

How Extinction Rebellion Aids Counter-Insurgency & Legitimises Police Violence

Green Anticapitalist Front

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In the wake of civil rights era activism, states and Police around the globe have rapidly developed and widely utilised methods of Counter-Insurgency against every popular movement threatening to create a more just, and equitable world. Some movements have gained legal and political concession, some even mild victory – while most have led to an influx of political prisoners and repressed citizens. With extensive documents available that describe and outline Counter-Insurgency tactics, it is possible for us to analyse the actions taken by movements to understand their impact and likelihood for generating lasting change.

Counter-insurgency (COIN) are military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government. It is an umbrella term that describes the complete range of measures that governments take to defeat rebellions

Many would assume that peaceful activists have nothing to fear from Police, or that these activists would not be considered targets for repression. Though, to their surprise the definition given by bodies enforcing counter-insurgency clearly stipulate: Any element of society deemed a threat to the state's monopoly of power is classified as insurgency. This includes scholars, students, authors, journalists, peaceful protesters, activists, organised workers, civilian support structures, and guerilla elements. These groups without discrimination, and with great prejudice, are all addressed through the lens of counter insurgency tactics by Police.

It is becoming increasingly alarming how movements like Extinction Rebellion (XR), without a proper understanding of Counter-Insurgency unknowingly aid COIN operations, and state violence.

This article is an analysis of how Extinction Rebellion – despite their best intentions – aid counter-insurgency and legitimise Police violence.

Legitimising Systems Of Domination

Extinction Rebellion are known to film themselves committing 'crimes', waiting to be arrested, complying and collaborating with the very oppressors they claim to oppose. There is a hard-line stance that any other tactics are unacceptable in or out of XR, paired with the utter refusal to re-evaluate their techniques. This leaves no room and often even creates a dangerous environment for marginalised groups to become involved, contributing to division that benefits only the state and white supremacy.

While the majority of activists involved with Extinction Rebellion may have no official affiliation with the state or its organs, their ideals mirror those which give the governing body legitimacy and control. The logic behind XR's proposed strategy originates from positions of privilege. Their strategy being to confer with politicians for mild reform, and seeking compromise rather than addressing and abolishing root causes for systemic issues; the state and its organs. Proving only to allow the culprits of climate destruction opportunities to legitimise, expand, and evolve into more subtle methods of operation, which become more difficult to combat.

As a consequence, only people who have adequate resources and privilege can partake in the struggle for liberation. It is not realistic for anyone who is not white, with a stable house

and finances to put themselves in a position where they are forced to be brutalised, arrested, and attend court. This strategy of playing within the system aids the state's ability to quell dissent and manage resistance, rather than generating any real threat to the systems of domination.

Transforming Support Into Manageable Resistance

Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that all struggles for liberation are intertwined – how would it be possible to achieve climate justice without decolonisation? Or, animal rights without addressing private property? A lack of intersectionality means splitting resistance into smaller concentrated niche struggles which become much easier for police to map, manage, and pacify.

A symptom of one-dimensional struggle is the creation of static organisations – where only a single issue is addressed and all other issues are ignored as insignificant or irrelevant. This also makes easy work of promoting compromise to divide popular movements. This is when legal changes are made or political representation is given to a movement to pacify its majority. If the states of the world would agree to a simple concession, for example – signing the Paris agreement – portions of activists and their support networks would claim victory and pacify their resistance. Others would understand the root causes for the climate crisis have still not been addressed, and continue to struggle in a drastically weaker network of activists.

By ignoring intersectionality and seeking reform rather than the total destruction of oppressive and ecologically catastrophic structures in their entirety, the movement is weakened to the whims of politics – a game the state will always win.

Negligence of Operational Security & Security Culture

Security culture refers to the set of values, shared by everyone in an organisation, that determine how people are expected to think about and approach security. XR's affinity for "civil disobedience" type actions leads them to the understanding that police and government will look upon them favourably – thus assuming operational security is entirely unnecessary. In fact this misconception only makes them easier targets for surveillance and repression.

