ESREA Active Democratic Citizenship and
Adult Learning Research Network

Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy,
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

MOVEMENTS FOR DEMOCRACY, CRITICAL LEARNING AND THE LIMITS OF WHAT WE KNOW

Book of Abstracts

Belgrade, 2023

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PAPER PRESENTATIONS

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From *Margins* to Adult Education *Centers*.
Insights from a Research on Active Citizenship
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While the current debate highlights the signals of an increasing civic deficit in contemporary societies (Blais & Dobrzynska, 1998; Putnam, 2000), including Italy (Santerini, 2020), new forms of active citizenship are beginning to be detected. These are often implemented by citizens at the margins of mainstream expressions of citizenship, such as youth, minorities, migrants, and women (Zani & Barrett, 2012), and are less visible in the public sphere. At the same time, they have the potential to contribute to renewing the constructs of citizenship and active citizenship education from an intercultural, processual, and transformative perspective (Banks, 2017; Lazzarini, 2018).

CPIAs (Provincial Centers for Adult Education) are formal adult education institutions in Italy. They appear today as particularly heterogeneous contexts (Colombo & Scardigno, 2019; Floreancig et al., 2018) with a school population characterized by *superdiversity* (Vertovec, 2007). The promotion of civic education is explicitly included among CPIAs' aims (Ministero dell'Istruzione, 2020). However, their teachers struggle to deal with the complexity of their multicultural classes and to promptly innovate their methods and approaches to citizenship and active citizenship education. The contribution presents a study that was carried out in a CPIA located in a multicultural neighborhood of Milan, Italy, as part of a wider project called Abitare insieme (Italian for 'Living together') (AMIF 3477). The research was inscribed within a qualitative paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), adopting the methodological framework of participatory research to enhance reflexivity and transformative practices (Bove, 2009). Within the project, an innovative intervention of active citizenship education was experimented with in the CPIA.

The study was based on data gathered through interviews conducted with female students with migratory backgrounds involved in the project and qualitative observations of their participation in the intervention. The

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interviews were fully transcribed, while observation diaries were drafted. Afterwards, data were coded with the aid of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software and analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

The results show how CPIA migrant female students express peculiar ways of conceiving citizenship and active citizenship that are often invisible in their daily-life contexts, including CPIAs. At the same time, CPIAs appear as key sites to promote and, at the same time, renew the concept of citizenship in a more inclusive perspective. However, this requires specific attention to enhance the experiences of "lived" citizenship (Kallio et al., 2020) that all the students make between school and extra-school and between local and global dimensions.

In conclusion, based on the study, it would be possible to provide guiding criteria for the development of new approaches and methods to encourage active citizenship in adult education sector, with specific attention to migrant women's engagement.

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The Activation Experience of Socially Excluded People Towards A Critical Assessment of Being in a Relationship

The aim of the presented speech is to introduce the project implemented in Poland in 2022 and to situate it in the critical discourse. The project was called "Come Out of the Shadows" and was financed by the "Active Citizens – Regional Fund" Programme.

The project was addressed to ten women at risk of social exclusion due to their experience of domestic violence in the Inowrocław district. Social exclusion is a situation in which an individual who is a member of society is unable to participate fully in the activities of that society, and this restriction is not due to their internal beliefs but is beyond the control of the excluded individual. Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon that, in practice, means the inability to participate in economic, political, and cultural life due to a lack of access to resources, goods, and institutions, as well as limitations on social rights and the deprivation of needs.

Embedding the activation experiences of socially excluded people within critical theory makes it possible to identify three levels within the social environment: (1) the injustice of the existing world; (2) the opportunity to learn about the conditions of social processes; and (3) the encouragement to transcend thinking practiced from only one position (ideological thinking), while also striving to construct explanations that may be considered more adequate than common thinking.

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The Role of Adult Learning and Education in the Concept of Lifelong Learning. An International Study with Eight Countries from Four Continents

The CONFINTEA VII conference in Marrakech 2022 revealed that adult education and learning (ALE) improved in many ways and in many countries but that ALE opportunities still do not reach those who need it most (Boeren & Rubenson, 2022). Moreover, in the Sustainable Development Goals on Education, ALE seems to disappear in the broader concept of lifelong learning (Benavot et al., 2022).

This situation led to a study, funded by DVV-International and carried out by scholars from three countries. DVV-International holds offices in 30 countries around the world (https://www.dvv-international.de/en/about-us/profile). DVV-International builds its work on improving framework conditions, capacity development and implementing pilot activities on the community level. This study applies theory of macro-, meso– and micro levels of adult education and learning (Egetenmeyer et al., 2017; Tietgens, 1991), which is applied in this study.

The research questions aim at *efficient strategies for the implementation of adult learning and education* as well as *hindering factors*. Focus group and expert interviews took place with resource people from Brazil, South Africa, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan, India, Thailand and Australia. The method of constant comparison was applied for the interview analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). MaxQDA software was used for inductive categorizing.

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One hindering factor is possibly seen in the front loaded educational systems with most of the funding addressed to children or formal school qualifications. This was found earlier in an analysis of adult education policies (Belzer & Grotlüschen, 2022) and is confirmed by our findings. A supportive factor is the existence of national associations for adult learning and education that aim at social justice and advocate for the implementation of ALE as a system. However, the data reveal a clear power relation between meso level advocacy activities (by associations, peak bodies and researchers) and macro level impact (onto educational ministries or ministries of labor). One of the policy strategies applied by the ministries is called "empty signifier" by the interviewees: Following (inter)national pressure, ministries implement policy strategies and white papers, but they do not add funding or budget.

The inductive approach also allows us to see how micro-level answers emerge as an effect of being underserved for decades. This shows that people do not trust in the regular policy-making process anymore. Individuals and communities use civil disobedience, self-help groups and community-based activism in order to overcome ecological disasters, food insecurity due to lockdowns, war and refugees, gender-based violence and many other disastrous experiences where they feel left alone by their governments.

