



scholar

activism

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE  
SCHOLAR-ACTIVIST THROUGH  
ZINE-MAKING

## Exploring the role of the scholar-activist through zine-making

To be a scholar-activist means to simultaneously have one foot in the academy and one foot in activist circles, whether they be grassroots community groups or international movements. More recently there is a growing acceptance of the dual role that many researchers occupy and even the need to engage with both rather than seeing scholarship and activism as separate. Scholar-activists embrace the idea that their research can lead to social change rather than seeing themselves as objective observers. This is particularly relevant in sustainable place-shaping research which engages with the multiple voices involved in transformative actions towards sustainability.

However, being part of both worlds isn't easy and often involves contradictions and compromise. How do we navigate this dual identity as scholar-activists and activist-scholars? Through this zine we open up space for individual and collective reflection around what scholar-activism means.

A zine is a self-published magazine, usually in the form of a collection of texts and images, both original and borrowed. As a do-it-yourself publication, it is based upon the (re)claiming and sharing of voice. Zine-making can be a tool for collective reflection as well as a means of recording our lived experiences as practitioners/activists/researchers in order to shed light on the concept of scholar-activism.

The pages that follow were created by susplace scholar-activists at the susplace Final Conference in Tampere, May 2019. They respond to three guiding questions:

**(joy)** what experiences in your academic or activist work encapsulates scholar-activism?

**(challenge)** which barriers, institutional or otherwise, have you encountered in trying to embody these two positions?

**(theory/meta)** is scholar-activism a useful or even realisable concept in the context of academia?

[Joy]

HAVE YOU HAD A SPECIFIC

EXPERIENCE WHICH YOU FEEL

ENCAPSULATES

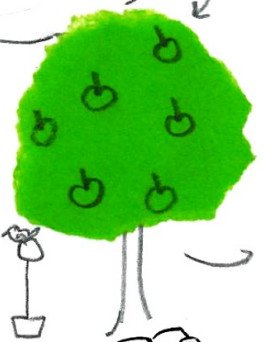
SCHOLAR-

ACTIVISM?

how can research/  
activism bring



is it  
REGenerative?



ON  
HEART

HEAD



HANDS

Tasty tips

## How to write about

your activities / work / research  
as a scholar-activist

- x do it with others!
- x talk about it with others!
- x publish it in different media  
- not only ranked journals -
- x tell people about your background  
& why you are interested in  
writing this

others?

e.g. your  
colleagues, buddies  
people involved  
in the research  
or explicitly  
not involved in  
it! They will  
all have valuable  
feedbacks!  
& contributions

- x write about failures. If we dare  
to speak more honestly about  
our problems + conflicts within  
research, it can only help and  
be a relieve within a world that  
has to "function".

Joyful !

