

Project Group (Number and Name): Group 80, (How) does activist research make sense?

Comment

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Comment on the challenges and benefits of Activist Research

Activist research is a highly discussed topic in academic circles. A frequently asked question is if activist research is as credible as traditional research. In order to get a deeper understanding of the topic we analyzed the essays “Common notion, part 1: work-inquiry, co-research, consciousness-raising“ written by Marta Malo de Molina published in 2004 and “Virtual Opening Week“ written by Prof. Dr. Serhat Karakayali. In the following we will elaborate on our evaluation.

One of the most glaring issues with activist research is its inherent subjectivity. Activist researchers are likely to be biased towards their own cause, for example by interpreting established information in a more favorable way. This can lead to reduced trust in the findings of activist research. Because society is aware, that the researching activists are acting in their own interest. This can possibly cause a huge rift in society, by splitting the people in two camps. In the worst - case scenario this may lead to extremist ideologies within members of society. On the other hand, activist research has many advantages when used in conjunction with traditional research. Since Activist Researchers are directly involved with their inquiries, they have unique insights in the topic, which traditional researchers may not have. For the same reason they have reduced interest in financial gain and are thus a valuable asset in times of growing corporatism.

Financial interests lead to underfunding of unprofitable scientific ventures. Activist Research is a good way of still generating insights into topics that are less dominant and profitable topics.

A good example regarding this challenge is the neglect of research on AIDS in the early 1980s. In this context the activists established the slogan “Nothing about us is without us” what led to the cooperation between researchers and activists. In consequence they were able to achieve fundamental insights on the topic, that helped to decrease the mortality rate. This would not have been able without the help of Activist Researchers.

Furthermore, their emotional involvement provides them with more diverse arguments as well as endurance in the process of research. Thus, they are keen on finding fulfilling an accurate result.

In conclusion it's important to have Activist Research if it is as logically consistent in its own narratives as traditional research. It complements traditional research by providing additional points of view rather than replacing it. It is important to notice that traditional research is also to be questioned in its objectivity and accuracy.