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Public Pedagogies in Party-Political Social Media Feeds. The Case of The Finnish Nato Membership Debate in 2022

Since a crucial democratic task of political parties is to propose political choices and educate the public (Dalton et al., 2011), this study scrutinises parties' social media content from an educational perspective. Understanding the educational processes targeted at the public appears to be relevant in light of previous research pointing out how parties have become more invested in winning elections. This role has become more and more predominant during the last decades (Farrell & Webb, 2000) as the number of party members has decreased and parties need to mobilise increasing numbers of voters in order to win elections (Blyth & Katz, 2005; Koivula et al., 2020). Even though some previous research on member education in political parties exists (for example Arriaza Hult, 2020; Bladh, 2022; Hakoniemi, 2021; Nordvall & Pastuhov, 2020), research illuminating parties as educators of the public is scarce.

The aim of this article is to study political parties' social media content as practices of public pedagogies by investigating the debate on a Finnish NATO membership application in 2022. The research questions are: How can the emerging Finnish NATO debate be understood as public pedagogies? And what understandings are proposed and justified through these public pedagogies? The public debate on whether Finland, militarily neutral since the 1940s, should join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) unfolded in the Winter and Spring of 2022, succeeding and linked to the Russian invasion of Ukraine commencing on February 24th 2022. Drawing on practice theories (Kemmis, 2019, 2021; Schatzki, 2001; Schatzki, 2002), also making use of the notion of public pedagogies (Sandlin et al., 2009), practices of public pedagogies are in this study regarded as certain types of collective knowledge projects, unfolding in the site of social media, enabled and constrained by different arrangements found in and brought to this site.

In order to understand the practices of public pedagogies linked to the NATO debate, I turn to a type of platform which is characterised by a direct contact to the public, social media, and more specifically Instagram.

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Through social media, ways of political mass communication have shifted, from mediated appearances in for example national television, to posts on social media where politicians and parties can directly convey their messages to the general public (Lindholm et al., 2021). The empirical study focuses on posts by the Social Democratic Party, the right-wing National Coalition Party, and their party leaders. At the time of the studied debate, the Social Democrats were the Prime Minister Party while the National Coalition Party was the leading opposition party.

The preliminary results show how the two studied parties' social media content, understood as partisan and one-way public pedagogies, establish similar understandings of the importance of Finnish sympathies for Ukraine. This shared understanding is rooted in a perceived new geopolitical situation, and NATO as a peace project and solution for Finland in this situation.

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The Roles and Impacts of Learning Cities in Promoting Active and Democratic Citizenship Through Adult Learning for Community Development

In the Age of Uncertainties, learning cities have gained a particularly important role in the development of local and regional communities by effective forms of knowledge exchange and transfer so as to address a number of matters of sustainable development. In the last two decades, we have seen the rise of the movement of learning cities and communities to signal the importance of collaboration among places and spaces of formal, non-formal and informal grounds. Authors having scrutinized the model of learning in urban environments (Longworth, 2006; Inman and Swanson, 2007) underlined that the majority of learning cities can be considered as platforms, coalition for learning collaborations to enhance well-being, social cohesion and identity formation in community as much as skills development and knowledge transfer to combine smart and creative goals with economic concerns for relevant and reliable responses to be made for sustainable futures.

Recent topics of learning cities have demonstrated that communities are ready and concerned to change for proactive actions in lifelong learning to respond to the challenges of climate, aging, social inequalities, employment, digitalisation and technological advancement, and to the matters of active democratic citizenship. (UIL Policy Handbook of Lifelong Learning, 2022) However, In the European Year of Skills, we may also have to reconsider the warning of Jarvis that active citizenship must be enhanced through the exercise of responsibility (Jarvis, 2004).

We will demonstrate in our paper and presentation that universities have a vital role, on the one hand, to connect smart, creative and learn-

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ing dimensions of urban developments through learning cities. On the other hand the paper underlines the potential of learning communities to promote critical, active citizenship and critical thinking by experiential and transformative learning in the local environment at learning festivals, adult and lifelong learning weeks and other distinguished forms of knowledge transfer. The paper stresses the role and importance of stakeholder partnerships in community learning and development processes. Examples– in a comparative aspect – from Cork (O'Tuama, 2020), Espoo (Erkkilä, 2020) Pécs and Sonderborg (Németh, 2022) will demonstrate how such initiatives and advancements address social, economic, technological, environmental, cultural matters in urban communities, and how adult learning in intergenerational and in intercultural context contributes to community development in cities.

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Slovenian Movements and Organisations Fighting Precarity: Knowledge Production, Tactics and the Scale-Up Process

This presentation will discuss three initiatives that emerged from the 2008 global economic crisis in Slovenia, aimed at organizing precarious (migrant) workers and wider social groups facing precarity, which later scaled up into precarious (migrant) workers' movements and organizations. These initiatives are the Workers' Counselling Office, the trade union Youth Plus, and the Movement for Decent Work and Welfare Society. The post-crisis Slovenian context had a very negative impact on young, precarious, and migrant workers, who were initially targeted for dismissal or faced prolonged (education-to-) work transitions and have since been negotiating precarity with the growth of non-standardized employment and slashed social protections. The paper departs from sociology and radical adult education literature focusing on intersectional precarization reinforced through workfarist state policies and consequent resisting and emancipatory practices (Castel, 2003; Holst, 2018; Kump, 2012; Samaluk, 2021; Samaluk & Kunz, 2022). The analysis is based on extensive fieldwork done in Slovenia between 2015 and 2022 that followed the process of development of these initiatives. The study also involves in-depth follow-up interviews with activists, young, migrant, and other precarious workers, and key informants, as well as secondary data sources such as policy documents, websites, online forums, and social media sites.

