Brigade or the radiation measurements mapped by the Safecast community in Fukushima are not more local – neither are they less universal – than institutional science. They are, of course, different because they have lower budgets, less formal education and simpler instrumentation, and they will always struggle to voice their concerns when at odds with ‘science proper’. However, more importantly, they differ in who gets to decide what is a research problem and how it should be investigated. The institution of science can measure if whale populations increase or decrease in the oceans, and this knowledge can be both used and abused as arguments about whale hunting. However, when citizen scientists enter the scene, the demarcation between hard facts and moral arguments becomes much more difficult to uphold. This form of citizen science is not immediately recognised in the accounts of Wynne, Yearley and Irwin, maybe because it is of recent date, or maybe because the distinction between lay and expert knowledge is too strong from these authors’ perspective.

The Alaska Whale Foundation<sup>18</sup> relies on volunteer observations of marine mammals, especially humpback whales, for conducting ‘novel studies that shed light on the biological richness and uniqueness of Southeast Alaska, and engender broad support for conservation programs’.<sup>19</sup> This ‘conservation-oriented research’ keeps close watch on the baseline health of whale populations. Moreover, the members of the foundation consist of both scientists using the observations in their research (Fournet et al. 2015; Szabo & Duffus, 2008) and volunteers as ‘efficient, low-cost methods to collect large amounts of data’,<sup>20</sup> even though these roles seem to overlap in many ways. In this hybrid position between established science and volunteer monitoring, the Alaska Whale Foundation has occupied a powerful moral and scientific position, as they are able to survey the waters and keep an eye on noise pollution, entanglement in fishing nets and acidic pollution that threaten the whales.

In this article, I have emphasised the practice of citizen scientists conducting their own empirical research and what the political implications of facts generated in such investigations may be. Nevertheless, this account does not exhaust every aspect of the ‘messy’ conditions under which such knowledge production takes place. In-depth case studies of citizen science projects are needed to give a more complete and complex description. As Yearley writes, many environmental issues that affect the public are not necessarily scientific questions, but are determined instead in other regulatory systems, where actors such as the EPA (as discussed earlier) may have a decisive role in the outcome of a controversy (Yearley, 2005: 137-9), as confirmed in Ottinger’s detailed study on how the Louisiana Bucket Brigade had their methods ‘EPA-approved’ rather than approved by scientists (Ottinger, 2010: 258-61). Thus, it is imperative to remain

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.alaskawhalefoundation.org/research-page/#citizen-science>, accessed 2015-04-19.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.alaskawhalefoundation.org/conservation/#conservation-oriented-research>, accessed 2015-04-19.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.alaskawhalefoundation.org/research-page/#citizen-science>, accessed 2015-04-19.

perceptive of the complexity of the networks involved in each case. And it is equally important to examine closely the different modes of veridiction enveloped by these networks to avoid applying an idealised treatment of how knowledge is produced.

I have argued that citizen science is most successful not as a countercultural phenomenon that attempts to bring about a new form of science, but rather, it seems as citizen science derives its impact from affirming the epistemic standards of conventional science and by connecting to their publishing practices. This, however, does not contradict the fact that citizen scientists in many ways create completely novel forms of making the world knowable. In their concern for local problems, sometimes ignored by authorities or the public sphere, their efforts and investigations can be truly game changing. As O'Rourke and Macey have shown, there is a unique aspect in the very method of the Bucket Brigades for making the local visible in a way that has gone largely unnoticed by established forms of science:

“Sniffers” are responsible for recording odors of concern and alerting samplers when they believe there is a serious pollution release. Sniffers are usually located in prime spots in a community for first smelling odors from a plant (such as along the fence line of a refinery). Using knowledge of prevailing wind directions and chemical releases, the community selects households to receive training in identifying and recording noxious smells (such as a rotten egg smell, gasoline, oil, or various chemical smells), health symptoms (such as nausea, irritated eyes, sore throat, or headache), and unusual sounds (such as explosions or pressure releases). Sniffers are also trained to call the appropriate government authorities to report incidents and complaints (O'Rourke and Macey, 2003: 389).

Before the mobile, yet immutable, instruments of buckets are applied, the citizen scientists are using their own bodies to navigate in their toxic environment. If there is a nomadic aspect of citizen science along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, it would consist

of these ‘sniffers’, moving in a smooth space to detect singularities of smells, sounds and haptic sensations (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 528-529). Such nomadic perceptions are also present in Lora-Wainwright’s study of embodied knowledges among Chinese villagers, who report on smells, irritations, aches and breathing problems as a form of ‘lay epidemiology’ (2013: 310). Nonetheless, there is one important difference between these two cases. The Chinese villagers lack the necessary mediator for creating chains of reference. This is because when the buckets are applied for grabbing air samples in Louisiana, space is immediately striated and perceptions of toxic pollutants are translated into micrograms per square meter. When the air is sampled through the use of scientific instrumentation, the substances in the air that cause nausea, irritation and headaches can be put under the close inspection of laboratories. Only then is it possible to map the territory with numbers. Only by counting, citizen scientists can make the state of affairs count as political problems.

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# **Building Resilience to Repression in Nonviolent Resistance Struggles**

**Jason MacLeod**

*Centre for peace and conflict studies, University of Sydney*

## **Abstract**

Nonviolent movements are more effective than violent ones and casualties will be fewer than if the resistance was waged through armed struggle. However, nonviolent movements are still not immune to repression. This article presents a new framework that orders theory and practice – how nonviolent resistance movements can effectively respond to repression by opponents – across five dimensions: strategy, tactics, organisational structure, individual activists and advance preparation and planning. The framework is applied to the situation in West Papua, arguably an exemplar of a ‘worst case scenario’ – an internationally isolated Indigenous population resisting an extremely ruthless opponent – and is supplemented with examples from other nonviolent resistance movements. A proactive and systematic response to repression by opponents makes it more likely that acts of violence against activists will function to strengthen the movement and weaken the opponent.

## **Introduction**

All collective nonviolent action involves risk. When activists go outside conventional politics to nonviolently pursue political and social goals that are deeply opposed by powerful corporations and/or governments, the stage is inevitably set for some kind of confrontation. Indeed, that is a purpose of nonviolent action: to make latent injustice visible to a wider audience so that it can be acknowledged and resolved through nonviolent means (Curle 1971). That process generates conflict and, although nonviolent movements seek to transform that conflict without resort to violence, or the threat of violence, there is no guarantee the adversary will do the same. In fact, they rarely do. Indeed

repression is often an indicator the opponent is taking resistance seriously. When opponents do respond with violence, activists can face arrest, incarceration, torture, injury, seizure of money and assets, and even death. In some places an extremely ruthless opponent will target activists' family and friends.

In many struggles, disciplined nonviolent resistance in the face of violence from opponents has often been the trigger that has generated greater support for movement goals. Richard Gregg (1960) referred to this dynamic as moral jujitsu, named after a martial art that uses the energy and momentum of one's opponent to throw them off balance. Gene Sharp in his classic three part series 'The Politics of Nonviolent Action' (1973) renamed the dynamic, political jujitsu. Brian Martin (2007) picks up where Sharp left off. Through systematic, comparative, and grounded research he analyses how perpetrators use a variety of tactics to reduce outrage over their actions. By countering these tactics, activists can sometimes generate more attention on the original injustice and more support for movement goals than if the opponent had not used repressive tactics at all. Martin describes the dynamic as backfire.

What these scholar activists insist on then, is creative tension between repression, nonviolent discipline, persistence and movement success. Effective nonviolent action cannot be made so safe as to reduce all likelihood of risk. That is why training, preparation, planning and organisation are so vital. It is often only when activists persist in carrying out nonviolent action in the face of repression, raising the political and economic costs for the opponent and drawing more and more people into the resistance that the balance of power shifts in favour of the movement. Martin Luther King Jnr understood this dynamic so well that he, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference he led, intentionally waged campaigns of nonviolent action in the places where their opponent was most likely to respond with hate and violence – Birmingham and Selma, for example (see Halberstam 1998). This poses a range of ethical and strategic dilemmas for practitioners of nonviolent resistance. It is not an invitation to recklessness.

Because nonviolent action requires risk and, often, intentionally placing people in harm's way, it raises the question: how might

nonviolent resistance be carried out in ways that minimise the negative cost of repression to individuals while maximising the effectiveness and potency of the nonviolent movement? This article seeks to explore just that. I scan the literature on nonviolent resistance and repression, organising it around a five-part framework that is practical, theoretically robust, and grounded in the historical experience of people working for social change. In doing so I look at one particular movement, the nonviolent struggle for self-determination in West Papua, and examine the ways Papuans are building – or could build further – resilience. I complement the framework with examples from other struggles.

The article begins by addressing some preliminary contextual problems and a few recurring assumptions about violence and the relationship between repression and mobilisation. Why is nonviolent action a wiser strategic choice when faced with a repressive – even an extremely ruthless – opponent? What is the political purpose of repression? How effective is repression; does repression lead to more or less mobilisation? I then proceed to outline a practice framework (Westoby and Ingamells 2011) which is organised around strategic, tactical, organisational and personal ways to build resilience to repression as well as the vital role of advance preparation and planning. This section, which comprises the bulk of the article, looks at how to reduce the likelihood and negative impact of repression. The intention here is to outline the framework and its component parts rather than exhaustively explore the history and theory behind each section and how it is applied.

Sceptics about nonviolent resistance often present worst case scenarios. Although the challenge of repression is an important strategic question for armed struggles as well, and that questions of effectiveness are rarely applied objectively and equally to both armed and unarmed resistance movements (see Chenoweth and Stephan 2011 for a refreshing exception to this), the challenge is an important one. It can be expressed as a question: how might a resisting population in an isolated area, far from local or international media and networks of support, who face an extremely ruthless opponent which views them as less than human, defend themselves against acts of state violence? This is an important question for me personally because I work as a reflective practitioner, accompanying nonviolent resistance in a place that easily fits the description of a worst case scenario: West Papua.

Although this article will focus more on building resilience to repression in nondemocratic contexts against a state opponent, the central insights will also be useful for activists residing in countries governed by parliamentary democracies but who face repressive policing and corporate and state harassment. Some of what is suggested will also be useful for resistance campaigns against extremist militants like ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. However, responding to warlords and repressive non-state actors is really a separate topic and beyond the scope of this article.

## **Why is Nonviolent Action a Wiser Strategic Choice when Faced with a Repressive Opponent, Even an Extremely Ruthless One?**

According to Wintrobe (1998, p. 34) repression can be defined as:

restrictions on the rights of citizens to criticize the government, restrictions on the freedom of press, restrictions on the rights of opposition parties to campaign against the government, or, as is common in totalitarian dictatorship, the outright prohibition of groups, associations, or political parties opposed to the government.

If power-holders choose repression, three broad options are available to them. They can impose negative sanctions, use force, or wage war by proxy, either by overlooking vigilante activity or by actively encouraging and supporting it. According to Carlos Martín Beristain and Francesc Riera (1992), psychologists who researched repression and supported survivors of torture and trauma in El Salvador during the 1980s, repression has several purposes. Understanding these is a vital part of resistance. Beristain and Riera argue that repression is employed by authoritarian regimes to maintain control by limiting or eliminating dissent. Repression is employed to break the bonds of collectivism and solidarity by destroying cultural practices, social norms and kinship ties. It is used to control any form of opposition,

intimidate the population into submission, and establish impunity. In its most totalising form, write Beristain and Riera, it transforms entire populations into collaborators, willing to supply the regime with information and assistance against would be dissenters.

Faced with repression there are six ways activists can respond. They can stop their work temporarily or permanently. They can go into exile (although mass emigration has also been used as a nonviolent tactic including by West Papuans in 1984). They can work clandestinely. They can collaborate with the opponent. They can respond with violence. Or they can respond in ways that build movement strength.

For those with an appetite to fight injustice, the first reason why nonviolent resistance should be the weapon of choice is because nonviolent struggles against autocratic governments are more effective, particularly in anti-regime, pro-democracy struggles (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Examples of nonviolent resistance movements succeeding – at least in a limited sense – against ruthless opponents include movements in the Philippines (1986), Chile (1988), South Africa (1988), East Germany and a range of other authoritarian communist regimes (1989), Serbia (2000), Egypt (2011) and many others. Given the success rates of nonviolent movements are increasing and the success rates of armed struggles falling (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), there is reason to believe that the above list, which is by no means exhaustive, will grow longer.

The second reason to use nonviolent resistance against an extremely ruthless opponent is that it is likely there will be fewer casualties. In a little known essay that deserves to be more widely read, Gene Keyes (1991) demonstrated that although nonviolent movements should certainly prepare for casualties, the number of deaths and injuries will almost certainly be far lower than if the struggle is waged through violent action. Keyes compared Gandhi's independence campaign with Mau Mau resistance in Kenya. Both movements were anti-colonial struggles against the British Empire. In Kenya the Mau Mau predominately waged a campaign of political violence while the Indian independence movement predominately used nonviolent action. During the Mau Mau uprising the British killed 11,503 Kenyans (out of a resistance movement that numbered little more than 100,000). In contrast, during the Indian Independence struggle – which lasted more

than 30 years – the total number of recorded deaths reached 8,000 of a total population of 350 million (Burrowes 1996, p. 239). Keyes' findings correlate with the empirical evidence comparing the relative costs of armed and unarmed movements (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

It is also important to note that in nonviolent movements where there has been a significant death toll from a single repressive event like a massacre (Francisco 2005) there were significant tactical, strategic and organisational deficiencies that in all likelihood increased the number of casualties (Burrowes 1996, p. 240). During the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, for instance, 2,600 people were killed by the Chinese People's Republic Army. In this case the strategic goal of democracy was displaced by the tactical objective of holding the square, which was not necessary to usher in democracy. In addition to some other tactical and organisational mistakes, the Chinese pro-democracy activists had no contingency plan in place. As a result, when the army marched in to clear Tiananmen Square the movement was ill-prepared. There is good reason to believe that if these shortcomings were addressed earlier they would have greatly reduced the loss of life. Unlike military campaigns, nonviolent resistance movements are rarely concerned with holding onto 'turf'. In the long-term, winning over large numbers of uncommitted third parties, including the opponents' supporters is more important than maintaining control of territory.

As well as looking dispassionately at the risks from the movement's point of view it is also important to look at the costs of using extremely ruthless repression from the ruler's point of view. As previously stated, a worse-case-scenario is a ruthless ruler or military officer willing to kill large numbers of demonstrators. From a dictator's point of view will this strengthen or weaken their rule? Roland Francisco (2005), a social movement scholar, examined this exact question. Francisco found that massacres do not help dictators maintain control. Public killings of large numbers of demonstrators by the authorities nearly always increases mobilisation in the short-term. In the long-term – and it may be a long time, especially in the absence of a strategic nonviolent movement – massacres hurt dictatorships. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011, p. 202) made a similar observation. In their large N study of 323 violent and nonviolent struggles between 1900 and 2006 Chenoweth and Stephan found that overt repression of

nonviolent movements disadvantages power-holders. Repression appears to increase sympathy for the movement's goals from third parties and undermines support within the opponent's own ranks. Smithey and Kurtz (1999) call this the 'paradox of repression'.

From the point of view of the state, repression is deployed to stop challengers. What appears to be important in this regard, is whether repression is targeted or indiscriminate, and whether the repression is captured by a third party and made available to a sympathetic audience who mobilises large numbers of people in support of the target, or not. Targeted repression of activists is more effective at quelling dissent than indiscriminate repression. Mass killings of unarmed citizens by the regime are more likely to ignite the backfire dynamic (Martin 2007), pushing moderates towards the resistance. This is especially so if the resistance creates low cost ways for people to participate in the movement (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011) and if the repression is documented and widely disseminated to audiences who can mobilise on behalf of the oppressed (Martin 2007).

The problem for activists is that repressive regimes are also continually learning and adapt their strategies accordingly (Dobson 2013). Take Indonesia for example. The Indonesian government occupied East Timor from 1975 until 1999 and forcibly controlled Aceh from around the time of the Beureu'eh rebellion in 1953 until the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement in 2005. The Indonesian government has occupied West Papua since 1963. In each colony they used massacres, including mass killings of unarmed citizenry, to deal with dissent and maintain their rule. The Dili Massacre on 12 November 1991 – which was one of many mass killings in East Timor – certainly hastened the end of the Indonesian occupation in that colony (Martin 2007, pp. 23-33). Learning from their experience in East Timor, the Indonesian government has shifted their strategies of rule in West Papua. Prior to the Dili Massacre the Indonesian army had carried out mass killings in West Papua in places like the highlands in 1977 and in Biak on 6 July 1998. After 1999, when they had already lost East Timor, the occupying Indonesian military and police forces began to use terror as an instrument of governance (Hernawan 2013).

Terror, as it is employed by the state in West Papua, takes two particular nefarious forms: targeted individual killings of activists and

torture of ordinary citizens, carried out in public places. In recent years one organisation targeted by counter insurgency forces has been KNPB (the West Papua National Committee), a nonviolent group calling for a referendum on West Papua's political status. The United States and Australian-armed and trained state sanctioned death squad, Detachment 88, summarily executed 29 KNPB activists between 2012 and 2014 (Bachelard 17 December 2012; author's interviews with KNPB activists). As well as targeted killings, the Indonesian security forces use torture and random brutalisation of its citizens. Again it is nonviolent activists and, more often than not, ordinary citizens that are targeted, not members of the armed resistance. Of 431 cases documented by Budi Hernawan (2013) only two of the victims were involved in the armed struggle. Most of the victims did not even speak Indonesian. Given the fact that Indonesian soldiers – who are ethnically different from West Papuans – do not speak any of the Indigenous languages in West Papua, there is no way Indonesian soldiers would have been able to question their captives in order to pursue their stated goal of eradicating the armed resistance, which is used as a public rationale for military operations in West Papua.

Unlike the use of torture practiced against Arab militants by the United States in Abu Ghraib, for instance, where the (alleged) purpose was to extract strategically useful information in a war against violent extremism by those the United States and its allies opposes, the purpose of torture practised by occupying Indonesian forces in West Papua is to intimidate. Police, intelligence and security personnel assume this enables them to govern with less interference from dissenting citizens.

According to Hernawan (2009, pp. 3-4) the Indonesian state's use of torture 'does not aim at extracting real information [about] the OPM [Free Papua Movement]':

Instead, torture represents larger machinery that aims to control the whole community by conjuring and maintaining the spectre of terror. The survivors of torture remain living in their own families and communities and thus share their stories with them. By telling their stories, the survivors inadvertently transfer and reproduce the mark of terror into the community

and thus reinforce its impact on their lives. The authorities might assume that such practice will deter the whole community from joining the resistance movements and eventually eradicate the OPM itself.

In order to perpetuate a strategy of rule based on torture the Indonesian government depends on two things. First, the Indonesian state needs to keep West Papua isolated internationally. Restricting foreign media access through its repressive *Surat Jalan* (Letter of Police Permission) system is essential to the Indonesian government's desire to control the narratives coming out of West Papua. Social media and rapid uptake of mobile internet communication technologies in West Papua, however, is making it harder for the state to control the flow of information. However, keeping journalists out is still effective precisely because Papuans have limited international networks, internet speed makes it difficult to send out photos and videos in a timely fashion, and because many activists do not speak English. The second thing the state depends on is lack of sympathy for Papuan grievances from the rest of Indonesia. The Indonesian government partly retains control of West Papua through an elaborate system of structural racism that, amongst other things perpetuates a culture of otherness and impunity, ensuring that brown Indonesian soldiers are rarely punished for crimes against black Papuan activists. Therefore, from a narrow realist perspective, the Indonesian government's shift from installing fear through mass killings to governing the body politic through individualised executions, torture and keeping reporters out is smart. Torture and extra-judicial killings are less likely to ignite moral outrage when they take place far from the gaze of the international media.

