

**University of Lower Silesia**

**European Society for Research on the Education of Adults**

**Adult learning & communities in a world  
on the move: between national tensions  
and transnational challenges**

**European Research Conference**

**Wrocław, Poland, 25 - 27 May 2017**

**Organized by:**

**ESREA network *Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Communities* and the University of Lower Silesia, Faculty of Pedagogy**

**Conference venue:**

**Wrocław, Strzegomska 55**

**Conference website:**

**[www.BGL2017.dsw.edu.pl](http://www.BGL2017.dsw.edu.pl)**

## ESREA research network

### Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Communities

In 2017 the 9<sup>th</sup> ESREA Conference of the Network **Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Communities (BGL-ALC)** will meet at the **University of Lower Silesia (ULS)** in Wrocław, Poland. The conference theme will be:

**“Adult learning & communities in a world on the move: between national tensions and transnational challenges”.**

**The conference will take place from Thursday 25th to Saturday 27th of May, 2017.**

At the Network's last conference in 2015 hosted by our colleagues at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, we discussed how substantial learning is connected with the everyday life of adults, with the environment and social milieus they live in, with their efforts to tackle social inequalities, injustices, and to enhance their quality of life and well-being. The conference addressed in particular the tensions between neo-liberal encroachments on public and social learning and the increasing challenge of private interests through commercialisation and commodification of learning in the public spaces of communities. Conference participants discussed the need for research about learning processes (in public and social spaces) in communities, and about the need for interdisciplinary and transnational approaches in our work to give meaning to the many different aspects of personal and social development of individuals, groups and whole communities. The development of many local initiatives, it was agreed, are clearly bound up with global processes.

Since Ljubljana in June 2015, we have witnessed unparalleled waves of migration across Europe, waves of refugees moving through countries and crossing borders on a scale unseen in Europe since 1945. With over a million refugees and displaced people crossing EU borders in 2015, and more than 300 thousand reaching EU countries alone via the Mediterranean routes in 2016 up to September (and 3500 dead and missing on these routes this year to date), the **BGL-ALC Network** will turn its attention to adult learning and communities in this world 'on the move', and will seek to address in discussion possible responses to the national tensions and transnational challenges we observe and experience in our work.

The astonishing, dramatic, events of the autumn of 2015 were largely triggered by well-known causes: war, homelessness, persecution, hopelessness, despair. Such 'local' causes, in Syria above all, but also in Eritrea, Somalia, Congo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans, were given an unprecedented 'global' character through the increasingly interlocking character of the 'local' crises and their individual – yet connected – roles within trans- and supranational politics. The EU and individual member states alone, leaving aside the US, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and so on, with their various security, humanitarian, military portfolios are involved in operations of many different types from West and North Africa to Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan. The 'local' emergencies of Central and Sub-Saharan Africa, the destruction of civil society in Syrian and Iraqi cities by international mercenaries of IS recruited perhaps in Birmingham or Dortmund or the bombing of Syrian cities by the Russian and US air forces become 'global' experiences in the rafts sinking off the coast of Lampedusa or the overfilled 'jungle' camps at Calais or on Lesbos. And become again 'local' emergencies, local chances as they begin to involve the civil societies each migration wave successively reaches. Needless to say, the new media in the dissemination and the sharing of both horror and hope have shown themselves to

be both crucial and ambiguous in their relationship to the shaping of events and the responses to them, and have incontrovertibly become an integral part of the events themselves.

The numbers of people involved in this historic chain of events - international refugees, refugees within their own land and asylum-seekers worldwide - is put at around 65 million people (UNHCR June 2016). The United Nations, in its special Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016 drew up the New York Declaration which, first, calls for governments to save lives and share responsibility for large movements of people. Secondly, and more pertinently to this Network's Call, the Declaration calls for a campaign entitled "Together - Respect, Safety and Dignity for All" in order "to respond to rising xenophobia and turn fear into hope" (UN Press Release 19 September 2016).

This response is timely, as we have witnessed contradictory reactions across Europe and beyond from civil and 'uncivil society', new forms of political turbulence as different actions and attitudes are rehearsed to understand, 'manage', limit, dam, or 'discourage' the movement of millions in the face of war. More than this, we have seen:

