



Chapter 6

A Taxonomy of Action

If you love this planet, it's time to put away the distractions that have no potential to stop destruction: lifestyle adjustments, consumer choices, moral purity. And it's time to put away the diversion of hope, the last, useless weapon of the desperate. We have better weapons. It's time to put them all on the table and make some decisions.

What do we want? We want to end global warming and the globalized exploitation of the poor. We want the planet to recover and rejuvenate. We want, in no uncertain terms, to bring down civilization.

As Derrick wrote in *Endgame*, "Bringing down civilization means depriving the rich of their ability to steal from the poor, and it means depriving the powerful of their ability to destroy the planet." It means thoroughly

destroying the political, social, physical, and technological infrastructure that not only permits the rich to steal and the powerful to destroy, but rewards them for doing so.

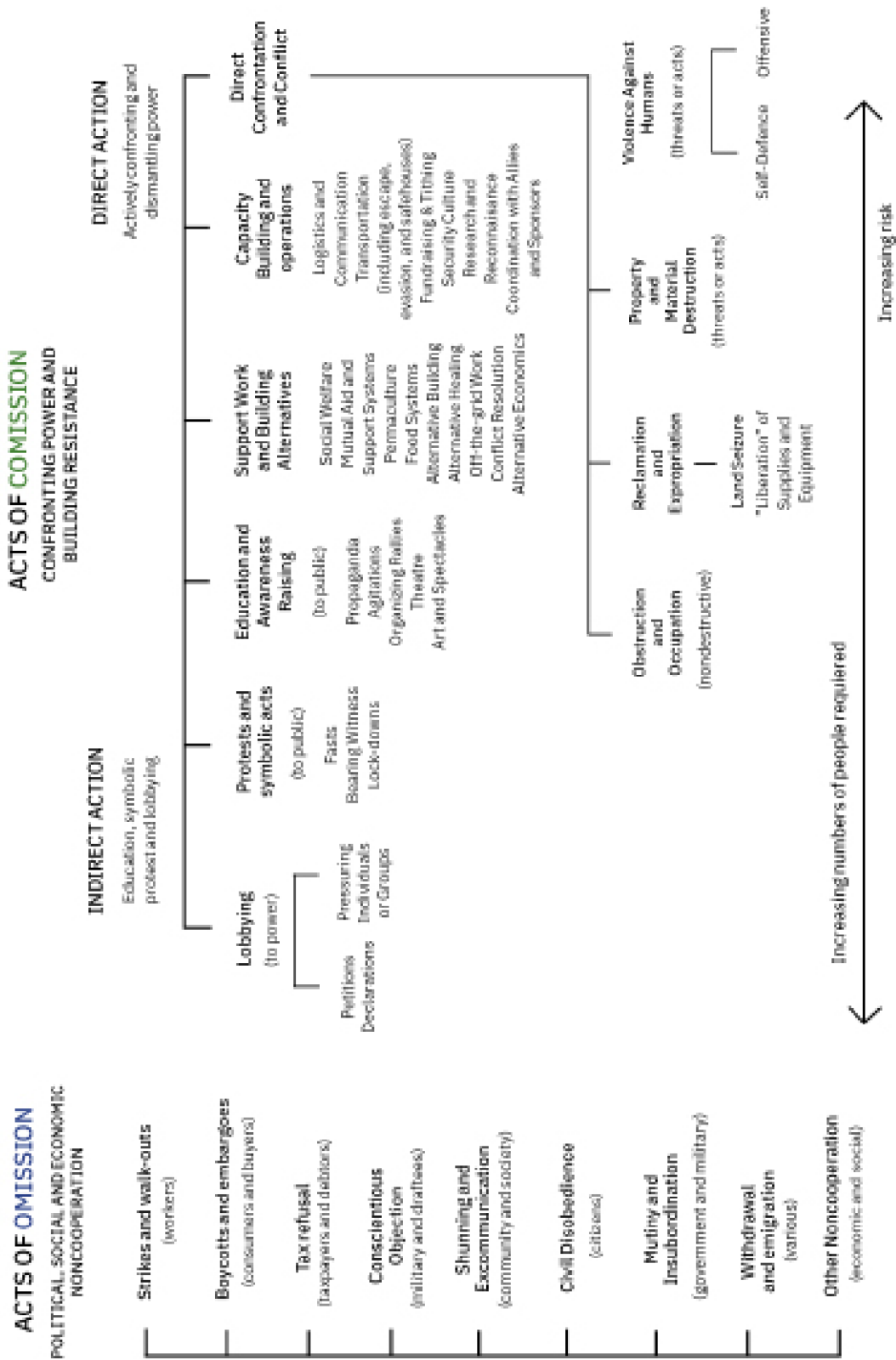
The strategies and tactics we choose must be part of a grander strategy. This is not the same as movement-building; taking down civilization does not require a majority or a single coherent movement. A grand strategy is necessarily diverse and decentralized, and will include many kinds of actionists. If those in power seek Full-Spectrum Dominance, we need Full-Spectrum Resistance.

When we seek effective strategies and tactics, we have to sort through millions of past and potential actions, most of which are either historical failures or dead ends. We can save ourselves a lot of time and anguish with a quick and dirty resistance taxonomy. By looking over whole branches of action at once we can quickly judge which tactics are actually appropriate and effective for saving the planet. A taxonomy of action can also suggest tactics we might otherwise overlook.

We can divide all of our tactics and projects into either acts of omission or acts of commission. Sometimes these categories overlap, and sometimes one tactic can support another.

