

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

The role, nature and difficulties of dialogue in transformative learning

**First call for papers, symposia, experiential workshops, posters etc
proposals for our 2nd Conference to be held in Athens, Greece, 24th-26th
June, 2016**



On dialogue: dialogue represents a central element of our network, and may also be at the heart of transformative learning processes. Dialogue can take many forms: it may lie at the core of our formation as human beings, in relation to significant others, as well as in our transformations, at various stages of our lives. It can be dialogue within, perhaps between different aspects of ourselves, and of our identities, in processes of self-negotiation/renegotiation. It can be dialogue with the other: the people not like us – in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, education, politics or sexual orientation etc. - who may appear threatening precisely because of difference; and yet who provide potential access to other ways of thinking and being in the world that enrich our own repertoire of existential possibilities and resources for learning. It could be dialogue with theory and/or between different theoretical perspectives on transformative learning. It could also be a dialogue with a spiritual other or in artistic and diverse forms of creative experience like writing where we are touched to our core, in relationship and new dialogic possibilities. It might be dialogue with characters in literature, or in the symbolic order, like a good idea, with whom we can identify and which affects us in profound, life changing ways. It can be an imaginary dialogue with diverse people who inspire us – whether historical and inspirational characters, including, perhaps, in our own families, as we become more attuned to what has been lost, as well as to marginalised others and histories. It can be dialogue between theory and praxis, as well as with the powerful, who may inhibit who we are and might be; or with oppressed people who might teach us more about a shared humanity, and of our own vulnerability

and contingency. Understanding grounded in dialogue, like some of the above, could be at the core of diverse transformative processes. Paulo Freire placed the dialogical at the core of conscientisation and meaningful social as well as personal change. Additionally, Habermas and Mezirow have considered dialogue as a basic component of good communication and transformative learning.

It may be important to recognise, in bell hooks (1989) words: 'Dialogue implies talk between two subjects, not the speech of subject and object. It is a humanising speech, one that challenges and resists domination' (hooks, 1989: 131). Supposed dialogue can be reduced to monologue, to silencing and objectification, and this has to be challenged and resisted, as part of creating new transformational possibilities in self as well as in the wider world. We have to ask ourselves the question as to why dialogue is often so difficult, and human connections get broken. We might want to explore the difficulties of dialogue, and why we may not listen or accept another's point of view. Can there be dialogue with the oppressor, the abuser, the racist, or the jihadi, for instance? Is dialogue a kind of liberal illusion in a conflict ridden and frequently violent world?

This is why we chose dialogue as our title and the focus of our second network conference.

Our first network conference in 2014 focused on "What's the point of TL" and set the groundwork for the launch of an international dialogue around transformative processes in learning. Back then, our network was newly launched and the first network meeting helped us to explore different perspectives and foci of interest on TL in the diverse field of adult and lifelong education. As a result, different themes emerged as central. They are as follows:

- TL, Migration and Interculturality
- TL in higher education
- Planning and Evaluation within TL/ the role of the educator in TL
- Gender Issues on and in TL
- TL and the use, role and potential of the arts
- TL, social action and local communities
- The temporalities and rhythms of transformative education

With the launch of our new network website, dialogue around these different themes is taking place across Europe and beyond. With this 2nd network conference, we would like to further broaden the exchange around these and other possible themes.

It is important to recall that dialogue was important to our network, from the outset:

- Dialogue was a central element at this first meeting.
- Dialogue is central to the work of the convenors
- Dialogue emerged as a central characteristic of our network (it's also part of its title).
- Dialogue may be essential to the formation of our humanity, and to its transformation
- Dialogue may take many and varied forms: artistic, spiritual, symbolic, intellectual and even political
- Dialogue can increase the possibilities of profounder forms of learning and social justice: racism and xenophobia may be examples of fractured dialogue and or objectification.

This call includes papers, *experiential* sessions, symposia and posters.

- Papers can include up to two presenters and should be up to 25 minutes and there will be 20 minutes additionally for debate.
- Experiential sessions can include up to three facilitators and should last 90 minutes. Sessions will take the form of workshops in which the presenters facilitate activity for the participants. Participants' experience in the workshop becomes the basis for reflection on the topic.
- Symposia can include up to three presentations around the same topic and should last 90 minutes. Presentations should be up to 50 minutes and there will be 20 minutes additionally for dialogue and debate.
- Posters should include a research question, methodological approach, and some aspects of the current state of analysis. The aim of the poster session is the exchange of ideas and research and to cultivate dialogue around the research topic, facilitating networking with other conference participants. There will be a dedicated time frame for posters during the conference. Poster presenters are expected to be around during this time frame for questions and explanations. Handouts should be provided. The call for posters is mainly addressed to emerging researchers.

Guidelines for submission of paper abstracts/ proposals for symposia / *experiential* sessions/ posters

Abstracts should be submitted by January 13th, 2016 to the Conference organiser at interrogatingt2016conf@gmail.com

Your paper proposal should have be no more than 600 words and should be in Times New Roman, 12 points. Please remove all personal information from the abstract.

Please send on a separate sheet with 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 in all communications with the Conference organisers.

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

Dr Michel Alhadef-Jones

Professor Jerome Eneau

Dr Fergal Finnegan

Professor Ted Fleming

Professor Laura Formenti

Professor Alexis Kokkos

Dr Anna Laros

Dr Kaisu Mälkki

Professor Linden West

Acceptance will be announced by the end of February, 2016. Final papers (3000 –5000 words) should be submitted by May 15th, by email to interrogatingtl2016conf@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 recognize 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.

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 Network Coordinators:

Prof. Linden West, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

Prof. Alexis Kokkos, Hellenic Open University, Greece

Dr. Anna Laros, University for Applied Sciences and Arts, Northwestern Switzerland.

Dimitra Andritsakou, Hellenic Adult Education Association, Athens, Greece

Professor Michel Alhadeff, Teachers College, Columbia University;
Sunkhronos Institute, Switzerland