

1. POWER AND POSSIBILITY IN ADULT EDUCATION

Reflecting on Old Themes in New Times

INTRODUCTION

In the era of lifelong learning, adult education has acquired a new prominence (Field, 2006). Across the world the amount of time adults spend in education has steadily increased and new policy imperatives, linked to notions such as the ‘knowledge economy’ have made adult education and adult learning major topics of research. Within the body of research which has emerged from the highly diverse field of adult education – which includes, for example, studies on basic education, literacy, popular and community education, continuing education, lifelong learning and higher education as well as learning in workplaces, social movements and civil society – there is a very marked interest in questions of power.

This is not a new phenomenon; in fact, power has been defining and constitutive theme of adult education scholarship for over a century and is a central concern of many of the most famous and influential thinkers in the field (e.g., Brookfield, 2005; Freire, 1998; Lindemann, 1926; Mezirow, 1991, etc.). It is also noteworthy that when adult education researchers turn to other disciplines for ideas and inspiration, they frequently chose to draw upon thinkers such as Bourdieu and Foucault who also foreground issues of power (Käpplinger, 2015; Nylander, Österlund, & Fejes, 2018).

As one might expect given this longstanding interest within a broadly defined field of research power has been approached in varied ways. Nonetheless, there are certain recurrent themes, concerns and characteristics which are pertinent to framing the content and purpose of this collection. The genesis and formation of adult education as a field of practice, strongly orientated to democratic and egalitarian values, and the subsequent way adult education has developed within the academy, as an ‘applied’ social science (Rubenson, 2011; Nylander & Fejes, 2019) means that positivistic claims of neutrality and exercises in ‘grand theory’ are rare in adult education research. There is also relatively little melancholy rumination on the impossibility of action or change and the desire to produce research that contributes to progressive change and is relevant to communities, movements and practitioners remains the norm. As a result documenting inequality and injustice and/or theorizing social reproduction, ‘power over’, is complemented with a keen interest in ‘power to’ that is to explore what is, or might be, possible through adult education.

Possibility on a macro level has been mainly understood in terms of fostering active democratic participation (Rubenson, 2011) and advancing emancipatory politics (Holst, 2011). Adult education from this perspective is linked to wider democratizing tendencies in society (Williams, 1961). Critical pedagogy and feminism have been the most influential lines of research and inquiry in this regard (Freire, 1972; Hall et al., 2012; hooks, 1994; Mayo, 1999; Newman, 2007; Tett, 2002) but liberal as well as radical forms of popular education (Langinder, Nordvall, & Crowther, 2013) and a good deal of work using transformative learning theory also works within this paradigm (Mezirow & Assoc, 2000).

Interest in democracy from ‘below’ and political possibility on a macro level is complemented with a concern with the transformative potential of adult education on the meso and micro levels. This reflects the generally humanistic orientation of adult education research. Humanism has been articulated in a range of political and philosophical registers, including ones which are not especially interested in power and possibility in political terms, and there is a very widely shared interest in tapping into the ‘hidden’ potential located with human experience, informal learning and everyday knowledge (e.g. Alheit & Dausien, 2002; Bélanger, 2016; hooks, 1994; Illeris, 2009; Knowles, 1970; Jarvis, 2009; Pineau, 1986; Tett, 2002; Torres, 1990; Tough, 1979 etc.). This is typically paired with the argument that much educational provision fails to recognize this potential or even actively blocks its development. A recurrent trope of adult education research is the proposition that only by developing more open and responsive forms of education through innovation in institutions, program planning, and pedagogy (e.g. Horton, 2003; Tett, 2002 etc.) and ultimately devising new modes of producing and exchanging knowledge in society can we realize human potential. We want to suggest this way of construing power and possibility has been one of the things that has created a common sense of identity and purpose across a very wide and disparate scientific field. With some qualifications, this can also be discerned in some of the extensive and steadily growing body of research on workplace learning (e.g. Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2004).

Adult education is now a ‘mature’ scientific field and there is a clear need to interrogate and empirically explore on an ongoing basis what Malcolm Tight (1999, p. 1) once called the “mythologies” of adult education, the “powerful and revered ways of knowing aspects of our world” including these paradigmatic assumptions about power and possibility. This is what this book seeks to do.

