

On Civil Disobedience

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St. Gallen Symposium 2023

“A New Generational Contract”

Introduction

Particularly through the activities of groups like *Fridays for Future*, *Last Generation*, or *Extinction Rebellion*, a new and growing interest in the legitimacy and effectiveness of various forms of political activism has emerged. For example, *Last Generation* has been protesting for a year for tougher climate-protection measures. It relies mainly on blockades of roads and airports, with activists gluing themselves to the spot. In addition, there have also been high-profile protests at ministries, museums, and concert halls. They gained a lot of public attention when activists glued themselves to museum walls and attacked famous paintings with paint or mashed potatoes.¹ A common viewpoint you hear from activists is the following: The climate crisis threatens our children and future generations with heatwaves, floods and rising sea levels, wildfires, loss of biodiversity, and psychological adaptation costs like climate anxiety. Hence, they must break the law to avoid being guilty of a bigger crime. Is that right?

In particular, civil disobedience, which aims to break the law while committing to the principle of nonviolence, has attracted public interest: Is civil disobedience legitimate or a criminal act? Can it be morally right to break the law if breaking the law seems to be the only way to prevent disaster? How can one distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate causes? Is there even a moral obligation to engage in acts of civil disobedience given the threats imposed by the climate and biodiversity crises? How should the state react to this form of protest? And how much hindrance from protests do citizens have to tolerate? What does non-violence mean? Is there no alternative, legal and democratic way to effectively articulate one’s interests? The list could go on.

As of February 2023, Climate activists seem to be highly motivated to continue their protests, and the movement seems to be spreading through society at large. In August 2022, even the prestigious scientific journal *Nature Climate Change* published an article that basically argued that especially scientists have a right if not a duty to engage in acts of civil disobedience to focus public attention on the severe consequences of climate inaction.² It starts with the following unusually alarmist words: “Time is short to secure a liveable and sustainable future; yet, inaction from governments, industry and civil society is setting the course for 3.2 °C of warming, with all the cascading and catastrophic consequences that this implies. In this context, when does civil disobedience by scientists become justified?” And it continues: “When those with expertise and knowledge are willing to convey their concerns in a more uncompromising manner ... this affords them particular

¹ To my knowledge, the paintings have never been damaged by the attacks, as they have been protected by glass. However, these activities are costly for museums as the paintings must be lavishly cleaned and—if this form of protest becomes the rule—museums may be confronted with higher insurance premia.

² Capstick, S., Thierry, A., Cox, E. *et al.* Civil disobedience by scientists helps press for urgent climate action. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 12, 773–774 (2022).

effectiveness as a communicative act. This is the insight of Greta Thunberg when she calls on us to ‘act as you would in a crisis.’”

I will look at civil disobedience mainly from a philosophical and from an empirical point of view. I am not interested in the specifics of, e.g., the compatibility of civil disobedience with Swiss law. The purpose is also not to give an exhaustive survey over the extensive and nuanced literature about the subject. And it is even less an attempt to justify or condemn civil disobedience as a practice of individual or collective resistance. It is rather a subjective attempt to sensitize for some of the issues I find especially important when thinking about this form of political protest.

Civil disobedience is discussed for states without and with a justified claim to political authority, and as can be expected, the discussions come to very different conclusions. I will henceforth discuss this type of political activism only for states with a justified claim to authority, i.e., a state that fulfills certain procedural and consequentialist norms of fairness and justice that can be summarized as a *liberal constitutional democracy with the rule of law*.

For states like this, the default position seems to be clear: In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, there are ways for legal resistance: Independent courts can be appealed against unlawful state power, and elections plus popular initiatives enables opposition along legal lines. Hence, it could be argued that there basically no room for a right of resistance that intentionally breaks the law. In a state governed by the rule of law, respect for the law cannot be left to the discretion of individuals.