But first, a warning. There is no easy way out. Every resistance victory has been won by blood and tears, with anguish and sacrifice. There are only so many ways to resist, and they all involve profound and dangerous struggle. Once we learn the stories of those who fight

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back, we have no choice but to fight back ourselves. Only by doing that can we hope to live up to their example. We must fight back because if we don't we will die. We must fight back not only to win, but to show that we are both alive and worthy of that life.

Acts of omission include strikes, boycotts and embargoes, tax refusal, conscientious objection to military service, mutiny and insubordination within military service, shunning and shaming (for severe social transgressions and wrongdoing, such as abuse or rape), civil disobedience (the refusal to follow unjust laws and customs), withdrawal or emigration from society, and other acts of noncooperation.

All acts of omission require very large numbers of people to be permanently effective on a large scale. An effective resistance movement based on acts of omission might need 10 percent, or 50 percent, or 90 percent of the population to win. One in a thousand people withdrawing from the global economy would have a negligible impact. Acts of commission are a different story. What if one out of a thousand people joined a campaign of direct action to bring down civilization? Seven million brave and smart people could ensure the survival of our planet.

Acts of omission are not going to bring down civilization. Let's talk about action with more potential. We can split acts of commission into six branches:

Lobbying is attempting to influence or persuade those in power through letter writing, petitions, declarations, protests, and so on. Lobbying via persuasion is a dead

end in virtually every radical endeavor. If those in power were essentially moral and could be convinced to change their behavior, we wouldn't be where we are now. Our ability to lobby those in power is vastly out-matched by their ability to lobby each other. Lobbying is simply not a priority in taking down civilization.

Protests and symbolic acts are tactics used mostly to gain attention. When used effectively, protests are part of a broader movement, and can show strength and attract recruits.

Education and awareness raising includes propaganda, agitation, rallies, theater, art and spectacle. Education won't directly take down civilization, but it may help to radicalize and recruit people.



Support work and building alternatives may take the physical form of sustainable local food systems, alternative construction, alternative health care, and off-the-grid energy, transport, and communications. It may also include socially focused endeavors such as mutual

aid, prisoner support, conflict resolution work, alternative economics, and intentional communities. These support structures directly enable resistance.

Building alternatives won't directly bring down civilization, but as industrial civilization unravels, alternatives can bolster resistance in times of crisis; resisters are more able to fight if they aren't preoccupied with getting food, water, and shelter. And alternative communities can act as an escape hatch for regular people, so that their day-to-day work and efforts go to autonomous societies rather than authoritarian ones. To serve either role, alternatives must be part of a culture of resistance.

Capacity building and logistics are the backbone of any successful resistance movement. No sustained campaign of direct action is possible without a healthy logistical and operational core which includes:

Recruiting new members, training recruits in tactics, strategy, and logistics, and screening recruits to assess their suitability and to exclude infiltrators.

Secure and rapid communication, to share information and coordinate plans. Many resistance groups have failed because of inadequate or insecure communications.

Funding, whether for offices and equipment, legal costs and bail, or underground activities.

Transportation, and distribution of materials.

Security, a necessity for any group big enough to make a splash and become a target for state repression and intelligence gathering. Infiltration is a serious concern, as is surveillance. This does not apply solely to groups or individuals considering illegal actions. Many times it is the aboveground resisters who are more at risk as working aboveground means being identifiable.

Research and reconnaissance, to gather information about potential targets, and develop strategy.

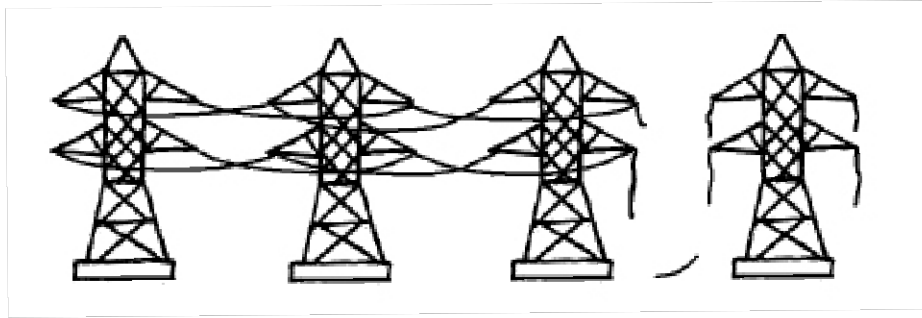
Essential services and care, including repair of equipment and clothing. Health care skills and equipment can be extremely valuable, and resistance groups should have at least basic first aid capabilities.

Coordination with allies and sponsors.

Direct conflict and confrontation with power is required for success; you can't win on the defensive. There are four basic ways to directly confront those in power:

Nondestructive obstruction and occupation—block it. This includes the blockade of a highway, a tree sit, a lock-down, or the occupation of a building. These acts prevent those in power from using or destroying the places in question. With enough dedicated people, these actions can be very effective.

Reclamation and expropriation—take it. Instead of blocking the use of land or property, the resistance takes it for their own use. For example, the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil occupies underused farmland and sets up farming villages for landless or displaced people.



Property and material destruction (threats or acts)—break it. This category includes sabotage, which can be more than just physical damage to machines; labor activism has long included work slowdowns and deliberate bungling. The US military has published a number of manuals and pamphlets on sabotage for use by occupied people.

Violence against humans (threats or acts). The purpose of violent resistance isn't simply to do violence or exact revenge; the purpose is to reduce the capacity of those in power to do further violence.

The incredible level of day-to-day violence inflicted by this culture on human beings and on the natural world means that to refrain from fighting back will not prevent violence. The question, as ever, is which particular strategy—violent or not—will work.