

Project Group (Number and Name): 79 (How) does Activist Research Make Sense?

Comment

Authors of the Comment: Pauline-Astrid Wicher, Tjorven Wernecken, Malte Simon Jacob, Simone Liepold

Comment: How does activist research make sense?

It is, first of all, a rather silly question. Nonetheless, we will dedicate this comment on explaining how, and if it is just to justify the hours spend talking about it.

Activist research is in a way a corner stone of protest. The way researchers participate and include themselves and their work in protests, legitimize these protests by demonstrating that the cause is just and based on facts and studies. One might argue that research alone does the trick. Unfortunately, there is a big difference between knowing that there are facts hidden in the multiverse of answers the internet offers, and having those who truly understand these facts join in and share them directly.

But it is not just about supporting activism that has already started, it is also about attempting change first hand. To paraphrase one of our guest speakers, Klaas Burger, without activism you may pile study on study upon a certain issue without ever-changing it for the better.

In that way, activist research shines light on grievances otherwise left in the dark. After this week of theories and talks of general topics and vague introductions, we had the chance to see a direct, clear and live example upon this very subject.

We are talking, of course, about the situation in Iran and the conference held on Wednesday.

Here, we could see first hand the importance of activist research.

In Iran, a revolution is starting that is being violently oppressed by its own government. The media coverage is extremely poor, both in quality and in quantity. We have little confirmed information about what is happening, and unreliable intel by the regime in question.

But we do have people like the speakers on Wednesday, people who have been there, have seen with their own eyes the cruelty committed upon those protesting for freedom and the basic rights we all largely hold here. People who have taken it upon themselves to do the leg work and find out what is happening, who do the research and then come here to spread the information. They spark the activism we have seen starting here and elsewhere, the activism and support for the people and especially the woman of Iran that must go on.

So how could activist research not make sense?

We are aware that there are many crises at the moment. In the face of it all, it does feel overwhelming and simply too much. However, we did hear a lot of reasons to hope this week, a lot of strategies on how to cope.

And so we want to leave you with this thought: We don't all need to fix everything. The best way to move forward is to take your time and start - maybe stay with one crisis.

There are a lot of problems, but there is more of us.