This position seems to align well with public opinion on civil disobedience: “Across the political spectrum, many people—journalists, politicians, but also activists and theorists—seem to think there is something fundamentally wrong with civil disobedience. Some consider it too radical, as an attempt to procure political power under the mantel of moral principles, as a one-sided renunciation of the duty to obey the law and to uphold order that is not to be tolerated.”³ Especially in Western democracies, citizens must restrict themselves to democratic institutions to express their normative discontent. At the same time, “[o]n the other extreme we find those who consider it nothing more than the impotent expression of a reformist yearning for cosmetic changes within a given system, as a socially permissible and harmless protest of well-intentioned citizens, which remains purely symbolic and only contributes to the stabilization of the status quo.”⁴

Philosophical and legal positions that argue in favor of civil disobedience usually take this idealized vision of a state as a starting point to argue why real states fall short of this idealization and how these shortcomings can make other, non-law-abiding forms of political articulation legitimate. An example would be that democratic elections, if not properly controlled by the rule of law, can lead to the majority always prevailing at the expense of minorities. Hence, even if every citizen has formal voting rights, there may be situations where minorities’ voices are systematically not heard within the system. Civil disobedience might therefore be the only way to bring attention to their causes. Creating this space may therefore not only be an ethical imperative but also prudent for the state as it may allow to involve groups that would otherwise threaten to radicalize.

But before we start with a more detailed discussion, let us briefly look at the history of civil disobedience. The term can be traced back to Henry David Thoreau, who, in protest against slavery and the United States’ war against Mexico in 1846, stopped paying taxes and accepted a prison

³ Celitakes, R. (2016): Rethinking Civil Disobedience as a Practice of Contestation—Beyond the Liberal Paradigm, *Constellations Volume 23, No 1*.

⁴ Celitakes, R. (2016): Rethinking Civil Disobedience as a Practice of Contestation—Beyond the Liberal Paradigm, *Constellations Volume 23, No 1*.

sentence for doing so. Since then, the term has been intensively discussed. All positions have in common that they see a limited tolerance for violations of the law as an expression of a mature constitutional state. The latter recognizes that there may be situations in which legitimate decisions of conscience are made that do not receive an appropriate hearing within the legal framework. Therefore, in extreme situations, the creation of a social balance is only possible if law is broken. However, there is also agreement that not every arbitrary breach of law can be considered civil disobedience.

What is civil disobedience?

Civil disobedience is a form of political protest that challenges the existing order by purposefully breaking the law. Compared to more radical forms of protest, however, this is done in a specific, “civil” way. The normative perspective on this phenomenon therefore depends on the implicit or explicit understanding of the relationship between society and its institutions.

Several of the most influential political philosophers and legal theorists were concerned with civil disobedience, and their positions form what might be called the mainstream, liberal view. None of them question the legitimacy of this form of protest *per se* but hedge the area in which it is considered legitimate, sometimes strongly.

The most influential definition goes back to John Rawls’ book *A Theory of Justice*.⁵ He defines civil disobedience as “a public, non-violent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government” by appealing to the “sense of justice of the majority,” all “within the limits of fidelity to law”. The latter element of the definition implies a willingness of the protestor to accept lawful penalty (which does not imply that the state must execute it; in fact, there is a long debate regarding the adequacy of punishment in case of legitimate civil disobedience).

Jürgen Habermas has a similar and even “tamer” concept in mind by requiring that the protest has to be announced in advance: “Civil disobedience is a morally justified protest which may not be founded only on private convictions or individual self-interests; it is a public act which, as a rule, is announced in advance and which the police can control as it occurs; it includes the premeditated transgression of legal norms without calling into question obedience to the rule of law as a whole; it demands the readiness to accept the legal consequences of the transgression of those norms; the infraction by which civil disobedience is expressed has an exclusively symbolic character— hence is derived the restriction to nonviolent means of protest.”⁶

Boiling it down to its essential core, civil disobedience is a form of individual or collective protest, if it is *public, non-violent, conscientious, and contrary to but accepting the law*. Even though this mainstream view gives rise to a lot of disputes, it is still a relatively “tame” concept, as it requires a basic acceptance of the state’s institutions. This plus the commitment to nonviolence make this form of disobedience civil. And at that level of abstraction, most scholars as well as laypeople would agree that protest that respects this definition can be legitimate.

Does it have to be this way? As I have already said, implicit in this definition is a very specific understanding of the relationship between society and its institutions. The liberal fallback starts with

⁵ Rawls, J. (1971): *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 364–6.

