

Interrogating transformative processes in learning and education: an international dialogue: a new European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) Network

What's the point of transformative learning?

2nd Call for proposal for our 1st Conference to be held in Athens, Greece, 27th-29th June, 2014

Royal Olympic Hotel¹

2nd call for papers, symposia, experiential workshops, posters etc



We live in times where education is easily reduced to preparation for labour markets, or is commodified as a product whose main value is one of exchange for other goods, such as consumption. Learning, especially discourses of lifelong learning can also be narrow and reductive of the human spirit and possibility: the neo-liberal subject is constructed as highly individualistic – omnipotent and omniscient – and notions of collective learning and wider social justice get lost. Traditions of popular education in Europe and beyond – with their notions of social transformation by critically interrogating established assumptions and injustices – have, at the same time, been marginalized. Theodor Adorno has written of ‘Halbbildung’ or half-education dominating the educational imagination, producing a desire to comply with current cultural and social directives. Paulo Freire critiqued the banking or transmission concept of education, in which the learner is reduced to an empty vessel, needing to be filled, passively, by what others – especially the

¹ <http://www.royalolympic.com/index.php>. See more details about accommodation in the last page of this document.

powerful – might think s/he might need. Such forces appear to have strengthened rather than weakened in an increasingly ‘runaway’, globalizing world.

Ideas of transformative learning (and / or critical reflection etc.) are in part a reaction to such processes. Transformation theory began to be elaborated by Jack Mezirow thirty years ago and soon attracted the intense interest of theorists and scholars of adult education. Many of them, located mainly in North America, adopted the core purpose of this learning theory – the fundamental change in learners’ dysfunctional frames of reference – and developed their own ideas within this theoretical frame, providing new conceptualizations, research evidence as well as suggestions for critical evaluation of its various aspects. These debates – with critiques of a cognitive reductionism in Mezirow’s work, or a lack of critical dimensions in some of his followers – have been spirited. For some, transformative learning is in danger of falling foul to the twin dangers of evacuation and reification of meaning. Evacuation has to do with the term being used so often, referring to many different things, and losing distinctive terms of reference, while reification gives the term a quasi-mystical significance beyond critical analysis.

Other scholars, located in Europe, for instance, but also in other continents, may share the purpose of transformative learning but offer alternative understandings of perspective transformation, using different conceptual frameworks, whether derived from critical theory, Bildung, Marxism, psychosocial studies etc. Nevertheless, there may be shared understanding in that all such views might contribute to better understandings of shifts in learners’ perspective of him/herself, in various ways, individually and collectively, cognitively, socially, emotionally, relationally, artistically, biographically and / or intuitively.

Our 1st Conference is addressed to all researchers and adult educators from Europe and around the world that share emancipatory educational goals, and wish to interrogate transformative processes in learning and education, their meaning, problematics and facilitation. Our title builds on some skepticism about the very term ‘Transformative Learning’ among particular scholars in Europe – ‘too North American, too individualistic etc’. – and we wish to create a space where we can play (in a Winnicottian sense) with TL and related concepts in a critical, but also constructive spirit.

The aim of the Conference is therefore

- To create a space in which we can interrogate TL and other concepts of transformation and its dynamics, in interdisciplinary ways, helping invigorate understanding of emancipatory forms of education.
- To bring alongside TL theories, those of critical theory, Freirian-inspired understandings, psychoanalysis etc., to build a dialogue between those who

may be motivated by similar ends, but may assert the importance of different conceptual frames.

- To build a strong, vigorous, diverse and interdisciplinary ESREA Network, to enhance scholarship and research of transformative processes in learning and education in diverse settings, cultures and societies.

We also welcome presentations to address questions of TL and its meanings as well as problematics. These may include, for example:

- TL: cognitive and/or psychic and/or social change?
- The collective and individual in transformative processes
- Criticality, critique and transformative learning
- Interdisciplinary perspectives on transformation
- Research perspectives on transformative processes, including the perspectives of auto/biographical and narrative, ethnographic, feminist research, psychosocial studies etc.
- Gender and transformative learning
- The constraints of transformation: cultural, structural and/or psychic
- Popular education and notions of transformation
- Bildung and TL
- Reflexivity and transformation
- Aesthetic experience and transformation
- Time and transformation
- Fostering transformative processes in learning
- Disorientating dilemmas and the forms that transform

In our conference, we want to help create new and slower spaces for dialogue, demonstration, reflexivity and discovery. There will be keynotes from internationally renowned colleagues, dialogues /round tables, experiential workshops, alongside individual papers and symposia, focusing on our theme of *What's the point of transformative learning?*

Guidelines for submission of paper abstracts/ proposals for symposia / workshops / posters

Abstracts should be submitted by January 13th, 2014 to the Conference organiser at interrogatingtl2014conf@gmail.com

Your paper proposal should have no more than 500 words and should be in Times New Roman, 12 points. Please remove all personal information from the abstract.

