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 [JOY]

IS IT REGENERATIVE?

UN

HEART

HEAD

HANDZ
How to write about your activities/work/research as a scholar-activist

- do it with others!
- talk about it with others!
- publish it in different media - not only ranked journals -
- tell people about your background & why you are interested in writing this
- write about failures. If we dare to speak more honestly about our problems & conflicts within research, it can only help and be a relief 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? Brethe's phenomenology is concerned with Intuitive Judgement...

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!
so much learnt about facilitation, participatory methods + public speaking

Extinction
Rebellion

skills

ideas + theory

friends

root

Being embedded in the community

Local Community Gardens

Research
career

colleagues

books

reading group

feminist sci-fi

comrades

lovers

collective reflection

community events + networks
SIGN HERE

Conflict

We were in a watershed in Bhutan

After 3 years of collaborative

agreements, they signed an agreement for water sharing

This is the story of people who study
Peasants and researchers from France & Africa united to preserve and sow biodiversity in the fields.

joy of animating a participatory event & sharing my research work with all the stakeholders.

Let’s imagine the future of our collaboration.

Seeds = autonomy & résilience facing climate change.
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** have to be a lonely task.

**Take a step!**
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...
NO WINNER YET.
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 in order to keep your position...
How to get a balance between research outputs which are required by your institution.

Research "Outputs"

And those that are useful and accessible to participants...

Your standard lengthy PhD thesis

Without just doing twice as much work?!
Enough!!!

Don't want to know anymore... No more statistics!

Know facts, figures and frighteningly human...

More to fully be who I am...

Empower everyone to be fully human...

Share their unique gifts with the world

In service of a more magical, enchantment.

And motivate me...

Give me awe! Mystify me...
In the "field"

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

Yes, that's right!

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 anyways...

Wow, super! Let me tell you... so you will help us do xyz!!
Academic results vs. Changes in society
fear threat

There's a sense of relief in presence,
changing the rules.
in a nutshell

Market forces

Economy

education bubble

ABANDONO
Do you think Scholar-Activism is a useful or even realisable concept in the context of academia?
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?

Curated by
Poppy Nicol (NICOL@CARDIFF.AC.UK),
Alice Taherzadeh (TAHERZADEH@CARDIFF.AC.UK)
and Gloria Giambartolomei

Sustainable Places Research Institute
Sefydliad Ymchwil Mannau Cynaliadwy

With thanks to Susplace for enabling this workshop.