The findings show that struggles emerged from crisis-led experiences of precarity that developed into an organised movement and later distinct organisations that played a major role in addressing and exposing invisibilised and transnationalised precarity. This work involved proactive outreach to those in precarious transitions, dialogical learning and awareness raising, as well as mobilisation that put pressure on the government to take precarity seriously. While uncovering, producing the knowledge about and publicly exposing precarity was a necessary first step, their work was really important because in time they managed to scale up from one-off campaigns and projects to more temporary and stable trade union or

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civil society organisations, which have built lasting alliances and developed and supported other communities of struggle. As such they became capable of effective mobilising, advocating for and empowering those who fall through the cracks of various protective institutions when transitioning between precarious work and non-work statuses. Their work also went beyond narrow identity politics and put class and intersecting structural inequalities firmly back into the public agenda, thus importantly challenging existing workfarist, migration and youth policy approaches and transforming traditional protective institutions.

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Solidarity as a Task of Civic Learning

As described in previous publications (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2021, 2022), we argue that society is suffering from an epistemic crisis, where dialogue becomes not only difficult but also often undesired. Our societies are diverse, and whereas this diversity holds the potential to promote the development of a better world, instead we seem to be becoming more and more atomized. Groups cling tightly to their perspectives and their "truths," thereby developing echo chambers, refusing to expose themselves to different perspectives and engage in meaningful dialogue with those who have different perspectives.

There are no quick and easy fixes to the many challenges in our worldwide society, but one foundation of democracy that can and needs to be learned is solidarity. There are many good reasons to push for solidarity as a basis for participation in a pluralistic, democratic society and in a global, humane world. The concept, however, is vague; it is often used as a tool of rhetoric in political speeches rather than a thoroughly theorized concept. Some scholars (Brunkhorst, 2005; Stjernø, 2004) attempt to provide more clarity into the concept of solidarity, to trace the history of the idea and to show its prospects for the discourses in a modern global world. In this paper, we discuss solidarity as a practice to be learned, highlighting some of the primary modern debates around solidarity and providing a classification of different forms of solidarity.

In general, debates about solidarity have indicated the tension between national (particular) and global (universal) solidarities. Living in the interconnected, mobile world and in a superdiverse society makes the notion that solidarity stops at the border of a particular ethnicity or nation flawed. In contrast, we define solidarity as a feeling of connection between people, qua human beings, as a universal reciprocal relation that extends to all humans. It is based on recognition that people are in different ways

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dependent on each other and that they have reciprocal obligations and responsibilities. Scholars have written about diverse forms of solidarity, three of which we find particularly important for adult civic learning: social solidarity ("We meet each other as compassionate human beings"), civic solidarity ("We meet each other as fellow citizens"), and epistemic solidarity ("We meet each other as responsible knowers").

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Education for Sustainability
in a University Setting: What is Possible?

> Crises of the world, unite!
> (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2021, p. 3)

Our present is flooded with crises, both ecological and social. While these current realities can be seen as wicked problems, they also hold the potential for transformation towards a more just and humane world. This year's conference call for papers asked what assumptions on knowledge can embrace learning with the unknown, and what sources of imagination linked with education might bring forth new ways of being, acting and feeling in the world. In line with the conference's interest in epistemology, I want to ask: What can adult learning and critical education for sustainability teach us to improve teaching and learning in university settings?

As we know, education is not inherently good. There is always the risk that "education can equip people merely to be more effective vandals of the earth" (Orr, 1994/2004, p. 5). In line with this, Gezin (2019) argues that critical education for sustainability is rooted in transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; 2000), as well as critique of ideologies (Brookfield, 2000). With this in mind, I am interested in exploring how we, as adult educators working in academia, can enact education as sustainability when we engage with 'traditional' students. I want to argue that, as climate change is starting to be felt by the privileged middle and upper classes of the Global North, educators should mobilise students' first-hand experiences of uncertainty and change as transformative learning opportunities. Empathy, the ability to collaborate, and to think on questions of worth and values are crucial competencies required to navigate both current and future crises (cf Wiek et al., 2016).

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Education: A Path to Emerge from the Shadows of Invisible and Unpaid Labor

In the context of constant re-examination of democracy in society, we consider the issue of visibility of the unenviable position and value of certain categories of employees to be important, which calls for responsibility and active engagement of labor organizations, local communities, legislation, and society as a whole. To get out of the shadow of this important issue, we see education as a light that, to begin with, can point out facts that have been "invisible" until now and illuminate and show the way to solving this problem in the future.

The goal of this empirical research is to examine the capacities of education in overcoming the practice of "invisible" and unpaid work of employees. We analyze the phenomenon of "invisible" and unpaid labor through two contexts, global and work. In the global context, by this phenomenon, we imply the general situation in the labor market where non-standard, more flexible forms of employment are increasingly prevalent, the occurrence of "informal work", the category of "invisible workers", as well as the phenomenon of precarious work, the main characteristic of which is the insecure and uncertain position of temporary workers, limited access, and inadequate coverage of legal, social, and health protection systems. In the work context, by "invisible" and unpaid work we assume everyday work tasks and activities that employees perform, which are "hidden", overtime, unrecognized, and unpaid. Certain categories of employees are particularly affected by this situation.

We conducted the research on a sample of 428 employed respondents in the territory of Belgrade in the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic. As an instrument, we used a questionnaire with assessment scales, which was constructed by the researchers. The results of the research provide answers to several questions: to what extent do the respondents estimate that they do "invisible" and

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unpaid work; what are the capacities of education in overcoming this kind of problem, according to their assessment; whether, in relation to the assessment of the degree of expression of "invisible" and unpaid work, the respondents participated in the educational activity "Familiarity with the ethical code of the organization and sanctions in case of its violation".

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Second Chance Education in Cyprus: A Critical Look at the Socio-Political Empowerment of Marginalised Adults

An important part of adult learning is second chance education (SCE), a field where the social ideals of adult education can be fully actualized. Typically, SCE addresses the needs of low-educated adults who did not complete primary and/or secondary education (ISCED 0–2). Although this group of learners is far from homogeneous, they share some similar characteristics, including low social status, unemployment/part-time/low-paid work, and reliance on social welfare. These factors contribute to their multi-level socio-economic vulnerability. Therefore, targeted policies and practices aimed at supporting SCE are essential for combating social exclusion and empowering low-educated adults.