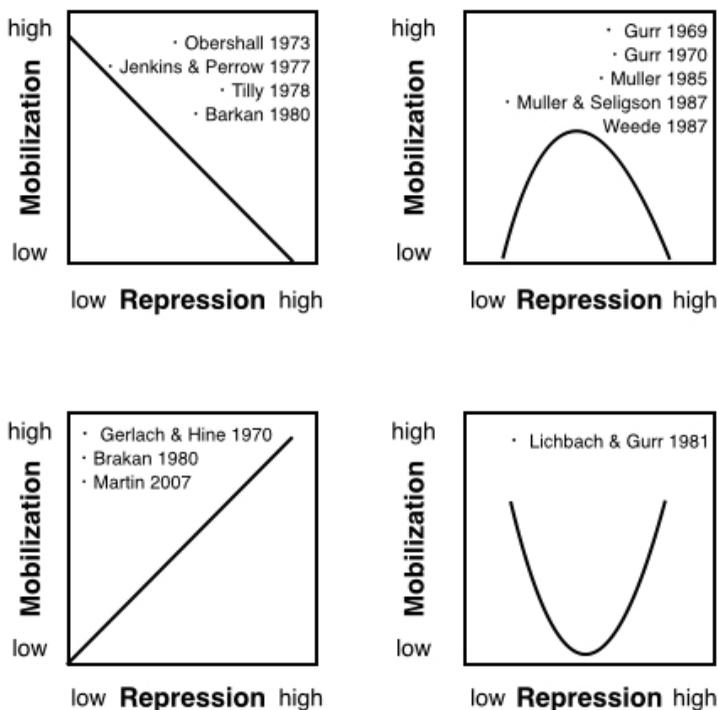
The problem for the state is that repressive Indonesian rule in West Papua is unstable and unsustainable. It relies on continuing violence. Repression, even covert repression, fuels dissent. At the same time internet communication technologies make state control of the media impossible. The more the Indonesian government tightens its iron fist, the less Papuans support and identify with it. Repression undermines trust and cooperation which is a basis for a ruler's legitimacy (Sharp 1973). In a 'worst case scenario' like West Papua nonviolent activists need to first ensure that their movement becomes much more visible and much more connected, both domestically –

within Indonesia – and internationally. That will necessitate, in part, getting rid of the *Surat Jalan* system and opening up West Papua to the international press. This requires local and transnational campaigns of nonviolent resistance backed up by detailed research and reportage.

In summary, two things are clear. First, nonviolent resistance movements are more effective than armed struggles, even against extremely repressive opponents. Second, nonviolent resistance movements result in fewer casualties than political violence such as guerrilla war or terrorism. Burrowes (1996, p. 239) concludes that while nonviolent resistance movements operating in repressive contexts *should* prepare for high casualties, they are *not likely*. What is needed are more detailed examinations of how movements might reduce the risk of heavy casualties while at the same time not abandoning and even seeking to increase, their effectiveness.

## **How Effective is Repression? Does Repression Lead to More or Less Mobilisation?**

As Figure 1 illustrates, the relationship between repression and dissent is remarkably inconclusive. For every study illustrating that repression leads to mobilisation you can find another demonstrating that the effect of repression leads to demobilisation. Other studies suggest certain thresholds of repression trigger different movement reactions. Some researchers, notably Tilly (2005), Barkan (1980) and Gurr (1969), even contradict themselves, finding evidence that repression, and different levels of repression, can amplify or dampen mobilisation, depending on the context. Tilly concludes (2005, p. 218) that ‘repression and mobilisation regularly interact’ ... but ‘those interactions do not conform to covering laws; at the most general level, for example, repression sometimes flattens resistance, but sometimes magnifies it.’ This variance is also reflected in the choice of how populations resist. For every instance where an insurgency has taken up arms because they argue that there is no way their opponent can be defeated through unarmed resistance, you will find a movement that resorts to nonviolent resistance precisely because they claim they can never defeat their adversary through an armed insurrection, particularly where the state has a monopoly on the use of force.



**Figure 1:** Studies examining the links between political repression and social movement mobilisation

There may not be general covering laws at the level of episodes and classes of episodes, however, when one's gaze moves away from examining bounded sequences of political contention and focuses on the level of processes and mechanisms, at least four distinct causal pathways emerge (Tilly 2005, p. 224):

1. Repression decreases mobilisation ('dissidents rationally reduce their efforts when authorities raise their costs,

authorities rationally beat down opposition that will impede their programs”).

2. Repression increases mobilisation (repression of dissidents threatens their survival and causes recoil amongst the opponent’s elite ranks which ‘spurs dissident mobilisation’).
3. Mobilisation decreases repression (dissidents mobilise, reaching out to, recruiting and/or neutralising/pacifying elite segments, ‘thereby facilitating alliances between ‘ins’ and ‘outs,’ and thus [promoting the protection] of dissidents’).
4. Mobilisation increases repression (‘dissidents rationally reduce their efforts when authorities raise their costs, authorities rationally beat down opposition that will impede their programs’).

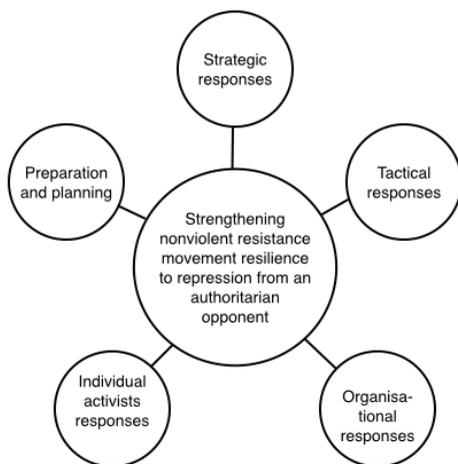
If therefore, repression can lead to either mobilisation or demobilisation the question becomes: how to maximise the former while inoculating against the latter?

## **A Framework for Building Resilience in Civil Resistance Struggles Operating in Repressive Contexts**

The social sciences have borrowed the term ‘resilience’ from the natural sciences. The concept is now part of a growing field of research in disaster management, international relations, peacebuilding, development, security studies, education, social work, planning, psychology, gender and queer studies and elsewhere. There also exists a discussion on the links between resistance and resilience with some arguing that the concepts do not sit well together. This is a vast research field. For more see, for instance, Rogers (2015), Chandler (2014), Juntunen and Hyvönen (2014), the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (2011) and Weinstein (2007). For the purpose of this article it is enough to say that I am using the term

resilience to refer to the capability of nonviolent resistance movements to persist in pursuing their social and political change goals, to re-organise, and to learn and adapt to changing circumstances, in response to repression from authoritarian opponents.

It should be clear from the previous discussion that a commitment to nonviolent resistance may limit bloodshed, but it is not a guarantee against repression from the state. In any struggle of people against power there is no guarantee that ‘the people’ will not sustain casualties, or that they will win. But movements can minimise the likelihood of repression and its negative impacts on demobilisation while at the same time maximising the power of nonviolent resistance. One framework for building movement resilience to repression that has emerged in the course of my practice and research is based on strengthening strategic, tactical, organisational, personal responses to repression and on thorough advance preparation and planning. That framework is depicted visually in Figure 2. Each one of the components is mutually reinforcing of the others.



**Figure 2:** A framework for building resilience of nonviolent resistance movements to repression from an authoritarian opponent

## **Strategic Responses to Building Resilience to Repression**

Strategy, I maintain, is the single most important determinant in developing movement resilience to repression. If movements do not undermine passive and active support for the opponent's violence then tactical responses will be misguided and ineffective. Tactical objectives need to be subordinated to the movement's overarching strategic goal. For each tactic, movement strategists need to be clear who they are influencing and what they want them to do (Burrowes 1996, pp. 6-7).

Creating a strategy involves careful analysis of the opponent's sources of power (Sharp 1973) in particular the direct and indirect dependency relationships between the ruler and ruled (Summy 1994), why people obey (Sharp 1973) and the ways in which their power is expressed through the pillars of support (Sharp 1973; Helvey 2004, pp. 9-18). The literature suggests two particular kinds of inter-related and mutually reinforcing strategies. At the level of the strategic counter-offensive (Burrowes 1996) activists will need to design interventions that promote division amongst the opponent (see for instance Schock 2005; Tilly 2005; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; and Nepstad 2011). When it comes to strengthening the nonviolent defence, strategists will need to draw in new allies particularly those from the opponent's own rank, class, religion and ethnicity, as well as others who can influence the opponent's policy and behaviour (see for instance Galtung 1989; Burrowes 1996; and Thurber 2015). Generating division amongst the opponent and encouraging defection helps create inside-outside alliances that will, the above authors argue, increase mobilisation. Simultaneously this increases the likelihood that activists will enjoy greater protection.

In some circumstances undermining support from within the opponent's own ranks might mean generating tactics that expose, even precipitate, extreme violence by the opponent in order to trigger the backfire dynamic. This is an extremely risky strategy. Activists will want to keep the focus on the opponent's norm-violating behaviour and the nonviolent discipline and reasonableness of the movement. Movement leaders will also need to avoid or re-frame charges that they intentionally provoked violence. Most importantly they will need to make sure the opponent's violence (and the movement's nonviolent

discipline) is communicated to audiences who will mobilise on behalf of the oppressed. That includes making sure tactics are filmed and photographed and there are plans for circulating these images widely, accompanied by clear and powerful interpretations that amplify support for the movement and decrease and divide support amongst the opposition.

Anti-occupation and secessionist struggles are more complex (Burrowes 1996, pp. 85-91). They require challengers to develop strategies of resistance not just inside the occupied territory but also in the territory of the occupier and in the societies of the occupier's international allies (Stephan and Mundy 2006; MacLeod 2012; and MacLeod *in press*). For Palestinians, for example, that means organising inside Palestine and the occupied territories, inside Israel and inside the societies of the Israeli government's key allies, principally the United States. For West Papuans it means organising inside Indonesia, in the societies of Indonesia's elite allies and sphere of influence, as well as inside West Papua. Movements need plans for altering the opponent's *will* to conduct aggression and undermining their *power* to do so in each of the three domains of struggle – the occupied territory, the territory of the occupier and in the societies of the occupier's international elite allies (Burrowes 1996; MacLeod 2012; MacLeod *in press*). For ethnically or socially homogenous movements fighting against an opponent of a different race or class, critical thought needs to go into how to diversify the social base of the resistance so that people from the opponent's own rank and class are brought into to support the movement (Galtung 1989; Thurber 2015).

By being clear about the dynamic and multi-focal nature of power, challengers have a better chance of designing effective and innovative strategies and tactics that also minimise risks. In the event of a repressive incident – which all movements should prepare elaborate contingency plans for – Brian Martin (2007) has developed an empirically sound and practically useful model he terms 'backfire'. It is to that model we turn next using the case of West Papua to illustrate how the model might be used in practice.

### **Using the Backfire Model to Ignite Outrage**

One reason massacres are ineffective is that they generate backfire. A massacre is worse for the regime than if they had done

nothing. But even the mistreatment of a single person by the regime can, under the right conditions, be perceived as unacceptable injustice and generate massive public backlash. Martin (2007, p. 2) uses the word 'backfire' to describe this dynamic. He defines backfire as 'an action that recoils against its originators. In backfire the outcome is not just worse than anticipated – it is negative, namely, worse than having done nothing.'

All sorts of situations can backfire. The Indonesian government's occupation of West Papua involves cases that most Papuans widely consider to be an injustice, where one side – the Indonesian government, the security forces, and foreign corporations such as the Freeport mine – has all the power and the other side, the Papuans, is unarmed. Martin demonstrates that in order for injustice – including ruthless repression – to backfire two conditions must be met. Firstly, the behaviour of the power-holders must be widely perceived to be unjust and disproportionate. Secondly, significant audiences need to be aware of this injustice and take action on behalf of the oppressed.

It is useful to look at what the Indonesian government does to try and inhibit outrage. Understanding what the power-holders do will help Papuans design strategies and tactics that are more likely to make repression backfire.

### **What the Indonesian Government does to Inhibit Outrage**

The Indonesian government's strategy to control and quell resistance in West Papua has five mutually reinforcing elements: cover-up; devaluation and stigmatisation of Papuan identity and culture; re-interpretation of reality; the use of policy and procedures to give the appearance of justice; and intimidation.

First, the Indonesian government effectively restricts international media and independent scrutiny of what is happening in its restive Pacific periphery. The banning or tight control of foreign media and Red Cross visits to political prisoners in West Papua is just one tactic used by the Indonesian government in a long sequence of silencing and marginalising critical voices. By controlling what foreign media, diplomats and others see and who they talk to, the Indonesian government can deny that there is a problem.

Second, the Indonesian government stigmatises Papuan dissent and devalues Papuan identities. This is systematic racism on the part of the occupier. Oswald Iten, a Swiss journalist who was jailed in West Papua in 2000 after recording a nonviolent demonstration, witnessed this dynamic while in prison. Indonesian police taunted scores of Papuan students and political prisoners who had been wrongly imprisoned for attacking a police post. They taunted, tortured, and even killed activists who had been arrested. Iten witnessed the police telling those detained: 'You eat pig meat which is why you look like pigs'. (Pigs which are highly valued by Melanesian Papuans are considered unclean by the mostly Muslim Indonesians.) Papuans know only too well the ways they are devalued by migrants and a racist system that keeps them in less powerful positions.

Third, the Indonesian government reinterprets and criminalises Papuans' legitimate grievances with words like 'separatism' and 'rebellion'. The state lies about what happens. For example, in Paniai on 8 December 2014 when Indonesian police shot dead four unarmed young people, the police falsely claimed that they were being fired upon by Papuan guerrillas hiding in the hills, which is why they opened fire. The government also justifies its actions claiming it is defending the integrity of the state or it minimises the effects of its actions claiming that few people have been hurt or killed. At times when perpetrators are charged the government will either claim that they are heroes – as the former General and current Indonesian Defence Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu said of those soldiers accused of murdering independence leader Theys Eluay in 2001 – or they will claim troops disobeyed orders. The Indonesian government expresses more concern about those who raise the Morning Star flag and engage in other forms of nonviolent protest than the violent repression – including murder – carried out by the state security forces.

Fourth, formal procedures are used to give a veneer of legitimacy to what Papuans privately say amounts to an occupation. The Special Autonomy Law of 2001, designed to address many of the root causes of West Papua's problems, has been ineffective because the regulations that enable the law to be implemented have never been passed. This allows the Indonesian government to give the appearance of responding to Papuan concerns and satisfying the international community it is responding to Papuan grievances, while not genuinely

addressing the root political causes of Papuan grievances. In cases where perpetrators from the police and military have been accused or even found guilty of carrying out acts of violence against unarmed demonstrators, individual perpetrators have been given light sentences (or none at all).

Finally, the Indonesian government will use threats and intimidation to silence dissent. This is certainly what happens to Papuan political leaders and their families. While Papuans like Filep Karma receive a 15-year jail sentence for organising a nonviolent flag-raising and Papuans present at the Third Papuan Congress are shot dead and leaders sentenced to years in jail, few Indonesian police and soldiers are brought to justice for human rights violations. Some perpetrators have even been promoted.

### **So, How Might Papuans Ignite Outrage?**

If the action is perceived to be unjust, and significant audiences are aware of this, there are a number of things activists can do to ignite justice. They can expose cover-ups, value those who are targeted, reframe what the power-holders have done as an injustice, use campaigns rather than get drawn into official procedures, and finally, resist injustice. Papuan activists are doing many of these things.

First, Papuan activists can expose the repression to the national and international community. Papuans will need to document and publicise violence and oppression and the nonviolent ways they are working to change this and make this evidence available to sympathetic audiences. Documenting repression and nonviolent resistance by taking photos, videos and recording accurate details about who did what to whom, when, where, how and why, is vital.

Second, Papuans can validate those targeted by the repression and reframe the actions of those targeted in ways that appeal to allied third parties. One important technique is to show Papuan targets of state violence as real human beings (rather than abstract ciphers or stigmatised enemies), with faces, families and histories, in ways that resonate with large sectors of the population, particularly in Java and amongst mainstream Muslim Indonesians. The nonviolent resistance by Papuans as well as the violence and repression of the Indonesian military also needs to be made visible to the international community and solidarity networks that can mobilise action on behalf of Papuans.

Third, the activists can tell a different story from what is being told by those responsible for or supporting repression, one that emphasises the difference between the activists and those who are carrying out repression (see for instance Reinsborough and Canning 2010). Movements for freedom are a kind of drama and the difference between the ‘goodies’ and the ‘baddies’ needs to be made crystal clear to the audience. This drama needs to make the nonviolent action of Papuans explicit, in contrast to the violence of the security forces, promote Papuan demands, and undermine Indonesian government legitimacy. Most importantly it needs to value and promote the dignity, courage, and intelligence of Papuans who put their lives on the line for freedom. This is why maintaining nonviolent discipline is so important.

There is a clear example of using ridicule to tell a different story that comes from a scene in the film ‘Bringing Down a Dictator’ (York and Zimmerman 2001) which is about activists from *Otpor!*, the Serbian resistance movement who nonviolently overthrew Milosevic in 2000. This was at a time when *Otpor!* was being accused of being a terrorist organisation and individual activists within it were being accused of being terrorists, fascists, criminals, drug addicts and other derogatory labels. With the press gathered to watch, the focaliser of the action invites an *Otpor!* activist onto the back of a truck. The activist is young, perhaps only a teenager. The focaliser – who is also wearing an *Otpor!* t-shirt along with the majority of the audience, all who are unarmed, addresses the crowd and press. He says,

We are here reporting from in front of the Nis police station and here is an example of a terrorist on the border between Serbia and Montenegro. The terrorist is about six feet tall, and he is wearing a t-shirt of the terrorist organisation *Otpor*. [Points to the t-shirt with a pointer.] He is wearing eye glasses which mean he reads a lot. It is dangerous to read a lot in this country, so beware. [People laugh and clap.]

Fourth, Papuans can mobilise nationally and internationally. By putting less energy into formal procedures imposed by the regime, or diplomatic and legal channels that favour the powerful, Papuans can instead put more energy into using non-institutional actions that

challenge state power. By using nonviolent action and maintaining the initiative, activists will make it harder for the regime to use tactics designed to dilute and dissipate popular outrage at the repressive acts of the Indonesian security forces and government.

Finally, Papuans will need to resist and expose any attempts by those in power to bribe or intimidate activists into giving up.

## **Tactical Responses to Building Resilience to Repression**

In addition to having a well-developed strategy informed by a detailed analyses of the opponent's and movement's power, and constantly reviewing strategy in light of changing threats and opportunities, there are a number of ways movements can design tactics that blunt the force of repression.

One way movements respond to repression is to phase campaigns so people can build up their experience and courage. In the first few years of the *Otpor* movement, for example, activists avoided organising large demonstrations in the capital city. They felt that this would only result in a violent and premature confrontation with Milosevic. Instead they recruited, trained and organised activists to build the movement, working in the smaller cities and towns to give ordinary Serbs low-cost ways to participate in the struggle.

In Uruguay, in Latin America, violence by the military was so severe and so extensive that leaders decided it would be too risky to engage in demonstrations. Instead some of the leaders, including a popular priest, undertook a public fast. At the end of the fast they called for everybody all over the country to turn off the lights. The leadership did not know if people would have the courage to do this but on the appointed time virtually the entire country went dark. Energised by this collective display of disobedience, people poured out into the streets banging pots and pans, creating a deafening noise. The junta knew its time was up.

Burrowes (1996, pp. 241-245; 2014), lists other things, at the level of tactics, that a movement can consider:

- Using protective accompaniment and national and international networks to protect nonviolent activists

facing threats from the regime. Examples include Peace Brigades International, Nonviolent Peaceforce and Christian and Muslim Peacemaker Teams.

- Designing tactics that emphasise dispersed action (such as a go-slow day, stay at home strike, or fasting). In places like Belarus activists have used 'lightning protests' where small groups will assemble simultaneously in different parts of the city and carry out a protest that lasts for only a few minutes before dispersing into the crowd.
- Designing tactics that concentrate people in one place by investing traditional practices with new meaning (such as using a religious, national or cultural festival or a funeral). In this way activists find subtle and creative ways of demonstrating. The anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, for example, used funerals as opportunities for people to gather and protest. Buddhist activists in Burma and Tibet have also used gatherings for religious ceremonies as opportunities to protest.
- Building personal relationships with the security forces. These relationships humanise the movement to the opponent and can make it harder for security forces to carry out dehumanising and brutal actions. Establishing advance relations with security forces also helps maximise the likelihood of divisions and defections within the police and/or military's ranks, which are often a major contributor to movement success, particularly in pro-democracy struggles (Nepstad 2011).
- Using music, song, dance, costumes and banners to boost morale.
- Having contingency plans in place when organising demonstrations. People who participate need to know what to do if something goes wrong. There needs to be clear systems for making decisions and communicating those decisions to activists in the field.

When planning nonviolent tactics in repressive contexts it is also important to consider methods that increase participation while reducing risk. Successful movements need to maximise the ability of ordinary people to participate in political action. That means designing tactics that are low-risk but enable lots of people to participate in. Examples of low-risk/high-participation nonviolent actions include wearing the same symbol or clothes (for example, black), walking or driving slowly, stay at home strikes and turning lights off at night at appointed time. Movements can also use ‘tester actions’ to help gauge how the regime will respond and at the same time increase people’s courage. An example of a highly effective ‘tester action’ was Gandhi’s salt march.

