

A practical guide to resistance: Petra Morsbach on the misuse of power and moral courage



Petra Morsbach
The Elephant in the Room

[Der Elefant im Zimmer]
On the misuse of power and how to oppose it
An essay

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Petra Morsbach, born in 1956, studied in Munich and St. Petersburg. After writing her PhD thesis on Isaak Babel, she spent ten years working as a dramaturge and stage director and since 1993 has been freelancing as a writer. She has written several highly acclaimed novels, including *Opera Novel*, and has won numerous awards. In 2017 she received the Wilhelm Raabe Prize for her *Palace of Justice*, for which she spent nine years doing research.

What makes a church authority protect a cardinal, despite having known for decades that he's been sexually abusing pupils and novices? What makes a political party reluctant to uncover a minister's wrongdoing, even when that minister is a member of the opposition? What makes members of an art academy quietly accept a ban on poetry readings? It isn't so much the misuse of power itself that is ominous – after all, it's a perfectly natural inclination – as the evasive, confused, contradictory and unpredictable attitude of its subordinates.

In *The Elephant in the Room*, Petra Morsbach examines this attitude in three gripping reports. The scenarios presented here not only deal with moral dilemmas, but also tell many-layered stories whose topicality will be clear to every reader – whether they work in a hospital, in a nursery, or for a car maker. A meticulously argued and accessible analysis of the abuse of power, why we tolerate it, and how we can oppose it.

Press

"Petra Morsbach's book is a strong appeal for critique and correction. These are the oxygen of the rule of law." *FAZ*

"Petra Morsbach has written an entertaining book about power, and what happens when the abuse of power is exposed." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

"Petra Morsbach's book on the abuse of power and resistance

to it is a powerful contribution to civics in the best sense."
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