



3 strategies for change

A mapping exercise of actions to strategies

Resistance and building Counterpower

To resist and build up counter-power means to (publicly) oppose something that is judged to be unjust or unsustainable. This involves seeking a direct confrontation or a break with existing institutions and social structures. This can occur in various ways, such as physical blockades that disrupt unjust or destructive activities while simultaneously drawing attention to these injustices. This strategy aims to foster democratic change: when unjust circumstances are temporarily halted and publicly discussed, it raises awareness among more people about the need for socio-ecological transformation and increases pressure on policymakers to implement radical reforms for a good life for all. Other terms for this strategy include rupture and counter-hegemony.

Examples

- The blockade of a coal mine as a deliberate act of resistance against a capitalist economic system based on fossil fuels, which contributes to the climate crisis.
- The occupation of a university to prevent neoliberal university reforms, such as the increasing alignment of curricula with the job market.
- The development and formulation of joint demands to the government, for example, in the form of a position paper drafted and signed by various civil society actors.

Opportunities

Civil society groups and social movements are crucial for resistance and counterpower. Such actions strengthen these movements and demonstrate that they have the power to alter power structures and make the unthinkable possible. Through demonstrations, blockades, and occupations, they disrupt the political routine, interrupt societal processes, and make problems visible, thereby increasing pressure on political decision-makers. At the same time, they challenge widespread ideas and practices by openly addressing issues such as capitalism, the climate crisis, and resource depletion, raising awareness of the necessary changes. These acts of resistance can also support other transformation strategies and drive change. For example, occupations can create new free spaces where people can experiment with and live in solidarity.

Challenges and Limitations

Some forms of resistance are criminalized, punished, or delegitimized by authorities. Authorities often respond to such actions with violence and repression, which can have



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long-term consequences. Therefore, the risks of such actions are often high. The ability to bear these risks varies from person to person and often depends on privileges. As a result, resistance actions are often temporary and limited in scope, which can restrict their potential impact.

Building counterpower also involves initiating cultural change by questioning and transforming common societal thought patterns and behaviors. A challenge here is that such change in people's minds and hearts usually happens slowly. Competitive thinking, profit-seeking, and other unsustainable mindsets are deeply ingrained, and it takes intensive learning and unlearning processes to overcome them.

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