The proposed presentation takes a critical look at SCE in Cyprus. The study is based on the results of a previous applied research that investigated the concept of empowerment through the voices of adult learners in a second chance school (SCS). While the learners went through significant transformations at the cognitive and psychological levels, there was no evident effect of the educational programme on social and political empowerment and action. Among other reasons, this result was attributed to the way the institution operates at the macro-level of the background philosophy, at the meso-level of the functioning of the institution, and at the micro-level of the teaching procedures and practices applied.

The current presentation critically approaches the relevant policies, curricula, and some recent reforms to investigate the limitations of SCE as it is currently provided. The aim is to identify the factors that hinder learners' empowerment at the socio-political level and their actual emancipation as the concept is used in the context of critical theory.

The data was obtained through a critical analysis of major policy texts (macro-level) and the practices (micro-level) in use. In this approach, the curricula in use are also considered a policy text, as curricula analysis can reveal direct and hidden ideologies and provide insights into the type of knowledge they promote.

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Data analysis was performed using Critical Policy Discourse analysis. The critical policy discourse analysis is a way to investigate policies using both the macro-level of historical and social contexts and the micro-level of the texts. The approach is grounded in the theoretical framework of critical theory, which seeks to investigate not only how things are, but also why they are the way they are and which powers have shaped them.

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Learning from Each Other's Struggles: Popular Education with Experienced Activists

This paper will offer reflections of an ongoing research and educational project on popular education and effective progressive and emancipatory transversal and transnational activism. The 'Movement Learning Project' (MLC) brings together three pan-European activist training networks –the Ulex Project, European Alternatives and European Community Organizing Network – with researchers near Maynooth university. Drawing on extensive, interviews and focus groups with activists and educators as well as the experience of an intensive two week residential training and four months of a year-long blended course I will outline what we have learnt about the social and political challenges faced by activists and how we are trying to respond to this pedagogically. The challenges include fragmentation, burnout and the need to enhance strategic and alliance building capacities. In reflecting on this I will highlight some gaps in what we know about the specificities of popular education with experienced activists and the importance of finding productive ways of working with differences between movements and between activists. Theoretically the paper is underpinned by social movement learning research of Choudry (2014) and Freirean (1972) critical pedagogy and I will explain how work of the project has afforded a critical reading of Choudry in light of Freire and vice versa.

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Research on Social Justice and Transformative Learning Theory: Insights, Limits and Pressing Questions

With a colleague (Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023) I recently edited a special issue on transformative learning theory after 45 years. I want to draw on part of the research done for this special issue looking critically at literature dealing with transformative learning and social justice. Based on a review of literature from major journals and the International Transformative Learning Conference proceedings I will offer an assessment of the significance of social justice research in the wider field. In the paper I will outlline how social justice is envisaged and approached theoretically, methodologically, and thematically in the reviewed publications. I will conclude by assessing the strengths and limitations of research on this topic and offer some suggestions on how research on this topic might be advanced in the future. In doing so I will argue for the importance of a properly differentiated theory of transformative learning which is capable of thinking through transformative processes for individuals, communities, institutions and society.

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Study Circles as a Mean For Intra-Party Education: Institutionalized Popular Education and the Social Movement Legacy in the Swedish Political Landscape

This paper explores how intra-party education is organized in political parties with different ideological orientation by focusing on the parties' links to popular education. By doing so, it intends to contribute with insights on an aspect of adult education and learning with great importance for liberal democratic systems, namely the education and socialization of party representatives and party members. More precisely, this paper presents and discusses results from a study of Swedish political parties, their links to institutionalized popular education, and the level of participation in study circles among politicians on the municipal level.

Previous research has emphasized the historical importance of study circles for the training of political representatives in Sweden, not least in the labour movement. Research focusing on contemporary educational pathways for Swedish politicians has also indicated that valued knowledge within the Swedish political culture to a significant extent seems to be acquired outside the formal education system. The parties' own educational activities, often in collaboration with study associations or folk high schools, have been pointed out as an important educational pathway in this context. However, variations between political parties in this respect have not been explored in detail. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to identify variations between Swedish political parties regarding their intraparty education by exploring their link to institutionalized popular education (i.e. state-subsidized study associations) and the level of study circle participation among party representatives.

The study is based on different types of data: semi-structured interviews with education leaders in parties, study associations and local politician; information available through websites, statutes, documents and study materials produced by parties and study associations; as well as information from Statistics Sweden on participation in study circles and other popular education activities among the country's 12,679 elected

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members of municipal councils. Research and theories on differences between parties with social movement links, i.e. movement parties, and parties without such links, is used an framework to analyze the organizational structures for intra-party education and the use of study circles.

Results show that both the connection to study associations and participation in study circles are strongest among parties with roots in old social movements (OSM): the Social Democrats and the Left Party (labour movement) and the Center Party (peasant movement). However, there are significant differences between parties without roots in social movements as for instance between The Moderate Party (conservatives) and the Liberal Party. The Moderate Party has very low participation in study circles, as well as a weak organizational connection to the institutionalized popular education, while the Liberal Party has a relatively high level of participation and a strong organizational connection to study associations. When it comes to newer parties with links to social movements, for example the Green Party (environmental movement) and the Swedish Democrats (right-wing populist movement), the differences are also large. Although both parties have a weaker connection (Swedish Democrats has no connection at all) to the institutionalized popular education, the Green Party has a relatively high (just slightly below OSM-parties) participation in study circles. Overall, the study shows that a focus on the parties' approaches to popular education and study circles illuminates central differences between how political parties organize internal education. It also shows that the parties' movement ties seem to play an important, but not decisive, role in how the parties relate to the institutions and traditions of popular education.

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How We Learn When We Cocreate?

This paper aims to explore the learning processes among a group of science communicators who implemented three cycles of a co-creative program called Makers Lab. All installations created during these projects were exhibited in public spaces as part of the Center for the Promotion of Science's art+science and May Month of Mathematics manifestations in Belgrade, Serbia.

