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# Soup and Glue – A Recipe for Fighting Climate Change

*An investigation into the weaponisation of art by climate activists*

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## Abstract:

This thesis aims to investigate the newly emerging phenomenon in the environmental justice sphere – namely, the weaponisation of art by climate activists for the purpose of attracting attention to specific demands held. These attacks materialise in the form of organised acts wherein tactics entailing vandalism are enacted by a climate activist group. With the commencement of this climate movement in 2022, the current status of the controversial intersection of art and climate activism still shows a significant lack of inquiry into the phenomenon. This work commences with a content analysis-acquired mapping of instances of art vandalism, allowing for a characterisation of the new movement, its actors, acts, and mechanisms. The exploration of the movement follows a contentious politics framework, allowing for a characterisation of key elements which define it. Moreover, the thesis inquires how the movement meets the criteria outlined in the theory of contentious politics. This interdisciplinary approach offers a comprehensive insight into a new form of protest, contributing to the discussion on the role of art in social change, and the broader status of climate change activism in the 2020s.

## Keywords:

Art, vandalism, protest, climate activism, climate change, environmental justice, human rights, social movements.

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# 1. Introduction

Many say that a picture is worth a thousand words. A truth can be attested to this age-old statement, whether it comes from an avid art connoisseur, or an average person with little to no interest in art. A fine, esteemed form of creation and study, art is and has been held in high esteem. In multiple fields of study, art and art periods are of great importance to the understanding of society, of history, or even of the human psyche. Since 2022, numerous renowned works of art have transformed into a target for climate activists. Art has seemingly become a technique for individuals or groups to make a statement and bring attention to the current climate crisis.

The public eye is fixated on climate change, and for good reason. The warming of the global climate poses a deadly threat and is ‘the defining issue of our time’.<sup>1</sup> In response to these concerns, a large section of the public has voiced their worries. Dissatisfied youth activists have been at the forefront of the population which is bringing attention to climate change through protest. One of the prominent names involved in the broader climate movement is that of Greta Thunberg, who started the Fridays For Future school strikes back in 2018 and popularised a general stream of activism.<sup>2</sup> Globally, movements have been established and protests towards combatting climate change have taken place.

In recent years, select climate activists have utilised the emotive aspect of paintings, statues, and more, for the expression and desired acknowledgment of their demands and pleas in the face of growing fears surrounding an uncertain future. These activists aim to display the urgency of the situation, which they believe to be inextricably connected to human rights. Through their pleas, they emphasise possible implications for human lives and the planet and demand their protection. Their actions point towards a justification of vandalism and destruction of property against a human rights issue. Following every sensationalist instance of such vandalism, internet users and media outlets have instantly

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<sup>1</sup>A. Guterres, ‘Climate Change ‘Biggest Threat Modern Humans Have Ever Faced’, World-Renowned Naturalist Tells Security Council, Calls for Greater Global Cooperation’, *United Nations Press Release*, New York, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>J. de Moor et al., ‘New kids on the block: taking stock of the recent cycle of climate activism’, *Social Movement Studies*, vol. 20, no. 5, 2021, p. 621.

circulated the visual evidence of the act, simultaneously condemning it. Soup, paint, glue, potatoes, and cake - climate activists have not been short of creativity and imagination when enacting their protests. In defence of the environment, environmental groups have taken to art institutions equipped with controversial tactics for the goal of spreading their messages. In May of 2022, a solitary act began the art vandalism movement in question, when a man in disguise targeted the *Mona Lisa*, located in one of Paris' most frequently visited museums.<sup>3</sup> Following the first protest, the acts of vandalism grew and intensified. The groups responsible for these acts, many of which function and coordinate under an umbrella network, have defended their actions utilising the rationale of environmental justice and fundamental human rights.

The movement encompasses a contemporary approach to the growing climate emergency and has yet to be concretely defined and studied on a larger scale. As a response, this thesis henceforth aims to shed light on what this phenomenon is, what it entails, and how it operates within the criteria of *contentious politics*. The dissection of it will allow for a foundation for further examination.

## 1.1. Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the phenomenon of weaponisation of art by climate change activists. This is a modern and recently observed method of garnering attention from governmental entities and the general public for motivations fuelled by human rights and environmental justice. This research problem calls for a scholarly investigation, as a lack of previous literature underpins this field of research. It aims to fill the knowledge gap about the new yet seemingly well-established social movement. Moreover, this thesis is of importance in its contribution to the fields of research of social movements and environmental justice. By gaining an insight into the movement which the thesis situates itself in, the work will allow for a more nuanced interpretation of the movement, should the trend of targeting art continue. This developing, niche, branch of

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<sup>3</sup> Man in wig throws cake at glass protecting Mona Lisa', *Telegraph – Herald*, 31 May 2022.

climate activism offers an insight into the public response to the climate emergency, which constitutes a highly important human rights issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The research questions address this phenomenon and dissect it, while the essence of the work aims to deepen the understanding of the movement, and how it manifests itself. The following questions guide the line of inquiry:

1. What is the climate activist art vandalism movement and what characterises its performances?
2. How can contentious politics advance the understanding of the movement?

## 2. Ethical Considerations

Firstly, I outline some ethical considerations that crop up in the research of this topic. In all forms of research, it is important to work in a way which prioritises minimising harm to both respect and protect subjects, organisations, and reputations.<sup>4</sup> This responsibility, of acting in accordance with ethical practices, rests on the shoulders of the researcher. In a wider consideration of ethics, many dilemmas can occur. These include power imbalances between the researcher and the researched, social proximity to the researcher affecting the researched persons, and issues of publication.<sup>5</sup> These can be counteracted with precautions, such as informed consent and anonymisation. That being said, at times social researchers will have to compromise some practical values and claim a certain ‘moral license’ in order to effectively carry out research.<sup>6</sup> This is exemplified with the case of a medical profession – a doctor ought to preserve the health of their patients, and not to ‘save their souls or to serve the interests of a kin group’.<sup>7</sup> It is important for researchers to simultaneously explore

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<sup>4</sup> A. Traianou, ‘The Centrality of Ethics in Qualitative Practice’, in P. Leavy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 86-88.

<sup>5</sup> L. A. Fujii, ‘Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities’, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2012, pp. 718-720.

<sup>6</sup> Traianou, 2020, pp. 99-100

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100

contentious acts which permeate society and to consider ethics as an ongoing goal. In human rights research, there is a likelihood that research will relate to sensitive or otherwise charged issues.<sup>8</sup> One response to this is for scientific conduct to stay in line with ‘core human rights principles such as participation, non-discrimination, social inclusion and respect for the dignity of the human person’.<sup>9</sup> Considering these principles allows for a natural progression with an ethics-informed approach.

Within this study, the data obtained through global news outlets minimises potential harm, and transparently uses readily available public sources. The sources used are accessible through an Internet search, or otherwise obtained from academic library catalogues. The thesis does not involve direct contact with any human subjects, and hence avoids issues of informed consent or data destruction following any potential interviews. Moreover, the names of subjects who are involved will not be used, should they be discoverable through an Internet search. The use of such would offer no significant contribution to the scientific research, since the thesis does not consider the exact profile of activists to be important in this line of inquiry. Finally, as acts of vandalism possess legal ramifications, examining instances of such may raise considerations regarding legality or potential harm to individuals. Hence, general portrayals of protesters will anonymise the human subjects to avoid any potential consequences tied to the discussion of involvement in illegal actions.

As a final remark, on the term *vandalism*, the choice to use the word throughout the thesis has been carefully considered. Though climate activists predominantly work with substances and materials that leave no long-lasting damage, the purposeful use of them still results in an act of vandalism and leaves the art in need of some maintenance or cleaning before it can continue to be displayed. Vandalism can be defined as an act of deliberate destruction, and ‘constitutes damage upon the material landscape... it is an interaction between an individual and his or her direct material environment’.<sup>10</sup> Professor of art

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<sup>8</sup> G. Ulrich, ‘Research ethics for human rights researchers’ in B. A. Andreassen, H. Sano, and S. McInerney-Lankford, (eds.), *Research Methods in Human Rights*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017, p. 192.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204

<sup>10</sup> D. Chatzigiannis, ‘Vandalism of Cultural Heritage’, *Change Over Time*, vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 2015, pp. 120–35.

history, Dario Gamboni, disagrees with this term and its usage in relation to the destruction of art, and goes as far as calling it ‘inappropriate’.<sup>11</sup> In his view, this term is connected to senseless acts and may impose biases. Conversely, antiquities specialist, Dimitrios Chatziagiannis, poses an example of the dual interpretations of vandalism – if looking at a schoolyard or public square, where young people congregate or play, vandalism could be seen as antisocial, but also as a ‘gesture of familiarity’ with the given environment.<sup>12</sup> This example alludes to the fact that vandalism may not inherently be tied to biases when carried out, and hence should not be tied to biases when examined. Lastly, given that vandalism is a legal term and would be the term used to define an attack on art should it require the intervention of authorities, the word choice is most apt for the discourse throughout the thesis. This thesis proceeds in an objective manner and uses the term vandalism without any attribution of biases relating to antisocial or senseless behaviour.

### 3. Literature Review

Today’s climate-related research is vast and multidisciplinary, offering insights from various schools of research and different perspectives (for example, radical, feminist, indigenous perspectives). Scholars have covered areas of climate risks to humans, climate in relation to rights, climate activism, local and global climate and environmental case studies, and the scientific ins-and-outs of what climate change is, to name a few.<sup>13</sup> What the research links to, more so than just climate change as a solitary concept, is environmental justice.

This thesis operates before the backdrop of a larger issue, and a larger academic field – environmental justice. The objective underlining environmental justice is a ‘social political and moral struggle for human rights, healthy environments, and thriving

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<sup>11</sup> D. Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*, London, Reaktion Books, 2018, pp. 22-24, p. 208.

<sup>12</sup> Chatziagiannis, 2015, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> For an introductory text on climate change see: *Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction* by Mark Maslin. Commencing with a digestible explanation of natural greenhouse gases and cyclical carbon dioxide fluctuations of the past, the book proceeds with a discussion of climate change impacts, politics of climate change, and solutions.



democracies led by residents of communities most negatively impacted’ (in terms of ecological degradation).<sup>14</sup> Modern day environmental justice has transposed into a concept of focus on everyday lived realities, compared to the previous associations of the term ‘environment’ with something detached and external to people.<sup>15</sup> Now, the concept is affixed to both the concerns of pollution and degradation of air, water, and nature, as well as to social issues, such as civil rights, health, gender, incarceration, and food insecurity.<sup>16</sup> This can also be referred to as threatening the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, which occurs in disproportionate ways on the basis of gender, income, race.<sup>17</sup> The issue, as it stands, is all-encompassing.

Environmental justice discourse functions in a way which ‘links concepts such as racial oppression with labour market and environmental experiences, health, and environmental degradation in one frame that expresses the magnitude and immediacy of the problem’.<sup>18</sup> At its core, it amplifies issues and provides evidence of how a multi-faceted array of problems, such as environmental policies, may affect individuals, groups, and communities disproportionately. Taylor contends that there are four pathways of environmental activism through a consideration of environmental history and environmental activism.<sup>19</sup> The first pathway stems from an initial focus on wildlife conservation and habitat protection predominantly propelled by middle-class white men in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the establishment of mainstream environmentalism. Another pathway, starting around the 19<sup>th</sup> century strayed from the focus on wilderness, and came about as a product of the middle-class. It focused on the intersection of urbanism and environmentalism, and the improvement of urban areas through an appeal for occupational safety and public green spaces. The third pathway described refers to a more progressive

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<sup>14</sup> G. Di Chiro, ‘Environmental Justice’, in J. Adamson et al. (eds.), *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, vol. 3, NYU Press, 2016, p. 100.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101

<sup>17</sup> L. García, ‘An Ecosystemic Approach to Human Rights Philanthropy’, *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, vol. 15, no. 3, November 2023, pp. 678–84.

<sup>18</sup> D. E. Taylor, ‘The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm: Injustice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourses’, *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2000, pp. 508-580.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 524-525.

working-class agenda spearheaded by white working-class women who furthered the aforementioned concerns with a bigger focus on workers' rights and access to recreation. Finally, the fourth pathway was conceived by people of colour, and pertains to concepts of social justice, human rights, and self-determination. The article's findings delve further into framing, microstructural network recruitment, resource mobilisation, and political opportunities, and the rise of the environmental justice movement as a result of these converging theoretical aspects.<sup>20</sup> As a whole, this article contributes to the understanding of the innerworkings of the environmental justice paradigm.

