

## **ESREA Access, Learning Careers and Identities Network**

**2-4 November 2017 University of Rennes 2, Rennes, France**

### **First Call for Papers**



**Title: Exploring Learning Contexts: Implications for access, learning careers and identities**

#### **Call:**

The last ESREA Access, Learning Careers and Identity Network Conference in 2015 interrogated the dimension of continuity and discontinuity in learning careers. The 2017 conference will shift the focus to the concept of 'learning contexts' and how they impact on access, learning careers and identities. Learning contexts may be formal, informal or non-formal so that there is the possibility to access different forms of knowledge and /or educational domains resulting in learning shaping representations of self and identities. Adult learners may experience different and diverse learning contexts as they transition between contexts. The interpretation of learning processes in terms of a lifelong and lifewide phenomenon highlights the transversal dimension of this experience: the fact that we live, at the same time and along different moments, in a plurality of learning contexts and, as a consequence, the importance of considering and dealing with their different assumptions, implications and impacts.

The concept of learning contexts is underpinned by different theoretical approaches and is open to a range of meanings in adult education. On the one hand, for

example, we can think about learning contexts as a phenomenon distributed across the social order of educational institutions, the workplace, home or community and embedded in practices. The social order itself also becomes a learning context so that learning cannot be separated from the practice, and as a result all contexts become a learning context (Edwards 2009). On the other hand, the learning context can be seen as an outcome of activity or a set of practices itself (Nespor, 2003). *'Learning contexts are practically and discursively performed and performative'* (Edwards 2009, p. 6). One example of this relationship between contexts is related to one of the traditional issues of this network: the experiences of non-traditional students at university. In this case there is the possibility to promote and foster a dialogue between different learning contexts (e.g. the academy, the family, work, the neighbourhood and community) and encompassing diverse codes, habitus and expectations. At the same time these differences may raise issues of inequalities in terms of access: borders between learning contexts may assume the traits of walls that are not possible to be crossed (Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg, 2014).

At another level it is important to consider that the notion of lifewide learning and the distinction between formal/non-formal/informal learning are not universally accepted. Different scholars have warned that if the whole of life becomes "pedagogised" many aspects belonging to the private sphere are at risk of being exposed to external scrutiny, evaluation and intervention with related issues of power and control (see Andersson & Fejes, 2005). Furthermore a vision in which learning contexts are everywhere, without a general agreement on their specificity risks to reduce the concept to an empty signifier without real meaning and significance. For Edwards (2009: 2) this raises questions of: 'What is specific to a learning context which is not to be found in other contexts? And who names these contexts as learning contexts?'

Finally the notion of learning contexts raises epistemological issues that question the way in which learning is shaped and realised. Different metaphors may be used to map the concept (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and each one sheds light only on particular aspects of the phenomenon with specific possibilities and constraints: 'In all common sense uses of the term, context refers to an empty slot, a container, into which other things are placed. It is the 'con' that contains the "text", the bowl that contains the soup. As such, it shapes the contours of its contents: it has its effects only at the borders of the phenomenon under analysis. A static sense of context delivers a stable world' (McDermott quoted in Edwards, 2009 p.2).

Learning contexts are, therefore, diverse and different.

The conference welcomes papers, posters, roundtables and symposia which address one or more of the following themes in relation to the notion of learning contexts:

- epistemic interrogations and effects on educational practices;
- methodological approaches to understanding the concept of learning contexts
- transitions and learning contexts
- issues of access and who gets access to which learning contexts
- consideration of and research on relationships between formal, non-formal and informal learning; (for example, HE, adult and further education schools / colleges, workplace, community adult education, family and intergenerational learning);

- interplay of individual and collective dimensions;
- inequalities (class, gender, ethnicity etc ) and the intersection of these;
- the role of adult educators in different learning contexts.

## References:

Andersson, P. & Fejes, A. (2005) "Recognition of prior learning as a technique for fabricating the adult learner: a genealogical analysis on Swedish adult education policy." *Journal of Education Policy*. 20.

Edwards, R. (2009) Introduction. Life is a learning context? In Edwards, R., Biesta, G., Thorpe, M. (Eds.) *Rethinking Contexts for Learning and Teaching*. Oxon UK: Routledge.

Field, J. & Lynch, H. (2015) "Getting stuck, becoming unstuck: agency, identity and transition between learning contexts" in *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, Volume 21, 3-17.

Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg, (2014). *Students Voices of Inequalities in European Higher Education*. Oxon UK: Routledge.

Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980), *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nespor, J. (2003). Undergraduate curricula as networks and trajectories. In Edwards, R. Usher, R. (Eds) *Space, Curriculum and Learning*. Greenwich: IAP:

## Keynote speaker

Laura Formenti

Professor at Department of Human Sciences - Bicocca University of Milan - Italy  
Chair of ESREA

## Call for papers, poster sessions, symposiums and roundtables

All abstracts for papers, poster sessions, symposium and round tables to be submitted by 1 of June 2017. Notification of acceptance will be 1 July 2017. The deadline for submission of complete papers will be 30 September 2017.

Please submit abstracts in two separate files: one including the paper title, the name, address, e-mail of each author and information on whether it is a paper, poster session, symposium or round table; and the second one including the paper title and abstract. Abstracts should be one side of A4 maximum with Arial, 12 points. The main language of the conference is English but abstracts will be accepted in

languages where we have members of the committee who can translate such as in French, Spanish and Italian. We will try to offer support for translating presentations.

Please send your abstract in RTF-format to.

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

A paper is proposed and submitted in the form of an abstract by one person but 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 ESREA 2013 Conference for Access, Learning Career and Identity.

The author or one of the named co-authors is responsible for communicating with the ESREA Conference Organisers about the paper.

### **Bursaries and support to participating graduate students**

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

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

Applications should be submitted no later than August 1, 2017.

Applications or questions regarding the application procedure should be directed to Diana Holmqvist – [diana.holmqvist@liu.se](mailto:diana.holmqvist@liu.se) ESREA

### **Scientific Committee**

Agnieszka Bron, Stockholm University, Sweden

Andrea Galimberti, Bicocca University of Milan - Italy

Jérôme Eneau, University of Rennes 2, France

José González Monteagudo, University of Seville, Spain

Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick, UK

Adrianna Nizinska, Gothenburg University, Sweden

### **Organising Committee**

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Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick, UK

Adrianna Nizinska, Gothenburg University, Sweden

### **Organising Institutions**

Bicocca University of Milan - Italy

University of Rennes 2, France

University of Warwick, UK

Gothenburg University, Sweden

### **Conference Venue**

The conference will be held at the University of Rennes 2, France

<https://www.univ-rennes2.fr/service-communication/plans-acces> ;

### **Rennes:**



Rennes is situated in Brittany, France. Below is a link to tourist information.

<http://www.brittanytourism.com/discover-our-destinations/rennes-and-brittany-s-historic-gateways/unmissable-sites/rennes>

### **Conference Times**

The conference will begin at 1400 on 2 November, 2017 and finish at 1300 on 4 November, 2017

Information about fees, accommodation and travel will be posted soon.