

## TACTIC

# CACEROLAZO (NOISE-MAKING PROTEST)

Let your resistance be heard loud and clear by making lots of noise en masse — banging pots and pans, blowing whistles, honking horns, or setting off cell-phone ringtones.

## CONTRIBUTED BY

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## “A CACEROLAZO IS DRIVEN BY SHARED DISCONTENT; THE TACTIC IS FUNDAMENTALLY PARTICIPATORY AND DEMOCRATIC.”

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“You and I travel to the beat of a different drum.”  
—Linda Ronstadt

As the clock struck 8 pm on a Montréal spring night in May 2012, a sound rose like crickets at dusk: a metallic tapping in the distance that multiplied and spread until a cacophony of clanging pots and pans filled the air. All over the city, tens of thousands of people took to the streets that night, and for many nights to follow, armed with kitchenware. It was the largest pot-banging protest — *cacerolazo* in Spanish, *les casseroles* in French — that North America had ever seen.

As a protest tactic, the *cacerolazo* first gained international prominence in the 1970s, emerging as a powerful means of expressing popular dissent under brutal repression in Chile during the US-backed military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. It again came to prominence during Argentina’s neoliberal financial crisis in 2001. The tactic was widely deployed in Québec during the student strike in 2012 (see: STORY: Québec Student Strike), and again in Turkey the following year during mass protests against widespread government corruption and police repression.

Given its auditory force, a *cacerolazo* of sufficient size can be incredibly effective in drawing people into the streets, and massing them in public spaces (see: TACTIC: Mass street action). It also costs nothing and requires no previous activist training or skills (see: PRINCIPLE: Simple rules can have grand results). A *cacerolazo* is driven by shared discontent; the tactic is fundamentally participatory and democratic. People can also participate without hitting the streets, just by leaning out their window and banging a pot and pan in solidarity (see: PRINCIPLE: Create many points of

## POTENTIAL RISKS

Some critics, while acknowledging the excellent collaborative, creative, and disruptive qualities of the *cacerolazo*, point out that in a revolutionary context, the tactic can serve as a less challenging and potentially less effective alternative to more instrumental actions (see: THEORY: Expressive and instrumental actions), such as a bank blockade or a general strike. However, it’s important to consider the broader social and political context within which *cacerolazos* are taking place. Under the terror and extreme repression of Pinochet’s 1970s regime in Chile, or in a repressive context like the Québec student strike (when government authorities passed a law making street protests illegal), spontaneous *cacerolazos* served as an antidote to fear and drew wide swaths of the population into active participation in civil

entry).

Given the speed and spontaneity with which the tactic can spread, and the resulting clamor, a successful cacerolazo is disorienting to police forces attempting to control the protests. A cacerolazo protest is versatile and decentralized. It can be deployed during mass street demonstrations, but can also be used as a disruptor, say, for example, at a politician's press conference, or a corporate luncheon (see: TACTIC: Creative disruption). Musically, it can range from a noisy, chaotic free-for-all to more coordinated rhythms. The tactic appeals to all ages and is particularly popular with children, who love banging pots and pans together even more than adults do.

While the tactic, most prominent in Latin America, originally began with the use of kitchenware, it can also extend to other type of noise-making instruments or tools including horns, whistles, ringtones, and more. For example, in Lebanon, people used air horns in the Parliament square as well as car horns at the sight of Parliamentarians to protest the illegal extension of the Parliament's term (see: STORY: Honk at Parliament).

## LEARN MORE

Casseroles - Montréal, 24 Mai 2012

Jeremie Battaglia, 2012

<https://vimeo.com/42848523>

A Brief History of Pots and Pans

Colin M. Snider, Americas South and North, 2012

<https://americasouthandnorth.wordpress.com/2012/06/08/a-brief-history-of-pots-and-pans/>

disobedience.

## RELATED TOOLS

### Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Honk at Parliament
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Round Dance Revolution

### Tactics

- Blockade
- Creative disruption
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- General strike
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Occupation

### Principles

- Anyone can act
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Create many points of entry
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Make new folks welcome
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the power of ritual

### Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

### Methodologies

- Ladder of engagement
- Pillars of power

- Spectrum of allies

**TAGS**

Action design, Street protest,  
Humour, Nonviolence