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:


**Keynote speaker**

Laura Formenti
Professor at Department of Human Sciences - University of Milano Bicocca, 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. Full paper must be submitted in English. Regarding presentations English is requested as well but, if necessary, we will try to offer support for translation where conference organization allows it.

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 needs 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  ESREA
Conference fees

ESREA member       110 €
Non-member          200 €
Student             60 €

The conference fees include the following:

- reception in the City Hall and/or visit of Parliament House (to be confirmed)
- lunch and dinner on Friday
- the visit of Mont Saint Michel, on Saturday afternoon will be optional (we are working for this option!) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znNMDaqSTtE

Scientific Committee

Agnieszka Bron, Stockholm University, Sweden
Andrea Galimberti, University of Milano Bicocca, Italy
Jérôme Eneau, University Rennes 2, France
José González Monteagudo, University of Seville, Spain
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And the following doctoral students from Rennes: Anne-France Hardy, Elzbieta Sanojca, Jean-Michel Megret, Yann Le Faou

Organising Institutions

University of Milano Bicocca, Italy
University Rennes 2, France
University of Warwick, UK
Gothenburg University, Sweden

Conference Venue

The conference will be held at the University 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.


Conference Times

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