- The EU's continuing incapacity to formulate an agreed response to the crises on its borders (Arab Spring, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine), all of which contribute to a world of people on the move
- Intense 'peripherisation' of central European problems (the financial and banking crises of 2008/9 and their impacts in Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Greece) and the tensions arising from the socialisation of anti-crisis policies (with negative effects on pensions, health provision, employment for the young, care for the elderly everywhere and most dramatically in the EU 'South')
- Dissonant political responses to shared challenges (youth unemployment, migration, asylum, humanitarian aid, foreign aid)
- Sharp and historic rises in the levels of violence towards ethnic minorities, generally challenging millions of citizens with 'migration backgrounds', coupled with a historic resurgence of forms of nationalism and chauvinism in many parts of Europe thought to have been 'overcome' or outlived
- Growing challenges to traditional political systems across Europe with the appearance not only of new parties of the political Right, but the legitimisation in public debate of anti-democratic discourses throwing open the debate about the future of democratic citizenship in many, if not all EU member countries
- Both inside and on the borders of Europe the rise of movements openly rejecting open, democratic political action, rejecting multicultural projects, individual political, social and sexual freedoms, reaffirming on the contrary narrow, racist, homophobic, anti-pacifist, ideological and religious intolerance and extreme forms of nationalist bigotry and movements of ethnocentric 'identity'

### **The BGL-ALC Network and a world on the move**

In the research fields and methodological perspectives of the BGL-ALC Network, the first thing that can be stressed is diversity, which is wholly coherent with the diversity we face when talking about communities. Diverse communities, we argue, include within themselves all the diversity of the people living in them. In the past community was often considered a more or less homogeneous space that differentiated neatly between 'us' and 'them' (Hoggart). This kind of symbolic shelter to people, however, hides a reality: community is a place where conflict and confrontation are the usual thing, and, we add, conflict and the way conflict is resolved are substantial elements in the definition of community as a symbolic place. Thus, our first conclusion is an invitation to reflect on the concept of community and the different roles that it can play in people's daily lives, either as a place of shelter or as a place of confrontation and debate.

Community is also a place in which to join people. It is a public place where everyday life is developed. In this sense, it can be affirmed that community is a place to learn. To learn about democracy and participation, and it is itself the source for learning and teaching. Community is a place where people are creating knowledge about the community and about themselves. The educative process can lead to the knowledge created becoming 'really useful knowledge' to transform communities and improve the life of the people living in them.

The creation of knowledge is an important step to researching and transforming communities, but this creation of knowledge should be done in an alternative way (as participatory research, for example, does) and produce an alternative knowledge: a liberating knowledge that allows people to understand and transform the surrounding environment and that helps people to understand the world.

Social movements we consider to be agents of adult learning and development. Social movements can be creators of solidarity and of shared responsibilities. Communities are based on the solidarity among their members, but also on solidarity with other people outside the community. This important move from 'I' to 'we', in the context of the waves of migration and displacement we are experiencing today, needs to be discussed and will be a central element of our work at the conference.

In short, we conclude that the most important task is to reflect on social change in a context of migration and flight, social tensions, the temptations of demagoguery and chauvinism, and how adult education and learning can help people to confront these changes in a participatory and democratic way.

### **Conference themes**

Papers, round tables, and keynote talks will address themes from among the following:

- Contributions to the theory of learning in a world on the move. How adequate are our notions of lifelong learning, of international adult education and learning programmes and what is the contribution of our research in this field?
- How do we build better dialogue and connectivity between diverse people in situations where opportunities for dialogue are being challenged, when in our cities and regions the 'other' is frequently experienced as a threat rather than a source of solidarity, learning and enrichment?
- Adult learning and discourses of power, difference and 'identity', and new forms of solidarity that further social learning and the creation of democratic forms of citizenship and living together
- Adult learning and the work of movements of volunteers, local initiatives, and the responses of state agencies, flanked as they are by growing apparatuses of security and policing
- The role of communities in furthering integration, tolerance, and offering alternatives to exclusion, radicalisation, and political division
- How does our research respond to current definitions of 'sovereignty' within the nation state, and to the widespread takeover of the notion of 'identity', seen for many as the fixed attribute of nations/ethnic groups, and formulated as an antithesis to difference and diversity?
- The role of research into adult learning in addressing rising levels of xenophobia, racism and fundamentalism in the world outside as well in local communities. How can we best to embrace, to value, and to work with 'difference' within our own learning communities?

These and any other themes which address the relationship between adult education and communities, and the role of local actors, whether individual or institutional, and transnational movements confronting the challenges posed by thousands of people on the move may be proposed for discussion at the conference.

## **ABSTRACTS AND PAPERS**

Participants are invited from all fields of research on adult learning to submit an abstract addressing the conference theme. Abstracts should be no more than 500 words.

**The deadline for submission of abstracts is December 15, 2016.**

The Scientific Committee of this conference is responsible for the selection of the submitted abstracts.

**Latest notification of acceptance is January 15, 2017.**

Abstracts should be sent in two separate files, one including the paper title, the name, address, e-mail of author(s); and the second one including the paper title and abstract.

