



## **ESREA Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Research (ADCAL) Network Conference**

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

26-27 May, 2023

### **First Call for Papers**

#### ***Movements for Democracy, Critical Learning and the Limits of What we Know***

At our last conference our network explored the sources of democratic crisis (see <https://liu.se/en/research/esrea-conference-2018>) and at a subsequent set of seminars we asked how adult education might respond hopefully and generatively to an era of 'polycrisis' (see <http://esrea.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ADCAL-Dialogue-Series-2021-CfP.pdf>). These crises are intensifying and the themes of hope and hopelessness, and the role of adult education in renewing democracy are more present and pressing than ever. We want our next network conference to build on these earlier discussions but to focus on epistemology, especially critical knowledge, as it relates to movements for democracy.

We very much want the conference to be open to a wide variety of ways of making sense of these broad themes but would very much welcome contributions that address the following questions and topics:

What types of knowledge are democratic organisations, institutions and especially social movements producing? We are curious to explore how knowledge is generated and in spaces of knowledge production that operate by and for democratic principles. We are interested in how technical, relational, political and experiential knowledge are combined in efforts to critically understand the world and to advance and deepen democracy (Eyerman & Jamison 1991; Freire, 1998; Gregorovic, 2020; Schugurensky, et al, 2005). What has been learnt from longstanding projects in democratic and popular education about the characteristics and processes of critical knowledge production? What role has, and could, research play in such initiatives?

We assume that learning does not precede or result from action, but it takes place alongside activity in the zones at the 'edges' of knowledge. It is not and cannot be reduced to the reproduction of what exists, although it may proceed from it, but is an opening towards the unknown. We want to challenge the dominant discourses on adult education, especially in policy, that focus too much on predictable and planned, which only confirms the existing order of things, and ask about learning practices that

tap into democratic possibilities by embracing the unknown. On the periphery of the educational system, adult education is subject to experimentation, constantly between what it is and what it could become for example in forms of popular and community education (Connolly, 2020; Horton et al, 1990; Tett, in press). That effort is not just a building on what has gone before, but a continuous recomposition of meaning, the creation of new mosaics, and the framing of potential engagement outcomes as unfinished. Beside critically understanding the world that already is, we wonder what are sources of imagination linked with education that can bring to the forth new ways of being, acting and feeling in the world (Barnett, 2012; Greene, 1995)? What are assumptions on knowledge that can embrace learning with the unknown? How collective action is, or can be, seen as a learning event? We invite papers dealing with theory, practice and research methodologies that can continue asking questions or give insights into epistemology, learning and democracy.

We specifically want to invite presentations on what we know about critical knowledge and emergent knowledge to research on 'social movement learning' (Atta & Holst, 2022; Choudry, 2015; Hall & Turay, 2005; Foley, 1999). This is an important, and growing, area of adult education research but one which is uneven and undeveloped and where there is the opportunity, and we think the need, to develop a collective research agenda through collective reflection and drawing on other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and social geography. With this in mind we are interested in the range of practices that are going on in social movements but especially which of these are impactful and powerful and why? How is critical knowledge produced by emancipatory movements documented and shared across borders and between groups? How is it 'held' across generations and through democratic crises? In this way we want to return to the question of polycrisis we have discussed at other network events from a different angle and ask how movements effectively build alliances and 'scale up'? What sort of learning is required to ensure that democratic movements are effective transnationally and transversally in the face of savage inequalities and the climate crisis? And how, and this seems to us a fundamental question, can we develop a genuine 'ecology of knowledges' (de Sousa Santos, 2009) commensurable with the global challenges we face?

In considering this we also need to consider the blocks and limits to democratic knowledge production and critical learning. There are a number of dimensions we wish to bring into view here which range from the scepticism of science to the uncritical trust in established epistemic authorities (Prlić-Samardžija, 2021). The refusal to acknowledge power and sources of social advantage is one of the characteristics of domination (Bourdieu, 2000) but this is distinct from the undermining of the very idea of reliable knowledge (Neiwert, 2020) and the festival of willful ignorance that we are witnessing playing out in the political and virtual spheres (Negt & Kluge, 2015) as we survey the 'ruins of neoliberalism' (Brown, 2019). We also want to explore and debate the meaning and productive uses of 'ignorance' (de Sousa Santos, 2009; Ranciere, 1991).