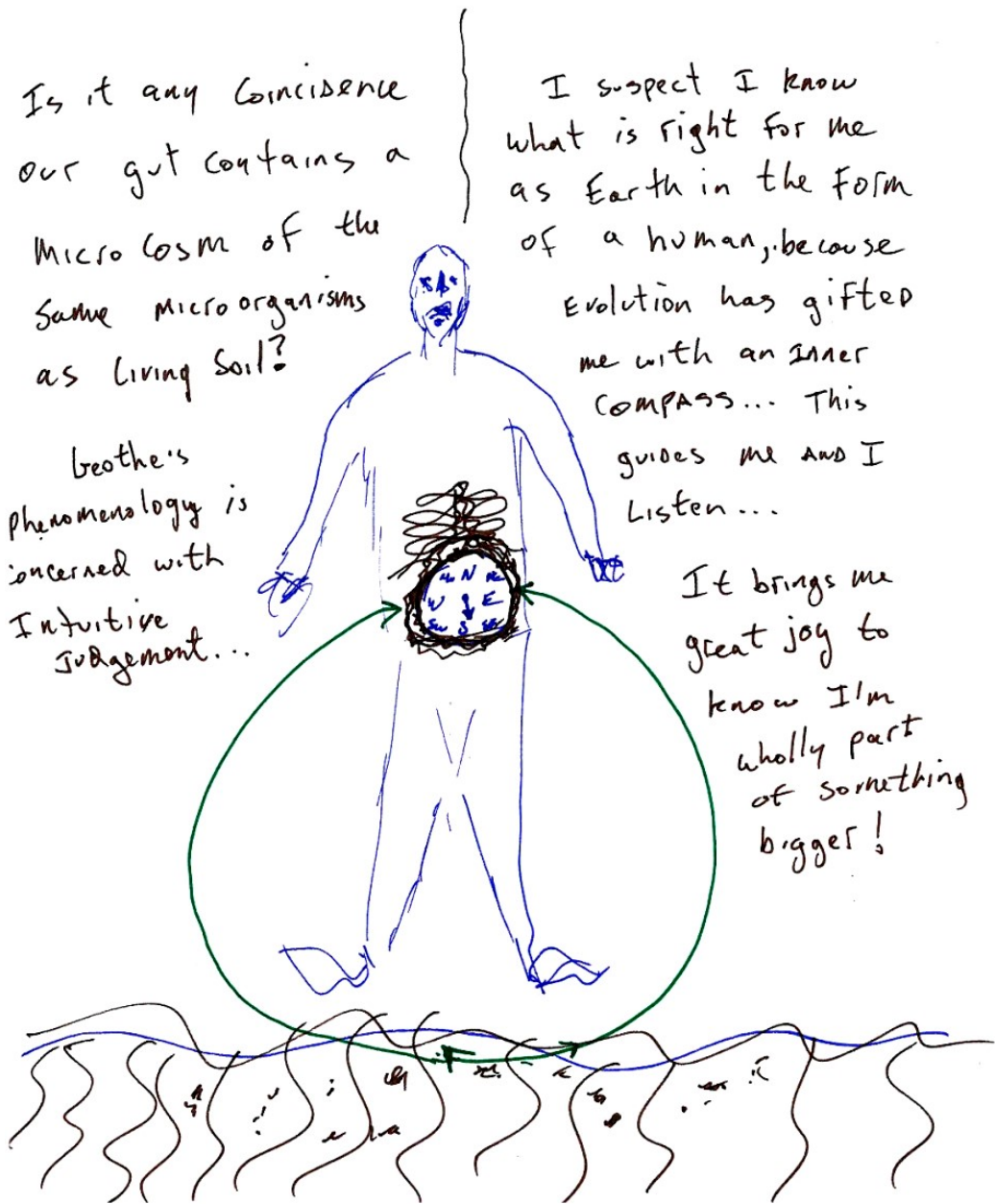
# INNER COMPASS

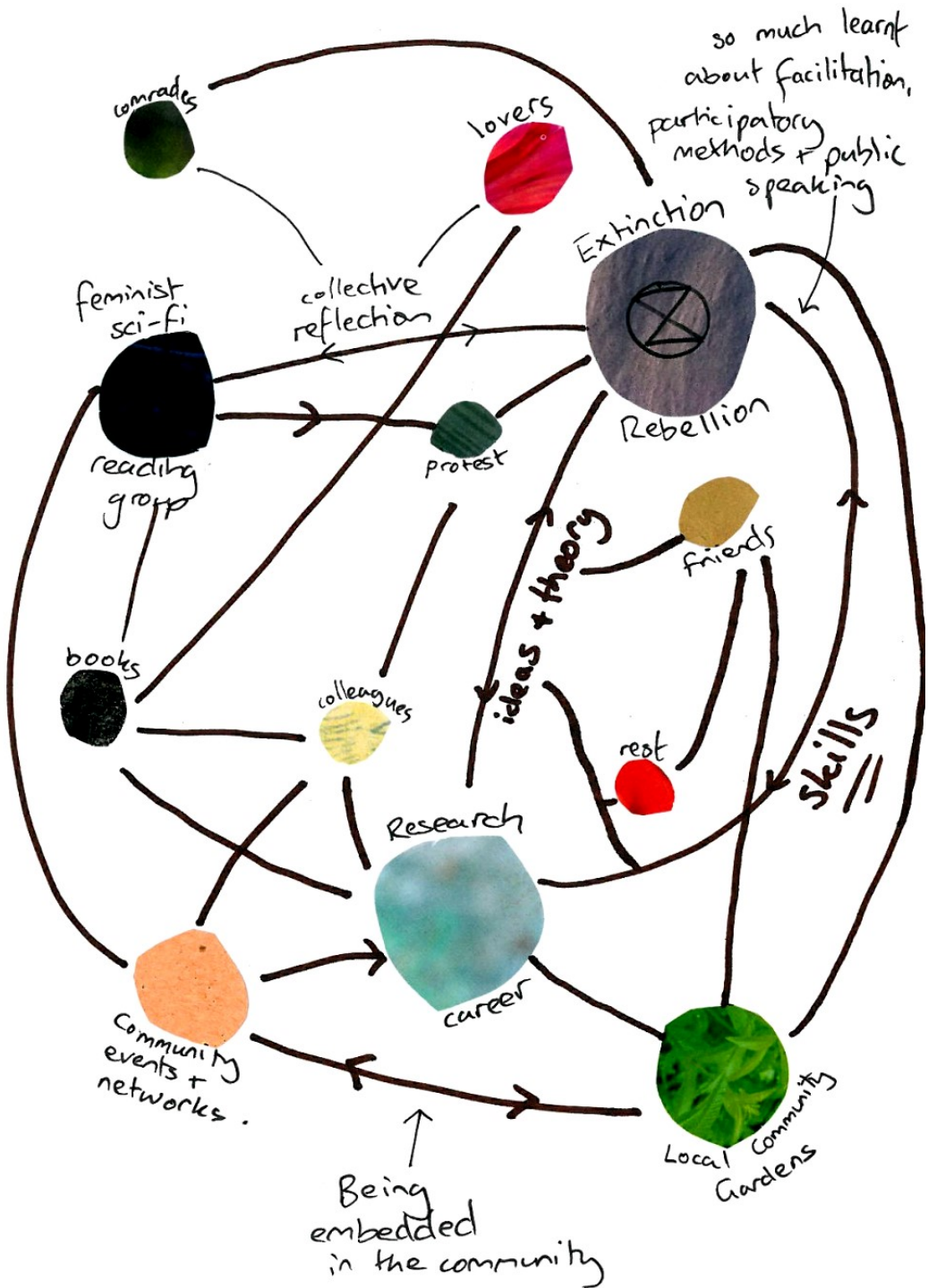
Is it any coincidence  
our gut contains a  
Microcosm of the  
same microorganisms  
as living soil?

Beothe's  
Phenomenology is  
concerned with  