Climate activism has been researched through a sociological lens, more so than a human rights one. Scholars have mapped the typology of the climate activist, charting profiles considering scale, endogenous and exogenous factors, and theory of change.<sup>21</sup> Based on a study of activists from the 1970s until the present, it is argued that climate activists self-identify in varying ways which is distinguished between the endogenous focus ('being the change') and the exogenous focus ('seeing the change').<sup>22</sup> Their identities thus guide different tactics of advocacy. The study calls for a greater consideration in future research on the basis of motivations, tactics, and strategies, in order to better outline a broader typology.

With some similarities, de Moor et al consider the climate activism movement as propelled by Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, and whether (and to what extent) it can be considered a 'new' form of climate activism.<sup>23</sup> Fridays for Future, which commenced in 2018 with Greta Thunberg's solitary school strike, is an ongoing movement focusing on intergenerational equity in the face of climate change, while Extinction Rebellion, also known as XR, is an international movement focusing on nonviolent civil disobedience. In their line of inquiry, de Moor et al also consider a brief typology. The typology showcases that there is little deviation in education levels of participants when compared to activism which preceded the 2019 explosion of activism, though the

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 560.

<sup>21</sup> N. Kirsop-Taylor, D. Russel, & A. Jensen, 'A typology of the climate activist', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 10, no. 896, 2023, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> J. de Moor et al., 2021, pp. 619–625.

underlying goal for both cooperatives aims to permeate across all societal levels regardless of education levels. What distinguishes not only the activists, but also the movement as a whole, is the momentous participation which has included newcomers and school students, the targeting of local and national governments, and the significance of disobedient action. Moreover, youth climate activism has been researched in relation to expression, categorising between dutiful dissent (e.g. involvement in NGO), disruptive dissent (e.g. boycotts, protests), and dangerous dissent (e.g. generation of alternative systems).<sup>24</sup> The study found that all categories of dissent rely on the belief in agency, and have varying power, legitimacy, and success rates.

In the same vein, Pickard et al derive an assessment of the term ‘radical’, and of its meaning in relation to youth activists in the British context of the environmental movements of Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion.<sup>25</sup> The study outlines similar points on education and demands as that of de Moor et al. However, through the use of interviews with activists carried out in late 2019, the ‘radical’ aspect of this repertoire of contention\* is investigated. The work finds that methods such as school walk-outs and marches, as opposed to changing lifestyle choices, are deemed ‘radical’ by those who participate, on the premise of consciously revolting school rules which they were raised to respect.<sup>26</sup> Other methods outlined included actions involving physical force, ie. occupations, supergluing, or road blocking. The concluding remarks of the study outline that in the traditional and historical sense, these activists are not ‘radical’, but that they are ‘radical in their kindness’, as per their strictly nonviolent and peaceful actions.<sup>27</sup>

One further critical analysis of a more generalised picture of the climate movement delves further into the typology of participants. of these comes from an emergence of ‘new social movements’, wherein amalgamated social classes use specific, Thunberg-inspired

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<sup>24</sup> K. O'Brien, E. Selboe, and B. M. Hayward, ‘Exploring youth activism on climate change: dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent’, *Ecology and Society*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2018, pp. 1-13.

\* The in-depth discussion of this theory follows in the Theory section.

<sup>25</sup> S. Pickard, B. Bowman, and D. Arya, “‘We Are Radical In Our Kindness’”: The Political Socialisation, Motivations, Demands and Protest Actions of Young Environmental Activists in Britain’, *Youth and Globalization*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2020, pp. 251-280.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 271-272

tactics as a means of protesting climate change.<sup>28</sup> The movement gained such attention that September 2019's protests of 7.6 million people across 185 countries are now deemed the largest coordinated global climate protest in world history.<sup>29</sup> Della Porta and Portos have delved into the structural innerworkings of the larger climate movement, investigating through surveys of protesters whether this movement is one which is led by a privileged upper-middle class of the global North.<sup>30</sup> Their research finds that approximately half of the surveyed FFF activists identified themselves as lower/working class or lower-middle class, with another sizeable portion identifying as students or professionals employed at a part-time basis.<sup>31</sup> However, the authors outline that more research is needed on matters of ideological fragmentation and diversity, but that a strong 'forging of alliances' between social classes can be determined.<sup>32</sup>

Though there could be a tendency for the climate movement to be overshadowed by talk of social divisions, climate justice has still created a 'master frame' for other movements, and through the intensity of the looming climate threat, has facilitated a transnational movement of both workers and people.<sup>33</sup> Fisher approaches the discussion of the Fridays For Future movement with a different approach, shedding light on overall youth civic participation and its increase due to the likes of these climate protests, and how a minor's involvement can positively influence the lifestyle choices of their parents.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Fisher outlines a similar need for further research into the movement, but in this case specifically pertaining to youth involvement.

Radical climate activism has been examined in its transformation following the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, which caused political momentum to slow. Bitschnau has addressed this, referring to this latest form of activism as a 'one-dimensional (and desperate) quest for attention', posing that the climate movement in its entirety 'must take a

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<sup>28</sup> D. della Porta, and M. Portos, 'Rich Kids of Europe? Social Basis and Strategic Choices in the Climate Activism of Fridays for Future', *Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica*, vol. 53, no. 1, March 2023, pp. 24 – 25.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 28-29

<sup>34</sup> D. R. Fisher, 'The Broader Importance of #FridaysForFuture', *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 9, no. 6, June 2019, pp. 430–31.

stand on the approach of the A22 Network and its members'.<sup>35</sup> In the article, Bitschnau takes a critical approach to these acts. He refers to the hunger strikes of Letzte Generation as a turning point, and comments on the apocalyptic rhetoric and the fact that their scenarios contradict nuanced assessments of experts.<sup>36</sup> The work finds that disruption is the primary operating method, which attracts attention rather than conviction. It also discusses that to activists, the lack of political attention is the issue, while arguing that climate change has gained great visibility. Most distinctly, the work argues the attention given to protests is absorbed by their appearance and mostly does not touch upon actual strategies to help the climate. It refers to empathising with those who end up stuck in traffic while activists glue their hands to the road – the tone of the article is generally condemning the activists. However, it does not refer to artwork-centred protest.

Though vandalism in relation to art and climate change remains somewhat unexplored, property destruction as a strategy has been investigated. The term *climatage* refers to this phenomenon.<sup>37</sup> The term addresses an instance inspired by the failure of institutions in addressing climate change, individual helplessness, and widespread despair. These factors contribute to the creation of an allure to more drastic actions. This new development and general engrossment in the topic are attributed to a popular interest in more radical direct action against climate change. Groups that partake in climatage justify destruction and non-violent disobedience 'in terms of a logic of consequentiality, which emphasizes the outcomes of action and non- action, as opposed to the logic of appropriateness, which emphasizes the normative underpinnings of action'.<sup>38</sup> The authors of this study stress that this method is highly counterproductive and will likely lead to decreased public support and increased state repression, while simultaneously arguing that methods which omit destruction will lead to better results.<sup>39</sup> The study however, refers to social and civil movements, and less so to concrete examples related to climate change and

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<sup>35</sup> M. Bitschnau, 'Seeking attention, provoking reactance: Radical climate activism after Covid-19', *European View*, 2024, pp. 1-7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> R. Gunderson, W. Charles, 'A sociology of "climatage": the appeal and counterproductivity of property destruction as a climate change strategy', *Environmental Sociology*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2023, pp. 398-408.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 399.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 398.

hence, art vandalism is not mentioned.

When it comes to literature directly pertaining to this thesis, only a solitary article looks at the nexus of art, vandalism, and climate change. Kinyon, Dolšak, and Prakash have carried out research outlining when and where art has been vandalized, and by whom.<sup>40</sup> The article entails graphs which define in which countries vandalism has occurred, beginning in May of 2022 until the end of the year, and which groups were responsible. The data set which complements this research is published and available through the Harvard Dataverse.<sup>41</sup> The authors conclude that the vandalism is largely utilised in European countries, with countries outside of Europe accounting for just 10% of the incidents analysed.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, they find that three groups (Ultima Generazione, Just Stop Oil, Letzte Generation) were responsible for more than half of all incidents.<sup>43</sup> To summarise their findings in relation to demands, the authors state that the three primary groups were orienting their demands around fossil fuel reductions rather than specific policy demands, while two other groups Scientist Rebellion and Futuro Vegetal advocated for a speed limit introduction in Germany, and the boycott of Coca-Cola's sponsorship of COP27 respectively.<sup>44</sup>

It is important to note here that the data set provided alongside the article does not fully delve into details of demands. Some information is omitted from the data set in certain instances, while references to it can be found. The study by Kinyon, Dolšak, and Prakash prioritises the quantitative aspect of the phenomenon, focusing on quantifying the numbers of instances, their fluctuations, and the number of involvements per group, which are illustrated in graphs within the article. Though their findings reveal certain aspects, I believe that background details to these incidents of defacement are crucial for an understanding of motives behind actions. This lack of information is an argument for the need of qualitative data on the phenomenon. The qualitative factor aids the understanding

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<sup>40</sup> L. Kinyon, N. Dolšak, and A. Prakash, 'When, where, and which climate activists have vandalized museums', *npj Climate Action*, vol. 2, no. 27, 2023, pp. 1-4.

<sup>41</sup> N. Dolšak, 2023, 'Museum-related Climate Activism 2022', *Harvard Dataverse*, V1, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SAYIJ5>.

<sup>42</sup> L. Kinyon, N. Dolšak, and A. Prakash, 2023, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

of the movement, since it is human-centred and requires the consideration of what activists have to say. This thesis works towards filling this knowledge gap with its approach. Lastly, the data set outlines two other instances, one which was prompted by democracy related demands, and another which was interrupted by security before it could occur – these will be omitted from further analysis.<sup>45</sup>

## 4. Theory

For this study, a lens pertaining to social movement theory is crucial. The section commences with the outlining of the theoretical framework of Tilly and Tarrow, which will be applied in the analysis of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it outlines concepts that are necessary for the definition and understanding of the movement at hand.

*Contentious politics*, a key element of analysis for the interpretation of social movements, and disruptive techniques which they are comprised of, is defined as involving ‘interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actor’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties’.<sup>46</sup> The definition distinguishes itself by highlighting claims and coordination as critical to the understanding of any reoccurring movement. For this, *collective action*, a sustained coordinated effort, is necessary. In this case, the thesis will proceed with the conduction of an analysis of the data, and how the climate activist movement utilising art could be envisioned as fitting into this category of contentious politics.

*Contention*, as defined by Tilly and Tarrow, involves claim-making by one party onto another.<sup>47</sup> This can be observed in everyday situations, and can be enacted upon persons but also institutions. The maker of the claim becomes the subject, while the institution becomes an object. The authors outline that the presence or absence of governments in this equation skews the outcome, due to the resources, power, and coercive

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<sup>45</sup> N. Dolšak, 2023.

<sup>46</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 7; C. Tilly, *Contentious Performances*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, 2015, p. 8.

means which governments tend to possess.<sup>48</sup>

Tilly and Tarrow oftentimes refer to acts of contention as ‘(contentious) performances’. These are related to the claims, and have historically developed into something modular – meaning that they can be adapted and tweaked for the benefit of the claim-making party.<sup>49</sup> These performances entail mechanisms (coordinated action, diffusion, escalation) and processes, which help to understand how these work in different settings.<sup>50</sup> When drawing on these performances which can be defined and broken down into a logical repetition, the result can be called a repertoire.

Continuing with the description of performances, Tilly poses that ‘the strong-repertoire hypothesis claims that in something like the style of theatrical performers, participants in contention are enacting available scripts. Within those scripts they innovate, mostly in small ways and incrementally’.<sup>51</sup> The acts carried out by parties, or in this case activists, are seen as something which surpasses a simple protest, and are juxtaposed with something of a theatrical essence. This rings true in line with the subject matter of the thesis, as acts are coordinated, and more goes on ‘behind the scenes’, as though it were a theatrical piece. The quote brings the chapter to the next point, which looks at ‘strong repertoires’.

Through his analysis of historical repertoires of contention, Tilly poses criteria that equate to a repertoire being a ‘strong repertoire’, which are laid out as follows: performances cluster into a limited number of recurring and well-defined types, which change little over time (where they do change, it is as a response to mass struggle, or in order to cater to available ways of claim-making).<sup>52</sup> They are defined by contentious actions that actors repeat, but also by actions that never occur despite the possibility of such. This in short means that groups adhere to some agreed upon boundaries within their acts. Furthermore, these actors demonstrate an awareness of performances and the methods used within them, signaling some level of knowledge that is being formally or informally being communicated between groups, leading to simultaneous or similar action. Tilly also

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> C. Tilly, 2012, pp. 59-60.