In this paper, we started with Arnstein's (1969) idea about co-creation as the method of learning with the same level of shared decision-power in all steps of the process. Then we relied on bell hooks' (1994, 2003) ideas about creating a community of learners (creators) by addressing power issues among us but also in our society at large. The concept through which we operationalized these assumptions is democratic potential in the learning and co-creating process. Democratic potential (Joksimović, 2021) is of key importance here, and we defined it as a combination of participation, a variety of learning methods, and tailoring of the content to participants' needs and backgrounds. Then we attempted to answer the following research questions: How do co-creative practices contribute to creating a community of learners? What kind of democratic potential lies in co-creative practices? And what kind of relationships arose during the co-creation process?

The program involved up to 30 high school students in each cycle in collaboration with 20 adults, two of whom are the authors of this paper. The participants came from different towns in Serbia and had diverse backgrounds in terms of profession or ongoing education. The main objective of the program was to develop interactive installations in three topics: art+science and artificial intelligence (2021), mathematics and gaming (2022), and big data (2023). We investigate the qualities of learning among a group of 12 adult science communicators, mostly students of very diverse faculties in Serbia, who facilitated the co-creative processes during the program. Method we used is semi-structured interviews combined

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with the content analysis of the program's results. The results are organized into the following categories: boundaries of our knowledge (what we tried for the first time), mistakes we made (and where they led us), relationships with participants, dynamics of the learning processes, challenges, working atmosphere, and motivation.

Results are presented through a map of power dynamics during all three cycles of the program combined with the above-mentioned categories. In the results, we also discussed privilege and kept investigating how to create more equitable and just relationships among participants keeping a relaxed and positive atmosphere. As one science communicator said, "We had so much fun that I forgot about all the structural problems we had. And in that, we managed to overcome them."

What we found is that the ideas of co-creating and love in education are deeply intertwined with its democratic potential. All three require us to create educational environments that prioritize human connection and caring relationships as core elements of the processes. Only then, democratic potential in learning and more specifically in co-creating can be seen as the capacity for transgressing one's own learning position, race, class, and gender.

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Navigating the Post-Covid Era: The Challenge of Educating for Democratic Citizenship

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on democratic governance in many countries around the world, with emergency measures taken to combat the spread of the virus often used as a pretext for authoritarian leaders to consolidate power and undermine democratic institutions. As a result, some governments have suspended constitutional rights, restricted freedom of expression and assembly, and cracked down on dissenting voices, exploiting the pandemic to limit democratic participation and engagement. The closure of public spaces, limitations on freedom of speech, and the suspension of elections have also contributed significantly to the erosion of democratic values during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the conflict between efforts to fight the pandemic through lockdowns and limitations on movements and gathering, and the need for citizens to be active and critical, created a tension between public health and democratic values. While some restrictions may have been necessary to curb the spread of the virus and protect public health, these measures have also limited citizens' ability to engage in critical dialogue about government policies, voice dissenting opinions, and participate in democratic processes. This tension highlights the need to strike a balance between diverse public values, and underscores the challenges posed by the pandemic to democratic governance. Additionally, the public discourse in many countries has become increasingly polarized, with alternative opinions often shamed or silenced, preventing constructive criticism of governmental measures and limiting the ability of citizens to engage in democratic processes.

The paper will use the data from international organizations such as Amnesty International, Freedom House, and the Varieties of Democracy Project, to indicate the ways in which the pandemic has had a negative impact on democracy around the world. This data will be used to provide

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a broad overview of the challenges faced by democratic institutions and processes in the context of COVID-19.

Next, the paper will draw on the ideas of Noam Chomsky and Hahrie Han to analyze the specific challenges posed by COVID-19 for democratic citizenship. Chomsky's critiques of authoritarianism and state power will be used to examine the ways in which emergency measures tyaken in response to the pandemic have been used as a pretext for consolidating power and undermining democratic institutions. Finally, Han's work on civic engagement and collective action will be used will be used to explore the challenges and dilemmas facing citizens in the context of COVID-19, including limitations on expression and gathering, as well as the need for active and critical citizenship in the face of emergency measures taken to combat the spread of the virus.

In conclusion, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have brought to light the complex and multifaceted nature of democratic governance. As the world continues to grapple with the ongoing effects of various crises, as well as those that may arise in the future, the tension between collective action and individual freedoms remains a crucial issue that requires further exploration. Finding a balance between a harmonized social response and the plurality of voices that a democracy needs is a complex and ongoing challenge. Furthermore, shaping education for democratic citizenship based on an active and critical approach without undermining social trust and legitimacy is another significant challenge that requires careful consideration.

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Where Have All the Flowers Gone: Learning from the Failure of the Posthuman Education Project

In the spring of 2022, a group of researchers, architects, and educators collaborated to develop posthuman artistic, scientific, and educational practices aimed at exploring the intricate relationship between humans and plants. The project was hosted at the Microgallery of the Centre for the Promotion of Science. We invited the community, our friends, and colleagues to bring dry houseplants to the Center, share their stories, and entrust us with their care. With the assistance of botanists on our team, we committed to the regeneration of these plants. One of the goals of this exhibition was to provide a space for slowing down, reflection, and dedication, especially in the current period of galloping digital capitalism. Our attention is continuously reformulated into "hyper-attention," which involves superficial engagement at the expense of focused awareness necessary for discernment and intimacy (Till, 2019). Moreover, consumers must not be attached to their objects; they must be unfaithful to them, consuming them by separating from them, destroying them, and discarding them to redirect the energy of their instincts towards newer objects (Stiegler, 2011). Therefore, we proposed the question: Can we consciously create relationships with plants to learn to dedicate ourselves to slow processes, respect perishability, and the power of regeneration?