⁶ Habermas, J. (1985): Civil Disobedience. Litmus Test for the Democratic Constitutional State, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 30, 96–116, 100.

the idea that rules and institutions are constitutive of society. According to this view, a liberal democracy can only come to life insofar as it is expressed in its institutions. As an implication, any form of protest that challenges these institutions must be illegitimate, and it must be taken for granted that the basic architecture of the state is just. From a more radical democratic perspective, however, institutions and legal principles like the rule of law are themselves expressions of collective self-determination. From this point of view, civil disobedience is more like a specific form of expression in the continuous process of negotiating consensus. In the words of Celitakes (2016): “Rather than as a defensive act of individual rights bearers, civil disobedience thus emerges as an essentially collective and political practice of contestation— as a form of struggle in which the vertical form of state authority is confronted with the horizontal power of the association of citizens or the governed, the “low-intensity representative democratic institutions and modern constitutional formations” with the “participatory or high-intensity democratic forms of democracy and self-determination.”

Are these definitions adequate? This is not the place to survey the extensive debates regarding the adequacy of the different elements of the definition.⁷ To give you an idea about what is at stake, I will focus on two elements of the definition, *sense of justice of the majority* and *non-violence*.

Sense of justice of the majority: Rawls’ claim that civil disobedience must appeal to the sense of justice of the majority is empirically wrong and normatively problematic, as it can be argued that almost by definition, the outcome of democratic processes more or less reflects the opinion of the majority. Hence, any meaningful form of protest must challenge this mainstream view. Claiming otherwise makes this form of protest a blunt sword. One could argue that the outcome of democratic processes does not need to reflect the majority’s sense of justice, but its more narrowly defined self-interest, but even in this case, societal tensions often exist because a minority thinks that the mainstream sense of justice is deeply flawed. Historical acts of civil disobedience in the fight for women’s rights, for example, cannot be adequately framed as appeals to the majority’s sense of justice, at least not initially. What from today’s perspective seems like a broad normative consensus—the equality of women and men with respect to their political and civic rights—was nothing like this in the early days of the movement. And it is hard to think of forms of democratic and legal ways to express women’s interest as they did not have the democratic right to vote, and their legal rights were severely restricted as well. What else could for example the suffragettes do than to articulate their interests by means of civil disobedience? Even more radical forms of protest? If one wants to have a benevolent interpretation of this criterion, one could argue that protests changed the majority’s sense of justice over time.

Non-violence: A similar point can be made regarding the notion of nonviolence. At first glance, the term sounds innocuous and plausible. But the devil turns out to be in the details, as it is subject to interpretation. By definition, disobedience infringes with the interest of at least some person, organization, or institution. There must be some aspect of confrontation. Is an act violence if it violates the physical integrity of another person? If it damages property? If the protester harms her- or himself? What about psychological harm like stress? How about mere inconveniences? With sufficient interpretative leeway and creativity, any such infringement could count as an act of violence, which would make this form of protest ineffective.

Those who doubt the creativity of the *status quo* to define violence in a way as to make acts of civil disobedience impossible, should review the rulings by the German Federal Court of Justice. In 1969,

⁷ Delmas, Candice and Kimberley Brownlee, "Civil Disobedience", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/civil-disobedience/>>.

it ruled that it is an act of violent coercion to sit down in the street and to psychologically pressure the driver of a car to stop. In 2001, it ruled that it is an act of violent coercion to chain oneself to railway tracks or to an entrance gate. And in 2011, it ruled that even sitting down in the street may constitute a violent act.⁸

Civil disobedience challenges the interests of the majority and the existing order. Hence, there is always an interest to define key terms as to disqualify protest and make it seem illegitimate or to even criminalize it. This general tendency is confirmed by the reaction the state to the current protests in Germany. For example, police took several climate activists in so-called preventive detention (*Präventivhaft*) in Munich in November 2022. This detention can last up to two months without a criminal trial in Bavaria.⁹ Preventive detention has the purpose to *prevent* breaches of the law and is reserved to situations that qualify, e.g., as *significant disturbances of public safety*. Is the use of this measure and the classification really justified in dealing with the climate protesters, is their form of protest a *significant* disturbance of public *safety*? Celitakes (2016) nicely summarizes the problem: “Jurisprudence can always try to de-facto eliminate civil disobedience by defining key concepts in status-quo defending ways. If one grants the state this freedom, civil disobedience is reduced to a pressure valve without any potential for initiating reform of injustices embedded in the status quo. Or to be more precise, it reduces civil disobedience to a specific type of marketing campaign.”