<sup>52</sup> C. Tilly, 2012, pp. 50-62.



poses that connected histories between actors result in a similar execution of the repertoire, making them more homogenous.<sup>53</sup>

Another layer is superimposed on the aforementioned criteria to better define social movements. Turning to contentious politics, the emphasis is placed on claim-making, which becomes a criterion in itself. These claim-makers ‘adopt scripts they have performed, or at least observed, before’.<sup>54</sup> Once again, the theory emphasises a routineness which threads itself through these acts of contention. Claims must be made to allow for a contentious politics observation. One concern observed by other scholars who apply this methodology has resulted in a dispute of broad versus narrow defining.<sup>55</sup> In a narrow sense, a claim is some stated political demand or effort to succeed in achieving a political goal, while in the broader sense all collective action or spatial claims can be classified as claim-making.<sup>56</sup> With this criticism noted, the thesis will proceed with a more narrow definition of claim-making and contentious politics, and will show that the climate activist movement is political and complex enough to constitute a strong case for being both a strong repertoire, and a repertoire of contention.

This theory has been put into practice within a different case study. Scholars have analysed the multi-faceted nature of civilian protest and youth protests. One of these studies by Pinto and Eriksson leans on the case study of the 1948 Stockholm Easter Riots. The authors gage the riots against the Contentious Politics Studies theoretical model, but also utilise theories and definitions of Tilly, Tarrow, and McAdam, outlining the conditions needed for a movement to be classified as a repertoire of contention.<sup>57</sup> For the riots to consist of a strong repertoire, they need to be a cluster of recurrent types, change relatively little over time, possess clear boundaries, and the actors possess knowledge of existing repertoires and have a shared understanding of such.<sup>58</sup> The authors pose an interesting

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>54</sup> D. McAdam, S. Tarrow, C. Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 138.

<sup>55</sup> A. B. Pinto and M. Ericsson, ‘Youth Riots’ and the Concept of Contentious Politics in Historical Research: The Case of the 1948 Stockholm Easter Riots’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, volume. 44, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-26.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> A. B. Pinto and M. Ericsson, 2019, pp. 1-5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

conclusion, wherein claim-making (or lack thereof) plays a role in defining the youth riots.

To illustrate with another example, this theoretical approach has been applied to the Danish squatters movement in Copenhagen from 1981-2011. Through the study of protest groups in the context of interactions with their targets via a relational view, Karpantschhof has analysed that while threats, opportunity, and interactions have explanatory value, shared ideas did not.<sup>59</sup> In the research paper, Karpantschhof argues that ‘actual events are important as they present participants, their opponents, and third parties ... *eventful protest*, then, refers to the effect of actual protests’, continuing with the fact that these protests set the stage for further activities, and hence events should be regarded as not only outcomes, but as ‘explanatory factors themselves’.<sup>60</sup> The analysis delves into relevant information on who did what, against whom, where, when, and why, allowing for a mapping of squatter-actions and their development throughout the period, and the author relies on newspapers in order to complete this. Ultimately, this urban movement was assessed as being led by external factors (and lack thereof) at the time, which explains the operations of how the movement proceeded.

This theoretical approach has been selected on the basis of its analytical potential and its agreement with the subject matter. Its applicability has been demonstrated through theoretical applications in other contexts of the aforementioned case studies. The intersection of art, vandalism, and climate activism will thus forth be viewed and interpreted with the use of this theoretical lens.

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<sup>59</sup> R. Karpantschhof, ‘Violence That Matters! Radicalization and de-Radicalization of Leftist, Urban Movements – Denmark 1981–2011’, *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2015, pp. 35–52.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

# 5. Methods and Delimitation

## 5.1. Methods

In this chapter, I discuss the methods and general methodological approach to the investigation of this social movement. The latter section of the chapter defines the delimitation and scope of the study.

This thesis requires the conduction of research using an adapted Content Analysis method. Content Analysis is ‘associated with the study of inscription contained in published reports, newspapers, adverts, books, web pages, journals, and other forms of documentation’.<sup>61</sup> It is a ‘nonreactive’ or ‘unobtrusive’ method of examination.<sup>62</sup> Prior poses that CTA is a foundation of all qualitative data analysis forms. Within the method, researchers can focus on words, sentences, themes, and more. For the purpose of the study, the method in practice lies somewhere in between words and themes. This means that all reports of vandalism will be analysed and searched for the same criteria. Following this, the findings will be filed in one document, outlining a) date of occurrence, b) place of occurrence and artwork targeted, c) affiliated group (or lack thereof), d) method of vandalism, and e) demands or claims made. Point e is formed in this way due to the limits of available information within texts – sometimes the claims of activists are targeting an object and making a definitive claim, other times they simply express a dissatisfaction with some climate-related issue. Hence, the point notes the most distinct sentiment carried by the group. At this stage, other comments or statements that are available or stand out will be noted too. This method allows for an analysis of all events under the same ‘themes’ which can then be compared for the mapping of similarities or differences. Relevant and available quotes will also be assessed, specifically when it comes to mentions of human rights.

The findings will be derived from international newspapers accessible through

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<sup>61</sup> L. Prior, 'Content Analysis', in P. Leavy, (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 542.

<sup>62</sup> L. Prior, 2020, p. 543.

ProQuest, a large database of multi-lingual, multidisciplinary news articles, and the search will be limited to May 2022, the first instance of the phenomenon, and onwards, until February 2024. This will entail searching for instances of climate activism in relation to works of art using the key terms: vandalism, vandalised, art, artwork, activist, activism, museum, climate change. These will be searched in different combinations until results are discovered. Should no result be available, particularly when consulting the Dolšak data set, a standard Google search will be applied. The aim of this is to map the instances of climate activism in relation to artwork, temporally and spatially. The findings will be analysed and made accessible to aid academic transparency and will additionally be summarised in the appendix.<sup>63</sup>

In order to complete this, the research will be supported by the data set compiled by Dolšak in the Harvard Dataverse for the period of May 2022 to December of the same year.<sup>64</sup> The data set included as part of an article was obtained through a search of media articles and social media posts. Within this, the authors acknowledge the occurrence of three protests in 2023, and with the publication date of the article falling in September 2023, it can be reasoned that this accounts for some months of the year. Hence, the data set will be utilised as more of a guide, as the demands by groups or individuals are largely omitted in the source. This will also allow for cross-referencing and data triangulation. Moreover, to surpass the limitations of being restricted to data from 2022 alone, the continuation of a list of events of vandalism from 2022 until February 2024 will be necessary. The news database will be searched until all possible cases of vandalism have been discovered. This will allow for an understanding of the scope of the activist movement, but also to define these performances further in the analysis. However, an issue that could occur unintentionally could be that an article discussing an instance of vandalism could go unnoticed. This could happen for two reasons – it could be the case that a performance is only acknowledged in social media posts, which will not be analysed due to the scope of the thesis, or if the headline or initial sentences of the article do not contain

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<sup>63</sup> P. Zajac, Art Vandalism Data Set, 2024, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14zscNiWg-HTdUNi0OUqqbX6UE6-gn-kOtaI5klYGCoc/edit?usp=sharing>. ; Appendix 1.

<sup>64</sup> N. Dolšak, 2023.

any of the outlined search terms. However, this is unlikely as these terms are consistently used to describe the movement, and all of the instances of vandalism outlined by Dolšak are discoverable in news reports. All attempts have been made to avoid this.

To assess the findings, this work utilises a set of guidelines outlined by Tarrow and Tilly which functions as follows:

- Specifying sites of contention
- Describing relevant conditions
- Identifying the relevant streams of contention
- Naming the notable outcomes (where applicable)
- Compounding mechanisms into processes and through analyses finding commonalities.<sup>65</sup>

This can be further simplified into (1) a description of the a process, (2) decomposition of the process into its basic causes, and (3) a reassembly of those causes into a more general account of how they take place.<sup>66</sup> This method, utilised by Tarrow and Tilly, provides a ‘flexible explanatory framework’ for matters pertaining to social movements, such as how contention can transform into a continuous and long-term movement.<sup>67</sup> This method promises to provide a starting point for the analysis to follow, as well as a foundation for understanding the phenomenon.

What follows is an outline a brief explanation of how these points function and what they refer to. A *site of contention* refers to the centre of the contentious event(s) – this can be as broad as a country, undergoing some unrest, or a network, neighbourhood or other setting of social life. The site of contention is usually a ‘human setting’ that functions as an originator, object and/or arena of contentious politics.<sup>68</sup> The *conditions* at these sites can refer to various factors and ‘characteristics of sites and relations among sites that shape the contention occurring in and across them’, while initial conditions are an ongoing social issue that propels contention.<sup>69</sup> *Streams of contention* refers to sequences of collective

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<sup>65</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, 2015, p. 29, p. 45.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

claim making in sites of contention, while *notable outcomes* highlight the results of these. *Mechanisms* and *processes* are distinguished as such: mechanisms are a ‘class of changes that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations’ while processes are ‘regular combinations and sequences of mechanisms that produce similar transformations of those elements’.<sup>70</sup> By way of a given example, the authors showcase how this works. Taking mobilisation, a common process in contentious politics, one can break it down into its component mechanisms to better understand it, and through the comparison of how this same process works in a different setting, one can outline what difference the presence or absence of a certain mechanism can make.<sup>71</sup> Further, mechanisms can occur so frequently that it can be concluded that they constitute a well-defined process.

The thesis is primarily qualitative in its methodological approach. The investigation centres around a sequence of events that add up to constitute an international climate-oriented movement. The sole quantitative aspect of the thesis involves the summation of the number of events and their dispersion across states.

## 5.2. Delimitation

Due to some ambiguity stemming from the newness of the phenomenon, coupled with a shortage of academic texts on the topic, some potential limitations will be outlined.

The study is temporally limited from the commencement of the events to the month of February 2024. This amounts to approximately two years’ worth of data. The cut-off date was chosen early on to allow for ample time to carry out the analysis, though this means that any potential events that follow that date will be disregarded no matter what significance they may carry for the study. This thesis will not look at social media posts, though the prominence of these attacks is most often spread through the likes of Instagram or X/Twitter. Hence, public responses and the general perception of the phenomenon will also be omitted from the study, as it would require an analysis of social media posts and

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

their comments, or perhaps interviews from onlookers of the vandalism. It would not be feasible to quantify and analyse social media perception nor assess viewer reception within the scope of this project.

Moreover, previous literature relating to climate activist vandalism is scarce. What exists and is related to the study has been outlined. In relation to further research for the purpose of the study, the thesis will heavily rely on news articles, herein considered primary sources due to their capacity of re-telling aspects of events that discuss the grander social situation. These materials, amassed for the compilation of acts of vandalism, will be sourced from international news outlets. For optimal accuracy, it will be ensured that the articles used are of a general reporting format, rather than that of an opinion piece. As the search for these yields many sources in different languages, the choice of sources becomes more limited. For this reason, primarily English language articles are considered, however I consider some Italian articles due to my working knowledge of the language. This challenge in accessing data in the most uniform manner can also be seen as a benefit to the diversity of data, as articles considered stem from news outlets based in countries that are not limited to the Global North.

## 6. Background

As a preamble to the analysis, this section offers a brief background on some key considerations of the thesis to ensure clarity for the reader regarding environmental justice and climate change issues at the time of writing. Moreover, these sections aim to aid an understanding of the unity of artistic and climatic contexts in the sections that follow and to outline the relevance of their interlinkages in a human rights perspective.

### 6.1. Art-related Context

It is important to understand that the vandalism or defacement of art is not a modern invention for expressing a violation or offence, be it for political, religious, or personal

reasons. Vandalism, here the act of destroying an artwork in an expression of a widely or independently possessed belief, dates back many centuries.

The first instance of a mass targeting of art can be traced back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Iconoclasm, the destruction of art, occurred in a way to signify a rejection of beliefs or values, and in the case of Byzantine history had religious motives.<sup>72</sup> The French Revolution was characterised by iconoclasm, which was justified as a critique of art as an excessive luxury.<sup>73</sup> Throughout the period, symbolic objects, being portraits of the monarch, members of nobility, and the church, as well as those commissioned or displayed by them, were manipulated for their linkages to the rhetoric of hierarchy and power.<sup>74</sup>

In modern history, the vandalism of art has been polysemic in character. In 1914, a suffragette destroyed an artwork with the use of a meat cleaver as part of a wider feminist movement in the UK.<sup>75</sup> The performance was prompted by the occurring hunger and thirst strike of the movement's founder, Emmeline Pankhurst.<sup>76</sup> In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Mona Lisa* was targeted twice, once with acid and once with the throwing of rocks, but the reasoning behind these two acts remains unclear.<sup>77</sup> Two decades later, the *Mona Lisa* was attacked again. In this instance, the painting was being displayed as part of a temporary exhibition in Tokyo.<sup>78</sup> Narrowly avoiding significant damage to the painting, a woman in a wheelchair spraypainted the masterpiece in an attempt to bring light to discrimination against disabilities within the museum. This happening is evidence for an attack on the basis of inequality, and holds political connotations. In another case completely distanced from activist expression, in 2006 an individual struck a statue on display in Paris, later admitting that the stunt was a performance piece, aiming to bring attention to artistic

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<sup>72</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, 'The age of Iconoclasm: 717-867', <https://www.britannica.com/place/Byzantine-Empire/The-age-of-Iconoclasm-717-867>, (accessed 10 March 2024).

