

## **Call for Papers – ESREA network on Access, Learning Careers and Trajectories**

### **Adult Learning: Future Possibilities and Spaces for Changing Identities and Transformations**

Across the world, adult learning is undergoing profound shifts driven by social, technological, ecological, and political change. This is also against a background of a changing world as we are witnessing global unrest and wars as well as the emergence of new political, social and economic changes due to the rise of neoliberalism, the far right and populism which is undermining and challenging democracy. In neo-liberal times adult education has become marketised, individualised and competitive and being viewed in economic terms rather than as a social and public good. Digitalisation, demographic transitions, labour-market reconfigurations, migration, and widening social inequalities are also continually reshaping the conditions under which adults learn, participate, and shape new identities. At the same time, community movements and new learning spaces open possibilities for transformation—of individuals, institutions, and societies.

Furthermore, a broader crisis of traditional points of reference concerning the role of subjectivity within wider ecosystems—often associated with issues related to sustainability—is reshaping current scenarios, both with regard to the role of adult- and higher education and to the construction of individual meaning. In this sense, the dimension of the future—individual, collective, and ecosystemic—becomes a crucial aspect to be identified and critically examined: a threatening future, as well as a future as a horizon within which it is possible to rethink what it means to be human beings embedded in processes of increasing social, environmental, and technological complexity.

As adult educators we need to reflect on how adult education, in all its contexts, can provide and build a space for transformation and changing identities for adult students. Learning institutions can be viewed as offering a transitional space which may enable an individual to reflect back on their past and present biography while also imagining a future biography of who they want to be and become. A transitional space, therefore, implies being in-between in terms of identity whereby an individual let go of part or all of their present identity transforming who they are. Once a learning journey has begun, however, it may not be an easy one as some may struggle with internal and external constraints while others will be determined to keep going and develop a learning identity. Issues of class, gender, race and age may come into play in the educational spaces affecting identities and transformations and relationships with family, friends and community.

We want to focus on adult education in its broadest sense and a range of contexts such as further and higher education, adult education, community education,

workplace learning and non-formal and informal learning. We want to explore these different educational and learning contexts and spaces and their possibilities for changing identities and transformations.

This conference invites researchers to explore how adult learning, in all its contexts, is being reimagined and reconstructed in response to current challenges. We welcome theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions that interrogate adult learning as a site of identity work, agency, struggle, and transformation. And in the words of Raymond Williams (1989) we need to remember and find ‘resources for a journey of hope’.

### Conference Themes

Submissions may address (but are not limited to) the following themes:

- **Changing identities in adult learning**  
Identity formation, shifting learner–worker–citizen roles, learning biographies, and the re-negotiation of self across the life course.
- **Learning spaces and emerging practices**  
Community-based learning, workplace learning, digital and hybrid environments, translocal spaces, informal and non-formal education.
- **Transformative learning and societal change**  
Critical pedagogy, sustainability transitions, social justice, activism, and collective forms of learning.
- **Adult learning in times of uncertainty**  
Crises, precarity, displacement, and resilience; how adults learn, adapt, and transform in rapidly changing conditions.
- **Social inequalities**  
The impact and role of class, gender, race and age
- **Future visions of HE in relation with emerging issues connected to identity processes**  
The role of HE in fostering spaces for thinking new way of approaching future visions of ourselves in relation with the broader ecosystemic crises
- **Policies and systems shaping adult learning futures**  
Reforms, governance, institutional arrangements, recognition of prior learning (RPL), and professionalisation of adult educators.
- **Methodological innovations**  
Visual, narrative, participatory, ethnographic, or digital methods that push the boundaries of adult learning research.

## Submission Guidelines

### Individual paper

Submit an abstract of 400-500 words excluding references indicating the research problem, theory, method and preliminary results.

### Symposium

A symposium consists of 3-4 papers covering the same thematic as well as a discussant. Submit one single document including an outline of the symposium (300 words), the abstract for each paper included in the symposium, 400-500 words each, as well as the name of a designated discussant.

### FOR ALL SUBMISSIONS

Please submit 2 documents in the format of Microsoft Word.

1. A document including all author information (full name and affiliation), as well as contact information to the corresponding author (e-mail). Name the document file: [TITLE OF THE PAPER OR SYMPOSIUM]
2. An anonymised version of the submission without any information making it possible to identify the authors. Name the document file: [TITLE OF THE PAPER OR SYMPOSIUM] ANONYMISED

All submissions should be sent by e-mail to [dejan.simonovic@liu.se](mailto:dejan.simonovic@liu.se) no later than May 31.

### Important Dates

- **Abstract submission deadline:** 31 May 2026
- **Notification of acceptance:** 26 June 2026
- **Full paper submission (optional):** 15 October 2026
- **Conference dates:** 18–20 November 2026

### Contact information

For queries and submissions, please contact:

**Email:** [dejan.simonovic@liu.se](mailto:dejan.simonovic@liu.se)

**Website:** <https://liu.se/forskning/vuxnas-larande-framtida-mojligheter-till-identitetsforandring-och-transformation>

### Scientific committee

Professor Andreas Fejes, Linköping University

Professor Antonio Fragoso, University of Algarve

Associate Professor Andrea Galimberti, University of Milano-Bicocca

Emeritus Professor Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick

Professor Sofia Nyström, Linköping University

### **Organising committee**

Professor Andreas Fejes, Linköping University  
Professor Sofia Nyström, Linköping University  
PhD student Dejan Simonovic

### **Conference Venue**

The conference is organised by the Division of education and adult learning at Linköping University in Sweden (<https://liu.se/en/organisation/liu/ibl/pvl>). The conference will take place at Scandic Frimurarehotellet (<https://www.scandichotels.com/en/hotels/scandic-frimurarehotellet>) in the city centre just a short walk from the train station.

Linköping is easily accessible by train from the airports in both Stockholm and Copenhagen. There is also an airport in Linköping with two daily flights with KLM to and from Amsterdam Schiphol airport. More information on how to travel to and from Linköping at: <https://visitlinkoping.se/en/before-your-trip/trip-to-linkoping/>

### **Conference fees**

Included in the conference fee, besides access to the conference, are 3 lunches, 4 coffee breaks, and the conference dinner.

#### *Early bird on or before August 25*

ESREA member - 3200 SEK  
Non ESREA member - 3800 SEK  
PhD Student - 2500 SEK

#### *After August 25*

ESREA member - 3800 SEK  
Non ESREA member - 4400 SEK  
PhD student 3000 SEK

### **Bursaries**

ESREA offers up to three bursaries of up to 300 € each for PhD students attending the conference, provided they contribute with a paper.

To be eligible to apply, students need to be ESREA members (individual or institutional membership). PhD students should declare their willingness to apply when sending the final version of paper. In this case the email should be addressed to Barbara Merrill – [Barbara.Merrill@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Barbara.Merrill@warwick.ac.uk), Antonio Fragoso - [aalmeida@ualg.pt](mailto:aalmeida@ualg.pt) and Andrea Galimberti - [andrea.galimberti1@unimib.it](mailto:andrea.galimberti1@unimib.it).

Students are to use the bursary money in expenses related to this conference (accommodation, flight, etc.) up to the limit of 300 €. ESREA will refund these



expenses when receipts of expenses are presented. Applications or questions regarding the application procedure should be directed to the ESREA Secretariat - Susanne Lattke: [esrea\\_sec@die-bonn.de](mailto:esrea_sec@die-bonn.de)