Reflecting on power and possibility has acquired a new urgency and relevance in recent years, a period of change and crisis characterized by social acceleration (Rosa, 2013; see also Alhadeff-Jones, 2017), deepening inequalities (Sayer, 2015), seismic changes in politics and governance, a rise in racism and xenophobia (Fekete, 2018) and grave ecological threats (Latour, 2017). Alongside these socio-political shifts, adult education as a field of practice and scientific inquiry has witnessed significant changes in funding, policy and provision as well. Furthermore, several commentators (Nylander & Fejes, 2019; Rubenson, 2011) suggest there has been a fragmentation and weakening of the field of adult education at the very point when

many commentators argue reflexive forms of adult education are essential (Bowl, 2017; Walters & Watters, 2017).

How can, and should, adult education respond to these changes in the research field and more widely? Is it time to abandon old paradigms and themes? What sort of research is being done that illuminates power and possibility in a complex, diverse and interdependent world? This collection brings together leading researchers in the field of adult education to explore these vital questions theoretically, politically and practically from multiple perspectives and in relation to varied areas of interest within contemporary adult education. Specifically, the collection discusses continuities and changes in adult education research and program development and what was, and is now shaping and driving policy and the effects this is having on practice. In particular, it looks at how metrics and the language of competences, standards and outcomes, which have become ubiquitous, is currently affecting conceptions of research, learning and literacy. It asks how can we, in the light of rapid change in economics, politics, the labour market, migration and culture, leading to heightened social complexity, effectively research and theorize power and imagine democratic change. By exploring these questions in a critical and open way the authors featured in the book offer an analysis of adult education which is timely, rich and substantive.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK

This collection of essays emerged from the debates and discussions that took place at the 2016 European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) Triennial conference. Established in 1991 and consisting of twelve different research networks, ESREA has become one of the best-known organisations concerned with academic research on adult education and learning (Slowey, 2016). Its twelve networks meet annually or bi-annually in different parts of Europe. The Triennial conferences offer space for the various networks to come together, meet and share ideas and it has become an important event for adult education researchers globally (for a review of the major themes at the Triennial conferences up to 2014 see Kapplinger, 2015).

The 2016 Triennial was the eighth such conference and took place in Maynooth University in Ireland and was hosted by the Department of Adult and Community Education. The theme of the conference was *Imagining diverse futures for adult education: Questions of power and resources of creativity*. The double focus on power and future possibilities was chosen through dialogue between colleagues in ESREA and was designed to respond to concerns about changes in the field which were being voiced at adult education events internationally and in various ESREA networks as a result of the medium-term socio-political changes mentioned above as well as the effect of the global economic crisis on adult education in many European countries.

It was a remarkably vibrant event with approximately 200 presentations and papers by researchers from 27 countries. These researchers were mainly from Europe

but also came Asia, Australia and North America. The predominance of participants from the global north and the fact that it was an Anglophone event is worth bearing in mind not least because one of the themes of this book is the need to think about adult education in global terms.

Researchers responded to the conference themes in multiple and unexpected ways and we cannot in this book, nor intend to, capture the full range of what was covered in papers, roundtables, performances and workshops. Interestingly, relatively few papers ‘imagined diverse futures’, the emphasis was more on the reconfiguration of the field. The papers which dealt with ‘power to’ contextualized these hopes in terms of a complex realities and challenges in the here and now. Questions of power ‘over’ loomed large in terms of policy change and neoliberal managerialism alongside a strong interest in power in relation to gender, workplace learning and migration. In other words, the interest in possibility, that is to say in small and large-scale empowerment through adult education, was strong but participants wanted above all to pause and to look carefully at the forces and tendencies at work in the field, especially in terms of policy. As editors we have taken the main ‘generative themes’ of the event – power and possibility in complex and diverse times – and then sought contributions to this collection on these themes.

