

## EDITORIAL

# The development and future of Resistance Studies

The launch of the Journal of Resistance Studies took place at the same time as the presentations of papers on various kinds of political resistance skyrocketed at academic conferences around the world. We see this as an encouragement and a clear indication that the Journal of Resistance Studies has an important function to fulfill. Our standard for acceptance is rigorous, in line with our goal to publish high-quality texts. Since the first call for papers, we have accepted around 10% of submissions. A number of the rejected texts have been of good quality, but lacked a specific resistance focus. This is to be expected in the process of developing a new academic field. In many cases, we advise the authors to submit these articles to other publications and we are happy to see that many are later published in other journals.

JRS has passed the initial hurdles and is now a well-established journal. This marks our fifth issue, and we already have more issues in the pipeline. With the help of our editorial board, a network of colleagues around the world, and a growing number of devoted supporters, we are optimistic about the future for the Journal of Resistance Studies.

The clear goals for the Journal to expand the impact, relevance, and importance of resistance studies have been successful in several ways. We now have both a Latin American editorial group and one focused on Asia. The special issue on "Feminized Resistances" from last year was a success and will be followed by a special issue on "Researching Resistance: On Methods and Ethics in Resistance Studies" later in 2017. More suggestions for upcoming issues are being discussed for future special issues. We encourage all with ideas for interesting topics to contact us as we are always open to discuss new proposals.

One of our goals is to develop and define the field. What shall Resistance Studies focus on? We have conscientiously searched for, and accepted for publication, articles that expand the list of topics which can be analysed through the lenses of resistance studies. There are, of course,

no strict boundaries in this regard, but we would like to see a clearer demarcation of the field without becoming rigid fundamentalists. This is, in fact, one of the most frequent discussion we have in the editorial group: Does this article have enough of relevance for resistance studies? With the somewhat incompatible goals of searching for some kind of consensus while remaining open to an expansion of the field, we seek to invite more views into our discussions. Shorter comments as well as longer theoretical texts on the epistemology of resistance studies will be welcomed in JRS.

Still, we are struggling to find a good model for the balance between Open Access, non-profit operation and the need for financial support. We have ongoing dialogues with well-established publishing houses and we hope to present a sustainable structure for funding JRS by the end of the year. The present financial support is not a sustainable model. Finding more subscribers for the printed version of the journal is high on our list of priorities.

As the interest in the field grows and develops, there are several crucial questions we must ask. One important question is: Shall the goal of resistance studies be to develop into an independent academic field? During the past decade, a number of initiatives have proven that the interest in resistance studies is growing, making this a possibility to consider and discuss.

There is no doubt that whichever path is taken, the journal must remain a place to publish relevant texts on resistance studies. The fact that we needed a peer-reviewed journal of high academic standard was obvious from the beginning. JRS seems to meet that need for the timebeing. We hope to produce more journals and specialised editions in the future. We are also pleased to see that Rowman & Littlefield have now launched a new book series on resistance studies, and other publishers have included publications on resistance-related topics in their lists of new books. There is no doubt that we are witnessing a notable and growing interest in resistance studies.

We are now looking ahead and discussing the next steps for JRS. A growing number of universities have opened courses specifically on resistance studies and some have even established professorships, centres,

networks or other units of resistance studies. Yet it remains difficult to discern the best strategy for the field in the years ahead.

When our "sister-field", Peace Studies, started to grow in the 1960s, it progressed down three main paths. Some groups, like the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), established independent centres outside the university structure. Other initiatives became new departments at universities, like Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford; Peace and Development at the University of Gothenburg; Peace and Conflict Studies in Uppsala; the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute; and Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Coventry University.

In all of these programs, there was a tendency over time to focus more on war and the consequences of wars than on peace and nonviolence. I would be surprised if the priorities among funders did not play an important role in these processes. This is not the place to discuss in detail why some of these initiatives have disappeared and others have changed their focus over time, but some lessons can be drawn for those seeking to establish a new academic discipline. It is no secret that funders have a huge impact on the focus of academic research. It would be too easy to conclude that by "following the money" we can see what type of research to expect, but I doubt I am the only one who has experienced the pressure of prioritizing the interests of grantsmaking institutions when I formulate a research application.

My own personal experience mainly derives from the University of Tromsø, which invited me to help set up a Centre for Peace Studies in 2000. With the clear and overt intentions of seeking "peace by peaceful means" and holding nonviolence as a core principle, we set out with well-meaning intentions and generous grants from the Norwegian government. Involvement and cooperation with civil society activists played a crucial role the early years. However, several years later the focus has shifted away from nonviolence, and engagement in the civil society has all but disappeared.

A third option to expand the field of peace studies was to include a peace and conflict perspective within curriculums and research programs which already exist in established academic fields like political science, sociology, or anthropology. This is already happening to some degree

with resistance studies, and we have seen many resistance-relevant theses on both the MA and PhD level produced at a variety of academic institutions.

The results of these three strategies are mixed, and no clear conclusion can yet be drawn. Many initiatives to establish peace studies have faced opposition from fields that may have seen the "newcomers" as competition for funding or as too political to be considered "objective academic disciplines". I anticipate that initiatives to establish resistance studies will face similar reactions. There will be arguments that the field is "too political" and the struggle for limited resources will make new initiatives possible competition in budget discussions. The largest and most well-established departments are more skilled at navigating the academic labyrinth and have a tendency to "win" in the long run. Many of the early initiatives within peace studies have either been "taken over" by more established academic disciplines or shut down entirely. The reasons for each of these developments varies, of course, and should be evaluated to better understand the circumstances. Understanding potential problems and obstacles is a good starting point, and not being naive about the academic power struggle is a must.

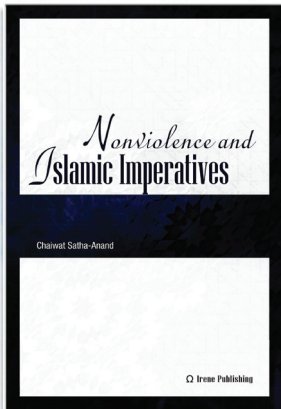
Most of what we have seen until now is less focused on establishing new structures and more on less formal networking efforts. Individuals and small groups preparing resistance studies sessions on conferences like ISA and BISA are typical examples. Many of these have been successful in the creation of new networks and initiatives. This leads to more flexibility, but also decreased funding and less solid structures. One vulnerability is a critical dependency on key individuals who can function as coordinators, as a sort of "glue" for these loosely-organised networks. Personal links have been more important than written MOUs; friendship is imperative to the efficiency of planning, minimal bureaucracy, and the flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing context.

Such a strategy does not exclude other ways of organising a new academic field; it may be the case that a variety of approaches would be wise going forward.

Resistance studies probably have closer links to radical political movements than most other academic fields, and hence will possibly be more vulnerable to critique of its academic standards. JRS has tried to

open the door to activist camps by asking all authors to include a popular version of their texts for publication on our website. We hope this will help us to remove the academic walls that are often built so highly around university campuses. Our goal is to have more academics take part in the activist groups of civil society, and to encourage more activists to enter into the campus realm. All will benefit from wider and more intense cooperation of this nature.

*Jørgen Johansen, Deputy Editor JRS*



*This important book by a famous Thai Muslim--theoretician and practitioner-- carries a double message. First, it puts to shame those who equate Islam with violence and terrorism, often called "jihadism" in a total misunderstanding of jihad. Second, it also puts to shame those who classify entire religions as violent or nonviolent; they may have both aspects, let us identify and build on the nonviolence, and move forward!*

**Johan Galtung, Founder Transcend International, Dr hc mult**

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