I will come back to the marketing-aspects of this “toothless” form of resistance later. It is important to recognize at this point that this tendency toward “rhetorical delegitimization,” while understandable individually, is probably not socially prudent. People who engage in forms of social protest like civil disobedience make a *moral* claim, they are pointing towards some form of deeply felt injustice. If the state reacts by an attempt to delegitimize forms of protest, the normative discontent felt by these groups will not vanish. On the contrary, their sense of injustice may even grow, as they experience the state as oppressive and may therefore be motivated to reach for more extreme forms of protest. What may look like a threat to the existing order to the state or an illegitimate and strange request for the majority society, is a burning problem for protesters who often seek this form of protest as last resort. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: “[Nonviolent] direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.”

Normative justifications

Now that we have a first idea about the mainstream understanding of civil disobedience, it is time to come back to one of the questions from the beginning: How can this form of protest be justified in a liberal democracy under the rule of law? Again, I am wildly selective in this section; its main purpose is to give you a first idea about the different ways political philosophers and legal theorists think about this issue. Most liberal thinkers look at civil disobedience from a contractarian perspective. They see society as a kind of implicit contract between citizens where citizens have agreed to obey the law and the state guarantees justice. What happens if some groups in society feel

⁸ Some of these rulings have later been revoked by the German Federal Constitutional Court. See Celitakes, R. (2016): Rethinking Civil Disobedience as a Practice of Contestation—Beyond the Liberal Paradigm, *Constellations Volume 23, No 1* for details.

⁹ <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/gesellschaft/praeventivhaft-klima-protest-bayern-101.html>

that the state does not keep its promises? And what are these promises? We can be more or less controversial in answering these questions. Let us start with the more “conservative” views.

For Rawls (1971), either serious infringements with his first principle of justice (equal liberty) or serious violations of his second principle of justice (fair equality of opportunity) can justify an act of civil disobedience. He thereby implicitly accepts that “real” in contrast to “ideal” states are necessarily only approximations of justice, which creates legitimate space for acting “out of the state.” Ronald Dworkin (1985), a leading legal theorist, makes a somewhat similar point.¹⁰ He distinguishes between “matters of principle” (like civil liberties) and “matters of policy” (like decisions about the energy mix of a country) and argues that civil disobedience should be restricted to matters of principle. Hence, discrimination according to gender may legitimize civil disobedience, whilst the decision of the government to invest in nuclear power plants or to allow factory farming not. Rawls’ concept would give rise to a similar conclusion, as it would be hard to build a case that nuclear power plants or factory farming are serious infringements to the principle of equal opportunity. This example illustrates that a lot of the protests that we are currently observing would not qualify as acts of civil disobedience. Peter Singer, an early advocate of animal welfare, makes exactly this point with respect to the treatment of animals: “It is, he [Rawls] says, wrong to be cruel to animals, although we do not owe them justice. If we combine this view with the idea that the justification of civil disobedience must be in terms of justice, we can see that Rawls is committed to holding that no amount of cruelty to animals can justify disobedience.”

If you find this position unacceptable, you must scrutinize it and dig deeper. Here are two examples:

First, Smith (2004) argues for the case of constitutional democracies that civil disobedience is justifiable if (1) deliberation is insufficiently inclusive, (2) if it is manipulated by powerful participants, and (3) if it is insufficiently informed.¹¹ Hence, there is no mention to the type of harm that is a distinguishing factor for both, Rawls and Dworkin. The first aspect is directly related to the problem of minorities to have a voice in the democratic processes. The second aspect relates to the fairness of the democratic process that is violated if single financially or otherwise powerful actors have an unjustifiable impact on political decision making. The third aspect is the most complicated one, as the complexity of modern live places a high informational burden on citizens in democratic societies. It is implicitly an epistemic claim that democratic citizens do not have a right to ignorance if they want to participate in the political process. Debates about “fake news” and “alternative facts” over the last couple of years reveals, that this requirement points towards a much deeper level: Democratic societies do not only depend on a political but also on an “epistemic constitution,” a set of agreed upon principles about how to reach epistemic consensus.¹²

Smith’s arguments are especially relevant for climate protests, as a strong case can be built as the climate crisis fulfills all three criteria: Future generations have no direct voice in political deliberations even though they will be influenced by the climate crisis,¹³ it has been shown that corporations in the energy sector tried to manipulate public opinion,¹⁴ and climate activists are on

¹⁰ Dworkin, R. (1985): *A Matter of Principle*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Ch. 4.