Below we elaborate and offer some further framing remarks in four parts which follow the structure of the book and reflect on the main ways invited contributors have taken up the themes of the book. The first part consists of pieces that help contextualize recent changes in adult education by looking back in time and across contexts. Part 2 looks at dominant trends in policy and the concepts, practices, categories and modes of research that are currently shaping practice. In the third part the challenge of theorizing power and possibility in relation to democracy, equality and emancipation in complex times is taken up. The fourth part looks at power and possibility in relation to some of the key themes of the conference – transnational migration and diversity in workplaces, formal education and civil society settings. The final part reflects on settings and practices which suggest how adult education can renew a sense of possibility in personal and social transformation.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW OF CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES IN ADULT EDUCATION

The first part of this book takes up the theme of continuities and changes in power and invites the reader to think about how we arrived at current conjuncture: it explores what is shifting, what persists and how we might respond as researchers. The chapters in the part have been chosen because of their wide scope and deal with three major concerns of adult education: policy, program planning and the evolution of research. Read together these three chapters illuminate the distance that has been travelled in adult education policy and program planning in recent years as well as what endures and situates this in relation to contemporary trends and tendencies in politics, economics and research. They also introduce two themes explored later in

the book – the temporal and spatial dimensions of adult education research – and offers examples of how we might think of the field diachronically as well as how we make sense of adult education as an international and global enterprise. In a collection such as this that is necessarily partial, the book offers signposts rather than a map; the aim is to offer new and suggestive angles of vision rather than a comprehensive account of the state of adult education which is ably outlined elsewhere (e.g. Milana et al., 2018; Nylander & Fejes, 2019; see also the various international and national handbooks of adult education).

In Chapter 2 Maren Elfert explores one of the most widely debated and significant ideas in adult education – lifelong learning. She traces the way this idea was conceptualized and articulated in two flagship reports published by UNESCO, the Faure report in 1972, and the Delors report in 1996. The chapter situates the broadly humanistic, and perhaps within current circumstances, even utopian, conception of lifelong learning as part of wider effort to address inequalities through international cooperation and the reform and development of the welfare state. As is well known with the neoliberalization of policy and politics, the OECD and World Bank emerged as the most influential international organization concerned with education. The philosophical and democratic ethos of UNESCO's reports are out of kilter with what became the dominant ideas of the age. Elfert contends that this cannot be seen as a complete and finished process and argues although this ambitious conception of lifelong learning has not been enacted on a policy level, they remain highly influential for practitioners and researchers as a resource of hope and is what she terms an “unfailure”.

This is followed by Marcella Milana who in Chapter 3 offers an overview of patterns in comparative research on international adult education policy and their interactions with national and local policy developments. Milana analyzes the collective effort by adult education policy researchers to examine the changing power dynamics between international organizations, national governments and local communities. Milana identifies research patterns that reveal the pervasiveness of the dominant neoliberal discourse and its effects on adult education, but also on its cracks as well as different forms of ‘resistance’ (see also Tett & Hamilton, 2019). Crucially, she suggests a reflexive awareness of these patterns will enhance the capacity to do meaningful research in the future. Further she argues that assuming a multi-scalar or global perspective in policy research provides adult education scholars with the capacity to trace the influence of the multiple political entities and agencies involved in shaping adult education policy.

Thomas Sork and Bernd K  pplinger in Chapter 4 take up the themes of the book from a different perspective by exploring power and programme planning. They discuss how power in program planning has been a crucial theme in adult education especially in North America. Drawing on previous empirical research in Germany and Canada on this topic and reflecting of the influential work of Cervero and Wilson (1994), they do two significant things. They offer a fascinating overview of the changing way power has been theorized within adult education and explore how

program planners can generatively respond to the multiple pressures, including from policymakers, in a way that responds to wider social needs and pressing problems today. Reflections on the macro and meso levels clears the ground to offer guidelines for practice and discuss the competences required for program planning to read and respond to power. Program planning is, they argue, a type of creative action which relies on ethical, socio-political and technical competences and which needs conceptual tools to grapple with visible and hidden forms of power in order to create new possibilities in adult education.

The first part is intentionally wide in scope and highly layered and thus illuminates adult education as a complex and evolving field through which dominant, residual and emergent forces operate. The three authors suggest that to understand power and possibility in adult education we need to be cognizant of our own history to discern accurately the fractures and faultlines which run through contemporary adult education. This is the departure point for a further exploration of power and policy today which is explored in the second part of the book.

THE AGE OF METRICS AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF POLICY AND PRACTICE IN ADULT EDUCATION

From the second world war up until the late 1980s adult education (at least viewed from much of Europe and North America) was a relatively stable field of practice, albeit quite loosely boundaried, which was served, and partially shaped, by a growing body of academic work. In Europe adult education as a field of practice and scientific field was strongly shaped by the imperatives of welfare state capitalism which led to a period of unprecedented and dramatic expansion in educational provision across the lifespan. Based on a historical compromise described by Peter Alheit (2005, p. 391) as a:

... a somewhat unusual alliance between social-democratic reformism and capital's drive to modernise both itself and society. What one side envisaged as an emancipatory opportunity for personal growth, especially for the working classes, was seen by the other side as the benefits of having the wide-ranging skills that were considered essential to remain competitive.