Abstracts should be submitted to: [BGL2017@dsw.edu.pl](mailto:BGL2017@dsw.edu.pl)

### **Papers**

Completed papers should be submitted by April 30, 2017 and sent to: [BGL2017@dsw.edu.pl](mailto:BGL2017@dsw.edu.pl)

The papers may be up to 5000 words.

The papers will have to follow the template for all contributions to the conference which will be made known soon.

### **Information for contributors of Abstracts/Papers**

A paper is proposed and submitted in the form of an abstract by one person. Up to three other people can be named as co-authors in the abstract proposal. For each participant, a maximum of two such proposals may be submitted in which the person is named as an author or co-author. The abstract proposal must indicate which of the named authors will be presenting the paper.

All those authors attending must register for the conference.

### **Criteria for Review of Abstracts**

Abstracts for papers are welcome from all fields of research referring the conference theme. The criteria used in reviewing each abstract will be as follows:

- Proposals should be directly related to specified aspects of adult education
- Proposals should make reference to a theoretical framework, involve systematic enquiry of an analytical or empirical nature
- Background, method, results and implications should be set out clearly in a manner which is accessible to an international audience

### **Language**

The abstract, the paper and its presentation should be in English. Simultaneous translation will not be available in plenary or paper presentation sessions, but participants will aid one another where necessary in order to overcome language difficulties.

Please bear in mind when presenting a paper that you are speaking to an international audience, the majority of whom may not be familiar with your own country let alone its adult educational system. Please avoid the use of acronyms and do not use expressions which relate to adult learning where you are active without providing a contextualization.

### **Deadlines**

Sending of abstracts – December 15, 2016

Confirmation of acceptance of paper proposals – January 15, 2017

Sending of full papers – April 30, 2017

### **REGISTRATION**

Early Bird Registration till 15/02/2017

Phd students: 50 Euro / after 15/02: 100

ESREA members: 120 Euro / after 15/02: 170

Non-ESREA members: 170 Euro / after 15/02: 220

The conference fee will include conference materials, coffee breaks during the conference, the reception buffet, and lunch on Friday and Saturday.

The cost of the Conference Dinner – Venue to be announced – is separate from the conference fee

### **Student bursaries**

As a way to support graduate-student's participation in the conference, there will be three bursaries for this conference. To be able to apply, one needs to be a graduate student (e.g. PhD-student, EdD-student, master student); a member of ESREA (either individual or covered by an institutional membership) and one need to submit a paper to the main conference.

The bursary is at the moment 300 Euros/person and should be used to cover parts of the costs for travel expenditures and/or accommodation during the conference/meeting.

Applications should be submitted no later than March 31, 2017.

Applications or questions regarding the application procedure should be directed to the secretary of ESREA Frederik Sandberg ([fredrik.sandberg@liu.se](mailto:fredrik.sandberg@liu.se))

## CONTACT

### Scientific Committee

Ewa Kurantowicz (Wrocław), Emilio Lucio-Villegas (Seville), Rob Evans (Magdeburg), António Fragoso (Faro), Angela Pilch-Ortega (Graz), Sabina Jelenc (Ljubljana), Jim Crowther (Edinburgh), Özlem Ünlühisarcikli (Istanbul), Mieczysław Malewski (Wrocław), Rozalia Ligus (Wrocław)

### Organising Committee

Anna Bilon, Magdalena Czubak-Koch, Rob Evans, Magdalena Fit, Paulina Hawrylewicz-Kowalska, Ewa Kurantowicz, Emilio Lucio-Villegas

### Conference website

[www.BGL2017@dsw.edu.pl](http://www.BGL2017@dsw.edu.pl)

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### About ESREA

The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) promotes and disseminates theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult learning in Europe through research networks, conferences and publications. Active members come from most parts of Europe.

ESREA is made up of several networks which on a regular basis have meetings at which research around certain themes is discussed. At the moment, ESREA has seven active networks, and each active network has a meeting every one or two years. Among these is the ESREA Network "*Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Communities*". This network aims to bring together European researchers committed to studying the multiple relationships between adult learning in communities and the relationship between the development of communities, social movements for learning and democratic citizenship in a local and global context. Different scales of development should be analysed together, clearly identifying the global and regional/ local dimensions of them. It involves educational processes and opportunities for social change, focusing on people's autonomy and emancipation. The idea is to create a network capable of encouraging research on development in the context of globalization, through territorial and micro-scale approaches, urban and rural studies, and taking in regenerating communities, learning places and spaces, regional development and planning. Above all, all these themes can show the central role of adult learning in the context of communities.

#### *To become a member of ESREA*

To become a member of ESREA fill out the form available at [www.esrea.org](http://www.esrea.org) and send it back to the secretariat. When the application has been received, the secretary will send an invoice for the membership-fee which should be paid within three weeks.