Intuitive  
Judgment...

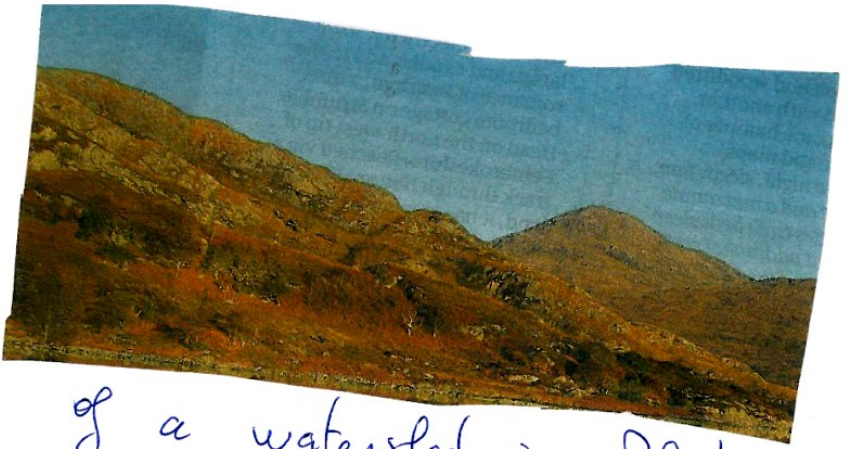
I suspect I know  
what is right for me  
as Earth in the form  
of a human, because  
Evolution has gifted  
me with an INNER  
COMPASS... This  
guides me and I  
listen...