## **Organisational Responses to Building Resilience to Repression**

Schock (2005, pp. 143-145) has argued persuasively that in repressive and nondemocratic contexts at least, decentralised network structures like coalitions, federations, alliances and umbrella organisations are more resilient than hierarchical social movement organisations. Schock outlines five factors that help explain why coordinated networks of decentralised organisations in repressive contexts are more effective than hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations. First, a decentralised movement structure is more likely to withstand state repression because one organisation or leader cannot be targeted. This was a major weakness of the *Presidium Dewan Papua’s* (Papuan Presidium Council or PDP, a West Papuan pro-independence organisation) hierarchical structure. When the Indonesian military assassinated the leader of the PDP in 2001 the organisation collapsed. Second, devolution of leadership means that the movement can continue to function when movement leaders are imprisoned or murdered by the state or state-backed militia groups. Failure to develop a decentralised (but coordinated) leadership structure was a factor in the failure of the 1989 Chinese pro-democracy movement and the first (unarmed) Palestinian Intifada. Third, decentralised movements are likely to be more democratic, which increases the commitment of the activists involved, makes the leadership more accountable, decreases the likelihood of co-option, and lays the foundations for a new democratic society. Fourth, decentralised network structures are more likely to help

develop an oppositional consciousness which enhances the ability of diverse groups to work together toward a common goal despite a lack of ideological consensus (see also Reed and Foran 2002; Chabot and Vinthagen 2007). Finally, because of their flexibility and capacity to distribute information horizontally, decentralised movements are likely to be more creative and better at developing innovative tactics than more hierarchical and rigid organisational forms.

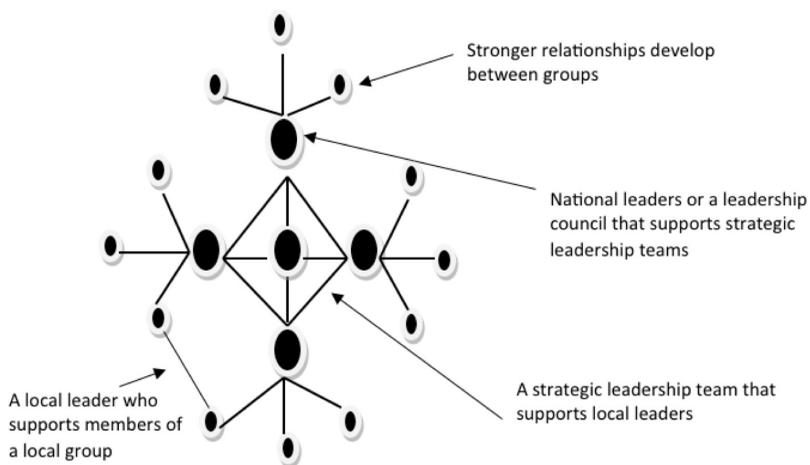
Broad based coalitions were a central feature in the success and resilience of people power movements in the Philippines, East Timor (the CNRT), Serbia, Poland (Solidarity), India (The Indian National Congress) and elsewhere. In South Africa, the United Democratic Front (UDF) brought together hundreds of people's organisations under one umbrella to resist apartheid. Also in South Africa the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) formed a federation to unite labour organisations. Both UDF and COSATU coordinated action to undermine the power of the state and resist repression.

There are many different ways decentralised network structures can be conceptualised. Figure 3 illustrates one way.



**Figure 3:**  
A decentralised  
network structure

This structure addresses the problem of resilience. It is harder to destroy because leadership is dispersed throughout the ‘nodes’ in the network. The decentralised nature of the structure also supports participation and tactical innovation, particularly on the edges of the network. But in structures like the one above, additional resilience and increased opportunities for participation and creativity come at the expense of enhanced coordination and communication, which is the strength of hierarchical organisations. The question then is how to get the best of both worlds: more participation, more innovation and more resilience combined with better communication and coordination? Figure 4 depicts an example of a movement structure that provides one answer to that question.



**Figure 4:** An example of a decentralised network structure that enables coordination

The 'snowflake' structure depicted in Figure 4 is more resilient to repression than a traditional hierarchy. It also gets around the problems of lack of communication and coordination that can sometimes exist in decentralised networks. It includes the important addition of strategic leadership teams (Ganz 2010). Members of strategic leadership teams recruit local leaders and then work with them to form groups who analyse problems and take collective nonviolent action. This is essentially what Nelson Mandela, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jnr and many other leaders of liberation movements did; they encouraged local leadership. During the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, for example, each town had hundreds of civics (small local citizen-based groups) responsible for some aspect of the struggle. People in Port Elizabeth, for example, organised civic groups under the United Democratic Front.

Strategic leadership teams help build strategic capacity of the local groups and provide a mechanism for coordination and communication between the national leadership and the local level. Over time the creation of numerous small groups who form relationships with one another and forge broad alliances strengthens the number and quality of activists involved in the movement.

It is important to emphasise that while the above models of organisational structures may be decentralised they still facilitate unity. However, it is unity around purpose (vision, goals and objectives), planning (strategy and tactics) and people (Merriman 2010), rather than a single hierarchical organisational form. This is what Benny Wenda, a West Papuan leader, talks about when he says: 'let's not try and have a single organisation, let's have a shared agenda' (MacLeod, *in press*).

This kind of work, building broad-based participation in social and political struggle, has been recognised as central to nonviolent resistance struggles. However, the ways in which this actually happens and is sustained over time has received insufficient attention from scholars of civil resistance who are more interested in the dynamics and trajectories of struggle once a mass movement has formed and become active. Those examining community organising have put more attention on how mass movements develop but their gaze has been more focused on democratic contexts, not repressive societies. Understanding the skills and knowledge required to build and sustain mass-based

organisations and mobilise large numbers of people to participate in nonviolent resistance movements in repressive contexts is one area that requires further research.

In West Papua, the recently formed United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) has a five person representative leadership council (secretariat) based outside the country who work closely with the leadership inside the country. The secretariat represents the three largest coalitions of resistance groups plus a number of other groups not affiliated with one of the three coalitions. Wisely, leaders based inside the country rejected a proposal for a central coordinator in favour of collective decision-making. This complex insider-outsider arrangement is designed to protect leaders inside the country. Solidarity groups, members of the West Papua Diaspora, and representatives from the Pacific Conference of Churches, a regional body with 7.5 million members, were also invited to witness the process of formation of the ULMWP and to provide ongoing support. This is significant. It is useful to find a role and place in the decentralised network structure for members of the Diaspora and solidarity groups in other countries in order to keep the struggle in the 'international public eye'. When in-country leaders suffer extraordinary repression solidarity groups and members of the Diaspora can then activate their transnational contacts to mobilise a response.

## **Individual Responses to Building Resilience to Repression**

Steve Biko once said that 'the most powerful tool in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed'. Biko was the founder of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa which strengthened the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Biko knew that unless the oppressed truly believe they have what it takes to win their freedom, they will never be free. So the first step in the struggle for freedom is what Doug McAdam (1982) called 'cognitive liberation'. One must throw off the shackles of the mind. Freeing the mind requires self-respect, self-belief and self-confidence. Casting off fear – or rather getting to a point where action is possible in spite of the fear one feels – is essential because repression can only work if it instils fear and fear is transmuted into blind obedience (Sharp 1973; de La Boétie 1576).

Social movement researchers Jeff Godwin and Steven Pfaff (2001) agree that casting off fear is necessary to resist in repressive contexts. These two academics looked at how activists dealt with fear in East Germany, under Communist rule, where one in ten people was working for the secret police and in the south of the United States during the Civil Rights struggle, where activists were killed and disappeared for organising for equal rights.

In East Germany the overwhelming power of the Communist Party apparatus was based on social exclusion. Intimidation, isolation and moral discrediting all served to create the conditions under which broad sections of the society conformed their behaviour so they acted in concert to the desires and demands of the state. This left many dissidents insecure and feeling threatened. As a result, civil courage had to be achieved through lengthy experience and required social support that could be gained through solidary relationships in the church or through membership in opposition groups.

In both East Germany and the southern US the following things all helped people cast off fear and take action:

- intimate social networks (small groups of trusted friends);
- mass meetings and other communal gatherings of movement participants;
- strong identification of activists with the movements, grounded in a belief of both their righteousness and the inevitability of victory;
- shaming activists into taking action (many took risky action because they did not want to be seen as cowards);
- formal training in the techniques of nonviolent resistance; and
- mass media coverage of movement activities and protest events.

Even though facing fear can only really be achieved at the level of the individual, in many of the examples above you can see that working through fear involves collective processes. It is rarely something one does in isolation from other people or the social context. Goodwin and Pfaff also found that some activists felt as if

they lived under divine protection. The knowledge of that feeling was more powerful than all the brutality of the state.

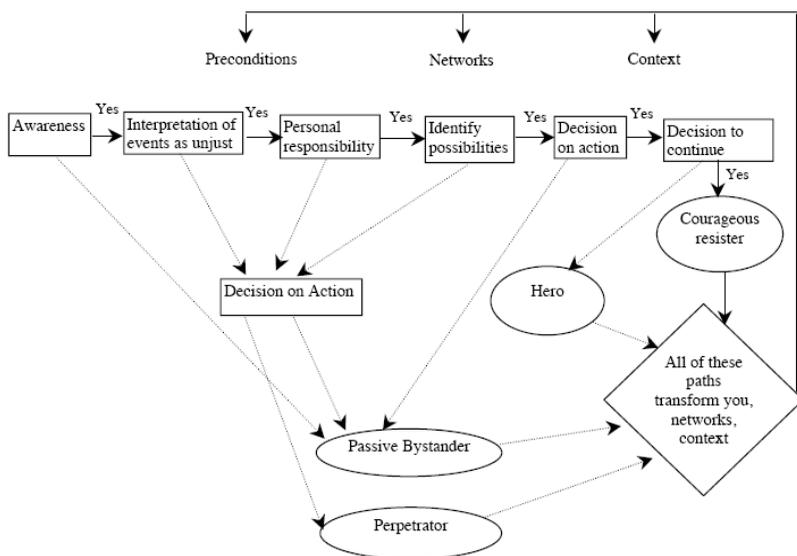
Beristain and Riera (1992, p. 13) also emphasise the importance of maintaining social solidarity:

Whenever people organize themselves in order to satisfy their necessities as persons or as communities (to reclaim a plot of land and build on it, to defend human rights, to secure a source of water for the neighbourhood, to demand respect for the rights of ethnic minorities, etc.), the fabric of social unity is woven.

The kinds of collective action mentioned by Beristain and Riera and Godwin and Pfaff, directly challenge repression because repression is often designed to sever the bonds of solidarity between people. Dictators and other kinds of authoritarian rulers do not want the oppressed to understand the purpose of repression. They want to spread confusion and self-doubt; to make people feel like they are going crazy because of everything they have experienced. Because when you do not understand why you are being attacked it is much harder to defend yourself and your community against the repression. That is why Beristain and Riera and others urge activists to remember that there is always a purpose to the brutality of the state. Activists need to understand why the government uses violence against them in order to make sense of what is happening and to devise some tactics of their own with which to confront it.

Too often, however, the view that overcoming fear belongs only to the innately courageous, dominates narratives of resistance. Thalhammer et al. (2007) disagrees. She and her colleagues argue that courageous resisters are made, not born. A hero acts once or twice. A courageous resister takes nonviolent action for peace and justice repeatedly and often at great risk to themselves. Becoming a courageous resister, however, is a long process. There are six major crossroads that people face on the journey to become a courageous resister. At each crossroad decisions need to be made. First, a person has to become aware of the issue. The second crossroad is that the issue has to be interpreted as an injustice. The third crossroad is that the person needs to accept personal responsibility and then identify

possible choices for action (the fourth crossroad). The fifth crossroad is taking action and the sixth crossroad is sustaining action over time. Working together in small groups and encouraging one another to keep taking nonviolent action for justice (regardless how small or seemingly insignificant such action feels) will make each decision at each crossroad easier to face than working for change alone. This journey and the pathways to becoming a perpetrator or bystander are illustrated in Figure 5. The choices people make are critical. For better or worse, they transform the individual, the networks they are a part of, and the political context.



**Figure 5:** Thalhammer et al. The journey to becoming a courageous resister

Not for a moment do I want to suggest that any of this is easy. Committing to take nonviolent action for justice and peace is difficult ... and risky. But not taking action for justice and peace is also costly. A

few years prior to East Timor achieving independence I had a conversation with Rev Vasconcelos from the Evangelical Church of Indonesia in East Timor. Rev Vasconcelos became an outspoken leader of the nonviolent movement during the Indonesian government's occupation of East Timor. At the height of Indonesian military violence in 1999 he had to fake his own death in order to protect himself from militia groups searching for him. At the start of the conflict he supported integration with Indonesia because he thought that the Indonesian government would develop East Timor. When he saw that this did not happen he became 'neutral'. He did not become involved in the struggle for *merdeka* (freedom) because he thought it would be too risky, but then he realised that there is no path in life that does not involve suffering. Supporting the Indonesian government's claim on East Timor involved suffering. Staying 'neutral' also involved suffering as many people saw this as a decision to abandon his flock and support the occupation. Fighting nonviolently for *merdeka* also involved suffering. But not all suffering is the same. Echoing Bonhoeffer, Rev Vasconcelos told me that when you fight nonviolently for *merdeka*, your suffering is redemptive. He said that God uses it to transform the individual, empower communities, and build a better world. When he realised this Rev Vasconcelos became a nonviolent activist for *merdeka*. He became a courageous resister. If he had continued to do nothing he would have become a bystander. Worse, if he had supported Indonesia he could have become a perpetrator as pressure mounted on him to support militia violence in East Timor.

This same journey is being undertaken in West Papua. As MacLeod and Moiwend (2014, p. 182) observe:

Papuan religious leaders like Benny Giay, Neles Tebay and Sofyan Yoman have walked the path to becoming courageous resisters. So too are many political prisoners ... When Rev Benny Giay learnt he was on an Indonesian intelligence hit list he responded 'I cannot just sit there whenever children of the Lord are being abused or murdered. I have to stand up and fight for their rights and give voice to the voiceless.' People like Rev Giay

enlarge the possibility for others to cast off fear. Their courage transforms their political and social environment.

One final point about fear, there is a clear physiological response to feeling frightened: the heart rate increases, the mouth goes dry, breathing becomes shallow and adrenalin levels surge. The body can also react in other unpleasant ways. There are a number of tactical interventions that can help reduce physiological stimuli and therefore reduce individual experience of fear (see for instance Popović et al. 2007, pp. 156-159). Music can be used to increase morale and drown out intimidating noises like the beating of police batons on riot shields. Banners can be raised high to block out the site of armed troops. In addition to the points mentioned above in the section on tactical responses activists can articulate the reaction they are seeking and rehearse in order to maximise the likelihood of getting the response they want.

Humour can also be used to reduce the effect of fear. I recall, for instance, facing a phalanx of riot police on the barricades of the World Economic Forum in Melbourne in 2000. When the riot police appeared replete in black armour and helmets, visors down, advancing in unison while beating their batons on their shields, someone started to hum the soundtrack that was played in Star Wars films whenever the Storm Troopers and Darth Vader appeared. Others took up the chant. Suddenly the whole crowd was singing it. Many laughed and morale soared as we sang the music, positioning ourselves as Jedi Knights against the Evil Empire. The performance tapped into a powerful shared aural memory. We knew who we were and how the story would ultimately unfold. This helped people stand their ground and maintain nonviolent discipline.

## **Preparation and Planning to Build Movement Resilience to Repression**

Preparation and planning are essential ingredients for waging a military conflict. This is equally true for nonviolent struggles. I have already alluded to the importance of analysing the opponent's power and the dynamics of conflict, crafting strategies, and developing resilient movement structures that enable coordinated mass participation. Obviously this is an important part of planning and

preparation as well. In addition there are several other things that movement leaders can do to prepare citizens to wage nonviolent struggle against ruthless opponents.:

- *Creating secure information and communication systems.* It is particularly important that movements operating in repressive environments develop a sound security culture and behaviour. At the very least movements need to find ways to keep names, addresses, financial systems, and other sensitive information safe. There are a range of ways of doing this, including using code and different types of encryption. This is a rapidly changing field and it is beyond the scope of this article to assess different technological options. Securing information and communication does not mean operating in secret. Sharp (1973, p. 485) and Burrowes (1996, pp. 230-232, 235) argue convincingly that movements should not rely on tactics that rely on secrecy to succeed.
- *Undertaking risk assessments and devising safety plans.* Frontline Defenders and Peace Brigades International (PBI) have devised useful systems for assessing risks and developing personal and organisational safety plans. These can be developed in advance.
- *Engaging third party accompaniment.* Movement leaders can also make contact with organisations specialising in unarmed civilian protection. Groups like Nonviolent Peaceforce and Peace Brigades International use unarmed strategies of protective engagement, monitoring, capacity development and relationship building to protect civilians (Schirch 2006; Duncan et al. 2015). The evidence suggests that these strategies can be extremely effective, even working in places of extreme violence.

- *Building personal relationships with members of the security forces.* Advance contact with the opponent's security forces should be designed to reduce fears and counter any ideological conditioning intended to dehumanise the resisting population in the eyes of the opponent's troops, thereby making it harder for security forces to carry out brutal actions. This strategy functions to promote security force divisions and defection, encouraging security forces to refuse to obey orders and to come over to the side of the people. When there is significant social and cultural distance between the movement and opposition troops, movement leaders should cultivate links with strategic allies closer to the adversary who can take action to humanise the movement (Galtung 1989; Burrowes 1996, pp. 87-88; Thurber 2015).
- *Developing contingency plans.* For each tactic that might be subject to extreme violence it is important to have contingency plans in place. That might include having teams ready to supply first aid and document the opponent's violence.
- *Training.* It is vital that activists are trained in advance. Training needs to include ways to maintain nonviolent discipline in the face of provocation. This kind of training can also help select activists more able to maintain discipline in the face of extreme violence.
- *Advance media contact.* Movement leaders need to utilise the media and transnational linkages with external solidarity networks to expose the violent repression of nonviolent resisters. That requires cultivating relationships with mainstream and progressive media outlets and individual journalists and editors, ideally prior

to violent incidents, to ensure they understand the movement and are willing to do all they can to cover incidents.

## Conclusion

Nonviolent resistance movements, particularly those that confront an authoritarian opponent, will be subject to repression. That is virtually certain and leaders and activists need to prepare for it. Opponents seek to raise the costs of social and political struggle and rationally expect that movements will subside when those costs become high enough. The key test for movements will be their ability to persist in pursuing their social and political goals in the face of repression. The challenge is how to reduce the costs of persistence. Doing that requires wisdom and courage. Although casualties are likely, and should be prepared for, there is much that nonviolent activists can do to maximise the likelihood of achieving movement goals and minimising the cost of repression.

In recent years knowledge and experience of how to respond to extreme violence from opponents has grown considerably. This article has ordered that knowledge and experience from diverse sources into a systematic framework that is both theoretically robust and has clear practical applications. The features of this framework include building movement resilience to repression at the strategic, tactical, organisational and the individual levels as well as engaging in advanced preparation and planning. The strategic dimension involves careful analysis of the opponent's power and the ways they depend on ordinary people. This analysis needs to inform a plan that: increases the active participation of ordinary people; draws in new and diverse allies into the movement, particularly those from key social groups who can influence the opponent's behaviour; divides the opponent elite; and promotes moral outrage by activating 'backfire'. At the organisational level it is important that movements that face extreme violence create decentralised networks that are also structured in ways that support communication and coordination between the different nodes of the network. Tactically, there are many things that movements can do including maintaining discipline and developing repertoires of low-risk, high-participation nonviolent actions. At the individual level particular

attention needs to be placed on supporting fearlessness and mutual support in order to assist activists to move people along the pathway to become courageous resisters. These interventions also need to be supported by advanced preparation and planning which necessarily involves training and education, making advance contact with external supporters and a robust communications and information plan. Using West Papua as an example I have argued that applying this framework can even assist movements operating in worse case scenarios: a resisting population in an isolated area, far from local or international media and networks of support, who face an extremely ruthless opponent which views them as less than human.

Of course, there are also limitations of this research. Some movements have adopted many of the interventions discussed in the article. However, there is not a single nonviolent resistance movement that I am aware of that has systematically applied the entire framework to strengthen a particular struggle for positive social change. Neither is it clear how possible, or even likely it is, that movements would adopt the framework. This challenge partly goes to the nature of leadership, decision making, and diversity in social movements. How readily can the various component parts of the framework be generalised and adapted across culture, time and space, let alone integrated into a coherent policy and program of action?

If research into nonviolent resistance was funded as much as military research, a large-scale experiment could be devised to test the framework. Even so, the voluntaristic, diverse and ephemeral nature of social movements, not to mention the ethical considerations, would make such scientific and comparative research a fraught undertaking. However, willing partners may be found for a more limited effort. Indeed each of the five dimensions can readily be translated into a program of education and training. Some of this work has already been done. Brian Martin's backfire model, for instance, has already been translated into a Manual (Martin 2012). CANVAS in Belgrade, Training for Change in the United States, Peace Brigades International and Frontline Defenders of Human Rights have worked on parts of the framework, although no-one, that I am aware of, has looked at how the component parts might be integrated into a systematic, unified and coherent program of action, training and education. With a careful action learning design and a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process

the framework could be tested and refined. Although repression remains a persistent and tragic reality for many social movements there are hopeful signs that could support action learning. The phenomenon of civil resistance is becoming more prominent and more successful over time. Civil resistance as a field of research is growing and maturing. There are also many foundations and donors willing to assist nonviolent conflict transformation. Consequently a logical next step is to return to the field with a program of action research.