<sup>73</sup> Gamboni, 2018, p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 39.

<sup>75</sup> 'World: Iconic artworks weaponized by climate activists', *Asia News Monitor*, August 29 2022.

<sup>76</sup> Gamboni, 2018, pp. 115-116.

<sup>77</sup> S. Kemp, 'From Rembrandt to Marcel Duchamp: A short history of art vandalism', *Far Out*, <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/a-history-of-art-vandalism/>, (accessed 10 March 2024).

<sup>78</sup> A. Greenberger, '6 Times the Mona Lisa Was Vandalized or Stolen', *ARTnews*, <https://www.artnews.com/list/art-news/artists/mona-lisa-vandalism-1234630407/vincenzo-peruggia-mona-lisa-theft/>, (accessed 10 March 2024).



reinvention of art.<sup>79</sup> More recently, the year 2014 saw a superglue ambush by a father appealing family law reform.<sup>80</sup> These are but some of the cases where art has been utilised for political, religious, and social movements and concerns. Though vandalism has also happened with less substantial claims as motivation, the weaponisation of art can be traced far back into history. These events hold no correlation to one another, but more so represent the powers of utilising art in order to attract attention to a cause.

## 6.2. Climate Change and Human Rights

In this section I briefly highlight the relevance of this thesis to human rights. As the topic at hand is multi-faceted, combining elements of climate change, art, activism, and new social movements, I wish to reiterate how this work both ties into and contributes to the scholarly field of human rights.

The statistics on climate change which have been consistently and rapidly emerging over the last decade are staggering. As it stands now, the Earth is predicted to see an increase of at least 1.5°C this century, and the impacts of this will trickle into every system – the flow of resources and ecosystem-related services, flows of goods, flows of capital, flows of migrants, and more.<sup>81</sup> Climate change is actively impacting health as a consequence of extreme weather events, diseases, and disruption of food systems.<sup>82</sup> Developing countries will be hit hardest by these factors, and it is estimated that between 2030 and 2050 climate change will lead to an additional 250,000 deaths per year by way of malnutrition, diarrhoea, heat-related maladies, and malaria.<sup>83</sup> Biodiversity loss is a growing concern, with agricultural land use and fossil fuel extraction being some of the main

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<sup>79</sup> S. Kemp, 'From Rembrandt to Marcel Duchamp'.

<sup>80</sup> 'Superglue dad's artwork attack', *The Star*, 20 March 2014.

<sup>81</sup> N. Mason, et al., 'The Cross-Border Effects of Climate Change', *The Prospects for Development in a Climate-Changed World: Anticipating Cross-Border Effects of Climate Change and Climate Action*, ODI, 2023, pp. 8 – 10.

<sup>82</sup> World Health Organisation, 'Climate Change' [website], <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health#:~:text=Climate%20change%20is%20impacting%20health,diseases%2C%20and%20mental%20health%20issues>, (accessed 26 February 2024).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

drivers. The United Nations (UN) illuminates this issue, stating that should global temperatures increase by 2°C, 99% of the earth's coral reefs will vanish.<sup>84</sup> These are just some of the risks at hand, and it is not a stretch to say that climate change will have irreversible, life-altering impacts. The global stocktake, a key outcome of COP28, called for amendments to be made nationally before the happening of COP30, which would entail the development of an improved climate action plan to keep in line with the 1.5°C requirement, necessitating a 43% cut of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.<sup>85</sup> In response to this, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is but one of the UN bodies outlining the necessity of a healthy, stable, climate, for a full enjoyment and fulfilment of fundamental human rights.<sup>86</sup> Climate change issues are heavily emphasised throughout the Sustainable Development Goals, hence the issue is inextricably linked with human rights.

Human rights can be an important tool for protecting the environment. This has been demonstrated by recent initiatives from the Global South, where youth activists are pioneering in the legal fight for intergenerational equality. The effectiveness of collective action can be seen through the recent development of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change bringing the case of Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change to the International Court of Justice with the backing of the Vanuatu government.<sup>87</sup> The case was the first of its type, and demonstrated the human rights models can be used in many ways by climate activists to make effective change in the legal sphere.

The linkages between human rights and climate change remain complex yet inseparable. Citizens advocating for a safer climate are relying on both human rights as instruments and human rights rhetoric to pronounce their concerns from the courts to the

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<sup>84</sup> United Nations, 'Biodiversity- our strongest natural defense against climate change' [website], <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/biodiversity>, (accessed 26 February 2024).

<sup>85</sup> UN Climate Press Release, 'COP28 Agreement Signals "Beginning of the End" of the Fossil Fuel Era' [website], <https://unfccc.int/news/cop28-agreement-signals-beginning-of-the-end-of-the-fossil-fuel-era>, (accessed 26 February 2024)

<sup>86</sup> OHCHR, 'OHCHR and climate change' [website], <https://www.ohchr.org/en/climate-change>, (accessed 10 March 2024).

<sup>87</sup> P. Taylor, 'How to be Good Ancestors: Taking Climate Change to the World Court' in J. Sobion, H. van Willenswaard (eds.), *Reflections on Earth Trusteeship: Mother Earth and a new 21<sup>st</sup>-century governance paradigm*, Nonhaburi, INI Books, 2023, pp. 183-197.

streets. This is an area of study that will grow in the lead-up to 2030 and 2050, dates heavily emphasised by mechanisms such as the Paris Agreement, as global tensions and temperatures rise.

In response to climate change, climate activists are taking bolder approaches. It can be assumed that in their view damage and disruption is justified, as the severity of the climate situation necessitates it. The argument for the destruction of property is not a new one. Gunderson and Charles have written about this in terms of a ‘logic of consequentiality’, which puts the emphasis on outcomes of action and non-action.<sup>88</sup> They pose a consequentialist case against the use of destruction of property as a valid strategy. Nevertheless, climate activists rely on this method in their approaches. A22 Network centres its operations, and thus the operations of its members, around the ‘solemn responsibility’ to defend ‘sacred rights’.<sup>89</sup> Human rights drive the reasoning of activists, which includes the vandalism of art. Still, this leaves the broader questions of whether the tactic is sound enough to create change, and whether vandalism is the right approach.

### 6.3. The Activists

This section offers background information about the international coalition, A22 Network, which is behind some of the major events in this movement. The section outlines some introductory insights about the most prominent groups involved in recent climate protests, with their actions taking place inside museums and in other contexts. These have involved roadblocks, or interruptions to sporting events. While some art protests are not tied to the major groups at work, or carried out by individuals unaffiliated to any group, the repetition of acts of vandalism by the same groups calls for greater acknowledgement.

Firstly, most activists operating on behalf of regional groups in art-related protests are related to the climate network A22. The information provided on the A22 Network website features an umbrella declaration, connected to 12 international groups working

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<sup>88</sup> Gunderson and Charles, 2023, p. 399.

<sup>89</sup> A22 Network, ‘Our Declaration’ [website], <https://a22network.org/>, (accessed 10 March 2024).

under the same motives.<sup>90</sup> These groups are based in Denmark, Switzerland, France, the USA, Sweden, Germany, the UK, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Austria, and Canada. The strongly-worded declaration paints a picture of the network's viewpoint – they state that they are the last generation, willing to create a new world, committed to mass civil disobedience.<sup>91</sup> The declaration leaves little room for interpretation – ‘This is our solemn responsibility. Sacred rights require a sacred duty to defend them. And until everyone is free, none of us are free... Bring it on. While there remains breath in our bodies we will not stop’.<sup>92</sup> Despite the considerably intimidating language, A22 Network commits itself to nonviolence and civil resistance for the sake of humanity. Their mention of sacred rights, which essentially acts as a synonym for human rights showcases that rights involving a clean environment, justice, water, food, and so forth, are sacred to them. Moreover, human rights pursuits guide their actions. The radicalism inspired by the climate emergency is evident through the linguistic choices of their manifesto, but also with accompanying images from protests which can be seen on the website.

The UK's biggest climate-concerned group, Just Stop Oil is committed to challenging the use of fossil fuel and by the extension those who are involved in the process. The sentiment of the group is clear, with the first glance at their website announcing in bold print ‘Our Government doesn't give a f\*\*\* about its responsibilities’.<sup>93</sup> The Italian branch, Ultima Generazione, takes a different approach on their website, with their major motivation being a request for a preventative climate change fund of 20 million euro from the Italian government.<sup>94</sup> Ultima Generazione appears to focus more on weather events and emergencies as a result of climate change. Their website, similarly to that of Just Stop Oil and A22 Network, outlines civil disobedience as crucial to the movement. The German branch, Letzte Generation is no outlier, mentioning ‘non-violent resistance to the fossil fuel madness of our present’.<sup>95</sup> While the groups use different language, and may maintain some specific demands, the overall goal of A22 showcases a collective movement

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Just Stop Oil, [website], <https://juststopoil.org/> (accessed 10 March 2024).

<sup>94</sup> Ultima Generazione, [website], <https://ultima-generazione.com/>, (accessed 10 March 2024)

<sup>95</sup> Letzte Generation, [website], <https://letztegeneration.org/en/>, (accessed 10 March 2024)

to address the urgency of the climate change emergency. All three websites of Just Stop Oil, Letzte Generation, and Ultima Generazione instantly greet the viewer with buttons with prompts such as ‘take action’ or ‘join now’, which illustrates the willingness for further recruitment and outreach in order to prompt mobilisation. These three groups have been mentioned in particular for their prominence, but also to illustrate a general sentiment held by climate activist groups involved in the movement as a whole.

## 7. Analysis

The analysis commences with a methodological deconstruction of the art vandalism movement as carried out by climate activist groups. The section which follows targets question 1 of the thesis, with the goal of investigating what the movement is. As part of this, the movement will be dissected in order to outline the characteristics that shape it.

The search for instances of climate protests anchoring their message in art yielded a total of 45 instances, or in contentious politics terms - performances.<sup>96</sup> The first one observed took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2022, while the last one considered for the thesis took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. To reiterate, the analysis in this section relies on the following framework of Tarrow and Tilly which divides into the following elements: defining sites of contention, describing relevant conditions, identifying the relevant streams of contention, naming the notable outcomes, compounding mechanisms into processes, and through analyses finding commonalities.<sup>97</sup>

### 7.1.1. Sites of Contention

The sites of contention, being the ‘human setting’ and serving as originators, in this case refer to the broader network of climate activists who have been involved in the movement. This includes both individuals and groups. The groups noted as contributing to art

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<sup>96</sup> See: Appendix I.

<sup>97</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, 2015, p. 29, p. 45.

vandalism are as follows: Just Stop Oil, Ultima Generazione, Letzte Generation (German and Austrian branches), Extinction Rebellion (Australian and Belgian branches), Scientist Rebellion, Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies, Futuro Vegetal, Stopp Oljeletinga, Stop Fracking Around, Dernière Rénovation, Last Generation Canada, Declare Emergency, Återställ Våtmarker, This is Rigged, and Riposte Alimentaire.<sup>98</sup> Out of these, 8 belong to the larger A22 Network, which has an overall 12 participating groups listed within its coalition, but not all engage in the vandalism of art. The specific typology of these activists is not clear, though the names and ages of those who engage in museum performances can often be found online. In the context of this study, the broader workings and operations of the groups are of priority.

The sites of contention, geographically speaking, were organised as such – the number ascribed to each of the 15 countries signifies the number of performances which have occurred:

Italy (10), Germany (7), England (6), France (4), Australia (3), Canada (3), Spain (2), Scotland (2), Norway (2), the Netherlands (1), Austria (1), Belgium (1), United States of America (1), Sweden (1), Vatican City (1).<sup>99</sup>

Considering these findings about activities in relation to nations, comprising of predominantly European countries, and wholly of the Global North, initial observations can be made. It can be deduced that the events are evidently situated in countries that firstly, in a broad sense, possess similar views on climate change and the protesting of such. This is proven by the fact that a majority of the groups carrying out the attacks are part of the coalition A22, and revel in possessing overlapping manifestos of nonviolence and civil disobedience. Their actions, when grouped together, carry one pronounced message of resistance in the face of climate change, showcasing that some similarities in attitudes exist. Secondly, the events have taken place in countries where the ramifications that stem from governmental or political authorities are not severe enough to hinder civil disobedience (or alternatively, there is enough leeway for citizens to behave in such ways). In news reports on the topic, little attention is given to the aftermath of these protests – should the events

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<sup>98</sup> Zajac, 2024.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

have taken place in a location with a more repressive authority, perhaps the attention would shift more in the direction of legal implications. In one case, an article says the activists were not charged, while in another case it was specified that the activists were arrested.<sup>100</sup> Another article expressed that climate activists can face arrest, jail time, or a permanent criminal record, but nevertheless protests have continued.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, the aftermath of the attacks is not the focal point of the news reporting, hence it is challenging to fully conclude the ramifications that may stem from vandalism. Lastly, there is some level of interconnected and ongoing communication and inspiration between activist groups that allows for this form of expression of concern to occur. This will be further provided through method-borrowing, similar claim-making, and coordinated events.