As the lockdown was gradually easing up, this project also aimed to delve into the theme of decay and the potential for rejuvenation given the appropriate circumstances. Consequently, both people and houseplants were involved in a workshop, and the participants shared personal stories about the plants, with botanists "diagnosing" the plants' conditions and subsequently implementing all necessary measures. Plant owners (if we can speak of ownership) become co-authors of this exhibition, and its curation takes on the original meaning of the term – nurturing (Latin curare – to nurture, heal). Thus, the educational goal of this exhibition goes beyond familiarizing oneself with biological processes as such, but focuses on exploring a personal and intimate relationship with plants. By involving the broader community in the creation of the exhibition, a space has

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been created for recognition, encounter, exchange, and co-creation. The visitors of the Microgallery could take time, sit in front of the glass window with the plants and read the collaborative book we have created.

As time passed, some of the plants began to decay. After several months on display, some developed freckles, some were stolen while placed outside on the street, and some simply died. This prompted us to reflect on our approach towards care and its consequences. We ask ourselves: What kind of knowledge was produced within this failed participatory posthuman education project? In terms of democratic processes, we can look at the questions of participation and accountability. What happens to hope when promises are not kept? To answer these questions, we have collected stories from the authors and participants.

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Learning Through Defense and Defiance – Environmental Protests in Serbia as a Sign of Hope and a Source of Inspiration

Accumulated environmental problems in the world of conflicts and contradictions naturally increase tensions and lead towards protests against decisions made by those in power, whether they come from governments, private entities, or groups motivated primarily by their own, mainly economic, interests. This is even more prevalent in societies facing constant threats to freedom of speech, pressures on democratic procedures and institutions, as evidenced in reports analyzing the actual (2021–2022) situation in Serbia (Ivkovic et al, 2022). With limited opportunities for citizens to actually participate in decision-making in their local communities, as well as to strengthen their capacities for that within educational programs (Orlovic Lovren et al, 2022), environmental protests in Serbia turned into a movement and a living learning lab in the last few years, supported by the civil society, experts, artists, and many others from both inside and outside the country. Besides its role in achieving their own goals, it also inspires other groups to stand for their rights in different rural and urban areas, gathered to prevent devastation, destruction or long-term consequences not only for the environment but also for local communities and their identities.

Starting from the premise that environmental adult education is a political and collective process grounded in the notion of environmental citizenship, which should be hopeful and leading towards action (Clover et al, 2010), this contribution aims to present learning experiences from environmental protests in Serbia from the perspective of their participants. Looking at the learning activities that were going on within the transactions between local people, experts, students, or supporters from various fields and places, it focuses on the following questions: What was the role of traditional and expert knowledge in providing motivation and support to their participation? What knowledge did they need and what lessons did they learn along the process? What were the sources and ways of their

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learning? Who were the teachers and who were the learners? Were there examples from other places they could learn from, and what is the experience they can offer to others fighting for their rights to live in a healthy and authentic environment?

The research is performed through interviews with selected participants representing activists organized in different places around specific goals ("defending the rivers," "defending the forests," fighting against the exploitation of lithium, etc.), of varied educational, social, and professional backgrounds. Findings will be presented through short video and presentation material.

This contribution should inspire a discussion on the power of examples in exploring hopeful solutions for environmental and democracy issues through adult education, as well as on the role of educators to support activities where "people learn how to defy others who might be laying out unwanted futures for them" (Newman, 2006, p. 11).

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Lifelong Learning Initiatives in Hungary
at the Turn of the Millennium –
How Can a Region Preserve its Culture
and Population through Adult Education?

The main aim of the presentation is to examine and demonstrate how participants in training and adult education can become employable and, beyond employability, how they can become socially responsible, active citizens and empowered, by increasing their employability skills and employability levels. My objective in this research is to help adult learners become more employable. Are they willing and motivated to do so, and does learning create changes in their lives that make them aware of the importance of this? It may be that once an individual is employable, once they have a qualification, they are no more active in society. These two factors are correlated.

This presentation will showcase a study of community projects in three disadvantaged settlements and explore the tools that different sectors such as NGOs, government, and social economy can use to help rural populations facing multiple disadvantages to achieve social inclusion.

The research aims to find answers to the question of how the labor market and social integration of adults can be achieved in the study area, and which key competencies can be developed to ensure the continuous development of the target group.

The author summarizes his research and practical experience to show how effectively the pragmatism (Dewey, 1916) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) tools can be incorporated into community and employment-based adult education activities. In addition, the research provides insights into adult education initiatives and measures in Hungary over the past 20 years.

The research has shown that people living in settlements far from urban centers have limited or zero access to adult learning opportunities. The three examples to be presented also respond to a bottom-up need such as learning to learn, social and civic competences, and developing initiative. Their tools have enabled citizens living in isolated settlements

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to organize themselves more actively, revitalizing their communities, and increasing the resilience of the settlements. The examples demonstrated are also adaptable models that can help conference participants find more effective adult learning pathways in their own areas and countries.

The presentation will be related to the following topics:

- Adult learning and active citizenship
- Active citizenship at the local level
- Popular education and social movement learning.

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Discovering the Epistemological Foundations of Adult Education Within a Social Movement: A Case Study from Serbia

In the era of the grassroots feminist movements, such as the #Me-Too movement, on the one hand, and the noticeable trend of decline of women's rights around the globe, on the other, the role of adult education for democracy is indisputable. Our local context is no exception, where we are witnessing the emergence of numerous grassroots social movements, which stood up for/against these questions. The majority of these movements operate in the digital environment, making one of them that stepped out of the digital sphere and onto the streets especially attract our interest. What can be found at the intersection of all the activities this movement undertakes, e.g. raising awareness about issues related to women's experiences and injustices through digital platforms, organising feminist protests and public debates etc., is adult education and learning. What we want to shed the light on are the epistemological assumptions of those who generated this movement and who are producing and spreading (critical) knowledge through it. Recognised in the theory of critical education, enlightening the epistemological foundations of any adult education practice is crucial if one strives for achieving emancipation through it (Gottesman, 2016). By choosing to focus on epistemology, we aim to explore the democratic quality of this ongoing adult education practice. The questions we want to explore are: What do initiators perceive as learning contexts and learning contents generated within 'their' movement? How do they create those learning contents and contexts? Do the initiators choose their epistemological standpoints when creating learning contexts and contents? What epistemological assumptions do they choose? How do they translate their choices about epistemology into the learning contents/contexts they create? Do they envision particular educational goals or milestones? For the purpose of our research, we will explore these questions through the