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# **Play, Politics, & the Practice of Resistance**

**Daniel Møller Ølgaard**

Do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable. It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force

(Foucault 1977: XII)

## **Prologue**

### **Politics are Fun Again**

It is a seductive and influential image of our contemporary world that Jean Baudrillard presents. In the transition from the modern era of manual production to the postmodern age of global information technologies, our world 'has been launched into hyperspace in a kind of postmodern apocalypse ... leaving us satellites in aimless orbit around an empty center' (Massumi 1987: 90). The substitution of reality with the signs and symbols that simulates reality means that everything is essentially empty, passive and without meaning. Art has become the art of pure reproduction of signs that may tease but never disturb order (Kellner 1989: 109-111). And politics has lost its antagonistic dimension as critique of those-in-power merely 'dignifies power's claim on reality' rendering the practice of resistance 'an unending, self-regenerating, tautological spiral' (Fardy 2012: 185). But there is also another image of our world floating around today. During the last decade or so, rather than a state of apathy,

we have witnessed the creation of a worldwide movement against neoliberalism [and] a continuous wave of riots, strikes, and occupations across the world, emerging with a frequency and intensity historically

unmatched since the last great social movements of the 1960s and 70s (Nail 2013).

Alongside this eruption, attention has returned to the role of aesthetics in the study of international politics (Bleiker 2001) and specifically how art ‘comes to situate itself’ in framing the debate on the interplay between ‘art, politics, and resistance’ (Jabri 2006: 819). We might still formulate powerful forms of critique today through aesthetical experience and creative forms of expression (Harrebye 2013). As Žižek (2005) asks: ‘Is not precisely the ‘postmodern’ politics of resistance permeated with aesthetic phenomena’ showing to us ‘the aesthetico-political ... at its purest?’ (79).

It certainly seems so as movements such as the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, Occupy Wall Street and Reclaim the Streets are reconfiguring the face of radical politics in the recent decade, preferring ‘mocking satire and feather dusters’ to ‘guns and sticks’ (Sharpe 2009: 181). They ask how ‘social movements combine live performance with guerrilla tactics in an effort to find agency’ (Shawyer 2007: 153), promoting a form of resistance that utilizes the signs and symbols of art for the very practice of critique. Baudrillard claims they pacify. In a sense, it is a revival of Situationism, a political movement founded on Guy Debord’s critique of late capitalist society, one of whose defining members held that to ‘work on the side of delight and authentic festivity can hardly be distinguished from preparing for a general insurrection’ (Vaneigem 1965: 25). More importantly though, this aesthetic move marks an epistemological turn for political resistance by recognizing Rancière’s observation that politics ‘revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak’ (Rancière 2004: 13). Thus, to ‘enter into political exchange, it becomes necessary to *invent the scene* upon which words may be audible, in which objects may be visible, and individuals themselves may be recognized’ (Rancière & Panagia 2000: 115). The political promise of the aesthetic move of resistance is thus to enable the ability of art and creative expression to *invent* and *embody* a space where critique can be spoken, enacted, heard, and seen (Harrebye 2013: 4), allowing politics to become fun again.

Based on this simple but central observation, I introduce the concept of *play* to describe the political potential of aesthetic forms of

protest today. I shall illustrate this choice with a brief excerpt from Greenwald's (2014) first encounter with Edward Snowden: Based on Greenwald's many years of journalistic experience working with whistle-blowers, Greenwald had expected a seasoned government employee in the autumn of his professional career and thus less afraid to risk it. The man he met did not look a day past 30. To address Greenwald's embezzlement, Snowden explained that he had mustered the courage to expose the National Security Agency by *playing* computer games. While often regarded as a meaningless activity, computer games had reminded Snowden that even the most powerless individual can fight injustice. It was in this sense an *act of play* that would bring Snowden to publish his material and, eventually, force the US administration to address their secret surveillance practices in public. With this story, I seek to highlight the relevance of examining the emancipative, and transformative, potential of playful activities; to make clear the need for an extensive analysis of playful action that moves beyond the traditional accounts of the activity as an act of pure simulation and fantasy. As the story and the earlier mentioned examples show quite clearly, playfulness, like critique, is also a way to intervene in a given reality through the invention of a new scene, and new possibilities for subjects to speak, show, see, and hear. Play is thus an aesthetic practice, and should perhaps therefore also be seen as a central element in politics. Rather than being merely a symptom of the victory of the simulacrum, this article puts forward the idea that *play* may serve as a template for investigating the political potential of creative protest action specifically and the interplay between aesthetics, politics, and resistance more widely.

In seeking the answer to this question, this also constitutes an attempt to engage with some of the wider issues in the study of the self, politics and resistance. Michel Foucault's work is central to this inquiry as it builds on a careful examination of historic practices and discourses that renders the modern self a docile body, subjected to the control of social institutions under the guise of increased measures of individual freedom and humanism (Foucault 1988; 1991). Yet, while much of Foucault's work shares Baudrillard's pessimism, one identifies in Foucault also a highly optimistic account of the possibility of autonomous action and self-determination (Foucault 1982, Rabinow 1997: 281-302). There must always be sites of resistance to dominant

schemes of power, he argued, and the task at hand was to locate these and to determine the most effective strategies and tactics for their practice. Ultimately, my argument seeks to challenge Baudrillard's dystopia and replace it with the possibility of a subversive ethics of political play.

## I.

### **The Ethics of Resistance**

#### **The Depoliticization of Politics**

I start out this inquiry by asking: How do we return politics to the subject, and what is the role of subjectivity, aesthetics and creativity in this process? To investigate these questions we must first come to understand the relationship between self and society, the subject and the political. How do human subjects come to be governed by politics, and more importantly, how do we take back agency and autonomy? In Foucault's analysis of modern society, the human subject moves, seemingly voluntarily, between institutions characterized as "enclosed, segmented space" in which "each individual figure is constantly located, examined and distributed" (Foucault 1991: 197). This *governmentality* constitutes subjects characterized by imposed as well as self-imposed control; a strategy that renders the subject a *docile* body in the face of its rulers. In addition to this disciplinary strategy of power aimed at the individual, biopower takes as its object of politics populations as such. In combining these forms of governance, modern liberal democracies are not only defined by disciplinary, punitive practices, but is just as much comprised of techniques aimed at monitoring the needs and increasing the life chances of its populations (Reid & Dillon 2009).

This increasingly global mode of governmentality renders the individual an object of various forms of control, and it disguises these globalized practices (such as war, imprisonment and torture) as paradoxically productive of life, with major consequences for how we are able to think ethically about the conduct of politics, war and society today (see e.g. Jabri 2010, Dillon & Reid 2009, Hardt & Negri 2004, Agamben 2005, Butler 2010). Instead of looking at systems of enclosure, Deleuze (1992) thus encourages us to investigate the 'the ultra-rapid forms of free-flowing control that replaced the old

disciplines' and how, within this crisis of the institutions of the modern era, we are constantly faced with emerging practices and discourses fluctuating between emancipation and control (Ibid: 4). Graeber (2009) e.g. shows how globalization of capitalism, rather than an emancipatory process that removes physical borders and battles inequality is 'the creation of the first genuinely planetary bureaucratic system in human history' (ibid: XI). The result is a democratic deficit that lies at the heart of the modern, liberal state, where politics is removed from the subject. By transforming the subject into an object of governance, representational politics becomes depoliticized in a sense. This is a global process where 'ideological visions ... who compete for power is replaced by a collaboration of enlightened technocrats' (Zizek 2005: 72). The emergence of this global mode of governmentality is 'the attempt [to] de-antagonize politics by way of formulating the clear rules to be obeyed' and thus prevent deliberative democracy to 'explode into politics proper' (Ibid:71).

Unveiling the present condition of politics shows to us the 'frontier possibility of self-determination' (Foucault 1989: 66). To Foucault, this frontier possibility is closely related to notions of *knowledge* and *truth* which 'defines the conditions of possibility ... whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice' (Foucault 1970: 168). Foucault himself often described this play of forces as so-called 'games of truth,' and it is the exact way in which games of truth establishes objective knowledge about subjects and society that allows for self-determination to be decreased and for politics to become, in turn, depoliticized. On the other hand, the way in which the self *plays* these games of truth can have a transformative effect on the configuration of society. How might we then more specifically understand the role the subject *plays* in them?

### **The Playful Subject**

'Games of Truth' is Foucault's concept for describing the ways in which the self is at once a subject and an object of discourses of knowledge and practices of power. The self is not only subjected *to* power as an object of knowledge or practices of control, it is also always the subject *of* power/knowledge. There 'is no subject that is already formed,' and in this sense 'the self is not only a constant *beginning* but also a constant *end*' (Ball & Olmedo 2013: 87). In fact, the

real basis of the self is its role as both agent and object (ibid). It is this constant divide of the self as at once governed by others and governing itself that leads Foucault to the idea of ‘truth games’ where the position of the self in relation to others and itself is constantly renegotiated. The possibility of self-constitution and -transformation arises from the subject in the form of a constant *becoming-subject*; the subject being capable of having multiple subjectivities. As Foucault explicitly states in explaining his concept of truth games:

You do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfil your desires in a sexual relationship ... In each case, *one plays*, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself (Foucault 1997a: 290–291, emphasis added).

In the third and last volume of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* the concept ‘care for the self’ emerged. Foucault traces its origins all the way to the philosophy of the Ancient Greeks, who were among the first to express the fundamental principle in the governing of self and others in this way. To a human individual, whose dominant relation to society is that of subjectivity, the main problem is for the subject to ‘turn its gaze upon itself’ (Rabinow 1997: 29). One might thus characterize the care for the self as a way to redeem politics to the site of the individual though a constant process of self-reflection and critique rather than the search for an object of divinity. To truly understand this *art of life* as a practice of resistance we must depart from the traditional notion of self-formation, *sophrosyne*, that is grounded in an hierachical, aristocratic understanding of society (Bogue 1994: 7). While this form of self-regulation as envisioned in Ancient Greece was mainly aimed at people in power to become masters of themselves as to be able to become a pure ruler of others, in Deleuze’s account of Foucault, the *telos* of the constitution and formation of self is that very intimate internalization of power, whereby the inside and outside of the subject is united. This ultimately allows this playful self to utilize those power-relations one might see as exterior, dominant forces of control on to itself. In this way ‘the telos

[of self-constitution] which Foucault discusses in terms of self-mastery, virility, truth and aesthetics, becomes in Deleuze's reformulation a fold of freedom and aesthetic self-creation' (Ibid: 13).

What Deleuze here identifies in Foucault's ethical writings is the possibility of the self as the creative centre of an aesthetical practice of resistance. By considering the relation between the subject and the objects of "truth" through reflection and critique, the self utilizes experience and problematizes the very process of consensus: Objectification. This makes the role of the outside forces of rule and domination an internalization of force. Here, the self becomes the 'locus of resistance' (ibid: 14) whose thoughts 'thinks its own history' of experience in order to 'liberate itself from that which it thinks' and to be able to finally 'think otherwise' about its own possibilities and limits (Foucault 1984: 127). To Deleuze, this desiring, creative self is essentially 'one that is anarchic, rather than aristocratic, conceived of as a mode of resistance to asymmetrical power relations rather than an integral part of such' (Bogue 1994: 20-21).

## **Ethics, Desire, & Creativity**

As *control*, to Foucault, is nothing more than a strategy, a set of techniques, practices and discourses, so resistance, rather than a moment or an event, is a continuous practice that depends partly 'on the way of life (ethos) we somehow choose for ourselves' (Chokr 2006: 13). Thus, Foucault 'privileges localized struggle ... and ongoing resistance to the minutiae of domination over grand emancipatory projects that endorse totalizing visions of social transformation' (Tobias 2005: 68). Because the self is at once the subject and object of power relations, it follows that it is the self that is also the site of resistant practice. This relocates the politics of resistance away from the organizing principle of representational politics and towards the individual. Cook (2013: 976), based on a Foucault reading, thus claims that since modern governmentality makes us 'prisoners of certain conceptions of ourselves and of our conduct', the aim of any strategy of resistance is to 'liberate our subjectivity, our relation to ourselves', which requires attacking the roots of the political rationalities that define power relations and which result in modes of individualization, totalizing visions and practices of control. This 'epistemological' understanding of resistance fosters a strategy of constant transgression

of established ‘truths’; interventions that forces reflections on who and what are excluded from this ‘truth’ (Pickett 1996: 448). Resistance is, as such, the constant refusal of consensus.

Foucault linked this understanding of resistance to the Deleuzian concept of ‘desire’ in his preface to Deleuze & Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* (Foucault 1977). Here, ‘desire’ means to ‘embody the power of differential reproduction or becoming-other which is the condition of creativity’ (Patton 2000: 69-70). As such, change is brought out by shifts in the configurations of desire in a given society and as such, *desiring-production* emerges as a central feature of political resistance. Three things are central in understanding desiring-production:

- (1) There is no subject that lies behind the production ...
- (2) the “desire” in desiring-production is not oriented to making up a lack, but is purely *positive*. Desiring-production is autonomous, self-constituting, and creative ... [and (3) desiring-production] does not connect “with” reality, as in escaping a subjective prison to touch the objective, but it *makes reality* (Stanford Encyclopaedia 2012)

The main point in combining Deleuze and Foucault is to understand how the concepts of desire and creativity are both relevant to understanding how the subject can actualize its political agency through an ethics of resistance. What Deleuze explicitly states is that this creative principle of desiring-production is fundamental to the human subject, and thus conditions the role of the self as the central site of resistance. Instead of merely constituting new forms of political representation, what is central to this notion of resistance is to focus instead on how the subject continuously seeks to actualize its desires through creative, aesthetic experience and production. Here we approach the final point I wish to make; in the current assemblage of modern, liberal societies, acts of resistance must be regarded as a way of life, an ethos, or continuous practice. Opposed to the view of neoliberal governmentality, or post-politics, as an all-pervasive, inescapable condition of politics today, resistance understood as ethics highlight a subject that *acts* in spite of its claimed docility. Since the human subject is already and always part of certain games of truth, it is

the way in which it participates in them that determines their outcome. It must act not to understand and define its role in the world *as is* and achieve freedom as a condition, but must seek constantly to imagine and create alternative realities, the very act of which enables the subject to continuously connect its desire to these and actualize it as a practice of resistance. Central to this ethos is continuous critique, self-reflexivity and creativity.

This, we might certainly characterize as an ethics of resistance. For as the self-constituting, desiring subject *plays* games of truth through critique, reflection, and creative desiring-production it might also come to play them in an emancipatory way. These include the direct refusal of domination and control; critical, reflexive thought where the self comes to realise its own role in these very practices; and lastly, the concrete search for an alternative reality, which Deleuze calls *desiring-production* understood here as the creative, aesthetic constitution of a different 'reality'. While few have dwelled much on the notion of this playful self, I shall now explore the perpetual interplay between play and politics and contextualize them along the categories of subjective resistance identified on the preceding pages. The following chapter is divided in two parts: The first part paints a thematic, historical and theoretical overview, and the second zooms in on contemporary political protest movements.

## II.

### Play & Politics

#### Play, Culture and the Disruption of Order

In the late 1930's, Johan Huizinga described the human species as *Homo Ludens*, or *Man, the player*. Where traditional theories of play 'start from the assumption that play must serve something which is *not* play, that it must have some kind of biological purpose' such as 'training of the young creature for the serious work that life will demand later on ... an exercise in restraint [or] the necessary restorer of energy wasted by one-sided activity,' Huizinga defined play in- and by itself as the formative element of human culture; 'a special form of activity [with] a social function' (Huizinga 1949: 97-98). Play 'only becomes thinkable and understandable when an influx of *mind* breaks

down the absolute determinism of the cosmos' and bursts 'the bounds of the physically existent' (ibid: 99).

As humans 'recognize that the other individual's and its own signals are only signals' play also functions as a form of non-verbal communication (Bateson 2006: 315). As opposed to automatic behavioural response, this realization allows for signals of communication to be 'trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, amplified, corrected, and so forth' by its participants (ibid). When engaging in play, humans (and animals) have the ability to separate real fighting from playful fighting, and play as a form of meta-communication thus happens beyond the spoken word and thus reveals itself as a context that allows for new cultural possibilities to continuously be explored by facilitating an 'open' setting that is not determined by the structure of language (Henricks 2011: 162).

### **The Fictional Capacity of Play**

Caillois (2006) derived claim is that play as an ideal type must be defined as a *free* practice; the role of play is to remove the masks we wear, and to put the secret out in the open for everybody to see. Play, as opposed to games and ritual, is free in the sense that it has no defined outcome or sacramental function, no set rules of conduct and no pre-existing dogma that conditions its manifestation:

A game which one would be forced to play would at once cease being play ... As an obligation or simply an order, it would lose one of its basic characteristics [namely that the] player devotes himself ... of his free will ... each time completely free to choose retreat, silence, mediation, idle solitude or creative activity' (ibid: 125)

As such, playfulness is as an example of the open, 'order-breaking eruptions of collective imagination' (Henricks 2011: 159). In play 'people themselves control the course of events; in ritual, they subordinate themselves to otherness' (ibid: 163-164). It is this playful, creative impulse which 'has been critical to processes of societal self-consciousness and renewal throughout history' and which defines subjects 'as active explorers and negotiator of societal possibility' (ibid: 162) rather than docile bodies. Play allows for open-ended explorations

of new social and political possibilities; a social process of ‘critical inquiry’ focused on creativity and dialogue rather than mastery (Morris, Rorabaugh, & Stommel 2013).

Fiction is not only a valuable source for investigating the playful elements of human culture and society, it also illustrates how ‘imagining utopia’ is an intensely political act that allows for one to imagine alternative realities (Koh 2014). Edward Said emphasized the importance of the banned comics of his childhood in ‘its untidy, sprawling format, the colourful, riotous extravagance of its pictures ... exotic creatures and adventures’ (Said 2001: Preface). The strength of the genre lies in its playful approach to challenging cosmic order and breaking the rules of a perceived reality, they ‘say what couldn’t otherwise be said ... defying the ordinary processes of thought, which are policed, shaped and re-shaped by all sorts of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures’ (ibid). The absurdity of specific works of visual art such as comics are thus excellent examples of the playful element of creative forms of expression in which ‘techniques of comedy, metaphor, heightened imagery, fantasy and so on are used to break down our conventional, habit-dulled certainties about what the world is and has to be’ (Koh 2014). It is this playful element of culture which ‘create[s] a space for a world to be imagined differently ... which can be one day translated into reality’ (ibid). This form of playful production ‘move[s] from the sheer criticism of the existing state of things [to the] projection of how dominant social structures could be changed’ (Desczc 2004: 32). In this way, play becomes a prefigurative intervention where imagination and fantasy is connected to a form of creative production.

A different take on the potentiality of playful activity emerges from playing computer games. Historically, the human species have been fascinated with trickery and the magic of personal transformation; we ‘wish to attach ourselves to images or resemblances of idealized personages and to draw from them their powers’ (Henricks 2011: 162). Thus, the political relevance of *mimicry* as a playful activity ‘refers to the obsessive desire of humans to escape the boundaries and limitations of their own selfhood’(ibid) and to turn around or play with notions of what the self can and must do in a given society. Today, computer games such as the widely popular Grand Theft Auto (GTA) allow a high degree of self-determination and the ability to act out for the

player – often in an extremely violent and norm-defying fashion. This *ludic* logic of play removes the need for predefined structures, and allows personal experience to influence the course of action. Yet, in addition the game also allows for the player to act out a *memetic* desire for ‘otherness’. In *Grand Theft Auto*, in most cases, one plays a character that is wildly different from oneself and thus allows for the exploration of new (political) possibilities – to act out *difference* (Duncombe 2007: 56-59). Playing games in this way can have a transformative political effect when, as Harper puts it, ‘the right games are played in the wrong way’ (Harper 2009).

An example of playing a game ‘the wrong way’ emerged during the 2009 riots in London where the police utilized a method for exhausting protesters known as the ‘kettling’ method whose tactic is to encircle peaceful protesters and refuse to let them go. *Metakettle* quickly emerged as a form of counter-action aimed at continuously changing the movement of protesters to prevent any surrounding by the police. In practice, one shouts ‘Metakettle’ to start the game, participants then start shouting animal names to form a team. Protesters gain members to their respective groups by entirely encircling them, creating an indeterminate pattern of movement inside the surrounded group of protesters, which makes it difficult for police to enforce the kettle and distracts protesters from feeling detained. *Metakettle* can be understood as a form of action

designed to appropriate a particular situation and playfully turn it around. It is carnivalesque play at its best —an appropriation of a situation turned into the absurd through play that shows a political interpretation of the situation in which it is played (Sicart 2014: 74-75).

