

EDITORIAL:

We continue to develop resistance studies**Stellan Vinthagen***UMass Amherst*

Welcome to the second year with the *Journal of Resistance Studies*! It has been a privilege to complete the first year and our promised two issues (available for free in digital format on our website). One becomes hopeful when one sees the number of editorial group and reviewers grow in number. This espouses hope since an increase in editorial and review work means that we are more known than before, and should receive more submissions of articles, book reviews, and thematic issues in the future. Even though, we started this work only in 2015 we have already received more than 150 submissions of articles; it clearly underscores the need for a journal that specializes in the critical exploration of “resistance”.

Our efforts in creating a high academic quality have been quickly rewarded. The JRS is already from the first issue classified as a Level 1 Academic Journal by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (Norsk center for forskningsdata, <https://dbh.nsd.uib.no>). This means that a publication in the JRS gives academic points for the author, and research funding is allocated to the department where the author works accordingly.

A new feature for this year is that we are publishing a popular summary of each article on our website written by the author, all in the interest of engaging the public: interested citizens and activists, and others that are not comfortable with the specialized academic discourses used by authors. This is just one of the ways in which we hope to become a bridge and interface for knowledge exchange between different communities.

Activists, or *the professors of the streets*, gather their own and unique practical wisdom, lived experience, know-how, and pragmatic knowledge

of resistance in their particular contexts, but also through ongoing communication and reflection with other activists. This wealth of knowledge is an essential part of what should build resistance studies. However, such subjugated knowledge moves uneasily within the specialized discourses and power infused infrastructure of the academia. Therefore, we have a problematic divide between the street and academia. We need to reflect upon and develop forms of interaction between the professors of the streets and the professors of the universities. In the future we want to find ways of collaborating with critical and reflective activists in the production of some Journal issues. The question is, “how is that best done?”. There are several options and we are not sure what is the best way forward. Therefore, we would appreciate proposals. Some of the alternative collaboration forms we think of are: a special thematic issue, on and by ‘activist-scholars’; a collection of “evaluation reports” of different activist campaigns written by participating activists themselves, and each commented by engaged academics; conventional academic research papers on activist campaigns, which then are commented on by activists from these campaigns; or, co-authored texts by academics and activists. But there are several other options. Please, share your experiences and suggestions of how such collaboration should be done.

Our editorial work is taking form and we are calibrating our routines, learning how to work more efficient and with higher quality. It all takes time, people, and the development of skills. We still don’t have a solution on how to make the economy of the journal sustainable in the long run. The JRS is still fully covered by the endowment connected to the *Endowed Chair in the Study of Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Resistance* at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. That is not possible as a long-term solution. Right now we only charge for the subscription of the printed copy, not for individual articles or the digital copy of the journal. We will try for a while more to keep the journal open access.

We have started collaboration with the open access service of the UMass Amherst Library to develop a more library suitable digital platform, archive and communication system with reviewers and authors. This will hopefully be a system that is active from the fall. More information on that will be posted on our website: <http://resistance-journal.org>

In order to strengthen our editorial work, this summer we are get-

ting additional support from a graduate student at UMass Amherst, Pukar Bista, who works with proofreading and editorial work that has so far been neglected, like identifying new potential reviewers in different fields, as well as communicating with libraries that want to support open access efforts.

Next issue – Vol. 2, Issue 2 – will be our first thematic issue, focused on *Gender, Development and Resistance*, guest edited by Tiina Seppälä and Sara C. Motta. The call for papers received over 35 submissions from which we selected some promising abstracts for full submissions. Now the full texts are submitted and are out on reviews. Finally, some 3-5 articles will be published in December.

We have a couple of submissions already for future thematic issues and are welcoming more submissions, especially those that cover themes that engage with unconventional perspectives on resistance. It is our goal to broaden the discussion on resistance and include novel theoretical frameworks, types of resistance, methodologies, contexts, and empirical data. Our aim is to have one thematic issue each year out of two issues we print each year. The other annual issue will continue to be an open call for submissions.

We have noticed that submitted articles tend to deal with resistance only implicitly, or they are texts that more comfortably relate to one specialized and already established field – typically social movement studies. However, that is not enough to develop resistance studies. We face a problem that is typical of a new and emerging field, a kind of Catch 22: since the concepts, theories and methodologies of “resistance” are not already well developed; it is hard to develop new concepts, theories, and methodologies. We are however determined to make this development, and we think it is possible, if we keep the focus and collaborate. Therefore, the *Journal of Resistance Studies* encourage submissions that explicitly deal with resistance, preferably in a critical way, and with themes or contexts that are unconventional, that broaden our understanding of this phenomenon. Please, spread calls for such texts in your circles.

On the other hand, in order to develop resistance studies we need more than publications (such as JRS). We also need to meet face-to-face and discuss. Last year there was an international workshop on resistance

studies at Karlstad University in Sweden, organized in collaboration with the Resistance Studies Initiative at UMass Amherst, and this year the University of Brighton, through the Critical Studies Research Group, organized a resistance studies conference. However, it is a sign of how weak and still emerging the field is that we still do not have a regular meeting space in the world. Despite that there are many and a growing number of scholars from different academic disciplines that focus on understanding resistance; and, despite an increasing number of papers and panels at major academic conferences; and, despite that occasional workshops and conferences devoted to resistance studies occur, there is still no regular conference structure for resistance scholars. Some of us are in activist and academic networks that discuss the need for regular conferences that could develop the field. Hopefully that will materialize soon.