It brings me  
great joy to  
know I'm  
wholly part  
of something  
bigger!





This is  
the story



of a watershed in Bhutan  
where people  
were in  
conflict



**SIGN HERE**

After 3  
years of collaborative  
activities, they signed an agreement  
for **water sharing**







Peasants and  
Researchers from  
France & Africa  
united  
to preserve and sow  
biodiversity in  
the fields!

joy of

animating a  
event &  
Participatory  
research work  
Sharing my  
with all the stakeholders



adaptation seeds of life  
- autonomy - fertility -

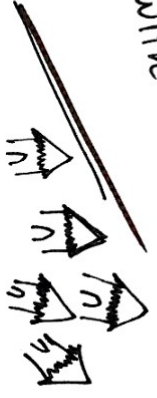
THIÈS,  
SENEGAL  
Nov. 2018



biodiversity can also  
be cultivated!

autonomy & resilience  
= seeds  
facing climate change

Let's  
imagine  
the future  
of our collaboration



IT'S IN  
THE  
MESS...



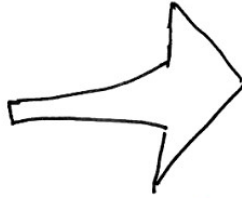
... WHEN  
SOMETHING  
JUST  
CLICKS ...

(AND  
WHEN YOU  
SEE SOMEONE  
PULL UP A  
POTATO FOR  
THE FIRST TIME)





**Listen**  
**to the stories**



Research does  
NOT has to  
be a lonely  
task.

TAKE  
A  
STEP!



[CHALLENGE]

WHICH BARRIERS,

INSTITUTIONAL OR OTHERWISE,

HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED IN

TRYING TO EMBODY THIS DUAL

POSITION?

How to sit in the  
discomfort of not  
hiding behind  
big words but  
also not hiding  
behind the  
busy-ness of  
activism . . .

TO WINNER THOUGH!



# CHALLENGES

**From  
to the**

feeling that good things are  
happening within  
a research project...

need to put it all in "nice"  
words in order to **publish** it  
in a well ranked journal  
that no one reads in  
order to keep your  
position...



I work with community gardens →



This is their focus as an output (well, one of them)

HOW TO GET A BALANCE BETWEEN RESEARCH OUTPUTS WHICH ARE REQUIRED BY YOUR INSTITUTION

Will anyone read this?

RESEARCH "OUTPUTS"



AND THOSE THAT ARE USEFUL + ACCESSIBLE TO PARTICIPANTS

Your standard lengthy PhD thesis

WITHOUT JUST DOING TWICE AS MUCH WORK?!

I  
Don't want to  
know anymore... no more  
facts, figures and frightening statistics!

**ENOUGH!!!**

Inspire, mystify and motivate me...  
Give me awe, magic, enchantment!  
Move to fully be who I am...  
Empower everyone to be fully human...  
So they share their unique  
gifts with the world  
In service  
of  
**Life**



In the "field"

Aha, so you came here to do research about the local community and xyz... !?

Yes, that's right!