Proceeding forth with the specifics of the operations of these sites of contention, the analysis considers the locations in which the activists carry out their contentious performances. As one can imagine, the vast majority of attacks on artworks took place in museums or art galleries of a rather traditional setting. At variance with this fact, the protesting was not solely bound to museums. Instances that strayed from the more conventional outlet included such incidents: two which targeted outdoor sculptures (one in a sculpture park, the other outside of the Bourse de Commerce of Paris), two which took place in natural history museums, one at the entrance of a theatre, one in a car museum, one which involved the flooding of the Roman Trevi Fountain, and one inside of a chapel. These performances were all affiliated with art in a sense, and were aimed at some function or display. Within these locations, a presence of activists and onlookers can be observed regardless of where the actual contention takes places, due to the fact that the events target public settings to garner a greater reaction from spectators.

Both the human setting and the setting within which the former operates have been outlined. This showcases the basis of the group-oriented contentious performances that the movement is composed of.

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<sup>100</sup> 'Climate protesters strike through the art', *The Age*, 12 October 2022; A. Marshall, 'Soup thrown at Vincent van Gogh's 'Sunflowers'', *New York Times*, 15 October 2022.

<sup>101</sup> J. York, 'More and more desperate measures': Climate protesters target another priceless artwork', *France 24*, Disco Digital Media, 27 October 2022.

### 7.1.2. Conditions

This section turns to the description of relevant conditions at the sites of contention. This refers to currents of external factors that define a period. Undoubtedly, the largest initiator of contention is the climate emergency – this can be expanded into more specific concerns pertaining to fossil fuel investments, government inaction, or biodiversity interests, to name a few of the primary troubles mentioned by climate groups. In short, climate change is at the forefront of contention, and is the defining ‘condition’ which inspires acts of vandalism. Be it through posters, chants, or graffiti, the methods used by activists in museums consistently pertain to the looming climate threat. Referring back to the introductory comments, the climate emergency is ‘the defining issue of our time’, and for that reason the claim being made by activists is strong enough to constitute a worthy basis for an international movement.<sup>102</sup> In this case, the primary condition underpinning the movement is consistently related to climate change.

More specific conditions can vary from group to group and from country to country. As an example, conditions can include severe weather events which cause loss of life, such as in two cases of protest by Ultima Generazione. Another monumental condition revealed during the content analysis was COP27, which led to an increase in protesting, as well as coordinated events on the final day of the conference in France, Italy, and Norway. Also connected to COP27 was a cake attack on a wax figure of King Charles after his cancellation of a plan to attend the conference and deliver a speech. In another instance, an Australian art attack preceded state elections. To sum this up, it is expected that national and local issues create different conditions, leading to different demands and operational choices by activists. The overarching condition may be the climate, but various conditions can exist and occur in ways that spur activists’ actions.

### 7.1.3. Streams of Contention

This thesis operates with the underlying presumption that the climate and art vandalism

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<sup>102</sup> A. Guterres, 2021.



movement operates within the framework of contentious politics. For this reason, when looking at the analytical categorisations of Tilly and Tarrow, the grander phenomenon ought to be deconstructed into streams of contention. The frequency and repetition of similar movements around the Global North provides the groundwork for this. Firstly, this section briefly outlines the frequency of the 45 performances that took place in the space of just under two years. This aims to showcase that the considerable number of protests, by which climate groups directly or indirectly prompted one another into action, constitutes a stream of contention. From the trends that were obtained from the content analysis of events, it can be noted that the first instance of vandalism set a precedent for protests to follow. By strategically targeting the *Mona Lisa*, one of the most recognisable paintings in the world in May of 2022, the statement on the climate situation was bound to be noticed on an international level.<sup>103</sup> Exactly one month after the cake-attack on the *Mona Lisa*, the UK-based group Just Stop Oil planned a one week long protest stint wherein five works were targeted at separate times. The protests took place around England and Scotland, in an attempt to advocate for a stop to new oil and gas agreements. In late July and August of 2022, Ultima Generazione proceeded with four protests, while in Germany, in August, protests occurred for four consecutive days around famous art galleries, with the goal of denouncing fossil fuels. In September and October, acts of vandalism continued around Germany, Italy, Australia, and the UK. By the end of 2022, 16 acts of vandalism were noted, with the uptake resulting from the approach of the climate-oriented event of COP27. Three protests were purposely held on the same day (the 18<sup>th</sup> of November), the final day of COP27, in a stream of international coordination. All three groups involved possessed an affiliation to the A22 Network, and their efforts were seen in France, Norway, and Italy.

By 2023 however, the momentum of the movement seemingly slowed, and a total of five acts were noted. Spatially, the events took place in Canada, the United States, Italy, Sweden, and Scotland. The methods used and claims made consistently constituted a strong fixation on climate-related issues. By 2024, the movement presented an uptake in events. Between January and February alone, four instances of vandalism took place. This brief

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<sup>103</sup> 'Man in wig throws cake at glass protecting Mona Lisa', *Telegraph – Herald*, 31 May 2022.

timeline of events aims to illustrate that these events were by no means isolated, and in fact even directly linked to one another as presented by the COP-related actions. The movement thus presents an interesting case for a social movement study through its stream of contention which orients all efforts on mitigating climate change.

#### 7.1.4. Outcomes

The concept of outcomes in contentious politics typically refers to changes in conditions, amongst and around sites of contention. In the case of this form of protest exists a standout outcome – public attention. This would suggest a change in condition between actors – the activists, and their targets – the public and the government. This seems to be the essence of the movement, as the groups operate in a way which complies with nonviolent principles. The goal is not necessarily to cause harm to the artwork, but to turn the vandalism into a statement. One researcher of social movements commented on this factor in a news report, stating that the predominant strategy of such groups is to act in such a way as to get the attention of news media, and moving onto ‘the next thing that creates a spark’.<sup>104</sup> The outcome of the movement then boils down to something between attention, from the media, the public, and political figures, but also to outreach through attention, which could lead to greater involvement in activist groups. The goal is to showcase climatic issues in a strategic way, rather than intervene in ways that could lead to more pronounced outcomes at the cost of being violent or harmful. In order to achieve this, activists mobilise and bring the performance to a museum or cultural institution. At that stage, they carry out an act of vandalism using select mechanisms, targeting a pre-selected piece of art. As the performances are usually captured on video, they occur during the opening hours of the institution and are viewed by the onlookers, who are ordinary museum goers. This applies to performances that take place indoors. In the case of outdoor and open to the public art, a group would likely target it when pedestrians are around. The captured footage is then circulated online, and this is how the wider public’s attention, or even scrutiny, comes

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<sup>104</sup> A. Marshall, ‘U.K. museums face a sticky problem from climate protests’, *New York Times*, 6 July 2022.

about. It can be speculated that security involvement and altercation further maximise the spectacle and make it more captivating. As mentioned previously, the reporting on these performances does not clarify exactly what ramifications the activists are subject to.

An outcome of this string of protests is also the maintenance of peaceful protest. Being a leading rationale for all of the activist groups, as can be seen in their manifestos, the maintenance of a nonviolent yet disruptive sort of contention is of importance. Through the methods chosen by activists, their activities remain nonviolent and nonthreatening.

Notable outcomes of this phenomenon are an obstacle within the analytical framework presented by Tarrow and Tilly. The demands of climate activists who preoccupy themselves with the targeting of art are more often than not beyond the realm of possibility, as the target government will most likely not cut ties with fossil fuel extraction companies overnight. Connecting this with Karpantschhof's analysis of urban movements, perhaps one ought to 'regard events as more than just outcomes but as explanatory factors themselves'.<sup>105</sup> The notable outcome of the movement could be its existence in itself. The mobilisation and upkeep of the movement for a sustained period attest to this. Moreover, the movement has not been concluded, and performances may happen again. The immediate outcomes can be traced to some extent with what is available in newspaper reports, but the long-term outcomes are not known. There is no strong indication for any of the performances inspiring governmental-level change as of yet. What is most evident however, is that the focal point of the movement is to attract attention. As part of this focus, activists make claims on subjects who are deemed as possessing some negative impact on the climate. More specifically, these claims pertain to different climatic issues or governmental shortcomings in the tackling of such. This element of the movement will be fully explored in section 7.2.1.

#### 7.1.5. Mechanisms and Processes

This section delves into mechanisms and processes that can be observed from the data

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<sup>105</sup> R. Karpantschhof, 2015, p. 39.

which is has been obtained from news reports.<sup>106</sup> One large mechanism in contentious politics is mobilisation.<sup>107</sup> As mentioned previously, activist groups such as Just Stop Oil, Letzte Generation, and Ultima Generazione seem to mobilise, at least partially, through their websites. The sites refer the viewer to other links which allow those who are interested to join the organisation, donate to the cause, or to meet at a local event hosted by the group.<sup>108</sup> The mobilisation is further invigorated on an internal level (within the group(s) rather than to potential activists) through the existence of the A22 Network which has drafted a shared declaration for participating member groups. Though the acts of climate groups within museums or other art-related institutions are very public, the organisation of these acts is far from being public. The innerworkings of the groups are not publicly available, but it can be concluded that their mobilisation is successful, as their stunts are not intercepted ahead of time. During the performances, newspaper reports allude to the fact that the number of activists present is always small, as to avoid suspicion. The entire nature of the operations of the activist groups is grounded in some level of discretion. The mobilisation hence functions in a secretive manner, in order to catch the museum staff and visitors off guard, eliciting a greater shock effect. This in itself is a mechanism. In short, the group members are openly relying on some level of cooperation and mobilisation within their ‘local’ group, but also within the larger coalition.

A more physical and observable mechanism that is crucial to the movement takes shape in the tactics used by activists. With tactics, the meaning pertains to how the vandalism occurs as part of the protest. Since vandalism entails some method of damage, or potential damage to the artwork, these methods will be explored. When quantifying these methods and their usage, one particular method stood out – the use of glue. Glue has been utilised by activists, particularly in street protests, and is not a new creation for the climate movement. By borrowing this tactic, climate activists are offered time to deliver their

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<sup>106</sup> Zajac, 2024.

<sup>107</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, 2015, p. 13.

<sup>108</sup> Just Stop Oil, [website], <https://juststopoil.org/> (accessed 10 March 2024); Ultima Generazione, [website], <https://ultima-generazione.com/>, (accessed 10 March 2024); Letzte Generation, [website], <https://letztegeneration.org/en/>, (accessed 10 March 2024).

message to an audience.<sup>109</sup> This means that while the activists are affixed to some part of an artwork and for the time it takes security or staff to remove them, the speeches or chants of the individual or group can be recorded by onlookers and spread online. The mechanism has without a doubt travelled across the network of climate activist groups, and the frequency of the use of glue attests to this. Within the 45 detected instances of vandalism, glue was used 27 times (at times in conjunction with other methods). To elaborate, glue is used by activists to affix a part of their body to a painting, sculpture, or surrounding area of an art piece. The use of glue is a deliberate and weighed tactic taken by a large number of protesters. To illustrate the regularity of this, an example can be offered. Ultima Generazione, following an act of vandalism commented ‘it’s important for us to value art, instead of damaging it, like our governments do with the only planet’, after explaining that they had consulted with experts about the safest glue to use.<sup>110</sup> The statement demonstrates that the approach is inherently strategic, and aims to avoid any long-lasting damage to the art. Moreover, the use of glue denotes the largest commonality within mechanisms.

Yet another mechanism which activists rely on that occurs frequently is the use of food within protests. This mechanism, which first occurred in the earliest attack on the *Mona Lisa* and involved cake, has been disseminated across the movement. In nine other instances, food such as potatoes, soup, flour, and maple syrup have been chosen as a way of vandalising art. Two explanations for this decision can be deduced. Firstly, the use of food is seen as controversial, and guaranteed to make international headlines. Secondly, and more visibly, there is an overt symbolism stemming from the use of food and the climatic concerns surrounding food insecurity. In one instance, an activist operating on behalf of Just Stop Oil utilised tomato soup to vandalise an artwork by Van Gogh. Following the stunt, a spokesperson for the organisation explained the symbolic nature of the soup, which was linked to the fact that many people in Britain do not possess the means to even heat up a can of soup.<sup>111</sup> This urgency came about in the context of a rising cost of living crisis in the country. In Germany, in a similar manner, potatoes and glue were used by Letzte

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<sup>109</sup> Ables K. Why bold activism is reaching a fever pitch at museums. *The Washington Post*. Oct 30 2022.