In the meantime, be aware that (1) many of us participate in panels at some regular conferences (like ASA – the American Sociology Association, BISA – the British International Studies Association, and ISA – the International Studies Association), and (2) we for many years have different online networks that facilitate the spreading of information and communication between people interested in resistance studies, and where calls for papers and announcements of conferences, collaborations, jobs, and new literature, etc. are posted:

Resistance Studies Network (2006-), hosted at University of Sussex, UK: a global community of activists and scholars interested in critical reflections on resistance. Here academics can present themselves and you can subscribe to a global mailing list (with currently 550 members). The organizational core of the network consists of academics based at the University of Gothenburg, University of Sussex, and University of Massachusetts. See: <http://resistancestudies.org/>

Resistance Studies Initiative (2014-), at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA: an academic platform that provides annual graduate and undergraduate courses in resistance studies and a resource site (with a collection of news feeds on resistance, academic syllabuses on resistance, a blog on resistance, key literature collections, and a North American list serve with announcements). RSI also organizes workshops in which activists and academics meet and reflect together. The RSI is the founder

and provider of support to the *Journal of Resistance Studies*.

See: <http://www.umass.edu/resistancestudies/>

RSN mailing list (global): <https://lists.chalmers.se/mailman/listinfo/rsn>

RSI mailing list (North America and New England):

<http://www.umass.edu/resistancestudies/subscribe>

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While we will have to do a lot of work to increase the formal structures and institutionalization of resistance studies (with positions, funding, publications, academic conferences, etc.), as it solves a lot of practical problems we live with today and makes the studies of resistance more prominent, we also need to be clear that it will create new problems in the future ... With recognition, growing organizations and activities we will also get hierarchies and competition for resources, and we will encounter forces and people within academia that wants to utilize resistance studies for their own ends. In order for a new discipline or academic field – even if it is a rebellious and interdisciplinary one – to get accepted and integrated into the academia, it will have to compromise, accommodate and live side by side with an academic system that is not only embodying academic freedom and truth-orientation, but essentially is an integrated part of militarism, nationalism, patriarchy, racism, heteronormativity, and academic snobbery – basically the systemic and cultural violence of the nation state and global capitalism. There is no space, also not within academia, that is liberated and free from relations of domination. And that has consequences when we are building a new academic discipline or field. There are of course more or less problematic spaces within academia, and different ways to introduce new areas, and there is much you can influence yourself by adopting skilled strategies. However, we need to be humble and cautious when we look on what happened to, for example, Marxism, Gender studies, Peace studies or Social Movement studies, when they got integrated. They have achieved much, and some of them remain to be critical voices within public debate and academia, but in what way did they succeed to really challenge dominant forces or cleavages within academia? To what extent did they manage to play a role for the rebellious movements from where they once came, or to stay loyal to the radical goals of these movements? Or, was it the other way

around, that the movements become a stepping-stone towards an academic carrier for individuals? Many have done research that points to the corrupting dangers with institutionalization. We, who work on resistance studies also need to take a look on that research.

In our work to promote resistance studies and to build the infrastructure of its endeavor, we need to carefully study the trajectories of our sister movements within academia, especially the problems and contradictions they encountered, and how some of them – groups and individuals – have managed to successfully deal with them. We have something to learn. We will have to be careful to avoid becoming like, for example, Peace studies, a discipline that turned its back to the peace movement, and became so preoccupied with being accepted as a “real” social science that it turned everything into quantified data, and avoided to talk about peace as something more than the absence of violent conflict. Peace studies turned into some kind of “critical studies of militarism” during the Cold War, indeed warranted, but at the same time, today it is far away from the studies of peace. And very far away from the revolutionary aspirations of people like Mohandas. K. Gandhi that once was the inspiration for the founders of peace studies. Some of us that initiated resistance studies are refugees from peace studies, and are therefore acutely aware of the dilemmas that haunt the discipline today.

In our work to develop resistance studies we need to find ways to keep the contention with relations of domination alive and thriving, also when that domination is part of the academia. I do not have the answers to how we need to go about this, but I do know that what made this work possible and created the vision of resistance studies among us PhD-students at a peace studies department at the University of Gothenburg, was informal networks. It was through linking academics, activists, authors, and interested individuals into a network that created activities growing out of desire – despite no one believing it would “work” – that we found the ideas, inspiration and energy to do what we do now. Perhaps, we need to keep creating informal networks also when we create new formal structures. Perhaps the trap is the assumed either-or choice between being a network or being a formal organization? Are the rational organization *and* the network of desire the tandem we need to ride to make resistance studies into more than just another radical attempt

within academia? I have many questions, but few answers. However, it is clear that the challenges ahead of us will demand much more of creative thinking and discussions, and as long as we keep the critical questions and self-critical reflections alive, we have a chance. Thanks for being part of this journey.

RESISTANCE

STUDIES INITIATIVE

Critical Support of People Power and Social Change

The UMass Amherst Resistance Studies Initiative, the first of its kind anywhere in the world, supports unarmed struggles against all forms of exploitation and violence. A generous donation from a Quaker activist family has underwritten the Initiative and the creation at UMass of an Endowed Chair in the Study of Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Resistance.

The Initiative seeks to create “resistance studies,” a liberationist social science analyzing and supporting the efforts of activists worldwide that are employing direct action, civil disobedience, everyday resistance, digital activism, mass protest, and other kinds of nonviolent resistance. Its essential goals are to help create a more humane world by fostering social change and human liberation in its fullest sense. It will study how resistance can undermine repression, injustices, and domination of all kinds, and how it can nurture such creative responses as constructive work, alternative communities, and oppositional ways of thinking.

www.umass.edu/resistancestudies/