¹¹ Smith, W. (2004): *Democracy, Deliberation and Disobedience*, Res Publica.

¹² Rauch, J. (2021): *The Constitution of Knowledge, A Defense of Truth*, Brookings Institution Press.

¹³ From a philosophical point of view, the argument that a lack of action to mitigate the climate crisis harms future generations, is subtle. As has been discussed by Parfit (1980), it is not clear how to apply the standard definition of harm to future, biologically unconceived generations, especially if the future individuals’ existence and identity depends on the present policies. See Parfit, D. (1980): *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/17/oil-companies-exxonmobil-chevron-shell-bp-climate-crisis>

the side of scientific evidence. Lemons and Brown (2011) explicitly make the point that there might even be a moral obligation to engage in acts of civil disobedience: “Despite knowledge of the risks of global climate change during the past 30 yr, the USA, among other nations, has failed to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions to reduce the risks to present and future generations. This is despite the fact that scientific and ethical literature makes the case that meaningful action is urgent. Consequently, we suggest that climate and environmental scientists, among others, consider whether non-violence civil disobedience should be used as a means to promote action on global climate change.”¹⁵

Second, Lefkowitz (2007) published an influential paper on the moral right to civil disobedience in constitutional democracies.¹⁶ He builds on Raz (1979) who denies such a right by arguing that the basic rights of citizens can be adequately recognized and protected in law.¹⁷ Contrary, Lefkowitz sees a conflict between the moral duty to obey the law and a moral right to express criticism and demand changes of exactly this law. He resolves this conflict arguing in favor of a specific kind of disobedience: citizens must either obey the law or they must *publicly* disobey it. He argues that a moral right to civil disobedience follows directly from the justification of a state’s claim to political authority: as collective action is a moral necessity, and as there is legitimate disagreement over the specific form of public action, “the moral right to political participation cannot be adequately recognized in law but instead entails a suitably constrained moral right to civil disobedience.” He develops his argument within a contractarian framework by first acknowledging basic human rights such as a right to be free from bodily harm, a right to freedom of religious belief and practice, a right to freedom of speech, a right to adequate nutrition, and a right to basic health care and argues that it cannot be guaranteed in pluralist societies that these rights are always respected within the political and legal framework that defines the state. Hence, a moral right to civil disobedience is a necessary counterweight that given people a kind of voice in situations where they would otherwise have none. The essential core of the disagreement is the view about the state’s ability to set and enforce rules that protect its citizen’s basic rights under all circumstances, even if they are very diverse. Given that much is at stake if Raz’s position is wrong and given that civil disobedience does not challenge the existence of the state as such, a precautionary principle would argue in favor of such a moral right.

When is civil disobedience effective?

But let us stick with the laundered, tame forms of civil disobedience that Celitakes (2016) has called a specific type of marketing campaign. Civil disobedience has at its core an evolutionary idea of change: it breaks the law to sensitize politicians, lawyers, or the public for an issue that the protesters find of supreme moral importance. Hence, it must rely on persuasion, and there is a growing body of literature that looks at civil disobedience as a specific form of marketing campaign. And as with marketing campaigns, a necessary condition for its success is public attention. But attention is not enough, in the end, it must convince the decisive group of people of their cause. Wieringa (2020) focusses on the possible dilemma: “For social movements, coverage in itself is not enough. Movements depend on media to spread their world view and repeat their arguments. Especially when using civil disobedience, which can be considered the most extreme form of nonviolent

¹⁵ Lemons J, Brown D.A (2011): Global climate change and non- violent civil disobedience. *Ethics Sci Environ Polit* 11:3–12.