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qualitative, naturalistic approach, by conducting a single case study method (Baxter & Jack, 2008), purposeful for gathering the data rich in information, relevant to the specific local context. Our main research question is: What are the epistemological assumptions upon which the initiators of this social movement generate their educational work? To ensure that our findings are strong enough (Green et al., 2006), we will use several methods for collecting data, such as through the focus group with the initiators of the chosen social movement, by conducting the semi-structured interviews, and by observation, e.g. going to the public debates organised by the movement, observing the content of their digital platforms, and similar. To enhance the trustworthiness of our interpretation, we will ask participants to comment and revise our conclusions. The findings should provide a basis for further development of critical thought on this topic, which we find significantly important, and perceive it as a means of making democracy-oriented adult education sustainable.

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Education in the Model of Integral Social Protection

In the beginning of the 2000s, a series of wider social changes took place in the Republic of Serbia, which were directly reflected in the social protection system. The previous centralized system of social protection, which emphasized the predominantly paternalistic role of the system in relation to those in a state of social need, was improved by a series of reform measures until 2010, and the development of the Model of Integral Social Protection in the local community.

The theoretical-methodological basis of the Model consists of ecological-systemic approaches, which view individuals, social groups, and their social environment as a unique system. The integral model of social protection is based on the paradigm of human rights, which are classified into three groups in the Model: 1) the right to life in the family and natural environment, 2) the right to optimal use of personal capacities and the development of all potentials, and 3) the right to integration (inclusion and participation) in the social environment. These three groups of rights are derived from the holism of human needs and represent a framework for the analysis and identification of needs that individuals and groups (especially the vulnerable or threatened groups) are unable to satisfy without special social support, which implies continuous and coordinated cooperation of different social systems at the local level.

In the Model of Integral Social Protection, the emphasis is on the least restrictive social protection services, as a result of which the family and the local community gain importance. With the aforementioned changes comes an increase in the number of different social protection services in the local community, among which education occupies a special place. In this Model, education has multiple functions, two of which are key: it is a means of direct support and assistance to individuals and groups (especially the vulnerable or threatened) in order to improve the quality of life, as well as a necessary tool for the empowerment and con-

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tinuous improvement of those who organize the services in order to adjust to the needs of citizens, and to ethical and professional standards.

A special role in the realization of these functions of education is played by the Republic Institute for Social Protection, which accredits training programs for professional workers and professional associates in social protection, with the aim of improving the quality of services provided in the local community. After a theoretical analysis of the functions of education in the Model of Integral Social Protection, in the paper we present an analysis of accredited educational programs and an analysis of the development of social protection services in the local community, based on which we offer recommendations for their further development.

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The Story of(f) the Course:
Initial Education on the Edge of the Unknown

Discussing the problems of contemporary education, scientists more and more often emphasize the issue of devitalization – mechanisation, repetition, reproduction and transmission as the basis of dominant practices – making education distant from the issues that shape everyday life and from the complex, creative and vital processes through which the world becomes (Colebrook, 2017; Krnjaja, 2016; Olsson, 2009; Semetsky, 2006). The novel currents of posthumanism and new materialisms in educational theory encourage us to rethink the everyday contexts and encounters as educational – as spaces for enlivening different possibilities for being and becoming in this world (Naughton & Cole, 2017), for creation in the field of possible effects on reality (Colebrook, 2017), for experimenting with the world and the self in creating new values and meanings through problem situations and learning from experiences (Semetsky, 2017). Such education leans on learning as a joint endeavour – performative, transformative, immersed and emergent, affective and cognitive, leaking as well as ineffable (Ulla et al., 2019); as an experience that enhances our powers to affect and to be affected, twisting at the same time the boundaries of the field in which it takes place towards the opening of new and different possibilities (Naughton & Cole, 2017).

However, through the ongoing experimentations in creating such a model of education, two dangers might be noticed: First, the danger of creating parallel systems and collectives or completely alternative forms which prove to be estranged and unworkable for the dominant world we keep coming back to; Second, the danger of urging exclusively for the changes on the level of systems or institutions, omitting from the story procedurality, everydayness and minority of the process of change – so as our individual responsibility.

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Striving to escape these dangers, we want to share the story of one semester of the elective course on the bachelor studies of pedagogy. Through this semester, we as teachers strived to open with our students the spaces of possibility – for practical engagement, for creation and transformation, for the development of a community, and for vitality. Our methods were not ambitious in the sense of form; we relied on discussions and creative activities but on everyday situations that arose during the semester in the different domains of faculty life, as well as in the wider context to which the faculty belongs. We've strived to follow the flows of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1984) and map the possible cracks in dominant mechanisms of functioning so as to further provoke the affective experience and professional engagement of our students. What was important for us was the balance – staying on the very edge of what we know and can predict, reworking the very edges of the course, the subject and our roles without erasing them entirely.

Mapping the pedagogical epiphanies (Cole, 2011) through the discussion of teachers and students after the end of this course, we strive to recognize the possible openings for the further process of joint learning on the edge of unpredictable and unknown.

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WORKSHOPS

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Critical Utopian Approach as a Tool for Social Action

Contemporary concepts of utopia consider it as a continuous and simultaneous process of criticism and creation (Firth, 2013). This position is significant for introducing utopia into the field of adult learning, which implies a reflection on lived experiences and the possibility of personal and social transformation. In the book "The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning and Teaching," Brookfield talked about the perspective of critical theory with the idea to return criticism to the domain of critical thinking (Brookfield, 2005). In this two-hour workshop, we will explore the group's capacity to formulate assumptions for utopian scenarios with the idea to activate the capacity for social action.