Please send on a separate sheet your professional / personal data (name, institutional affiliation, phone and email).

If an abstract is submitted by more than one author, one of the authors must take on the responsibility for their co-authors for all communications with the Conference organiser.

The proposals for papers, symposia, workshops, posters will be blind reviewed by the Scientific Committee:

Dr Michel Alhadef-Jones
Professor Agnieszka Bron
Professor Jerome Eneau
Professor Laura Formenti
Professor Alexis Kokkos
Anna Laros
Dr Kaisu Mälkki
Professor Linden West

Acceptance will be announced by the end of February, 2014. Final papers (3000 – 5000 words) should be submitted by June 1st by email to interrogatingt2014conf@gmail.com.

Detailed Guidelines for submission of papers will be made available on the conference website at a later date.

Conference languages: English will normally be used at the plenaries but a number of group sessions can be held in French or German.

ESREA's language policy is understood as being inclusive. Abstracts for the peer-review process must be in English or French. Though Papers will as a rule be in English, both Papers and Presentations in the Conference will be welcome in French or German as well as English. In the case of Papers in languages other than English, where possible, short (1000word) summaries in English should be provided.

For French, German, Greek, Italian speakers and naturally for many others, it is suggested that slides accompanying presentations (at least in part) should be in English or, if possible, bilingual. English speakers are asked, too, where possible, to provide bilingual versions of their slides. At the Conference there will not be any form of professional translation, but from experience we know that there are a number of colleagues who are willing and able to help and facilitate dialogue. Tolerance, respect, mutual support and curiosity will do the rest.

Just as all participants are asked to show patience and tolerance – as well as interest and curiosity - where a language other than their own is used, it is equally important to recognise that speakers requiring some element of translation or explanation

must accept that they can say less in the allotted time and that they should plan for this – perhaps by providing essential information in the form of a hand-out, for example.

Oral presentations should be up to 25 minutes and there will be 20 minutes additionally for debate. Experiential sessions and symposia should last 90 minutes.

Conference Fees and registration / Conference Dinner (in Euros)

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION (until end of April 2014)

ESREA members: 150

Non-members: 200

PhD/Research Students: 80 (a limited number of bursaries for PhD students will be available)*

FULL FEE (after 30th April 2014)

ESREA members: 180

Non-members: 230

PhD/Research Students: 100

Conference Dinner: 40

ESREA will be offering some bursaries for doctoral students. The bursaries exist in order to give some support to a small number of graduate-students to participate in the Conference. There will probably be three bursaries for this Conference. In order to be able to apply for a bursary, the applicant needs to be

- a graduate student (currently doing a Doctoral or Master's Degree)
- in addition, the applicant must be a member of ESREA (either an Individual Member or a member through their institution's membership)
- the applicant must submit a paper to the Conference

The bursary is at the moment 300 Euros/person and is designed to cover parts of the costs for travel expenditures and/or accommodation during the conference/meeting. Details of the ESREA bursaries will be provided on the Conference website.

*Individuals who hold a position at a university, including PhD or other doctoral students who are employed full-time by their university, are expected to pay the full fee. Those who register as a Doctoral **student** need to be able to show proof of their status.

For questions and expressions of interest in the meantime, please contact the Conference Organiser at dim.andritsakou@gmail.com, or the Convenors of the Network.

ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults) www.esrea.org

ESREA promotes and disseminates theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult learning in Europe through research networks, conferences and publications. It was established in 1991 as a scientific society which provides a Europe-wide forum for all researchers' engaged in adult education and learning. Today it has more than 400 members (individual and institutional) throughout Europe. It comprises a series of research networks that hold annual seminars for the exchange and scientifically open debate on research, scholarship and to encourage publications.

The Coordinators:

Dimitra Andritsakou, Hellenic Adult Education Association, Athens, Greece

Prof. Alexis Kokkos, Hellenic Open University, Greece

Anna Laros, University for Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland

Prof. Linden West, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

Conference Organizer

Hellenic Adult Education Association (<http://adulthoodeduc.gr/eng/index.html>)

Accommodation at the Royal Olympic Hotel

Special Room Prices for those who participate in the conference [per night, for 1 or 2 persons]:

Executive Room: 100 euros

Deluxe Room: 140 euros

Athenian Panorama Room/Junior Suite: 250 euros

Suite: 450 euros

IMPORTANT: The code for the reservation at Royal Olympic Hotel is [TransformativeLearningAthens](#).

Alternatively, around the area there are many hotels around the area which prices start at 40-50 euros (e.g. Acropolis Select, Art Gallery Hotel, Acropolis Museum Boutique Hotel, Philippos Hotel) or starting at around 70-75 euros (Athenian Callirhoe Hotel, The Athens Gate Hotel).