<sup>110</sup> ‘World: Iconic artworks weaponized by climate activists’, *Asia News Monitor*, August 29 2022.

<sup>111</sup> Marshall, A., ‘Soup thrown at Vincent van Gogh’s ‘Sunflowers’’, *New York Times*, 15 October 2022.

Generation on a Monet work. One protestor was noted as saying, ‘We are in a climate catastrophe and all you are afraid of is tomato soup or mashed potatoes on a painting ... I’m afraid because science tells us that we won’t be able to feed our families in 2050’.<sup>112</sup> The activist then continued with a speech prompting the need for greater urgency and attention when it comes to listening to demands to prevent inaction as the climate situation worsens. In short, the juxtaposition of food as a protest mechanism and the possibility of a food crisis illustrates the interconnectedness of methods used by activists with the message that they aim to convey. Adding another layer of interpretation, the use of food in combination with art, valued at sums often surpassing millions, contributes to the creation of controversy. Naturally, the risk of damage by food is something that is guaranteed to make international headlines. This ensures visibility for the activists, and further spreads their messages around the globe.

Finally, other methods used include spray-painting, the use of banners, and the use of other miscellaneous materials such as fake blood, charcoal, fake oil, or paint. One performance encompassed both fake oil and fake blood. The protest occurred in Antwerp in 2022, and referred to the museum’s receipt of financial support from a French oil giant.<sup>113</sup> Dissatisfied with this, Extinction Rebellion activists poured the two substances onto the pavement surrounding a statue while crying out. In 2023, Ultima Generazione poured diluted charcoal into the renowned Trevi Fountain situated in Rome.<sup>114</sup> The use of charcoal, presumably to mimic oil, connected the event to government fossil fuel subsidies and called for an end to them.

#### 7.1.6. Mechanisms - Art Symbolism

Continuing forth with mechanisms, this section considers symbolism in respect to the

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<sup>112</sup> S. Jones, ‘Climate activists throw mashed potatoes at Monet work in Germany’, *The Guardian*, 23 October 2022.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Antwerp: Activists pour fake oil and blood on the white floor of KMSKA’, *The Brussels Times*, 11 December 2022, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/335655/antwerp-activists-pour-fake-oil-and-blood-on-the-white-floor-of-kmska>, (accessed 6 February 2024).

<sup>114</sup> ‘Climate Activists in Rome Turn Trevi Fountain's Water Black in Protest Against Fossil Fuel Subsidies: Rome's Mayor Condemns Climate Activists Who Poured Charcoal into the Famous Trevi Fountain to Protest Against Subsidies for Fossil Fuel Companies’, *ABC Premium News*, 22 May 2023.

artworks selected for vandalising. This refers to the context and meaning of a piece of art, and how this can bolster the message of the activist groups. This mechanism emerged as a theme throughout the content analysis and was not predicted a priori. Symbolism as a mechanism is not as common as the mechanism of choosing glue or food, but it makes for an interesting point of analysis. The first noted instance of this occurred when Just Stop Oil activists chose to spray paint *The Last Supper* by Giampietrino. The mechanism aimed to bring attention to crop failure, through the food-related imagery, but also the linguistically laden aspect of it being the ‘last’ supper. A spokesperson for the group commented following the event – ‘we have a whole generation for whom it may be the last supper’, consolidating the message of the group in conjunction with the symbolism of the art. The stark symbolism pinpoints the concerns of intergenerational equity, and the sense of insecurity at the potential future that coming generations will be faced with. Moreover, the group further consolidated this fact by commenting that ‘some of the paintings were chosen for specific reasons, such as their importance or because they highlighted issues associated with climate change’.<sup>115</sup>

At a later point in time, the Australian branch of Extinction Rebellion utilised Picasso’s *Massacre in Korea*, an anti-war painting, to warn what might happen should environmental issues continue to be overlooked.<sup>116</sup> The protest took place ahead of state elections in the country. Similarly to Just Stop Oil, the symbolism presents an extreme situation, as is the aim of the groups. The symbolism functions as a way to elevate the urgency needed to combat the climatic situation.

Ultima Generazione has posited itself at the forefront of groups using symbols, and the findings demonstrate it. In one performance, the group chose a statue, *Laocoon and His Sons*, located in the Vatican. The statue is symbolic in its reference to Greek mythology, wherein the story reflects the priests’ martyrdom following his attempt at saving the citizens of Troy.<sup>117</sup> The protesters attempted to connect this tale to government inaction in light of climate change. In another case, Ultima Generazione chose to focus their attack on

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<sup>115</sup> Marshall, A., ‘U.K. museums face a sticky problem from climate protests’, *New York Times*, 6 July 2022.

<sup>116</sup> G. Baldwin, J. McCarthy, ‘Most extreme Extinction Rebellion disruptions across Melbourne’ *Herald Sun*, 2 September 2023.

<sup>117</sup> ‘World: Iconic artworks weaponized by climate activists’, *Asia News Monitor*, August 29 2022.

*Primavera* by Botticelli, a painting depicting hundreds of plant species, in an attempt to protest imminent biodiversity loss due to climate change.<sup>118</sup> With these two cases presented, the claims are motivated by government inaction and loss of nature. I pose the third case of symbol-oriented performance by Ultima Generazione, which presents the strongest case of using this tactic.

Following a deadly flood on the Italian island of Ischia in 2022, activists belonging to the group targeted *La strage degli innocenti* by Guido Reni, translating from Italian to ‘the massacre of the innocents’.<sup>119</sup> The performance entailed a series of mechanisms, however the symbolism of such poses the strongest argument for the analysis in this section. As can be deduced, the painting depicts the death of innocent people. Weaponising the power of the painting, the activists proceeded to write ‘Ischia, Italian Government, 2022’ next to the painting.<sup>120</sup> Utilising the museological format of labelling a piece of art, the group accused the government’s inaction towards climate change following the deaths of young children in the flood. The names and ages of the children were noted beside the new title of the painting. In addition to this, two activists were seen pouring fake blood on themselves. The focus on the motif of the artwork works to unify the art with the human-oriented implications that the climate crisis may contribute to in the long-run. The entire performance mimics a possible future scenario through the theatrical use of blood. It can be viewed as a testament to the fears held by activists regarding an increase in deaths as the climate crisis progresses. The group made the choice to act in a way that allowed for symbolism to define their operations, signifying that their actions are co-ordinated and thought-out. This performance specifically, showcases that the performances that make up the movement are anchored in real scenarios where lives are at risk, and not only a superficial ploy for empty words to be said.

With the mechanisms laid out, a linear process can be traced. Groups mobilise internally, and prompt interested members of the public to join via their websites or through

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<sup>118</sup> ‘Climate protesters strike through the art’, *The Age*, 12 October 2022.

<sup>119</sup> Azione a Bologna sulla Strage degli Innocenti (quella da parte del Governo a Ischia), *Ultima Generazione* [website], <https://ultima-generazione.com/comunicati/2022/12/03/azione-pinacoteca-bologna-strage-innocenti-ischia-2022/>, (accessed 6 February 2024).

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*



local meetings. The majority of activist groups involved in the movement belong to the umbrella organisation, A22 Network. Through a shared mentality, groups organise protests wherein members carry out vandalism predominantly in museums, but also other institutions possessing artworks. The mechanisms involve mobilisation, strategic vandalism tactics, and symbolic choices of art. The symbolic aspect has emerged as a strong point of analysis and heavily characterises many operational choices of the group – both in the choice of artworks and in the choice of tools for vandalism. As mentioned under notable outcomes, the aim is to create attention from different actors in order to bring focus to environmental pursuits.

Since the beginning of the phenomenon, this process has travelled across nations in 45 different instances. Within this, the movement has utilised borrowed tactics of using glue, from the likes of street protests, and has also piggybacked off of the prominence of the climate movement as spearheaded by Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion in earlier years. By taking elements, or more specifically mechanisms from other movements and protests, the climate movement weaponising art has emerged as its own entity, constituting a distinct process. This section has investigated the evident and tangible elements of the movement, and provides a foundation for understanding how the movement operates, who is involved and where, how the activists perform the vandalism, and what the outcomes of their actions are or aim to be.

### 7.2.1. Contentious Politics

Contentious politics refers to ‘interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actor’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties’.<sup>121</sup> The intrinsic element of contentious politics entails contention, which can be explained as making claims ‘that bear on someone else’s interests’.<sup>122</sup> In short, one party makes claims on to another party, and this process involves the subject or maker of the claim, and the

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<sup>121</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, 2015, p. 7; C. Tilly, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>122</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, 2015, p. 7.

object or receiver of the claim. The contention in this setting is spurred by one or more issues related to climate change and proceeds with the making of a claim on the party deemed responsible for the said issue(s). The other essential element in the equation is collective action, which pertains to coordinated operations. Henceforth, the purpose of the following sections is to advance the understanding of the climate/art movement through the theoretical lens of contentious politics, further demarcating the specifics of the phenomenon.

### 7.2.2. Claim-making

In this repertoire of contention, the sustained climate movement, aside from the mechanisms that define it, some essence of claim-making needs to occur to constitute a solid enough foundation to situate it within contentious politics. As one can imagine, claims made by climate activist groups pertain to environmental issues. As to parties upon which they are made upon, the situation can vary. The claim can be made upon a local government, more generally at political leaders, at museums, and more. This section proceeds with examples of claim-making, found within news reports of contentious performances. These are deduced with some postulation and are taken from texts where demands are most concretely highlighted. These claims take place during performances – standardised and routine protests involving art. These acts of protest have been referred to as performances throughout the analysis, and the thesis has consistently argued and will continue to argue that these events should be referred to as performances on the basis of their repetitive occurrences and similar mechanisms that transfer across groups.

Firstly, I bring to attention a performance of *Ultima Generazione* that took place in Milan and involved a protestor gluing themselves to a statue. The protestor stated that ‘there will be no art in a collapsing planet...this is why we ask cultural institutions to ... put pressure on the government’.<sup>123</sup> In this instance, the actor making the claim was a protestor with an affiliation to *Ultima Generazione*, and the party upon which the claim was made

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<sup>123</sup> ‘Climate protesters strike through the art’, *The Age*, 12 October 2022.

was the cultural institution in a broader sense. Through such appeal, the activists participating in the performance attempted to prompt those in positions of power within these institutions to further make a claim against the government, as museums tend to be tied to or funded by the government. In this case and across the repertoire, the activist group is the subject, or the maker of a claim, while the government and cultural institutions are the object, or receiver of a claim. Through this, the issue becomes politicised, and as a result the movement becomes connected to politics.

Other performances have also outlined museums as the object. In Antwerp, Extinction Rebellion activists protested in the KMSKA museum due to their involvement with ‘dirty money’ through a sponsorship from the Total Energies Foundation.<sup>124</sup> The agreement between the two parties was not made public, and activists were dissatisfied by the fact that the museum should choose profit over human rights and climate effort prioritisation. The object, the museum, was therefore seen as accountable for negative climate implications through its choice of funding partners.

Ultima Generazione have demonstrated yet another form of claim-making. As mentioned under the section on symbolism, the performance protesting the floods in Ischia was a stand-out performance for numerous reasons, including the fact that the symbolism was so pronounced, but also that it was performed in connection to an event where lives were lost. Consequently, the claims were targeted at the government, whom the group deemed responsible, by mentioning the ‘Italian Government’ as the fictitious artist. Thus, the claim made was targeted at the Italian government and called for immediate action to prevent the reoccurrence of deaths due to the changing climate. In a statement that is available through the Italian website of Ultima Generazione, the demands from that day were further clarified, and include an immediate stop to coal power plants and gas extraction, as well as an increase in solar and wind energy by the Italian government.<sup>125</sup>

Another example of claim-making can be observed with the operations of Just Stop

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<sup>124</sup> ‘Antwerp: Activists pour fake oil and blood on the white floor of KMSKA’, *The Brussels Times*, 11 December 2022, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/335655/antwerp-activists-pour-fake-oil-and-blood-on-the-white-floor-of-kmska>, (accessed 6 February 2024).

<sup>125</sup> Azione a Bologna sulla Strage degli Innocenti (quella da parte del Governo a Ischia), *Ultima Generazione* [website], <https://ultima-generazione.com/comunicati/2022/12/03/azione-pinacoteca-bologna-strage-innocenti-ischia-2022/>, (accessed 6 February 2024).