A lack of security culture means a staggeringly more difficult blockage to upward growth. Coupled with police infiltration, intelligence gathering and sabotage becoming increasingly simple. Police can then generate catalogues of activist identities, track them, and identify them without hindrance. For the Police, this means risk assessment and control are no longer complex operations, maximising the control the state holds over the movement and actions by activists. Ultimately, through presumed ignorance XR allows a database of activists identities to be collected and used for spycop operations. Being known to the Police increases the risk of repression, and can limit your ability to further the struggle against

capitalism in more meaningful and impactful ways – suffocating the movement as it exits the gate.

Dogmatic Non-violence

Exclusive and dogmatic non-violence works to self-police a movement from taking any effective autonomous forms of resistance. Extinction Rebellion demand all activists strictly adhere to their set of outlined principles; dictating to black communities, and wider society the ‘best’ and ‘only’ way to fight for their own liberation. This conclusively benefits the state, patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism.

If continued without redirection, XR risks white-washing the history of militant resistance within every social movement to date; specifically people of color during the civil rights movement, or the armed anti-colonial movements in India against British rule. All of whom relied on a diversity of tactics in their struggles against oppression.

Diversity of tactics is a strategy of planning an action to have the most effective impact based on your goals – rather than relying blindly on cookie cutter techniques of the past. By ignoring the importance of a diversity of tactics, XR push themselves into an isolated corner of ideological ineffectiveness, and in doing so perpetuate ideals that do great amounts of harm to these communities. Dogmatic non-violence creates a division between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ activists, which contributes to COIN objectives.

Even if, right now in as you read these words, the government implemented every single policy and legislation XR demand – it would still not be enough to mitigate the catastrophic effects of the climate crisis. We need to acknowledge the ineffectiveness of the tools currently being wielded in order to learn new ways of struggling against the conglomerates who currently commit ecocide without consequence.

Where nonviolence flourishes, so does the state and counter-insurgency. Rather than relying on uninvolved politicians to take up governmental alteration, direct action and diversity of tactics hold the key for activists who seek to make lasting change.

Political Cult of Personality

The glorification of XR, activism, and social justice has led to the gentrification of struggle. What was once students raising awareness has morphed into a personality cult of white activists dressing up to film their street performances.

The premise of XR began with white academics who centred their activism in their belief of the martyr spectacle to affect mainstream media, and in turn, public consciousness. Prominent white activists, utilising social capital consistently put themselves in positions of leadership where they work to become somewhat irreplaceable. Contrary to their doctrine, they do not generate networks of autonomous groups capable of interchangeable roles. The substance of XR lies in the swathes of these activists competing for the world to view them

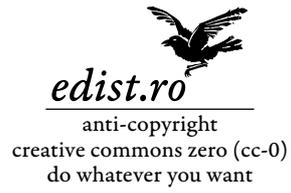
as audacious rebels; when in reality they have become no more than instagram obsessed spokespersons reaping the social benefits from the creation of a personality cult.

XR somehow became the loudest voice in the room, and still hasn't helped a thing – proving no amount of awareness alone can positively influence the climate crisis, contributing considerably to the dilution of resistance into privileged grovelling; pacifying a well intended movement.

In Conclusion

XR as a movement has existed since 2018, and through their initial actions they have achieved great amounts of awareness towards the destruction of our environment by profit-driven entities that are protected by the state. They have simultaneously, through a complete unwillingness to evaluate strategy and its impact, alienated themselves from their own goals of ending climate destruction. A conscious, and complete recalculation of involvement, strategies, tactics, and goals might be the only saviour for the activists still acting under XR's banner. Without drastic action against the state and it's apparatus, Extinction Rebellion will only succeed in aiding Counter-Insurgency and violent repression.

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