These cheats, toys and tricks can all be utilized by the playing subject to ‘facilitate an epistemic moment beyond the seduction of playing tricks and gaming’ (Charmante 2007). The use of absurdity and comic appropriation is political when the subject playfully subverts its present condition, reformulates the possibilities of action and oneself itself differently. The fictional capacity of play adds an extra element to this, as it allows oneself to move from criticism to the projection or imagination of concrete alternatives. But it is the performative capacity

of play, to which we shall now turn, that realizes this political potential to the fullest.

### **The Theatre of the Everyday**

For centuries, theatre has been a cultural activity aimed at entertaining the public. One thing that is especially noteworthy - Shakespeare is one of the earliest and most well-known examples of this - is the role of the clown fool in dramatic performance. In most traditional accounts the fool is seen as a mechanism of social control – a laughing stock meant to exemplify the unwanted consequences of undisciplined, untrustworthy behaviour (as in Bergson 1914). Yet, in Shakespearean plays, the importance of the fool is its wisdom-in-folly (Asimov 1970). Exactly because the fool stands simultaneously on the inside and the outside of power, both alien and recognizable to society and their sovereign ruler, the clown-fool ‘operates as antirulers’ (Amoore & Hall 2013). They offer to their spectators ‘sceptical, unencumbered viewpoints that scorn pride and challenge such concepts as logic ... and solution’ (Janik 1998: XIV). Just like *metakettle*, the clown-fool playfully appropriates situations and facilitates a new political interpretation.

It should be no surprise then that throughout history the clown-fool has served as a medium for subaltern, dominated social groups to foster and inspire resistance. In pre-civil-war North American slave communities, the Brier Rabbit tales tells of how the ‘clown-trickster’, in this case a seemingly inferior rabbit, uses cleverness and trickery to outsmart and defeat its apparently superior enemy, the wolf (Scott 1990: 163). It is hardly surprising that since these tales were fables elaborated by slaves and others under domination, the ‘position of the trickster hero and the stratagems he deploys bear a marked resemblance to the existential dilemma of subordinate groups’ (Ibid: 162-163). But these tales were not fables meant to conceal dissent. Most importantly, the seemingly innocent stories of the clown, trickster and the fool offered the subordinated groups a space where they could openly declare and idolize dissent. As Scott (ibid: 166) puts it

the heavy disguise [these tales wear] must all but eliminate the pleasure it gives. While it is surely less satisfying than an open declaration ... [it] carves out a public, if provisional, space for the autonomous cultural expression of dissent

As such, the clown, the trickster and the fool embodies a unique social and historical persona that has been allowed to speak truth to power - even under domination (Amoore & Hall 2013). Through techniques of mockery, laughter and trickery, those in power can be questioned and ridiculed *in public*. True to Caillois ideal of play, these stories can serve to demystify objects of truth and divinity and enable the spectators to engage in a reflexive process which exposes absurd, dominant power structures and persistent social order.

This cultural dynamic is perhaps most clearly embodied by the ancient tradition of the Carnival. Through its dense, chaotic web of intersubjective dialogue, the Saturnalia, commonly referred to as the carnival feast, emerges as a playful element of premodern human society that allowed for cultural expression and dialogue to grow, and to transform in non-predictive and non-manageable ways (Bakhtin 1981: 422). As Agamben reminds us, in every carnival feast

existing social relations are suspended or inverted: not only do slaves command their masters, but sovereignty is placed in the hands of a mock king ... who takes the place of the legitimate king. In this way the feast reveals itself to be above all a deactivation of existing values and powers (Agamben 2014: 70)

To play and take part in such public performances is to break the established rules, and continually explore the limit-possibilities of existence. To Augusto Boal, any form of cultural production is relevant only when it transgresses the division between the real and imagination (Boal 1992: 246-247). His 'Theatre of the Oppressed' was defined as a method for breaking down the barrier between the active actor and the passive spectator:

[Its] objective is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity, to change spectators into protagonists. [Thus, theatre] should be the initiator of changes the culmination of which is not the aesthetic phenomenon but real life (ibid: 245).

Theatre has nothing to do with its buildings or stages. Rather, it 'is the capacity, this human property which allows man to observe himself in action, in activity ... It allows him to imagine variations of his action, to study alternatives' (Boal 1995: 13). Through the playful engagement of its spectators the 'Theatre of the Oppressed is theatre in this most archaic application of the word [where] all human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!),' and cultural production and performance can thus 'help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it' (Boal 1992: XXX).

Where ritual has a defined outcome, playful activity, such as Boal's theatre, seeks to constantly redefine and renegotiate this very outcome. It is thus intensely political. By using humour, irony or comic appropriation, one mocks and subverts practices of domination or questions figures of authority. In addition, one observes and acts simultaneously and thus reflects on one's relation to the surroundings. And by using fantasy and imagination, one prefiguratively forms alternative realities.

### **Memes, Masks, & the Politics of Imagination**

To develop these points further, I analyse four specific cases of contemporary protest movements. These are: *Reclaim the Streets* (RTS); *The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army* (CIRCA); *Occupy Wall Street* (OWS); and finally *Adbusters*. While they all demonstrate playfulness through techniques of performing, clowning, mimicking, and mocking they are also clearly politically antagonistic as their actions are carried out with reference to conditions deemed abominable. While critical voices commenting on these movements have characterized them as, essentially, senseless (New York Times 2011a) I argue, in pointing to the playful elements of their political action, that they should be valued based on their ability to display an *excess* of senses and desires, the

potentiality of which is realized through their public manifestation in the gaze of a global audience.

On the preceding pages we identified three categories of playful action, which correspond to the three levels of resistance established in chapter I. These are *comic appropriation*, *performativity and the mimic and play of self*, and *prefiguration*. To elaborate these categories further I ask: Where and with what (political) effects do we identify these playful elements of political action in the protest sensibility of contemporary resistance movements? While certainly much is still to be said about the political objectives of these movements, keeping the aim of the article in mind, I shall focus here exclusively on the political effects of resistance understood specifically as a practice; focusing primarily on methods, tactics and strategies rather than ideological content.

### **Comic Appropriation**

On July 4th, 2005 at the G8 summit in Edinburgh it was a surprising sight that met the massive formations of riot police who had hours earlier removed large groups of rioting protesters by the use of force: They were facing a group of protesters dressed as clowns, known as the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA). The atmosphere was tense. In a surprising turn of events, one clown-trickster suddenly started kissing riot shields vigorously, repeating the act on the entire front line of disciplined and uniformed police men. The act changed the atmosphere and created obvious confusion with a number of shared nervous smiles and a sense of disbelief – with clowns and police both (Bogad 2010: 182). At the same G8 summit, clowns and policemen were again caught in a stare off when suddenly

[a] pair of clowns dressed as cops ... start to count down – ‘Five, four, three, two, one – go!’ The (real) police and clowns rush towards each other ... There is a floating moment of confusion and then they run into each other’s open arms – clowns hug cops, cops hug clowns (Cultural Hijack 2013).

The symbolic effect is obvious – and so is the political. Through childish, naive behaviour that questions social roles and political structures which are usually predetermined and unquestioned, CIRCA’s

illogical playfulness becomes a critical artifice of subversion (Amoore & Hall 2013: 100). By kissing and hugging symbols of force, CIRCA clearly demonstrates the power of playful appropriation, showing that affection in the face of violence not only distorts and redefines hierarchies of domination and subjectification; it increases the space for protest (New York Times 2011b).

This playful logic is visible also in the global visual phenomenon of *memes*. The meme is a cultural object with obvious elements of humor and ironic appropriation. Characterized as “difference and repetition” it combines singular pieces of text and image in new ways and makes them visible through its online transmission, spread and continuous repetition (Bratich 2014: 65). One is the iconic meme “Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop”. It combines the image of a police officer using pepper spray against protesters and playfully appropriates it by adding the image of the officer to classical, iconic paintings or simply adding sarcastic, mocking text bits such as “don’t mind me - just watering my hippies”. In this way, memes transforms the context of the original image in order to emphasize the act it depicts. And it does so through humour, which demonstrates to us how comic appropriation promises to criticize indirectly by drawing readers’ attention to the absurdity of the act. In many ways, my understanding of the political effect of comic appropriation thus relates closely to Slavoj Žižek’s analysis of subversion through Sloterdijk. The meme is thus

the popular, plebeian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm [used] to confront the pathetic phrases of the ruling official ideology [and] to hold them up to ridicule, thus exposing ... egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power. [This] subverts the official proposition by confronting it with the situation of its enunciation (Žižek 1989: 29-30).

The playful, engaging and confronting nature of humour and comic appropriation creates a creative ‘culture of active defiance as an alternative to the everyday life experience of many people’ (Bogard 2010: 180). Through techniques of humour and comic appropriation, these forms of playful political action thus questions, resists and in turn

redefines practices of detainment that are *directly* aimed at them and thus turns any attempt to render protesting subjects as objects of control on its head.

### **Guerrilla Theatre & the Mimic Play of Self**

But these playful acts might also foster subjective reflexivity. After a road accident on Camden High Street, two men got out of their car and started fighting. But it was not real – it was all an elaborate part of a public performance which marked the first protest action by Reclaim the Streets (RTS). Following the accident and the staged fight, which took place on May 14, 1995, the debris of the collision had blocked the road, leaving it empty, while the fight had summoned a large crowd which started throwing themselves into dance as sound systems started playing the repetitive rhythms of rave (Blanco 2013). The protest action carried out here by RTS was the first in a long line of street party protests and a prime example of the political effects of public performance. What is important to note is that this was not a performance confined to its original stage, and to the members of the RTS. Its success rested on the way in which it engaged people who were passing by in a spontaneous fashion (ibid). Similar to Boal’s ideal of theater, this public display of frivolous activity melted together spectators (who observe) and actors (who act). It allowed for people, not only to observe the performance but also themselves. This process transforms the audience from passive on-lookers into active, self-conscious spectators; what Walter Benjamin described as the modern *flâneur* who shifts his focus from the scene to his own *relation* to the scene (Glenn 1998: 60). A clear example of this is seen in protests where participants dress up with masks or costumes; Occupy Wall Street (OWS) being the obvious case. These public performances not only engage spectators in a direct way but force them to reflect on themselves; they foster reflexivity, a *mimic* play of self, beyond the mere public display of bodies.

Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson were pioneers in determining the performative potential of mimicry. To them mimicry is tantalizing to its audience exactly because it displayed and ridiculed the mechanic, deterministic aspects of human nature (Freud 1938: 776, 782-783.). By pointing out these characteristics, one effectively un.masks and questions the very notion of a human “nature”. These public

performances are fostering creativity and self-reflection, creating new spaces for dissent. Dressing up or masking has an effect beyond merely ridiculing and laughing at that which one is protesting against. By e.g. mimicking billionaires, as in the Billionaires for Bush marches, you not only mock their role in society; you engage the spectator by provoking self-reflexivity, questioning his or her relation to that which is displayed. An important point to add is that these performances are not only aimed at their direct spectators. Their indirect audience, reached through the gaze of media technologies, is crucial to the potentiality of these creative tactics (Jabri 2006: 176). Just like Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' these public performances can be said to engage its audiences and force them to reflect on their own relation to the scene they establish. This adds a self-reflective, self-transformative element to the appropriative effects of e.g. *memes*.

This partly explains how an online meme posted by Adbusters could lead to the occupation of Zucotti Park in New York and beyond. OWS'

memetic character can be seen in its repetition as sign (fidelity via the term Occupy) and its variation (adaptation to local contexts, especially related to types of people, space, state alignments). Occupy could be used by anyone (Bratich 2014: 65).

This point was evidenced by the global spread of action under the OWS banner – in fact, the OWS itself sought partially to mimic the protests on Tahrir Square in Egypt. To restate an important point: In addition to my earlier points, it is the way in which it captures the global media gaze and effectively engages its subjects that the political potential of public performance and the mimic play of self lies. The space carved out for critique and self-reflection by the "guerrilla theatre" is not confined to its buildings and stages; as evidenced by the international spread of mimetic, performative protest behaviour; it is the global cry to engage in a reflexive self-consideration. The political promise of this proliferating play is that it forces the subject to confront the political enunciations on the stage, and thus in turn by its very doing so becoming a political subject itself.

### **Prefigurative Action**

In addition to appropriation of hierarchical structures as well as self-critique and –reflection, playful action offers a third political procedure - prefiguration. This perhaps most intensely political aspect of playful action works by “showing” rather than “telling”. The question is: How do you realize this so-called power of playful imagination? For imagination to become political it must also be public; it must manifest itself in the gaze of society. In meeting this ambition, I hold that the carnivalesque protest sensibility employed by OWS and RTS contains elements which bridge the gap between imagination and its actual realization by not only pointing to injustice, but *prefiguratively* intervening in the everyday logics of politics and society; understood as the attempt to embody those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that one wishes to see in a political practice (Boggs 1977). The political effects of this have already been identified through the actions of the AGM in Seattle in 1999, where protesters not only pointed out injustices but confronted them ‘in a way which demonstrated why the kind of social relations on which it is based were unnecessary’ (Graeber 2004: 84).

Reclaim the Streets (RTS) has a rich history of conducting what one might call *public interventions*; from street parties organized simultaneously with G8 summits as well as other political/economical fora meetings, to the impromptu creation of urban fountains and bricking up entrances to banks (Blanco 2013). By transforming an urban space from its conventional, productive configuration that allows for circulation without major disruption into a chaotic, unpredictable and altogether different assemblage of fountains, masquerades and frivolous play, they not only describe political and social alternatives to the status quo; they actualize them. RTS’ strategy of *prefigurative* intervention at major financial facilities, public streets or private companies not only subverts ‘the normative function of space through a kind of carnivalesque hacking’ but effectively ‘potentiates the re-programming of reality’ (St. John 2008: 172). This is a powerful political technique: RTS not only explains what kind of change they want to see, they *show* it for better or for worse.

The form of political activism pursued by OWS shares some of these features, albeit with a slightly different manifestation. In addition to the mimetic, carnivalesque characters of the marches performed under the “Occupy!” banner, in Zuccotti Park and many other places,

the protest movement also aims to create new types of societies. From setting up community kitchens to inventing ‘the human microphone’, the occupied ‘spaces of dissent’ were activated and became a political laboratory, where alternative forms of sociability were presented and played with. As one observer puts it, OWS effectively circumvented the traditional rules of representational politics and

seized public space ... to create its own form of direct democracy based on consensus decision-making, equality, and mutual aid. In societies that have failed [OWS has] decided to provide ... kitchens, libraries, clinics, and media centres open to everyone who needs them (Nail 2013)

Several observers have described the days where the occupation took place. While the accounts differ – with some criticizing and others celebrating it - what is central was that they fostered ‘experience’. Playful refiguration as exemplified by RTS and OWS enables the subject to actualize its desire, and to pursue a practice that demonstrates in very concrete ways the possibilities for the creation of an alternative practice of politics beyond the current ‘reality’. No matter if you were a direct participant in the events or not, the space the events created was still there and offered an experience of political and social change which words simply does not. By prefiguratively intervening in our everyday lives, they embody a scene where they are allowed to show, and where a public audience can see, the basic political objective at the centre of their struggle: the material and symbolic making and remaking of human society.

### III.

## Ethics, Aesthetics, Action

We have thus far identified and elaborated three dimensions of playful action that carries with them a political potential. In the face of practices of violence or control, we saw how comic appropriation emerges as a valuable tactic for resistance, subverting hierarchies and creating space for dissent action. Through performance and mimicry, the self is allowed to observe itself in action, so to speak, and to

critique and reflect on the relation between self and society. Lastly, fantasy and imagination proved a valuable platform for a prefigurative politics where one interrupts the status quo by showing rather than telling the change you want to see. The question we must return to is whether or not what I have argued thus far actually provides us with novel, new possibilities for formulating a politics of resistance. More specifically, does playful action, as envisioned here, finally break down the barrier between art and protest, and deliver on its promise of releasing the creative potential of the desiring subject into the arena of politics? To investigate these claims we start out by returning to the underlying premise of subjectivity and self-determination and ask the question: In this carnival, can the subject be claimed to *act* or even exist in any autonomous sense?

### **Totalitarianism, Liminality, and the Disappearance of Art**

As we have seen, playful forms of protest are characterized by the public explosion of signs and symbols which we are forced to confront. What quickly comes to mind when discussing the use of signs and symbols in a political context is propaganda – particularly that pursued by the Nazi regime in 1940's Germany. Lene Riefenstahl's cinematic depictions of these public spectacles demonstrate with utmost clarity the ways in which performative, aesthetic forms of action can become the basis for ritualistic and repressive politics (Zizek 2005: 77). The use of signs and symbols, and the aesthetico-politics demonstrated by the Nazi regime are excellent examples of the way in which a subjective politico-aesthetic experience becomes instead the mobilisation of a political movement towards totalitarianism; where the playful aesthetico-politics meant to re-politicize human society through the continuous practice of critique, self-reflection and prefigurative interventions, becomes instead a totalitarian, particular experience of the divine object of truth. One might certainly claim that in these public displays of totalitarianism, it is evident that the creative desire believed to make possible the liberation of self is recaptured by the use of the very signs and symbols through which playful forms of protest seek to actualize radical, political change. To Guy Debord, this logic rearticulates itself even in liberal societies today. The late-capitalist *Society of the Spectacle* is characterized by *commodity fetishism* where, relations are not social, but economic; and where the capitalist mode of spectacle uses the image to direct people's desires (Debord 1977). As

such, capitalism becomes a system not of freedom, but of spectacles aimed at the control of people's desires through the aesthetic experience of its very spectacularity. The question is if this element of totalitarianism is inherent to any aesthetic mode of politics and thus also to the practice of playful protest.

While media have been quick to pick up on the carnivalesque tension visible in many modern forms of protest, it is unclear to which extent it bears an actual political effect. To many, the subversive nature of the carnival reveals itself as a paradox where the 'purifying power of mutual honesty' does not in fact foster actual change, but ends up 'regenerating the principles of classification and ordering on which social structure rests' (Turner 1969: 180). In fact, Turner argues, 'nothing underlines regularity so well as absurdity or paradox [and] nothing satisfies as much as extravagant or temporarily permitted elicit behaviour' which means that the carnivalesque rituals of reversal merely 'reaffirm the hierarchical principle [by] making the low mimic (often to the point of caricature) the behaviour of the high' (Ibid: 176). As Žižek explains, while one might certainly envision that radical, emancipatory politics is practiced through the transgression or subversion of certain rules, paradoxically, these transgressions are possible only if we remain within the given reality, seeking merely to bend or change its objects of truth and 'endlessly "subverting" or "displacing" the power system' instead of replacing it (Žižek 2003). The desires and creative forces released during a carnival might in fact not create a process of political change in itself. In fact, it might rather become a singular outburst, an isolated space allowed to exist within the current condition of politics, where desires are allowed to manifest themselves momentarily as to prevent them from entering politics proper. The Russian thinker Anatoly Lunacharsky reminds us that maybe, the carnival is simply 'a safety valve for passions that otherwise might erupt in revolution' which allows dissent voices to 'let off steam in a harmless, temporary event' (Docker 1994: 171). In sum, the liminality, or temporality, of the carnival as a method of political action is definitely an issue of contingency here.

In *L'échange symbolique et la mort* Baudrillard approaches this problematic from the notion of the symbolic. Recalling an earlier point, to Baudrillard, while the modern era was defined as the era of production, the current postmodern mode of society is defined as the

era of simulation. This is the basis of his critique of the *postmodern* carnival of society which, while it has its joys, all too quickly becomes boring and repetitive. Rather than an autonomous, real entity, the body in the simulacrum is defined solely by the signs and symbols of society (e.g. beauty), and the Carnival, rather than bodies-in-play displaying their pure desire, is the subjugation to normalization. In this aestheticized, postmodern form of action, one does not act in any autonomous sense according to one's desires, one fashions oneself in accordance with the dominant values of society (Kellner 1989: 99-102). This is particularly visible when putting the role of art in politics under critical scrutiny. Where, previously, art was characterized by its embedded moral values which endowed 'its artefacts with a spiritualistic-anthropomorphic aura', arguably, the role of art in the era of simulation is that of mere representation and reproduction (ibid: 108).

Furthermore, as Steyerl (2011) explains, what used to materialize itself as an object or a product of art has now become a process in the form of a performance or an activity. This is a strong critique of forms of political action defined as an ethics of creativity. If creative forms of resistance are the norm, art becomes an enforcement of a certain aesthetic logic rather than a creative intervention (ibid). This identified ethos of creative political action might thus simply be a symptom of 'an overall aestheticization of politics' as ethical activity which challenges human autonomy in the way it makes impossible the claim to a moral object (ibid). One might thus argue that the aestheticization of political action turns it into a repetitive, endless self-performance, a constant sense of auto-display without any political goals or objects of change. This questions the emancipative potential of playfulness and emphasizes the temporal nature of playful activity by pointing to the liminality of the carnival, showing how the carnival maintains rather than challenges political and social hierarchies, all of which questions on a broader level the very notion of the possibility of a playful ethics as a catalyst for protest politics.