Besides contributions regarding these specific theme and questions the ADCAL network welcomes other contributions dealing with the nature, possibilities and limits of adult education in encouraging active citizenship and promoting democracy as well as relations between and changing roles of adult education and active citizenship, adult education, democracy and democratization, popular education and social movement learning, adult learning and (active) citizenship, democracy and democratization, local, national and global citizenship.

The conference is open to researchers from all disciplines and perspectives relevant to adult education and involved in the full range of sectors and sites of practice linked to adult learning. We actively encourage various formats and modes of communication of research at the event.

We intend that this will be a convivial, stimulating and dialogical event. As a result, the conference will be structured in a way that ensures high level of exchange and discussion.

## **Where and when**

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

26-27 May, 2023

We welcome you to submit your abstract,

Fergal Finnegan, Maynooth University  
Henrik Nordvall, Linköping University  
Annika Pastuhov, Åbo Akademi University  
Maja Maksimović, University of Belgrade

The conveners of the ESREA Research Network on Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning

## **Abstract and paper guidelines**

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is January 20, 2023 (acceptance will be announced by mid-february 2023).

Early bird registration by March 15, 2023

Full papers (5,000- 8,000 words) to be submitted by April 28, 2023.

We welcome other modes of dissemination apart from written papers (such as film, drama piece etc.). Please ensure that the content and structure used in such alternative formats are described in the proposal. Abstracts should be one side of A4 maximum (500 words in 12 point, in a Word references using APA) and should include a title, name of the author(s), institutional affiliation, and contact details as well. Abstracts with author detail documents should be submitted [adcal.esrea2022@gmail.com](mailto:adcal.esrea2022@gmail.com)

The conference language will be English.

The following criteria will be used to review proposals:

- The relevance to adult education theory, policy and/or practice;
- The relevance to the conference themes;
- The clarity of the theoretical and conceptual framework;
- If the proposal is empirical, the background, method, results and implications should be clearly set out.

The scientific committee for the conference:

Fergal Finnegan (Maynooth University)  
Henrik Nordvall (Linköping University)  
Annika Pastuhov (Åbo Akademi University)  
Maja Maksimović (University of Belgrade)  
Barbara Merrill (University of Warwick)  
Andreas Fejes (Linköping University)  
Diana Holmqvist (Linköping University)  
Katarina Popović (University of Belgrade)  
Tamara Nikolić (University of Belgrade)  
Aleksandar Bulajić (University of Belgrade)

### **ESREA bursaries**

3 bursaries for PhD Students are available. To submit the application for a bursary, when you submit your abstract, you should include in a separate file all the relevant information regarding your academic position, as well as a letter with reasons for applying (e.g., lack of funding from your institution). Please note that the Secretary of ESREA will check that the students (or their institutions) are members of ESREA and whether they have already been awarded a bursary recently.

### **About the Research network ADCAL (Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning)**

From <http://esrea.org/networks/active-democratic-citizenship-and-adult-learning/>  
What, if anything, is the role of adult learning and education in fostering active democratic citizenship and the making of a democratic society? The ADC network is dedicated to exploring these central and longstanding questions through research, debate and discussion of active citizenship by studying and reflecting on these issues. We are currently particularly interested in adult learning in social movements; civic education for adults; the social and political construction of citizenship in relation to various discourses on adult learning and education and the historical and contemporary role of popular education. The ADC network welcomes a variety of approaches dealing with the nature, possibilities and limits of adult education in encouraging active citizenship and promoting democracy as well as relations between and changing roles of:

- adult education and active citizenship,
- adult education, democracy and democratization,
- popular education and social movement learning,
- adult learning and (active) citizenship, democracy and democratization,
- local, national and global citizenship.

## **About ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults)**

ESREA's mission is to support the advancement of high quality research on the education and learning of adults in Europe by sustaining:

- co-operation among researchers, in the European context conceived in the broadest geographical terms;
- development of research and dissemination of results in all areas of adult and continuing education;
- training of early researchers and continuing professional development of researchers;
- relationships with other European organizations and the appropriate national organizations.

To find out more about ESREA please visit [www.esrea.org](http://www.esrea.org)  
To apply for membership please visit [www.esrea.org/about-us/membership](http://www.esrea.org/about-us/membership)