Participatory democracy implies citizens who have the capacity to question the actions and decision-making of political leaders, as well as to imagine alternatives that are fairer than current structures (Brookfield, 1997). Moreover, in the workshop, we will search for the utopian-critical thinking relationship by discovering utopianism in examples of everyday life. Ira Shor (1996) created and tested the conceptual thinking training Utopia, which starts with an analysis of everyday life examples and continues with a utopian transformation of it. Zooming out from our reality offers us the possibility to see the vision and inspiration for the (brave) new world at the horizon (Molayan, 2021). The search for possible solutions continuously reconstructs utopian horizons. By floating between an imagined better world, possible transformations, and reality, the workshop participants should understand the contemporary definitions of utopia and be able to recognize the hegemonic assumptions, which reproduce oppressive social mechanisms through culture (Brookfield, 2010). Wright (2013) talked about an emancipatory theory as a way to think about alternatives, both for specific institutions and for macro-structures of society, where alternatives can be evaluated in terms of their desirability, viability, and their achievability. Thinking about better worlds and assessing the alternatives in the educational process could help us to discover the importance of imagination for developing critical democratic actions grounded in utopian visions.

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Teacher-Artist Partnerships in Challenging Times

I-TAP-PD (International Teacher-Artist Partnership Professional Development) is an Erasmus+ project and approach that aims to develop an international model with a training program and resource materials adaptable to various contexts. Artists, teachers, and other professionals from the field of art and education can use it to connect with each other, develop and strengthen partnerships, and advance their educational systems. This particular practice aims to create a space for diversity and inclusion within education, meet students' needs, and develop curriculum-worthy approaches that enhance arts education, mainly in early and primary school education. The methodology focuses on enabling teachers and artists to develop their understanding, expertise, and creativity in arts in education work with children. The Teacher-Artist Partnership should contribute to the grassroots democratization and transformation of schools. G l o b - al documents like The Soul Agenda reflect the role of arts education in transforming educational systems struggling to meet the needs of learners. Furthermore, arts education can make a direct contribution to resolving the social and cultural challenges of today's world (UNESCO, 2010). The International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA) created the Reykjavik Manifesto in 2022, which stated that "Drama in education is a powerful opportunity for enhancing social awareness, empathy and collaboration, and personal and community development, and a platform for expression and action on matters of local, global, and intercultural concern such as Peace, Sustainability, Equality, and Economic empowerment" (IDEA, 2022, p. 1). The aims of these global documents could be implemented through dialogue and cooperation between teachers and artists.
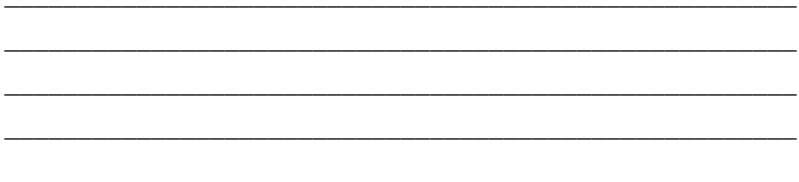
In this two-hour workshop, we will focus on the moment when artists enter the world of formal education. This is the moment when dialogue starts, and the standardized procedures about teaching, reporting, assessing outcomes, and developed organizational culture of the school

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system become apparent. Burnaford (2003) described this encounter as an opportunity for learning by understanding the "other," the artists who are usually seen as "cool" guests, and "teachers assume the role of disciplinarians while artists are present" (p. 170). Firstly, we will present the tools for encounter and negotiation between professional and personal identity and understanding how to accept and understand the otherness. Kenny and Morrissey (2020) presented in their research "how classroom spaces can be transformed through 'disturbance,' essentially negotiating identities through working in partnership" (p. 93). In the second part of the workshop, we will perform national curriculums. The workshop ends with the voices of the researchers and educators articulated through storytelling and art photography on the benefits and possible curriculum transformation of teacher-artist partnerships.

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Performativity and Overcoming the Knowing Paradigm in Adult Education

The question of the importance of education in a democratic system is as old as democracy itself. What makes the connection between democracy and civic education today relevant is an assumption that broad participation of citizens in solving public problems requires education throughout life, including adulthood. It is argued that the ability of people to participate in democracy depends on whether they have acquired certain skills, values and knowledge. On the contrary, in this workshop, I will argue that in order to be better equipped to share our lives together and build more democratic ways to live in the world; we need to abandon the acquisitional approach to education and learning at all. In order to advance and deepen democracy, adult education itself should become more democratic. In order to critically understand the world, it is not required that we turn to knowledge production. Moreover, it does not require that we know at all. Therefore, the abandoning of the knowing paradigm is suggested. By the knowing paradigm I refer to the mainstream belief that we need to know in order to learn, grow and develop. Our culture insists that we need to know how to do things to be capable of doing them. Knowing has been the primary way we have been socialized to engage in the world. Adult education needs to address this epistemological bias. This is not to suggest abandoning the knowledge itself, but it rather suggests that we reject the authority of knowledge that keeps us from growing, by embracing the unknown. What it takes is being with the discomfort and becoming with it (using it for creating with it). A simple way to do that in adult education is to turn to play, performance and improvisation. In the workshop, I will offer a set of improvisational exercises that will show that improvisation is not opposite to knowledge, but rather a radically different way to engage with the world. It enables us to focus simultaneously on the process and result, instead of the result itself (the knowledge). Performative approach to adult education engages creative capacities of everyone involved in the learning process, to be active creators of their learning and living environments. It entails cooperation and exchange by promoting continuous

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acceptance of ideas and experience of others, and at the same time building on those offers. As such, it involves giving mode exchange in which we use our differences and our creativity to discover new ways of relating to each other, in the process of changing ourselves and our world. Acting in the direction of what we do not know, enables us to go beyond what exists and reproduce the *status quo*. It is a creative response to local and global social problems, an approach that is reconstructive and generative of new ways of creating possibility. Performativity is not merely another tool to achieve social change; it is a qualitatively new approach to human growth and social transformation.

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Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Research Network

Aims and Themes of the Network

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.

Convenors:

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