### **Simulation, Sublimation, & Playful Subversion**

We have thus far accumulated a series of critical inquiries: One questions the political, emancipative potential of playfulness understood as the realization of creative desire through aesthetics, and asks

if not totalitarianism is inherent to aesthetico-politics; one emphasizes the temporal nature of playful activity by pointing to the liminality of the carnival, showing how the carnival maintains rather than challenges political and social hierarchies; and one questions on a broader level the very notion of the possibility of aesthetics, creativity and art as a catalyst for emancipative politics today. Might one even imagine a creative, aesthetic politics of desire or that tends to these notions of totalitarianism, liminality, and normalization? As Jacques Rancière argues, aesthetics is not inherently totalitarian, but it is inherently political (Rancière 2004). My starting point will be the issue of *sublimation*; we must seek to understand how one might prevent the collective aesthetic realizations of desire from becoming a repression of the playful ethics of resistance.

The ethical process of psychoanalysis, knowledge of self-relations, requires the acknowledgement of finitude. This, to Lacan is the tragic problem of *sublimation*; that the subject's desire can never be realized because that which desire tends to is death (Lacan 1997). Yet, perhaps, the 'picture of human finitude [is] better approached as comic acknowledgement ... than tragic affirmation' (Critchley 2008: 78). In its use of mocking and comic ridicule, humour is a less heroic form of sublimation than Lacan's ideal of aesthetic beauty. This allows the subject to realize its finitude and laugh at it in the moments of its enunciation. Through a humorous sublimation of desire, the subject is allowed a space from which to observe and critically reflect on its actions. The sublimation of desire moves away from the manic, cruel suppression of the self towards a confident, critical, and reflexive ethics of self-knowledge. This allows for an aesthetico-politics separated from the capture of subjective desire by any object of truth. By approaching the sublimation of desire from a playful, appropriative sense of the comic, one might thus discover how desire can be realized without becoming repressive. The critical, reflexive work on the self is demanding, but playfulness and humour allow us to pursue it in a non-repressive way. This certainly supports the very possibility of playful political action which realizes subjective desire through an aesthetical experience or a process of creativity. This also reverses the issue of liminality. We cannot simply view these spontaneous, creative outbursts of desire in their singular manifestations; rather, we must view them as part of an ethical experience of subjectivity and creative desire which

allows the subject to continuously reclaim its autonomy through a politics of playful subversion.

But is the very problem not this transition from work (or object) to occupation (or process)? Does the endless pursuit of a political ethics of feather dusters and self-performance not mean that the practice of politics has become meaningless, repetitive and banal rather than thrilling displays of an alternative reality? The loss of the referent object in postmodernity has left us speechless, stuttering in the face of endless opportunities and the constant need for transformation and self-fashioning (Salecl 2011: 117-119). If art and thus also the aesthetics of politics today is empty and meaningless, as Baudrillard and Steyerl argue, does that mean we have to dismiss its political, transformative potential all together? Luckily, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari open a third way of aesthetic action in their philosophical approach to the simulacrum. There is more to simulation than copy or representation. To them, pop art, as a playful appropriation of signs and symbols, is the clear example of a form of

simulacra that have successfully broken out of the copy mold [in which] the multiplied, stylized images take on a life of their own. The thrust of the process is not to become an equivalent of the "model" but to turn against it and ... open a new space for the simulacrum's own mad proliferation (Massumi 1987: 91).

Baudrillard's concept of simulation does not replace the real; 'rather it appropriates reality in the operation of despotic overcoding' (Deleuze & Guattari 1977: 91). The simulacrum is not simply the loss of all meaning leading to a societal condition of emptiness in the lack of a referent object. Even in the postmodern simulacrum, autonomy has not disappeared. As pop art shows, through continuous appropriation, a 'point is reached where a now all-invasive positive simulation can turn back against the grid of resemblance and replication and overturn it' (Massumi 1987: 95). In the realization that simulations are more than copies or representations,

the simulacrum envelops a proliferating play of differences ... a logic capable of grasping Baudrillard's

failing world of representation as an effective illusion the demise of which opens a glimmer of possibility (ibid: 97)

Simulations are not the disappearance of the real; rather acknowledging the simulacrum is also acknowledging that one can, in fact, become realer than real. We are not simply doomed to total indeterminacy in the face of the totalitarian political symbols; a subjective, playful appropriation of “reality” provides the opportunity to turn the conditioning ability of the simulacrum back on itself. The aestheticization of political resistance, then, does not mark the total surrender to the totality of the political spectacle’s seduction, but interrogates it by adding friction to its seemingly slippery surface. This prevents the unproblematic global circulation of signs and symbols through a subversive ethics that playfully appropriates them and utilizes them in public, subjective imaginations of what politics might be.

Clearly, there are valuable and viable criticisms of the playful, aesthetic form of political action this article investigates. Certainly, there are ways in which it become meaningless, and where its political effect can be drowned in banality, repetitiveness and self-fashioning. Yet one should also not dismiss playful action entirely as an ineffective form of political resistance. While we ‘cannot know, we cannot control, we cannot govern the entire force of the global mind’ we must maintain, ‘we can master the singular process of producing a singular world of sociality’ (Bifo 2003). From the examination of playful forms of political resistance provided here, I argue that playfulness understood here as a subjective experience and subsequent aesthetic reformulation of politics provides a valuable platform for this. The continuous, subjective process in which one approaches the political through playful forms of action offers the subject the possibility to turn politics onto itself. In line with the ambitions of Spinoza and Nietzsche, playful politics thus represents a pluralistic method of action; an immanent mode of existence that replace the recourse to transcendent values; and where the search for a referent object of truth is replaced by an immanent ethics of playful difference.

## **Conclusion**

The present condition of politics presents us with major challenges. To reverse processes of depoliticization, to prevent the

subject from becoming an object of control and to relocate politics at the site of the subject, resistance must be formulated as ethics. This ethical definition of resistance must focus on forms of action that make visible and actualize the creative desires of the subject in the gaze of the public. Exploring the concept of play offers valuable additions to a formulation of how this might in fact be done. As I have shown, throughout history, through playful forms of action the subject may appropriate practices of domination and control, critically reflect on its own relation to society, and constitute new realities through the prefigurative acting out of its fantasies and desires. All three are intensely political engagements that demonstrate the emancipative potential of a playful understanding of politics. And to illustrate this, I have identified this potential in acts of resistance today. When CIRCAs dress up as clowns, they highlight the absurdity of police violence; RTS public performances encourages mimicry and self-reflection on a global scale; and OWS prefigurative interventions effectively connects the desires of a public ‘acting out’ to the possibility of an alternative future. Playful forms of political action are constantly challenging the established order of things, engaging people in large numbers and facilitating new political opportunities for change. We must disavow the wish for a politics of truth, and foster forms of action that celebrates its disappearance and the possibilities that ensue in relation to how we conduct ourselves as political subjects. A playful ethics of resistance offers the possibility of politics today. Continuously identifying and determining how the subject might continue to play is paramount for this possibility to flourish.

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## OBITUARY

# Narayan Desai: A Blissful Life of Total Revolution

**Matt Meyer**

*Coordinator of the War Resisters International Africa Support Network, and is a United Nations/ECOSOC representative of the International Peace Research Association.*

The 15 March 2015 passing of Gandhian educator Narayan Desai, as has been pointed out in numerous obituaries, signals the death of the last of a generation of elders who literally grew up with the “Mahatma/great soul” so often iconized as the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century saint. As the son of Mahadev Desai – Gandhi’s personal secretary, close friend, and biographer – Narayan was brought up in the Ashrams at Sabarmarti, Ahmedabad and Sevegram, and spoke often of his childhood experiences as a student of India’s founding father. Much of Narayan’s work did include retelling the high points of his youth and completing the work of his father, which he accomplished in part through the publication of several books. But it would be a vast mistake to freeze Narayan’s contributions to the shadow of his early years. The ninety-year story of Narayan Desai is a rich chronicle of resistance movements and radical campaigns, of organization and institution-building for nothing short of what he and others would boldly call “total revolution.”

The title of Narayan’s 1988 book aptly summarizes his feelings about the movements that would characterize his life: *Bliss Was It to be Young with Gandhi* (Desai, 1988). The slim and highly accessible volume relates his reminiscences and reveals some foundational experiences which would shape Narayan for years to come. An overheard conversation between his parents, for example, led Narayan to realize that both had decided they believed he was old enough for them to risk their lives in an almost certain-death scenario on the eastern border,

where the WWII Japanese army had been lobbing bombs into India. Gandhi's own opinions about how best to respond to the war had gone through several permutations, from not giving even moral support to the Allies because war itself makes criminals of all sides, to praise and support for the Polish armed resistance to Nazism, which Gandhi felt was futile but heroic.

Narayan reiterated, in *Bliss* as well as other sources, Gandhi's long-standing precept that resisting injustice violently was far better than not resisting at all – but also noted that Gandhi was working out an alternative nonviolent response. He vividly recalled the detailed response to foreign army occupation that his parents, under Gandhi's direction, were readying for:

“Beforehand, the would-be aggressors might be weaned from their intention by acts of good will and kinship, service, and a counterforce of love. During the invasion, unarmed volunteers would mass themselves at the border and offer themselves as cannon fodder, hoping to awaken the invaders consciences. If the aggressors pressed on into the country, they would be met by an entire nation that resisted them by such means as refusal to cooperate, or total boycott (Desai, 1988).”

Though the end of World War Two took place without the anticipated Japanese invasion of India and the need for his parents to prepare for their ultimate sacrifice, Narayan's father died of a heart attack in 1942 – several years before Indian independence and while still incarcerated with Gandhi. Following Gandhi's assassination in 1948, piecemeal attempts at building Gandhian constructive programs were developed by the *Sarvodaya* (Welfare of All) movement, led by Vinoba Bhavé and Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) and gained momentum throughout the 1950s and 1960s. JP in particular believed that people must be directly involved in all aspects of social change, and asserted that all the youth of the world should join together for total revolution – deciding for themselves what form of action they needed to take (Ostergaard, 1985). Deeply affected by JP's combination of Gandhian principles and militant political practicalities, Narayan Desai became a strong supporter of JP's total revolution campaigns.

Total revolution, in JP's conception, was made up of at least seven distinct elements within the larger project of radically

transforming society. These elements were: economic (including tradition class, natural, and moral components), political, social, cultural, ideological or intellectual, educational, and spiritual change. Without all seven components, JP concluded, the total revolutionary potential of a society could not be complete (Narayan, 1978). This overt mixture of Marxist and Gandhian philosophies began to forge a new, people's power approach to liberation theory (Girdner, 2013), and – as a core organizer in both the Boodhan land gift movement of the 1950s and a leader of the Shanti Sena Peace Army of the early 1960s – Narayan Desai became closely affiliated with these attempts at implementing revolutionary aspects of the nonviolent campaigns.

The work of Shanti Sena, building a highly disciplined peace force to stand up against actual military opposition, was the leading Indian version of an idea being taken up globally at the time. The founding of the World Peace Brigade (WPB), which took place in Lebanon over the 1961/62 New Year, saw Narayan as the youngest of the Indian delegates – but one who quickly emerged in a role far beyond that of liaison with the Shanti Sena. He traveled to Pakistan, the USA, Russia, England, Japan, and throughout Scandinavia in those early years; he had already visited youth colleagues in West Africa (Hare, 2008). The idea for a WPB grew out of discussions during a Triennial conference of the secular pacifist War Resisters International (WRI), and Narayan also came to work in those years with WRI Pan African spokesperson Bill Sutherland (who was now based in Tanzania), and with Vietnamese Buddhist leader Vo Van Ai (War Resisters International, 1969).

Out of these Indian and international experiences, Narayan compiled one of his earliest influential books – *Towards a Nonviolent Revolution* (Desai, 1972). In it, he laid down some basic thoughts on the nature of nonviolence training, including the inter-related aspects of work – community, field, and theoretical – which adherents must become adept in. The structures, curriculum, and schedules of peace schools, youth camps, and adult training sessions were all explored. They foreshadowed a conversation held years later at a 1983 meeting of the WRI Council. “Activists in the US didn’t seem to want to spend the time preparing for nonviolent actions,” recalled Joanne Sheehan, who was later to follow Narayan as a Chair of the WRI. I asked Narayan what he thought a proper length of time was for nonviolence trainings.

Narayan quickly responded, ‘I think 16 years is a good beginning!’ (Sheehan, 2015).” Training for nonviolent revolution was surely a life-long process.

By 1975, the post-Gandhian movement in India split along several lines. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, daughter of Gandhian disciple and first independence Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, had ruled for almost ten years, and though considered generally progressive by some she was also criticized for widespread corruption and continued militarism – especially in regards to neighboring Pakistan. JP, with Narayan Desai’s assistance, helped set up the Janata People’s Party – calling for Prime Minister Gandhi’s resignation and eventually winning the 1977 national elections against the Indian Congress Party. Though the victory was short-lived, as the leftist coalition government itself divided into a number of factions, it signaled the potential power of a mobilized, politicized, and strategically flexible population. Upon JP’s death in 1979, Narayan returned to Gujurat province and set up the Institute for Total Revolution that would seek to systematize the trainings and consciousness necessary for multi-faceted social change. The idea that nonviolence and total revolution were essentially ways of life was reiterated in Desai’s *Handbook for Satyagrahis* (Desai, 1980), written as a manual for volunteers of the Total Revolution programs.

“The [Institute for Total Revolution],” Narayan explained, “signified not the achievement but the aspiration” and should be understood as a counter-point to the “total crisis that the society was facing (Hare, 2008, pp. 23-24).” With Narayan’s wife Uttara serving as the informal administrator of the Institute, Narayan was able to concentrate on teaching and leading seminars – one or more daily – and to lead short-term training camps which would be held on the grounds. Student enrollment and course work was completely individualized; people would come to learn, stay for the time they could, and create (with the on-sight teachers) the course of study that would suit them best. Teachers and students would together decide and create the curriculum, duration, and level of study – and embark on the work cooperatively. From the outset, Narayan and Uttara Desai also decided that the Institute would accept no money from any Indian governmental agencies, nor from foreign aid organizations. Their small budget was entirely raised through local contributions.

In 1981, picking up where WPB had left off and taking inspiration from the Shanti Sena movement. Narayan helped found Peace Brigades International (PBI), which began its tenure as a hand-on, grassroots solidarity mechanism for the Central American movements in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Ultimately expanding work to include Sri Lanka, Haiti, Colombia, the Balkans, Mexico, Kenya and beyond (Peace Brigades International, Retrieved 2015), PBI continues to work as an unarmed interventionary force inserting itself in conflict situations. Serving for some years as PBI's Director, Narayan used these opportunities, in the words of PBI International Secretary Mary Link, "to bring Gandhian nonviolence to the next generation and those younger than us as well (Link, 2015)."

In 1983, Narayan joined the Council of the War Resisters International, working closely with WRI former Chair and Indian artist and writer Devi Presad. Together they urged the WRI to hold their triennial conferences somewhere in the developing world – harkening back on the work Narayan and others had focused upon two decades before. With some difficulty, and ultimately due to the promises made by the two of the tremendous work they would put into it, the 1985-1986 WRI Triennial (held over New Year's Eve) took place in Vedcchi with the Institute as host and sponsor. Calling that conference "one of the highlights of the Institute's success," Narayan noted that representatives from thirty-two countries and six continents were in attendance, with greater Asian participation than at any previous WRI proceeding (Hare, 2008). Three year later, Narayan was elected Chair of the WRI, and continued working with the organization for twenty-five years until the next time WRI held a major conference in India, in Ahmedabad in 2010. By this time Narayan had been selected Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith, the Ahmedabad-based university which Gandhi himself had founded in 1920. Again serving as host for the WRI conference, Narayan's focus on radical work within the so-called developing world remained undeterred – and that conference brought together significant delegations from Africa and Latin America as well.

Perhaps the most significant project Narayan embarked on as WRI Chair was a 1991 tour of eleven Latin America countries, sponsored by Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAZ, the continent-wide nonviolence network founded by Nobel peace laureate Adolfo Perez

Esquivel). The points of unity and collaborative possibilities uncovered by the coming together of these coalition-building giants helped set a course for international peace work for years to come. With direct communication, it became clear that there was fertile ground for strong cooperation and that – as Narayan put it, “We must share much more of our experience...and we will find not only many things in common but also understand our problems much better than what we can in isolation (Meyer N. D., 1991).” Organized as a bilateral, mutual exchange program, the three months of conversations exploded a number of myths that Desai had been prepared for, including that Latin Americans would not be interested in Gandhi or nonviolence *per se* (only “relentless persistence” as the Brazilian peace and landless movement put it). The need for greater South-South work came into even sharper perspective for him, as did the more substantial differences between the movements of the North and South.

As Narayan stated:

“A sort of violence which is not generally perceived in the west is the structural violence of the society. During the past years, many Latin American countries have seen political change from dictatorship to so-called democracy – that political change has not satisfied most people and they want deeper change. And they associate that deeper change with Total Revolution...The exploitation, the colonization, the insults, their dignity being attacked is something that they thought was violence much more than the killing of a few people here or there...We in the South have so many things in common and yet know so little about each other...I always begin: ‘My objective is south-to-south dialogue’... and they say ‘That is exactly what we want.’ (Meyer N. D., 1991).”

An international nonviolence training for trainers, dominated by Western European and US trainers, led Narayan to call for a distinctly Southern trainers gathering, which took place in Vedcchi in 1993. The following year, WRI as an entire network held their Triennial in Brazil with Perez Esquivel as a speaker, deepening the ties with SERPAZ that Narayan had established. At the 1994 Brazil Triennial, a WRI Africa Working Group was formed to focus more consistent and intentional work with nonviolence leaders on that continent. A second Southern Trainers gathering took place in Thailand in 1996, and in the same year a WRI-influenced International Conscientious Objectors Movement

conference took place in the central African nation of Chad, bringing together elders such as Bill Sutherland and new peace practitioners from central and West Africa (Sutherland, 2000).

By the time the 2010 WRI conference took place in Ahmedabad, Narayan Desai had completed two major projects which occupied most of his life and time since the turn of the new century. The five-day “Gandhi Katha” was a public rendering of the Story of Gandhi, using music, pictures, and Narayan’s detailed reminiscences and analysis. Though well into his 80s, Desai’s passionate energy for the topic and extensive teaching skills made the long event a much-acclaimed must-see production through Gujarat, India, and much of the world. Over the course of ten years, from 2004-2013, Desai performed the Katha well over 100 times in at least three languages (The Times of India, 2013). Perhaps even more impressive was the completion of his father’s life-project, authoring a comprehensive biography of Gandhi that would serve both as a whole life overview as well as an insightful text looking deeply into the contradictions and controversies taken on by “the great soul.” The four-volume, 2300 page *My Life Is My Message* (Desai, 2009) is nothing short of an attempt to provide a loving, careful, and comprehensive look at the life of a man revered by so many.

The WRI Ahmedabad conference was also noteworthy for the concluding message that Desai gave to the gathering. Reiterating many themes that he had long shared, his emphasis was on the ways in which total revolution and satyagraha in particular were often misunderstood and limited, especially in their international applications. Too often defined only as “soul force” and practiced as a quasi-religious ritual, satyagraha was not only meant by Gandhi to describe “truth-force” but also to assert “love-force” and the transformative, revolutionary power of love (Ndura, 2013). In addition, WRI Ahmedabad saw the earnest beginning of another of Narayan’s long-standing visions which became reality at Cape Town, South Africa’s City Hall in 2014: the development of a major revolutionary nonviolence network and WRI conference in Africa (D’Almeida, 2014). Desai’s vision of South-South cooperation building a force for total revolution was bearing tangible fruit.

“At least three generations of Indians benefitted” from Narayan Desai’s unique work and perspective, noted National Alliance of

People's Movements leader and Saathi of the Association of India's Development Anand Mazgoankar, himself one of the key organizers of the 2010 conference. "He travelled around the world, absorbed the best that he saw everywhere, and in that way enriched his repertoire." (Mazgoankar, 2015)." International Peace Research Association Nonviolence Commission convener Vidya Jain, who also directs the Centre for Gandhian Studies at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, India, added that Narayan Desai had become a living legend among Gandhians in India, admired and loved in part because of his life-long practice but also because "in spite of his old age, he has continued to regularly hold training camps for the youth." As Jain noted: "all peace scholars across the globe salute him (Jain, 2015)."