Oh, so many expectations and ascriptions to science

OR:

VERSION ①

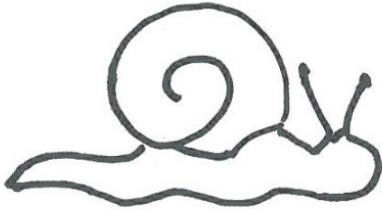
But how come, you are not from here, right? So how should you understand how things go on? You will not be able to change anything any ways ...!

VERSION ②

Wow, super! Let me tell you... so you will help us do xyz!!

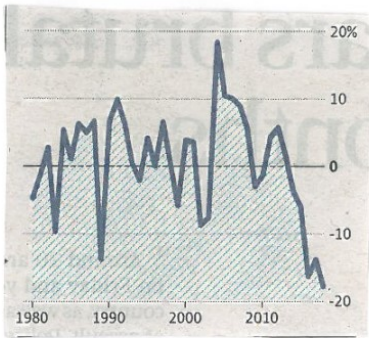


# Academic results vs. Changes in society



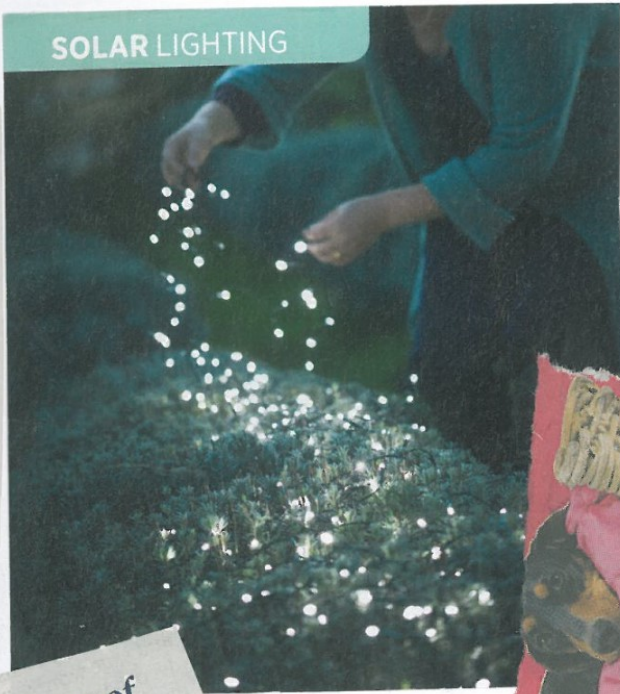
reports

Life



SOLAR LIGHTING

fear threat



There's a sense of relief **IN**

presence,



am  
wc

changing the rules

# in a nutshell

Market forces

Economy

education bubble



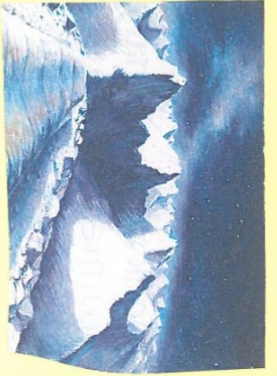
[THEORY/META]

DO YOU THINK SCHOLAR-ACTIVISM

IS A USEFUL OR EVEN

REALISABLE CONCEPT

IN THE CONTEXT OF ACADEMIA?



TENSION

Ego,

CENTRIC

Logic





if [scholar-]  
can  
be

an opportunity  
...








# WHAT IS ACTIVISM ANYWAY?

Is it Greenpeace?

Is it gardening?



Is it standing up  
for yourself?

Is it making change  
until you burnout?



Is it supporting each other?

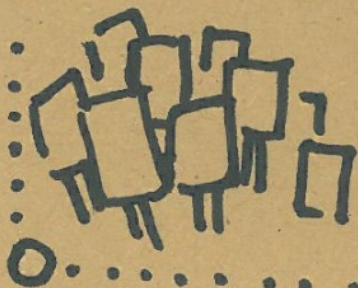


IF NOT



SCHOLAR-  
ACTIVISM,

THEN WHAT  
ELSE?



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