Oil. The name alone, Just Stop Oil, alludes to the nature of the claim that takes a stand against oil and gas investments by the UK government. As mentioned previously, the group carried out five connected attacks over the course of a week. Within two of these, the group made their claims by spray painting ‘no new oil’/ ‘just stop oil’. Though the direction of this claim is not specifically naming the government as the object, when the action is coupled with the manifesto of the group, it becomes easier to define the government as the receiver of the claim. By reiterating ‘oil’ within the claim-making as well as the group’s name, the message of the group remains consistent. Through this assortment of claim-making, a stream of contention can be traced.

Overall, claims tend to be geared towards the government, as the entity is most often equipped with the power to make decisions that pertain to the climate, such as investing or divesting from fossil fuels. In Canada, a protest involving maple syrup by Stop Fracking Around illustrated the making of claims on lawmakers to prompt the halting of a Pipeline project that was under construction at the time.<sup>126</sup> In Germany, two mothers affiliated with Letzte Generation targeted a dinosaur skeleton. The performance referred to the government’s inefficient climate policy, and the subject was accused of ‘deadly ignorance’.<sup>127</sup> In Italy, Ultima Generazione most recently appealed for a climate change damage repair fund worth 20 billion euros from the government.<sup>128</sup> Once again, the performance made the government the object, as it would be responsible for the repair fund should it be possible. By illustrating this in a more spatial manner, the conclusion can be made that activist groups around the world generally deem the government as the party that ought to receive a claim. The similarity of the claim-making in different nations shows a united stance against climate change, and predominantly fossil fuels’ harm to the environment. The government of the given country stands at the forefront of decision-making when it comes to this, and in a sense becomes the biggest perpetrator in the

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<sup>126</sup> ‘Making a Point: ACTIVISM: Climate Activists Throw Maple Syrup at Emily Carr Painting’, *Chronicle - Herald*, 14 November 2022.

<sup>127</sup> Pascal, ‘Glued to dinosaurs - mothers in the Natural History Museum “Our children should not die from the climate catastrophe’’, Letzte Generation, <https://letztegeneration.org/en/blog/2022/10/an-dinosaurier-geklebt-muetter-im-naturkundemuseum-unsere-kinder-sollen-nicht-an-der-klimakatastrophe-sterben/>, (accessed 6 February 2024).

<sup>128</sup> ‘Italy: Climate Protesters in Italy Target Botticelli Painting’, *Asia News Monitor*, 16 February 2024.

conditions surrounding the climate emergency.

The contention can be targeted at the government of the country in which the group is situated, but also on a grander level. As the issue of climate change is one of global concern, the claims can be localised or more far-reaching in their nature.

### 7.2.3 Human Rights and Claim-making

Within the claim-making process, human rights have been employed in the rhetoric of climate activists. This claim-making has occurred in direct ways, and more indirect ways. In these cases the object of the claim-making is not explicitly named, and the claims refer to the need for urgency in addressing climate change. As the government possesses the power to implement changes, we can view it as an indirect object. An underlying principle of environmental justice and intergenerational equity guides these claims. In terms of environmental justice, a lot of the claims relating to ending fossil fuel investments allude to the impact on humans and the planet, due to their position as the top contributor to greenhouse gases. In this vein, Letzte Generation Austria were quoted comparing oil and gas drilling to ‘a death sentence to society’.<sup>129</sup> This signals to the notion that the threat of environmental and societal collapse is a driving force behind the performance. In the Netherlands, one Just Stop Oil activist was quoted as having inquired:

What is worth more, art or life? Is it worth more than food? More than justice? Are you more concerned about the protection of a painting, or the protection of our planet and people?.<sup>130</sup>

This statement alludes to human rights rhetoric through the connotation that concepts such as life, food, and justice, hold within fundamental human rights. The comment could be viewed as in a way acknowledging cultural rights, and asking whether these rights are

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<sup>129</sup> K. Grieshaber, ‘Climate Activists Throw Liquid at Klimt Painting in Vienna’, *Irish Examiner*, 15 November 2022.

<sup>130</sup> S. Webb, ‘Climate Activists Target ‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’’, *The Independent*, 28 October 2022.

deemed more important than human rights. The result is an activist statement which shifts attention to key concepts such as justice and implements them into climate change conversations.

In a statement following an act of vandalism, Ultima Generazione also made a claim referring to human rights rhetoric. The statement translates to a case of conveying that within 30 years, should climate change continue to be inadequately addressed, the world will see millions of climate refugees and victims.<sup>131</sup> Such a mass displacement of people would mean that human rights to life, security, property, and even nationality, as well as a severely impacted standard of living.

In 2022, Just Stop Oil carried out five consecutive protests throughout a single week. A spokesperson for the group commented on these planned protests as part of an interview:

...And if we're working to, for example, preserve these objects, we need to be realistic about the fact that the future we're conserving them for at the moment doesn't currently exist. And the children that are coming around this gallery, if we're doing nothing to stop the looming, terrifying future that they've currently predicted, that that needs to change. So going into alternative cultural and sporting events, as well as being nothing new in the history of civil resistance, is also really trying to mobilise people from different sectors of society to say, this is all of our business, this is going to affect our lives, our homes, our livelihoods.<sup>132</sup>

This statement poses once again the acknowledgment of cultural rights when mentioning the preservation of artworks. Building on that notion, it transitions into speaking about intergenerational equity, posing that these rights alluding to humans and the environment should be put first. If not, the enjoyment of human rights will not be possible in the future, and as a result, neither will the enjoyment of cultural rights. Moreover, the statement touches upon lives, homes, and livelihoods – once again this can be understood in its

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<sup>131</sup> G. Bertasi, 'Venezia, incollati al Giorgione: «Opera a rischio». L'Accademia chiude la sala per due giorni' *Corriere Del Veneto*, 6 September 2022.

<sup>132</sup> 'Climate Protesters Resort to Stronger Tactics to Get the World's Attention', *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, 2022.

relation to human rights which employ the same terms. Finally, it acknowledges intergenerational equity through its reference to children and also their futures, and how climate change could jeopardise them.

Climate activists are utilising human rights as guiding principles. The mention of ‘sacred rights’ in the manifesto of A22, the network which is instrumental to large-scale mobilisation, attests to this. In the manifesto, A22 states that ‘if we are refused we will disrupt, week after week, as those who came before us did many times in the struggle for human rights’.<sup>133</sup> Through this, the network both recognises the role of human rights in historical injustices, but also the importance of their use for the environmental movement.

Though claims or statements do not directly quote human rights articles, they utilise overlapping language that strengthens the climate-oriented claims. The key takeaway is that human rights and climate advocacy cannot be separated. The climate movement always has human rights in mind, as aspects of climate risk such as access to water, food, and shelter are directly connected to fundamental human rights.

#### 7.2.4. Strong Repertoire

In order to qualify as a ‘strong repertoire’, performances have to be: recurring and well-defined, change little over time, defined by contentious actions that involved actors repeat, the presence of actors who demonstrate an awareness of performances and the methods used within them<sup>134</sup>. The analysis has illustrated that the performances are recurring, through the occurrence of 45 of them. Though the pace of the movement varies, going from very frequently occurring attacks in 2022, to a significantly smaller amount in 2023, and picking up again in 2024, the movement itself has persisted. It is likely that these performances might happen again in the future, as unlike other social movements, the demand of battling climate change is not easily resolved on a national, and even more so, international level. However, it must be noted that due to the newness of the phenomenon, a period of two years may be insufficient to denote major changes. It could take several years

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<sup>133</sup> A22 Network, ‘Our Declaration’ [website], <https://a22network.org/>, (accessed 10 March 2024).

<sup>134</sup> C. Tilly, 2012, pp. 50-62.

or decades to map changes which may not be visible until further in the future. The answer to this is not fully conclusive then, and time will tell how exactly the movement develops.

The repetitiveness of the actions can be deduced from method-borrowing among activist groups, as well as overlapping claim-making geared towards the government. Through these commonalities, a shared awareness of performances and methods is visible, and is enabled by the participation of groups in one umbrella coalition. The existence of the coalition attests to the fact that collective action is a part of the process. In addition to this, almost all cases of vandalism are carried out by a group, hence denoting collective action on a smaller, localized, and national scale. Moreover, these performances are well-defined, as has been shown through the deconstruction of the movement into sites of contention, conditions, streams of contention, outcomes, and mechanisms and processes. Furthermore, when it comes to the change of the repertoire over time, which within the criteria should only occur incrementally, one can consider alterations within the movement, such as adapting methods of vandalising to be coherent with the claims being made. This can also extend to the selection of artworks, which can differ should some symbolic connotation be desired by the actors.

#### 7.2.5. Concluding Remarks on Contentious Politics

The instances of activism which have been outlined, present a strong case for the movements compatibility with the criteria composing the contentious politics theory. Firstly, the events of activism in museums can be referred to as performances. As defined, from the first performance, involving the Mona Lisa, until the final performance noted in February, the combination of all events has showcased enough structure, cohesiveness, and repetitiveness to constitute a tangible movement. This movement, characterised most prominently by the tactics it entails, namely the use of food and glue, distinguishes itself amongst other movements, climate related or otherwise. The controversial choice of tactic is something that has been sustained throughout the period, but also slightly altered as needed (in order to unify the symbols of the art and claims).

Claim-making has been demonstrated as a large factor within these contentious



performances. In a broader sense, the claims of these are formulated in such a way that the receiver of the claim becomes anyone involved in contributing to climate change in a significant way. In a narrower sense, claims are typically and literally articulated at the government. These claims can also address other institutions with power, such as museums. As in the case of *Ultima Generazione*, a claim put forward to the government stemmed from the aftermath of an event which led to civilian deaths from severe weather. This shows the acknowledgment of the role played by the government in the climate emergency, and this sentiment transpires in the majority of performances. This contributes to the politicisation of the movement. Claims are articulated by the subject, the climate activists, as part of their contentious performances, and constitute a criterion of contentious politics. Moreover, claims have been made in reference to human rights, demonstrating a reliance on the human rights rhetoric to support and strengthen climate change messages.

These performances entail mechanisms (coordinated action, mobilisation, tactics, symbolism) which help to understand how these work when applied in different settings.<sup>135</sup> Drawing on these performances, which can be defined and broken down into episodes involving script borrowing from group to group, the process can be called a repertoire. Due to the general dissatisfaction of activists, the severity of their statements and symbolism, and claims made on governments, the movement becomes a repertoire of contention.

## 8. Discussion

The findings outlined in this thesis have shed significant light on a movement which, though established, remains relatively new. Through the dissection of the movement into various factors which represent it, a more concise understanding of the phenomenon can be obtained. This is of importance, considering the fact that little research has been carried out on the topic within the discipline of social movements. This work has built on previous research by Kinyon, Dolšak, and Prakash, who have focused on events of the movement which took place in 2022. Their work, posing some limitations within its scope and

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<sup>135</sup> C. Tilly and S. Tarrow, 2015, pp. 30-31.

analysis, was utilised as a starting point to further advance the discussion around climate activism and vandalism of art. By expanding on this, a significantly longer period of the movement has been assessed, allowing for a clearer overview which most prominently entailed tactics, claims, and symbolism, as well as an exploration of the contentious performances through sites of contention, conditions, and outcomes. Symbolism in particular has gone under the radar in terms of previous research and emerged as a relevant concept as the analysis progressed.

This work's analysis allowed for the distinction of the most eye-catching and controversial aspects such as the use of food, the employment of symbolism to solidify messages, and the collective action and mobilisation needed to proceed with such strategies, while characteristics of the movement were further highlighted through the lens of contentious politics. Overall, the thesis set out to investigate the phenomenon, and built a solid foundation for further research in the area. It has established the movement as one of contentious politics, through the theory of Tilly and Tarrow, which helped to advance the understanding of the phenomenon. What could strengthen this line of inquiry in future research, might be the use of interviews with involved actors. This approach could inform a potential study with a deeper insight into the innerworkings of the groups, elaborating upon the internal communication and mobilisation. Information about the activists and their operations would also expand the knowledge on typology of activists in this setting, as previous literature has mostly accounted for climate activism related to school strike protests and Extinction Rebellion.<sup>136</sup> Additional light could be shed on factors such as how performances are planned. All of this however, would depend on confidentiality policies within groups, but should the information be obtainable, the information gap that comes from private coordination and internal mobilisation and actions could be bridged. Within theoretical aspects, a theory different to contentious politics could have showcased other aspects of the movement. The employment of a theory of civil disobedience could be an example, and might offer insights about human behaviour and protest choices, rather than the operations within the movement.

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<sup>136</sup> N. Kirsop-Taylor, D. Russel, & A. Jensen, 2023, p. 3; J. de Moor et al., 2021, pp. 619 – 625.