Beyond the Global South, Narayan Desai's life and work has inspired leaders in a multitude of ways. WRI Chair Jørgen Johansen, a Scandinavian total resister who followed Desai at the helm of the WRI, noted that Narayan's near-constant spinning of cotton became the symbol of total revolution for him. Johansen was able to observe firsthand "the combination of constructive work and political activities which were for many years in good balance (Johansen, 2015)." US pacifist and Socialist Party leader David McReynolds, also noted Narayan's undeniable influence. Though Narayan was "remarkable in many ways," it was his bliss and love of life, and the ways in which he developed his own community in Vedecchi decades after Gandhi's passing, which most struck McReynolds: "His smiling face remains with me: a man whose village shoed what could be done, who could give a glimpse of the alternatives which are possible (McReynolds, 2015)."

Narayan Desai's well-lived life – as a devoted satyagrahi and Gandhian disciple, as a devout revolutionary organizer and theoretician, as a decorated educator and story-teller, as a much-quoted author and coordinator of international organizations – helps lay a foundation for the much-needed conceptual reinvention of both revolution and nonviolence. Though Narayan's mortal body is now gone, the ideals for which he stood must surely live on. Perhaps now is the time to build an International Institute for Total Revolution, which incorporates an increasing number of indigenous ideologies and practices, including feminist and transgendered non-binary ways of looking at the world and at ourselves. Building on the diverse work of Narayan Desai, we could begin to re-imagine and reconstruct a truly revolutionary praxis.

With a sense of hope and even bliss, such a revolution might indeed be total.

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## BOOKREVIEWS:

### **Shaazka Beyerle; *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice*, Lynne Reinner, 2014**

Focusing on citizens initiatives against corruption, Beyerle's book brings a refreshing new perspective to the study of civil resistance and nonviolent action, and how to counter this particular type of misconduct from the bottom-up. Beyerle's more than seven case studies from Afghanistan, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Italy, Korea, Uganda and elsewhere add deep insight into how grassroots initiatives can be organised and performed in campaigns that blacklist corrupt politicians, monitor development projects or organise citizens to protect an anti-corruption institution, as done in Indonesia. The case studies include many concrete examples of practical campaign tools, such as the "zero-rupee" note from India, useful to hand over to civil servants asking for an extra "fee". Each case is systematically structured with a description of the case and its context, the campaign attributes, outcomes, case analysis and lessons learned.

The book expands our knowledge about how to use nonviolent direct action against non-state actors, such as the mafia in Italy. By including examples from both democracies and dictatorships, Beyerle also reminds us that the logic of nonviolent action remains the same under varying circumstances. She is convincing in showing how monitoring authorities suspected of misconduct can be a useful for disrupting systems of corruption and convincing those not wedded to graft to switch loyalty. This is a method not usually included in the repertoire of nonviolent action.

The two concluding chapters focus on the lessons learned and the implications for internationals aiming to support anti-corruption work. The first would have been more interesting with a longer discussion drawing more on the case studies, while the latter is thorough and highly relevant, especially since Beyerle's work is a documentation of the effect that citizens' agency can have. There is no point in waiting for the "right" conditions to fight corruption to be

created from above, because people's own actions are one of the most important factors for such circumstances to develop.

An impressive start for the study of nonviolence and corruption, this book will hopefully be followed by more research, especially in relation to the long-term impact of citizen campaigns against corruption.

*Majken Jul Sorensen, Honorary Post-Doctoral Research Associate, The Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts University of Wollongong, Australia*

## **Jeff Shantz and Jordon Tomblin; Cyber Disobedience; Re://Presenting Online Anarchy. Zero Books, 2014**

With this ambitious book, Shantz and Tomblin offer an engaging overview on the different practices of disobedience and resistance that define the internet as a space for antagonistic politics. While the volume comprises of seven chapters that follow a well-articulated introduction section, in fact three broad themes can be identified for the sake of this review: anarchism and hacker/hactivist subjectivities (introduction, chapters 1 & 2); whistle-blowers and online anti-capitalism (chapters 3, 4 & 5); online commons and the prospect of cyber-syndicalism (chapters 6 & 7).

The first theme addresses the fundamental question concerning the nature and ideology that lies at the core of hacktivism. Because of its horizontal and anti-hierarchical organized methods (p.6) and its refusal for structural elements of organization, it is argued that hacktivism rests ontologically rooted in the theory and practices of anarchism. Retracing briefly the history of anarchist practices of the last century, the authors identify a set of commonalities that point to the anarchist character of cyber-disobedience. Amongst these, of particular interest is the focus on the similar ways in which offline and online anarchism is demonized in mainstream accounts to the point in which these political subjectivities are characterized as aberrant,

dehumanized and labelled with the one-size-fit-all term “terrorist” (p. 37). In the same way, as further argued in chapter two through a descriptive content analysis of hackers in films, cyber-disobedients tend to be stereotyped in banal ways that mainly focus on considerations of apolitical nature.

The book proceeds by exploring the anti-capitalist character of cyber-disobedience and the online battle over property of information and piracy as a form of resistance (chapter 3). It is argued that, similarly to other institutions, the Internet undergoes mechanisms of disciplinary power (p.81) that— through monitoring and surveillance— reduce the spaces for politics and liberty. However, because of its very nature, the Internet is characterized by spaces of obscurity that allow for unmonitored political and liberating activities. These spaces are accessible through computer virtuosity that remains “the most operative form of resistance within the online virtual community” (p. 85). In this sense, online whistle-blowers’ audacity allows for the disclosure of information that would otherwise remain unknown to the large public, de facto assigning them an avant-gardist role in the online struggle for freedom and “netizenship.”

In the last segment of the book, the authors resume an interesting debate that identifies strong similarities between those enclosure movements that characterized the period of capitalism early emergence and the Internet of our days. Similarly to those processes of dispossession, states and the capital are imposing regimes and the language of property rights to knowledge and creativity (p.104) that limit access to the commons. In this sense, cyber-anarchists recognize the web as a form of common wealth and “seek the extension of the communication commons through shared production and distribution” (p.107). The interesting debate on the online commons delineates a scenario in which future practices can be shaped in different organizational forms (as, for instance, in cyber-syndicalism).

This book undoubtedly succeeds in the ambition of mapping the different methods and goals that are at core of different forms of cyber-disobedience online while opening up a series of interesting questions for future research. The most important contribution of the book is the successful attempt to situate cyber-disobedience practices within the anarchist camp. Giving a specific focus on what cyber-

disobedients want rather than what they fight against, the book moves beyond a common impasse that characterizes scholarship on online resistances and offers a precious contribution for those interested in the issue of online commons.

Because of its broad scope and ambition, the volume also suffers from a number of minor shortcomings. While fascinating and illustrative, drawing a line that connects all the different subaltern online subjectivities and practices risks to minimize those ideological and operational differences that characterize them. In this sense, the arguments often rely on a conceptual confusion that presumes some sort of equation between anarchism and disobedience. Situating these debates within the existing scholarship on civil disobedience could have allowed for a more nuanced conceptual approach to the analysis of the different online resisters and their interactions and articulation through difference.

Overall, *Cyber Disobedience. Re://Presenting Online Anarchy* represents an important contribution to scholarship on subalternity and resistance and an engaging read for those who are interested in understanding how the online anarchist passion for destruction is articulated in creative ways.

*Fabio Cristiano, Department of Political Science, Lund University, Sweden*

## **Kurt Schock; Civil Resistance Today, Polity Press, 2015**

Since the largely nonviolent revolutions of 1989, subsequent popular resistance to autocratic rulers in Serbia and the Ukraine, and the Arab uprisings in 2011, media and academic interest in civil resistance has grown. The 2008 banking crisis and economic recession also led to new popular movements using militant nonviolent tactics, including the Occupy Movement. Kurt Schock's book, *Civil Resistance Today*, which covers all these movements and provides an introductory and up to date analytical overview, is therefore very timely.

In the last few years, there has also been a rapid growth in the literature on civil resistance, as Schock notes in his Preface, listing 'important' publications since 2009. He draws on most of these within his text, as well as surveying the historical evolution of the literature and the key role of Gandhi's campaigns and ideas in the development of civil resistance. Schock summarises Gene Sharp's central contribution to understanding the theory, methods and dynamics of how civil resistance works, but also queries (sometimes citing other contributors to the literature) the adequacy of some of Sharp's formulations, for example his 'consent theory' of power.

One well-known problem in discussing this field is that of terminology. Schock's own 2005 contribution to the literature was entitled *Unarmed Insurrections* and had 'people power' in the subtitle. A number of recent publications still use 'nonviolent action.' 'Civil resistance' has however become more widely adopted in recent years, partly because (as Schock notes) it avoids the 'moral and religious implications and misconceptions often associated with the term "nonviolence"' (p.2.) and because it covers struggles where commitment to avoid violence is pragmatic and sabotage may be used. However, Schock uses 'nonviolent resistance' and 'nonviolent struggle' interchangeably with civil resistance in the text. He implicitly avoids 'people power' as a general label because (as in his earlier book) it is especially associated with popular resistance to dictatorial or authoritarian regimes. This has been the major focus of most recent civil resistance literature, but Schock argues here for incorporating social movements within liberal democracies, especially resistance to economic forms of repression (which he has recently studied), into examination of civil resistance.

The inclusion of movements within parliamentary regimes in civil resistance ties into Schock's emphasis on linking civil resistance literature with the flourishing field of social movement studies, which tends to focus on movements within liberal democracies. Schock also explores briefly the relevance of civil resistance to the study of revolution (noting a shift in the emphasis on the centrality of violence in revolution from Samuel Huntington writing in 1968 to Jack Goldstone writing in 2001). He argues that both the study of social movements and of revolution have tended to give priority to structural explanations, whereas the civil resistance literature has emphasized

collective action, though recent studies of nonviolent action sometimes give more weight to cultural factors. His Chapter Four, 'How Resistance Happens,' skillfully utilizes the wider literatures of social movements and revolution to explore the development of resistance campaigns.

Because of his chosen focus, Schock does not give much attention to links with the literature on democratisation (especially relevant to movements to overthrow authoritarian governments or resist rigging of elections), although he does note reasons given within the civil resistance literature suggesting why a nonviolent strategy is more likely to produce democratic outcomes. As part of this argument, Schock notes how civil resistance is linked to civil society.

The introductory chapter helpfully highlights a number of key debates related to civil resistance, for example the distinction between 'pragmatic' and 'principled' nonviolence, and whether the threat of serious violence (a 'radical flank' effect) encourages major concessions by a regime. Schock also tackles the standard but important question: whether nonviolent methods can work against very repressive regimes. He starts from the classics of the civil resistance literature, and notes Ralph Summy's examination of this specific problem. He then cites the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1978-79 and of the 'very repressive' East German regime in 1989 as examples where civil resistance has succeeded. The Iranian examples raise questions about the links between civil resistance and violence, which Schock discusses as a separate key issue. The East German example suggests the importance of external international pressures - in particular the role of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev; this is touched upon in the next section on the role of structural factors.

One important problem that Schock raises in a later chapter, 'Processes, Dynamics and Outcomes,' is how to evaluate success. Immediate success - as in Ukraine 2004 or Egypt 2011 - may be followed by serious reversals. He also suggests that campaigns which have failed to reach their immediate goals may have an impact in promoting the bases of opposition which can be revived later, citing the initial widespread resistance inside Czechoslovakia to the Soviet invasion of 1968, which (together with the wider experience of the Prague Spring) had repercussions of reviving mass defiance in late

1989. His second example of apparent failure, 'challenges to communist rule in Poland in the 1970s' (p. 158), is more problematic, since the major worker protests of 1970 and 1976 were sparked by rises in the price of food and (despite shooting of demonstrators in 1970) met with immediate concessions by the regime; the 1970 protests also helped to oust the longstanding General Secretary of the Party, Gomulka. However, it is certainly possible to argue that the experiences of the 1970s proved the potential of strike action and informal organisation, provided important tactical lessons and fostered a desire for genuine trade union rights, which surfaced again in 1980 in Solidarity. Moreover, in 1976 the growing intellectual opposition began to forge links with the workers.

In general Schock provides a very clear, balanced and informative overview of issues related to civil resistance, highlighting key arguments in the literature. There are chapters on relations between resisters and the state, on the role of transnational diffusion and activism, and on the crucial issue of mechanisms of change. He is careful to include and reference a wide range of relevant studies of civil resistance, and also provides a lengthy and useful bibliography. One gap, however, is lack of any reference to East European theorists such as Vaclav Havel, Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, who are very relevant to the relationship between resistance and civil society, and discussion of whether principled and pragmatic nonviolence are necessarily distinct.

Although I have a number of caveats about particular arguments, claims and examples, for example Schock's assessment of whether civil disobedience is justified in a democracy, the book succeeds in its aim to provide a systematic and readable introduction to civil resistance. It also encourages further reflection, debate and research on contentious questions. It is directed particularly to students of politics and sociology, but can be highly recommended for a more general audience, and scholars of civil resistance and social movements will find it very useful to have on their shelves.

*April Carter; has written on nonviolent resistance since the 1960s.*

## **Dudouet, Véronique (ed.); *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation: Transitions from Armed to Nonviolent Struggle*, Routledge, 2015**

*Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation: Transitions from Armed to Nonviolent Struggle*, edited by Véronique Dudouet (2015) researches a key phenomenon that has previously gained much less attention than it deserves. This book describes and systematically analyzes the amazing and counter-intuitive trend of armed liberation groups that after decades of frustrated attempts with military means, opted for a strategy of nonviolent resistance mobilizations. We regularly hear the claim of frustrated activists that reject peaceful protest since it 'does not work', and instead they turn their hopes towards 'stronger', violent means of struggle. Thus, *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation* shows by major examples that the opposite is also common, how seasoned guerilla groups transform to employing methods of nonviolent struggle. More importantly, with its rather unique focus, variation of cases, ambitious theoretical approach and multitude of findings, this book moves our understanding significantly forward. It is simultaneously a model of collaborative research and edited books, which tries to systematically apply a theoretical framework onto diverse cases of the same phenomenon. Its main weakness is that it lacks a clear and substantiated conclusion that convincingly explains transitions from armed to unarmed resistance. Perhaps it is too much to ask for, but it does not provide a coherent theory that explains transitions. We need that if we are going to be able to support such transitions in future. But the high quality of the research presented in this publication makes the development of such a future theory seem possible for the first time. *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation* is clearly groundbreaking and I am convinced that a new sub-field of civil resistance has been shaped.

### **The Aim, Framework and Structure**

The book explores the internal and relational drivers of transitions from armed to unarmed resistance. It investigates policymaking processes by movement leaders, as well as organizational, environmental and relational logics and other formative factors that underlie such strategic shifts. It looks at a wide range of cases, all exemplifying how armed movements that are engaged in self-

determination, revolutionary or pro-democracy struggles transition to using unarmed means.

The editor, Veronique Dudouet, is a senior researcher and program director at the Berghof Foundation in Berlin, Germany. Dudouet is well established both within conflict theory and civil resistance studies. The other nine authors are all experts on their particular cases, and some of them are also seasoned researchers of nonviolent activism.

In the introduction, aims and arguments are outlined, displaying an ambitious analytical framework that explains how the study is approached and what types of factors and dimensions are taken into account. It summarizes existing research findings, builds on them, and also gives conceptual definitions that clarify the research area.

This study engages with all relevant analytical levels that possibly matter for transitions (Table 1.2). In the introduction, these levels are outlined as *intra-group* processes, as well as relations between the group and environmental factors and actors, which involve *group-society*, *group-state* and *group-international*. In the center of the analysis is the *resistance/liberation movement* (RLM). With its choice of means and goals, the RLM adapts and tries to conform to its changing circumstances. Thus, we have shifts that occur at the level of intra-processes, related to identity, belief systems, strategic choices, organizational processes, horizontal and vertical dynamics among members and its constituent base. These shifts are embedded in the surrounding society and formed by mechanisms of change, such as coalitions and competitions with other actors. Furthermore, this society is structured by the state: its type and level of repression and changing power asymmetries, and the international environment, through transmission of support, allies, norms and resources. Therefore, analyzed together, all kinds of levels and aspects are potentially made relevant, which is both a strength and a weakness of this research project.

The cases cover transitions from armed RLMs to unarmed resistance in Western Sahara, West Papua, Palestine, South Africa, Chiapas, Colombia, Egypt and Nepal, thus including three continents in the Global South. The chapters offer a somewhat similar structure with a historical overview, contextual analysis, summary of the repertoire of resistance applied, and an analysis of the factors that matter for the

transitions. However, the chapters vary in how strictly they follow the theoretical assumptions, concepts and analytical levels outlined in the introduction, which is a problem that I will return to.

### **The Findings on Transitions to Unarmed Resistance**

From this general framework the authors come to conclusions in each case from key events, processes and factors. The stories from different parts of the world are informative, fascinating and engaging, and very different. In the concluding chapter all the cases are compared, and through a discussion the editor arrives at a number of claims.

Some conclusions seem to be unique for a particular set of cases, as argued by Dudouet. For example, in chapter 3 by Jason MacLeod on West Papua, it becomes clear that the transition is driven from a new generation of urban actors who have taken over the initiative and now dominates the liberation struggle, forming a “transition” depending “less on the methods used by the armed guerrillas in the forests and highlands” (p. 46). Therefore, it is doubtful that this is a transition in the strict meaning, but is perhaps instead an *outcompeting*. Other cases are more in line with the expectations created in the introduction, like the case of Egypt, which shows “a pattern of mutual interaction” (p. 186) between different factors, or Nepal, where the transition was “facilitated by complementary factors” (p. 200) at all of the levels.

In the last chapter Dudouet concludes that no clear organizational shift happens in these transitions from armed to unarmed resistance. Both armed groups and social movements “frequently coexisted throughout the history” (p. 202). The same complicated mixture is also the case when it comes to the repertoires of contention, where both conventional and contentious action is combined and “most [of the groups] simultaneously pursuing both types of method[s] in a complementary fashion” (p. 204). What we see are “tactics [that] defy clear-cut categories” and a “continuum of overlapping methods” (p. 205). For example, in the discussion on Colombia it is argued that the use of sticks and stones in the defense of land occupations is a form of civil resistance due to the symbolic nature of these weapons when seen in the light of the “overwhelmingly strong adversary” (i.e. the state) (p. 205).

Thus we see organizational links and coalitions, and action strategies/tactics that combine conventional and contentious repertoires, as well as armed/violent and unarmed/civil means along continuums. Therefore, this research shows that transitions are “complex and non-linear”(p. 209).

However, it is possible to detect three types of transitions, according to Dudouet (Table 10.1): (1) collective shifts to unarmed resistance, while the capacity for armed struggle is preserved during negotiations, as with the ANC in South Africa (2) a series of shifts from unambiguous demilitarization, to conventional action, and a (re)turn to nonviolent resistance by some, as with *Gama'a Islamiya* in Egypt and (3) a progressive escalation of unarmed resistance and de-escalation of armed struggle, “with a geographical and generational gap and no clear-cut leadership endorsement” as with the West Papua National Liberation Army or PLO in Palestine.

As indicated above, I am not convinced if the third type always is a transition in the same sense. And, how well the different cases really fit these three types could be debated. For example, it is not clear why the case of Western Sahara would be placed in type three instead of type one. Despite the fact that the armed engagements ended in 1991 after the UN sponsored negotiations, Polisario still kept their arms ready outside of the occupied areas while refraining from their use. Still, this typology makes sense and structures our understanding of the differences within the process of transition.

### **The Key Mechanisms and Processes**

Despite the fact that most actors examined had clear-cut organizational structures and leaderships, “shifts in methods were usually undertaken in a much more decentralised manner” (p. 214). It is argued that some support is found for mechanisms such as “pressuring from (pre-existing) social allies”, “coalition-building” with new forces, “mirroring” (where one group follows a seemingly successful path of someone else), and “reversed outbidding” (to make oneself distinct from competing actors) (p. 216-9). But these examples are found only in some cases and not in others. Again, the diverse and complex nature of transition is underscored. Somewhat more supportive evidence is provided for the claim that a failure of the armed struggle and a “persistence or increase in power asymmetry in favour of the state”

matter, particularly in combination with “selective state inducement and political opportunities” for regime cooperation, and a search for new allies that replace a “loss/lack of foreign support” – all which facilitates the innovation of other (complementary or dominant) methods (p. 220-3). Thus, transitions seem to depend on combinations of mechanisms and factors.

The main conclusion of the study is three-fold depending on what type of RLM we are talking about. For national liberation movements (e.g. Palestine) it is argued that geopolitical factors are key in explaining the role of new generations of more civil resistance oriented activists, while for socio-economic rights movements (e.g. Chiapas) it is the preferences of their constituency and the power infused interactions with the state that decide. Dudouet adds that for more ideologically motivated revolutionary armed groups (e.g. Nepal) change occurs when senior leaders reinterpret the ideological and strategic frameworks that underlie their struggle. Here, I slightly disagree and think that a common pattern seems to exist.