¹⁶ Lefkowitz (2007): On a Moral Right for Civil Disobedience. *Ethics* 117, 202-233.

¹⁷ Raz, J. (1979): *The Authority of Law*, Oxford: Clarendon.

protest, social movements risk coverage that is counterproductive to their goals. They face a dilemma between quantity and quality of coverage: the more severe their protest, the more media attention they may get, but the more negative this coverage may also be.”

Is it possible to identify elements that make forms of civil disobedience successful in this respect? There are some relatively straightforward findings: Activism is more likely to be effective when there is already a significant level of public support. In addition, the organizational capacity, and the resources of activist groups also play an important role. In addition, and based on a historical comparative analysis, Dillard (2002) has shown that the effectiveness of civil disobedience depended on the way it was enacted.¹⁸ A clear commitment to non-violence (as understood by the public) and a non-threatening way to demonstrate turned out to be more effective. In addition, the credible signaling of their *willingness to suffer for their cause* and a willingness to communicate that suffering to the public turned out to be important. In a comprehensive study of resistance campaigns, Stephan and Chenoweth (2011) found that nonviolent ones succeeded more than half the time and more than twice as often than violent ones.¹⁹ Wieringa (2020) comes up with a more comprehensive list, and he identifies journalists not only as essential gatekeepers, but as key players to shape the public opinion.²⁰

First, a specific aspect of non-violence seems to be very important: *hindrance*. The prospect of civil disobedience alone tends to grab media attention, however, a decisive factor for getting the *right kind of media coverage*, media coverage that draws attention to the *cause* of the protestors, is non-hindrance. If the type of protest violates this requirement, media coverage is likely to focus on the obstruction of public order and the implied inconveniences imposed by the protest instead of its cause. In addition, it turns out to be hard to change the media narrative if protesters change their strategies. A campaign that does not respect this constraint is likely to fail as it gets a lot of media attention, but not for their cause but for its disruption of public life.

Second, *narrow, and easy-to-communicate goals* are advantageous: “The simpler the claim underlying an act of civil disobedience, the more effective the protest is in terms of media coverage.” Relatedly, a successful campaign succeeds in *relating the claim to the form of protest* (“the claim should be embedded in the act”). Simple claims and acts of civil disobedience that are directly related to this claim reduce the need for explanation and background information.

Third, a *strong hierarchical, top-down coordination of the activists* turns out to be advantageous in terms of media coverage. The underlying topic is simplicity again: An uncoordinated and undisciplined group of protestors is likely to send complicated and incoherent messages, blurring the cause.

Fourth, social movements should *build ties and establish trust with journalists*. Social ties and trust make it more likely that journalists will report about the protest and focus on its cause instead of the inconveniences implied by it. Direct communication with the media should be inclusive, as journalists who feel excluded makes them seem biased.

In summary, Wieringa’s (2020) explorative analysis reveals that four elements turn out to be decisive: *act, claim, organization, and media interaction*. Additional research is needed to make the results of his

¹⁸ Dillard, C. (2002): *Civil Disobedience: A Case Study in Factors of Effectiveness*, Society & Animals.

¹⁹ Chenoweth, E. and M. J. Stephan (2011): *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, New York, Columbia University Press.

²⁰ Wieringa (2020): *Take the Front Page, Exploring Differences in the Use of Civil Disobedience and their Effects on News Coverage*, Radboud University.

study more reliable, but it is laying the foundations for an *evaluation of existing campaigns* and the *design of future ones*.

Conclusion

It should be clear by now that while legal theorists and political philosophers agree that certain forms of civil disobedience are legitimate and may even constitute a moral duty, there are no easy answers for judging specific campaigns. What ethical and empirical reasoning can do is not to provide us with easy, one-size-fits-all answers to complex societal problems. Rather, it allows us to think about these issues in a principle-based way. So, I would like to invite all of you who have suffered to this point of the article to accept this invitation and to make up your mind regarding your view on this form of political protest and your own moral duties. We started the article with the following question: “The climate crisis threatens our children and future generations with heatwaves, floods and rising sea levels, wildfires, loss of biodiversity, and psychological adaptation costs like climate anxiety. Hence, they must break the law to avoid being guilty of a bigger crime. Is that right?” What is *your* answer? And are you willing to act accordingly?

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