Due to the novelty of the movement, it has been difficult to assess its impact. At this point in time, it is not possible to foresee the results it may bring. Evidently, the focal point now is the gaining of attention from the public and from lawmakers. In terms of the public, a further study could centre around how climate activist acts are received, through interviews, ethnographic observations, or content analysis of social media reactions. In terms of the governmental side of things, it cannot be foretold whether any nation which has experienced the movement will take activist claims seriously and work towards implementing climate policy changes. Widespread fossil fuel dependency remains an obstacle to this.

Reflecting on the movement as a whole, it has become clear that an important dimension of it is the framing of climate issues as human rights issues. The findings show that activists consistently return to human rights and environmental justice as an aid to their actions. In their view, potential and temporary damage to a piece of art should not be more atrocious to the public than long-term damage to the planet. This establishes the movement within the scope of human rights, demarcating a defined approach to the tackling of issues that the climate emergency poses. The use of human rights within climate advocacy speaks to a mentality which justifies civil disobedience and destruction of property for something deemed a greater cause. Moreover, the broader research problem, environmental justice and the climate emergency have come into play within this thesis. Within the art vandalism movement, claims remain broad, and specific policy demands are not a factor. Perhaps stronger human rights language implementation could strengthen the message of activists and gear it towards a more legal sphere, targeting governments with claims in a more systematic way. This is an issue that demarcates climate activism as a whole, as performances are often seen as senseless or radical, classifying them as out of touch with politics.

Finally, in reflecting on possible causes for the movement's existence, it could be the case that it is seen as a more accessible way of political involvement for participants. As demonstrated by de Moor et al, the broader climate movement remains connected to high

levels of youth participation.<sup>137</sup> It seems that activists could have doubts about democracy and the people in power, with the climate emergency serving as evidence. Protesting could be a more effective or accessible way for their voices to be heard, as has been shown through claim-making. This conceptualisation still begs the question, of whether current circumstances can justify the destruction of property, and whether this is a viable and effective approach to climate change.

## 9. Conclusion

To reiterate, this work set out to investigate the following research questions:

- 1. What is the climate activist art vandalism movement and what characterises its performances?*
- 2. How can contentious politics advance the understanding of the movement?*

This work has focused on the phenomenon of activists utilising the vandalism of art as a tool for combatting climate change, in broader terms, and in narrower terms, shifting the public's focus to climate change. The purpose of the thesis has been to investigate the phenomenon, and to deepen the understanding of the movement throughout its course. The thesis has been highly aided by the previous work on art vandalism by climate activists of Kinyon, Dolšak and Prakash, which allowed for a starting point of research and analysis. The research of de Moor et al, della Porta and Portos, and Pinto and Ericsson, have also been influential for their multi-disciplinary insights that most prominently connected with the topic of the thesis.

By means of content analysis, the movement has been examined through news reports, which involved the compilation of all information on which actors were involved, where the performance occurred, what methods of vandalism were used, and what demands

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<sup>137</sup> J. de Moor et al., 2021, pp. 619-625.

or claims were made. Alongside this, the method of analysing social movements presented by Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow was utilised. In the first question, the findings take the reader through a timeline of events, stating the temporal and spatial layout of the instances of protest. From that point, the movement was dissected through the use of the analytical framework suggested for contentious politics inquiries and applied to the data discovered through the content analysis method.

In relation to characteristics, many observations could be made. The sites of contention are composed of a network of climate activist groups located within the Global North. A majority of the groups rely on A22, the network which enables larger coordination of those who are driven to vandalise by environmental concerns. The performances by these groups have occurred in 15 countries, with Italy, Germany, and England having the highest number of performances. These performances have largely taken place in museums, but other locations have also been utilised. The driving condition for contention is unanimously the climate crisis, and activist sentiments as represented by claims point to the fact that the government is deemed responsible for the problem. While more specific causes have occurred, such as the case of severe weather events in Italy or COP27, the number one motivator has consistently been climate change in some sense.

A stream of contention has been established. This means that a trend can be seen wherein repeated actions take place, and a wave of inspiration from group to group can be traced. From what can be understood from a period of two years, the movement is observable in varying frequency in different periods. One outcome of the performances can be the change in conditions between the activist and the public, and through this the desired outcome can be explained as a wish to shift public attention to climate change. In doing this, activists operate under principles of nonviolence.

The mechanisms and processes of the movement have been investigated, and the takeaways have illustrated that tactics, method-borrowing, and symbolism, are instrumental to the movement. Under the theme of tactics, the thesis has explored the choices made by activists in what materials they utilise for vandalism, and how these correlate with the artworks to create symbolism. Interestingly, symbolism has emerged as a key theme to the operations of activists, who have been selecting art containing motifs to solidify their

message.

When it comes to contentious politics, the chosen theoretical framework, the movement has been further examined in terms specific to social movements. These have included claim-making and strong repertoire analysis. Within claim-making, one can distinguish between the object and the subject. The subject has been the climate activists, while the object has most frequently been the government. Claims have varied in nature, and broader environmental claims have accounted for the majority of claims. Other claims were made in relation to stopping fossil fuels, and in an attempt to prompt museums to cut ties with fossil fuel related funding. A distinct example of claim-making was displayed by Ultima Generazione's flood-related protest, wherein the government was directly named and involved in the tactical choices. Moreover, claims have been made with language that overlaps with human rights language, addressing risks that the climate poses to life, security, justice, and livelihoods. This has shown that the movement cannot isolate itself from human rights rhetoric as it is central to the understanding and addressing of climate change concerns. The importance of human rights to the groups has also been illustrated by their manifestos and speeches within performances or interviews.

This thesis has been consistently directed by the ambition to fill the knowledge gap surrounding the vandalism of art in the name of environmental pursuits. Though the movement still has elements which have not outwardly come to light, the thesis has presented a valuable contribution to this developing area of research. The findings of the thesis are of importance to the field of human rights, as they illustrate the lengths that activists would go to in order to prevent environmental collapse, but also the usefulness of human rights rhetoric to advocacy. The nexus of art and climate has established itself as a distinct and direct response to the 21<sup>st</sup> century's climate concerns.

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# Appendix

## Appendix I. Formatted data set of climate activist art vandalism.

Date	Group/Affiliation	Location	Artwork	Method	Claim/Demand
29/05/22	Individual	Louvre, Paris, France	Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci	Cake	Broad climate emergency demands
29/06/22	Just Stop Oil	Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, Scotland	My Heart's in the Highlands by Horatio McCulloch	Spray paint	End to new oil and gas agreements
30/06/22	Just Stop Oil	Courtauld Gallery, London, England	Peach Trees in Blossom by Vincent van Gogh	Glue	End to new oil and gas agreements
01/07/22	Just Stop Oil	Manchester Art Gallery, England	Tomson's Aeolian Harp by JMW Turner	Glue	End to new oil and gas agreements
04/07/22	Just Stop Oil	National Gallery, London, England	The Hay Wain by John Constable	Glue	End to new oil and gas agreements
05/07/22	Just Stop Oil	Royal Academy, London, England	The Last Supper by Giampietrino	Spray paint	End to new oil and gas agreements
22/07/22	Ultima Generazione	Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy	Primavera by Botticelli	Glue	Attention to biodiversity loss
30/07/22	Ultima Generazione	Museum of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century, Milan, Italy	Unique Forms of Continuity ...by Boccioni	Glue	Museums to put pressure on governments
18/08/22	Ultima Generazione	Vatican Museum, Vatican	Laocoon and His Sons, multiple artists	Glue	Government attention to climate change
21/08/22	Ultima Generazione	Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy	Frescos by Giotto	Banners, chaining to surrounding area	End to carbon and gas

23/08/22	Letzte Generation	Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, Germany	Sistine Madonna by Raphael	Glue	Attention to dangers of fossil fuels
24/08/22	Letzte Generation	Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany	Landscape during a thunderstorm ...by Nicolas Poussin	Glue	Attention to dangers of fossil fuels
25/08/22	Letzte Generation	Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany	Rest on the Flight into Egypt by Lucas Cranach	Glue	Broad climate emergency demands
26/08/22	Letzte Generation	Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany	Massacre of the Innocents by Rubens	Glue	Broad climate emergency demands
04/09/22	Ultima Generazione	Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy	La Tempesta by Giorgione	Glue	Government attention to climate change
08/10/22	Extinction Rebellion Australia	National Gallery of Victoria, Australia	Massacre in Korea by Picasso	Glue	Attention to dangers of fossil fuels
14/10/22	Just Stop Oil	National Gallery, London, England	Sunflowers by Vincent van Gogh	Tomato soup	Attention to cost of living crisis
19/10/22	Scientist Rebellion	Autostadt Museum, Wolfsburg, Germany	Car model	Glue	Broad climate emergency demands
23/10/22	Letzte Generation	Museum Barberini, Potsdam, Germany	Grainstacks by Monet	Potatoes and glue	Government inaction to food insecurity and climate crisis
24/10/22	Just Stop Oil	Madame Tussauds, London, England	King Charles Statue	Cake	End to new oil and gas agreements
27/10/22	Just Stop Oil	Mauritshuis Museum, Netherlands	Girl with a Pearl Earring by Johannes Vermeer	Glue	Attention to intergenerational equity
30/10/22	Letzte Generation	Natural History Museum	Dinosaur sculpture	Glue and banner	Government attention to climate change
04/11/22	Ultima Generazione	Palazzo Bonaparte, Rome, Italy	The Sower by Vincent van Gogh	Glue and soup	Broad climate emergency demands

04/11/22	Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies	Australian Parliament House, Canberra	The Woman's Suffrage Banner by Dora Meeson	Glue	End to fossil fuel subsidies
05/11/22	Futuro Vegetal	Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain	Set of paintings by Francisco Goya	Glue	Protesting agri-food model
09/11/22	Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies	National Gallery of Australia, Canberra	Campbell's Soup Cans by Warhol	Glue and spray paint	Attention to climate crisis and dangers of capitalism
11/11/22	Stopp Oljeletinga	National Gallery of Norway, Oslo	The Scream by Edvard Munch	Glue	Pressure on government to stop oil exploration
12/11/22	Stop Fracking Around	Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada	Stumps and Sky by Emily Carr	Glue and maple syrup	Against construction of pipeline
13/11/22	Futuro Vegetal	Egyptian Museum of Barcelona, Spain	Replica of mummy	Glue, slime, banner	Protesting against COP27 and Coca-Cola sponsorship of event
15/11/22	Letzte Generation Austria	Leopold Museum, Vienna, Austria	Life and Death by Gustav Klimt	Oil, paint, glue	Government to stop oil and gas investments
18/11/22	Dernière Rénovation	Bourse de Commerce, Paris, France	Horse and Rider statue by Charles Ray	Paint	Broad climate emergency demands
18/11/22	Ultima Generazione	Fabbrica del Vapore, Milan, Italy	BMW Art Car by Warhol	Flour and glue	Attention to ecosystems and climate change
18/11/22	Stopp Oljeletinga	Vigeland Sculpture Park, Oslo, Norway	Monolith by Vigeland	Paint	End to fossil fuels
03/12/22	Ultima Generazione	Pinacoteca di Bologna, Italy	Massacre of the Innocents by Reni	Paint, pictures, fake blood	Government inaction to climate change/deaths in floods
07/12/22	Ultima Generazione	Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy	Entrance of venue	Paint and banner	End to carbon and gas
10/12/22	Extinction Rebellion	KMSKA,	Misery of the	Fake blood	Demanding

	Belgium	Antwerp, Belgium	Job by Ossip Zadkine	and fake oil	museum to cut ties with fossil fuel foundation
01/03/23	Last Generation Canada	Royal B.C. Museum, Victoria, Canada	Wooly Mammoth	Paint	Government inaction to climate change
27/04/23	Declare Emergency	National Gallery of Art, Washington, USA	Little Dancer Aged Fourteen by Edgar Degas	Paint	Urging president Biden to declare a climate emergency
21/05/23	Ultima Generazione	Trevi Fountain, Rome, Italy	Fountain	Charcoal	Government to end fossil fuel subsidies
14/06/23	Återställ Våtmarker	National Museum Sweden, Stockholm	The Artist's Garden at Giverny by Monet	Paint and glue	Government attention to climate change
26/06/23	This is Rigged	Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh	Portrait of the King	Spray paint	Government inaction
28/01/24	Riposte Alimentaire	Louvre, Paris, France	Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci	Soup	Attention to food insecurity
08/02/24	Last Generation Canada	Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada	Dinosaur replica	Spray paint	Broad climate emergency demands
10/02/24	Riposte Alimentaire	Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, France	Le Printemps by Monet	Soup	Attention to food insecurity
13/02/24	Ultima Generazione	Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy	Birth of Venus by Botticelli	Banners	Demand of climate change repair fund