A national liberation movement is based on *international recognition*, since it is an attempt to establish a new nation state within a state environment. Similarly, the socio-economic rights movement articulates the *rights of its constituency* and wants these *rights recognized by the state*. Lastly, an armed group that emerges from a revolutionary ideology articulated by prominent leaders will also change when that *ideology and leadership* changes. I argue that the study points towards a conclusion that when the basis of a particular liberation struggle – *that which drives it or decides its chances of success* – is affected in a way that facilitates unarmed resistance, then we will also see some kind of complex and combined transition towards unarmed resistance. At least, this seems like a possible interpretation to me

### **The Major Achievements**

The analysis in *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation* is inspired by a somewhat loose application of the ‘contentious politics’ approach, developed by Charles Tilly, Dough McAdam and Sidney Tarrow in 2001, which I think is a good choice. By applying these key concepts of mechanisms and processes, as well as methodology of event histories, the discussion becomes more sophisticated, whereas a strict application would have stifled the discussion. Now the study is to a large extent

framed by contentious politics, but not restricted to it. Instead, one of the many achievements is that Dudouet incorporates findings from wide areas of research: terrorism, social movement, civil resistance and conflict resolution. The contentious politics approach is helping to see dynamic interactions between many different factors and actors within a context. In this way Dudouet avoids a common problem with these kinds of case studies in edited books. It is common that different authors make different selections of focus and discussions, based on widely differing assumptions and arrive at a very different set of factors that matter. This problem does not primarily arise from differences in the cases, but more due to varied theoretical frameworks, conceptual understandings, personal tastes and the research focus.

This path-breaking publication also succeeds in striking a reasonable balance between the archetypal polarities applied in the social sciences of agency and structure. In extremis we have those with a focus and explanation based primarily on the voluntarism of leaders' rational choices, ideology or experiences. On the other hand there are those who utilize the anonymous effects of structural-historic changes, systemic forces and the macro-forces of the political economy. The authors of *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation* largely avoid this destructive polarization and take in several layers of explanations based on world/regional geopolitical change, state/regime change and the strategic resource game between oppositional groups, as well as internal dynamics within the RLM itself. Here both world system change and subjective leadership choices matter. This balanced approach is in itself not a small achievement, since the field of civil resistance studies is heavily dominated by an agency bias, where actors' strategic calculations, not structure and not context, tend to inform the discussions.

By applying this complex theoretical framework on case analyses it becomes possible to discuss the dynamics of interaction between several actors and the relations between agency and structure in a meaningful way. However, these analyses must include mappings of the actors and their environment, catalogues of event histories and the accounting for the context of the various institutional and structural openings and challenges that a RLM may face. Having said that however, it is problematic that the different authors are not equally enthusiastic about applying this advanced theoretical framework.

The book brings civil resistance studies into dialogue with several other social science fields in a way that is in itself an important achievement. One of the key developments needed within resistance studies – perhaps the major one – is to utilize the often more sophisticated perspectives, concepts, theories and models from other social science fields. Dudouet achieves this in several ways, primarily by applying the contentious politics approach and also by bridging conflict studies and civil resistance studies.

### **High Ambitions – Weak Results**

The main weakness of this groundbreaking study is that there is no clear and convincing finding of tendencies, and therefore also no unanticipated policy implications. The findings are summarized in the final table (Table 10.2), but the result that arises is unclear. The lack of clarity is because it is almost impossible to draw conclusions from the other chapters. In a study that is made by one single person we have an expectation that each empirical chapter ends up in the conclusions of key points that are summarized in the last and concluding chapter. It is then possible to follow the whole process from the aim to the resulting claims. That is not possible here. The identifications of active mechanisms and the comparisons between the factors that matter in the different cases are unfortunately rather unconvincing. It is not clear how assessments are made. If each chapter had applied the model and, in a similar way, had shown how each factor or mechanism was assessed, a coherent concluding chapter would have been possible. Now, it is as if Dudouet made her own separate conclusion from her parallel reading of every chapter and probably having had intense discussions with the other authors. Based on that, she then came to write the concluding chapter. If that is the case, it is indeed impressive, but the problem is that the process of analysis is not made transparent enough in the study.

Thus, it is unclear to what extent the authors are following the common platform: the contentious politics approach and the analytical framework. Some do it, but most seem to follow it non-systematically. For example, only Dudouet explicitly discusses the contentious politics approach. It is doubtful if the others integrated that perspective in their analysis at all. Furthermore, among the chapters there are those that follow the framework of analytical levels step by step (e.g. Rovira, Chap.

6, Ashour, Chap. 8, and Thapa, Chap. 9), while others makes their own version of it (Mundy and Zunes, Chap. 2). In addition, some authors focus on the historical narrative (e.g. Armando and Planta, Chap. 7), on the mapping of strategic positions (e.g. Qumsiyeh, Chap. 4) or on the role of armed or unarmed methods for the success of the struggle (as Zunes, Chap. 5). There are those standing out with their wealth of case data (particularly MacLeod, Chap. 3), while others are much less encompassing in their treatment of their case (e.g. Thapa, Chap. 9). Here a more strict common application of the framework would have made the book much more convincing and pedagogical giving us more analytical depth.

There seems to exist a tension between area specialism and theoretical analysis in the book, which is not unusual. Some authors are taking part since they are experts on the region/context. In that sense they are able to write an analysis of the case, but they are not researchers on resistance, or more exactly, unarmed resistance. Furthermore, it seems like the editor is, as the sole author of the introduction and conclusion, the only one fully grasping the complex analytical approach and the comparison between the cases.

There are also other reasons for this lack of a convincing result. The factors are numerous and they are of different types. While some factors are multidimensional, others are not. Although some factors are clear-cut, others are somewhat overlapping. It also seems unclear why some of the factors appear in the summary table as they are displayed (see Table 10.2). For example, what criteria are used when assessing that the leadership played a role in the transition? Although the assessment process and analysis that produced the summary table, is indeed a huge challenge, its process is not sufficiently clarified, and therefore the result is unconvincing.

The framework is probably too complex and difficult for a collective of authors to apply. The contentious politics perspective has been widely criticized during the last decade for being methodologically unclear. The critics claim that mechanisms have been applied for too broad a range of factors. If you then apply that approach in a study together with a multi-level analysis, with only a vaguely common structure and methodology for the individual case studies, then it is no surprise that the result is unclear.

The framework also includes an inflation of concepts that creates an unclear terminology. When an author finds circumstances that give some explanation to the transition in her/his case, is it then a factor, mechanism, process, interaction, strategic resource or perhaps a resource? And in what way does that affect the result? And on what analytical level does it belong? Determining this is not easy, and the problems grow if several authors apply their own understanding.

Thus, my conclusion is that *Civil Resistance and Conflict Transformation* breaks new ground and seems to have tremendous potential. However, it does not really go the whole way, which is evident in the unclear final result of the analysis.

### **What Do We (Not) Know about Transitions to Unarmed Resistance?**

There is a general conclusion from the study that we need to take with us. We must understand that there is no clear-cut division between armed and unarmed means of struggle during long-term transitions. If that is accepted, I conclude that there is a need for both a tolerance of contradictions and a facilitation of the transition from supportive actors. Otherwise this complex process will probably be problematic creating difficulty in developing a new and effective repertoire of resistance for liberation.

We need to understand more about what factors, mechanisms and processes matter *more than others* and shape different types of transitions from armed to unarmed resistance. This book is an ambitious exploration and mapping of what matters and a generator of tentative propositions. However, we need a *theory*, however tentative, of what makes transitions happen. In order to do that the analysis needs to take a few more steps forward.

This book will be a modern classic and a firm basis for further research projects. If the framework could be refined, and if the cases could be analyzed again in order to find similar sets of data in the different cases, we might get a theory. My suggestion then is that *the same* research team that shares and develops the same refined analytical framework performs the analysis of each and every case.

*Stellan Vinthagen, Editor of Journal of Resistance Studies*

## REVIEW OF A CLASSICAL BOOK:

### **Joan V. Bondurant; Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict**

(Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958. New Revised Edition, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988)

If one is interested in nonviolence, especially Gandhian nonviolence, there are some key texts that make interesting and, sometimes, essential reading. However, while there are plenty of important writings about Gandhi the man, starting with Romain Rolland's 1924 biography *Mahatma Gandhi: The Man Who Became One With the Universal Being*, significant ones dealing with the Mahatma's nonviolent praxis are far fewer. In 1923, Clarence Marsh Case's *Non-Violent Coercion: A Study in Methods of Social Pressure* became probably the first systematic examination of nonviolent coercive tactics. Towards the end of the book, Case examines Gandhi's contribution to the field based on Gandhi's first major national struggle against British domination. Richard B. Gregg, who spent four years in India in the late 1920s, including over half a year at Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram, was the first to present a theory of the workings of Gandhian nonviolence with his 1934 publication, *The Power of Nonviolence*. In that book, Gregg explained the psychological mechanisms (which he termed "moral jiu-jitsu") by which *satyagraha* (literally "firmness in truth"), Gandhi's method of nonviolent activism, works.

That classic was followed a few years later by another, Krishnalal Shridharani's *War Without Violence: A Study of Gandhi's Method and its Accomplishments*. Shridharani, who had been involved with Gandhi's celebrated Salt March, presented *satyagraha* as a technique that could take the place of war in situations of conflict. These books received attention in pacifist circles; however, it was not until 1958, with the publication of Joan V. Bondurant's almost legendary book, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, that Gandhian nonviolence more or less positioned itself into the political science mainstream. It became, and remains to this day, the go-to book on the subject.

Joan Valerie Bondurant was born in 1918. She studied music at the University of Michigan and shortly thereafter, following the

bombing of Pearl Harbour, decided that she had to play her patriotic part in the war effort. With a belief that musicians had a facility for learning languages, she studied Japanese and was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services (a forerunner of the CIA) and, after a year in San Francisco, she was dispatched to India where she translated and analysed Japanese military intelligence. While in India between 1944-1946, she became interested in Gandhian *satyagraha* and even met Gandhi himself. He was not overly helpful in assisting her in her desire to analyse his method of activism, explaining that “*satyagraha* is not a subject for research – you must experience it, use it, live by it.” Thankfully, she did go on to analyse the technique so that the rest of us could have a better understanding of this powerful method of ending conflict. She returned to America in 1948 to work on her Ph.D. She completed her dissertation, which was to form the basis of *Conquest of Violence*, in 1952. The rest of her working life was spent as a professor of political science in various American universities. After a long illness, she died at the age of eighty-seven in 2006. She leaves this book as her major legacy.

Gene Sharp is the best known western analyst of nonviolent struggle (see his *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* and *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*), especially what has come to be known as “pragmatic” (as opposed to what is often referred to as “principled”), nonviolence. He points out that Bondurant was the first western political scientist to write on the significance of *satyagraha* from the perspective of western political theory and practice. In this task Bondurant attempts to flesh out the philosophy of conflict, noting that there is a demand for a constructive solution to the problem of violence. *Conquest of Violence* is an attempt to fill this gap by locating *satyagraha* within the literature of modern political philosophy. In the book, she makes the point that Western social and political theory has been dominated by the question of ends, while hitherto largely overlooked Gandhian nonviolence challenges this approach by concentrating on means. Bondurant compares Gandhi’s approach to conservatism and anarchism and decides that while there may be elements of both political philosophies in *satyagraha*, it transcends them, and, towards the end of the book, she notes that Gandhi was not really interested in limiting violence, but in eradicating it through a dialectical process that resulted in a new synthesis of the opposing sides.

Bondurant details and analyses five of Gandhi's best known India-based campaigns, selected because they clearly illustrated the use of techniques for divergent objectives in different social and political situations by different groups against different types of opposition. In doing so, she seeks to delineate a philosophy that underlies Gandhi's nonviolent activism.

In backgrounding *satyagraha*, Bondurant notes that Gandhi believed individuals have the ability to act and reason in a way that can effect changes in society. She points out that it is not necessary to subscribe to either Gandhi's asceticism or his religious ideas (after all, the war-like Muslim Pathans, under Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, were great practitioners of *satyagraha*) to understand his contribution to nonviolent activism. She clearly demonstrates that *satyagraha* is valid in a secularised form, that it is open as a method of ending conflicts for everyone. After all, power lies with the grass roots, rather than with the leadership in society. It is only the cooperation of the subjects which allows the elites to exercise power. And the withdrawal of cooperation and obedience can disempower the elites, and perhaps even convert them to the *satyagrahi's* position. This means that *satyagraha* is very different from other political philosophies which see a seizure of power, generally through violence, as a precursor to desired change.

In illustrating the methods of *satyagraha*, Bondurant tackles the perennial question of whether *satyagraha* could work against a totalitarian regime, concluding that although this is possible, there is no direct empirical evidence on which to base an answer to the question. More recent writings (for example Summy's seminal essay, "Nonviolence and the Case of the Extremely Ruthless Opponent", and the writings of Kurt Schock and Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth), based on many examples, answer the question with a resounding "yes." The key lies in a peaceful method of responding to conflict once it has broken out. *Satyagraha* encompasses a technique of social action (or way of life for those concerned with a more ideological approach to nonviolence) to be used for struggles as they arise, but it also provides an avenue for basic change, including change of oppressive regimes.

While Bondurant does not give detailed step-by-step instructions for conducting a Gandhian campaign to win over an opponent, she does note that the "first stage is characterised by

persuasion through reason. The subsequent stages enter the realm of persuasion through suffering, wherein the *satyagrahi* (one engaged in *satyagraha*) attempts to dramatise the issues at stake to get thought to the opponent's unprejudiced judgement so that he [sic] may willingly come again to a level where he may be persuaded through rational argument."

Bondurant reviews the principles of nonviolence that are fundamental to *satyagraha* as nonviolence and self-suffering. And these, in turn, require sincerity and courage. She admits that *satyagraha* employs force, but of a type that is quite different from that employed in conventional, violent conflict. Traditional political thought assumes a separation of ends and means, emphasising ends and downplaying means. *Satyagraha*, on the other hand sees means as ends-in-the-making. The practitioner of *satyagraha* does not seek victory, but a situation in which the total human needs of all the parties are best met. This is the most efficient way to overcome the future violence, the most likely way to arrive at truth.

Bondurant notes that one of the key elements of *satyagraha* is the issue of self-suffering which "remains the most obscure to the Western mind." It is a tactic for cutting through "the rational defences which the opponent may have built in opposing the initial efforts of rational persuasion through the clear statement of, and argument for, the *satyagrahi's* position. The role of self-suffering is to break a deadlock, to cut through the rationalised defences of the opponent because, according to Gandhi, the hardest heart and the grossest ignorance would disappear in the face of suffering without anger or malice." In any case, the loss of life and injuries sustained by *satyagrahis* in conducting nonviolent action campaigns is likely to be far less than those sustained in violent combat, and certain to leave less future conflict-generating bitterness behind.

Quite obviously, the way to cut through the defences of an opponent is not through the employment of coercion. But is it not true that nonviolence and even the taking on of suffering is a means of coercing an opponent? She admits that as a method, *satyagraha* itself contains a positive element of coercion. Bondurant points out that the tools of noncooperation, boycott and strike, which can be used in *satyagraha*, do involve elements of compulsion which may affect a change on the part of the opponent which was originally against their

will. However, she notes that violent coercion, which sets out to injure the opponent, is vastly different from nonviolent coercion which may cause indirect injury. In *satyagraha*, the practitioner of nonviolence willingly submits himself to suffering in contrast to those employing violence as a tool of coercion who intentionally cause suffering to their opponent.

In short, in *satyagraha* it is not a one-sided triumph that is sought, but the engagement in a dialectical process that produces a synthesis rather than a victory or compromise. The process by which *satyagraha* brings about change is essentially creative and inherently constructive. Its immediate objective is “a restructuring of the opposing elements to achieve a situation which is satisfactory to both of the original opposing antagonists, but in such a way as to present an entirely new total circumstance . . . through the operation of nonviolent action the truth as judged by the fulfilment of human needs will emerge in the form of a mutually satisfactory and agreed-upon solution.” The *satyagrahi* does all that he or she can to persuade the opponent that his or her position is correct while at the same time inviting the opponent to demonstrate the correctness of their position. The *satyagrahi* would then accede to it if he or she were persuaded by the opponent of an error in his or her own thinking. “The *satyagrahi* is never prepared to yield any position which he [sic] holds to be the truth”, but “he may be persuaded that he is in error in so holding them.”

How, then, does this *satyagraha* technique work? Bondurant notes that *satyagraha* can employ several different forms of nonviolent action, such as noncooperation (e.g., strikes and resignations) and civil disobedience (for example, contravention of laws and the non-payment of taxes), but adds that it also has a positive aspect that is fundamentally connected to it – the constructive program. It can be disempowering always to be struggling against things, working for something provides the rewards that enable one to keep going and also is a step in the creation of the better future while the unsatisfactory present is being pulled down.

From her analysis of Gandhian campaigns, Bondurant summarises some fundamental rules of *satyagraha*: *Satyagrahis* must be self-reliant; they must maintain the initiative in the campaign and progressively advance it when necessary; they should propagate the

objectives, strategy and tactics of the campaign; their demands should be reduced to a minimum consistent with truth; they should examine their own weaknesses; they should continually search for avenues of cooperation with the adversary on honourable terms, while refusing to surrender essentials in negotiation; and, finally, they must insist on a full agreement on fundamentals before accepting a settlement.

The steps in conducting a Gandhian campaign against an established political order could include the following: negotiation and arbitration, preparation of the group for direct action, agitation, issuing of an ultimatum, economic boycott and strikes, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, usurping of the functions of government, and parallel government. She notes that a *satyagraha* campaign requires planning, preparation and a thought-out execution in which the tactics may vary to suit the situation. In the new epilogue to the 1988 revised edition of the book, Bondurant reminds us that “the most significant objective for Gandhi was ....not India’s independence, significant though it was. His ultimate and overarching quest was for an effective method to meet, engage in, and resolve conflict.”

Although the main aim of *Conquest of Violence* is to study *satyagraha* as a political technique, there is also an examination of its spiritual underpinnings. Bondurant summarises the position of *satyagraha* as a method of helping practitioners realise their potential by saying that Gandhi “fashioned a method of conflict in the exercise of which a man could come to know what he is and what it means to evolve. In *satyagraha* dogma gives way to an open exploration of context. The objective is not to assert propositions, but to create possibilities. In opening up choices and confronting an opponent with the demand that he make a choice, the *satyagrahi* involves himself in acts of ‘ethical existence.’ The process forces a continuing examination of one’s motives, an examination undertaken within the context of relationships as they change towards a new, restructured, and reintegrated pattern.”

In another of her writings, Bondurant takes this definition even further when she claims that a life of ideals requires a good deal of self-discipline, and those who have mastered this to enable them to act constructively may find, as many of Gandhi’s followers have, “a sense of becoming, or realization of self that makes the demanding

tasks required not only tolerable but also attractive.” After all, *swaraj* – self-rule – was not merely about independence for India, it was about self-rule for the individual.

By way of conclusion, it needs to be admitted that some of this book will be hard going for those without a background in political theory or a knowledge of the writings of some of the main (and not so main) political theorists. It may even disappoint activists who are looking for a handbook that will guide them in easy steps to conduct a Gandhian campaign (although this can be teased out from the philosophical/theoretical analysis Bondurant provides – however for this purpose it may be better to go to either one of the classics of the field such as Coover et al’s *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* or George Lakey’s *Powerful Peacemaking*, or one of the many more recent handbooks). It is a book of political theory not about personal lifestyles. It attempts to place *satyagraha* into the context of political science – where previously it had little purchase. Bondurant does this, as noted above, by first comparing it with conservatism, anarchism, and then with Marxism, authoritarian realism, liberal democratic theory, compromise and Quaker methods of dealing with conflict. She presents a cogent case, but, in some respects, given that the book was originally published in 1958, her project seemed to have less impact than it should have had as Gandhi was not taken particularly seriously in the realms of political science. Perhaps now the time for *Conquest of Violence* has finally come. With the upsurge (and indeed success) of nonviolent campaigns around the world (think of people power, the various coloured revolutions and springs), and increasing analysis of them, nonviolence can no longer be sidelined by political scientists. Bondurant was merely way ahead of her time. And if one is particularly interested in the contribution of Gandhian nonviolence to political theory and practice, there is no better place to start than with Joan Bondurant’s *Conquest of Violence*. In fact, we can agree with Sharp that this book is a “must” for all interested in social research to promote peace. And, further, that “No sociologist, psychologist, political scientist or social and political philosopher ought to miss it.”

*Thomas Weber, Honorary Associate of the Politics Program, La Trobe University*

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Some relevant books from

## Ω Irene Publishing

### **Whistleblowing: A Practical Guide**

by Brian Martin

### **Tackling Trident**

Edited by Stellan Vinthagen, Justin Kenrick  
and Kelvin Mason

### **Humorous Political Stunts, Nonviolent Public Challenges to Power**

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