From the 1980s this compromise began to unravel due to social and economic crises and increasing neoliberalization (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010). The social, political and cultural coordinates – most significantly the configuration of state power and the organisation and orientation of progressive social movements – that shaped adult education in Europe in the post-war period have disappeared. The promotion of individualized and competitive forms of culture and politics has had a profound consequence of what is deemed possible or even thinkable within the social imaginary. More concretely markets and quasi-markets have been created now in many national educational systems (Bowl, 2017). The authors in the collection make the case that it is the neoliberalization of national and international adult education

policy, and the associated growth of managerial ‘audit culture’, linked to funding that has most directly impacted on the field. As a result we have seen the emergence of procedures, measures and practices through which power operates in a subtle manner to change how program planning, pedagogy and research is conducted and which cumulatively alter the purpose of adult education.

As Rosanna Barros recounts in her analysis of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Portuguese adult education (Chapter 5), the state along with transnational bodies have devised indicators and set goals which have had a profound impact on adult education. She reveals how educational policy through compulsory targets and outputs, has resulted in the reimagining of educational work in technical and administrative terms and the contradictions and pitfalls that this has created. In a period of crisis and austerity this has centralized control over education while decentralizing responsibility. This double movement sets tight bounds on what is deemed possible and Barros argues has neutralized or hampered the development of critical forms of adult education.

Mary Hamilton in Chapter 6 reveals in her analysis of how people’s own experience and meanings of literacy are devalued and rendered invisible in international comparative surveys such as PIAAC. As she argues, such surveys play a significant role in the establishment of new forms of governance and social regulation on a global and national basis, where power is exerted through data management and efforts are made to normalize knowledge in line with neoliberal views of the world, leading to a narrowing of the educational imagination.

Barros and Hamilton illustrate the operation of the ‘microphysics of power’ and how this resets the boundaries of possibility in education. In Chapter 7 Henning Salling Olesen builds on this analysis through a discussion of the notion of competence. He argues for a critical form of research from a ‘bottom up perspective’ that seeks to explore everyday practices related to competence and learning from a new perspective. He contends that adult education micro-practices related to the subjective interests and experience of individuals need to be studied to “trace their unrecognized potentials” for supporting autonomous action and societal change. While recognizing current limitations in the bureaucratic conception of competences Olesen also suggests how this might be reimagined drawing on empirical research in workplaces and with trade unions.

THEORISING POWER AND POSSIBILITY IN A COMPLEX WORLD

One of the primary aims of the book is to explore whether the paradigms that have been used to understand power and possibility in adult education are still adequate in a period of fluidity and change. This question is explored throughout the collection but is most systematically addressed as a theoretical challenge in the third part of the book. To do this we invited four authors to reflect on the themes of personal and social emancipation, transformative education, equality and social justice in relation to adult education. The authors approach this through various notions of praxis and

different conceptions of the source of ‘really useful knowledge’. Close philosophical inquiry of concepts is accompanied by grounded reflection on literacy practices and a discussion of a ‘prophetic’ figure from the history of adult education – Mary Parker Follett – who is rescued from the ‘enormous condescension of posterity’

It was argued earlier that hidden powers, blocked and unused capacities pushing against the constraints of tradition and institutional systems have been recurrent tropes in adult education which are articulated through and sustained by a range of metaphors of change, expansion and transformation. As we have already argued political conditions are vastly different than they were forty years ago. Related but distinct to this is the way progressive social movements organize and produce knowledge is changing (Wainwright, 2009). Furthermore, as is the case with social science more generally, the post-modern ‘turn’ means questions have been posed about the practical and theoretical limits of progressive ideas (Usher & Edwards, 1994) questioning the simplicity and linearity of such models. In particular, post-structuralists have problematized notions of emancipation which, they argue, are based on dichotomous models with a clear division between the powerful and the powerless and draw our attention to the subtle operation of power at all levels of social life mediated through practices, techniques and discourses. Power is not so much held or resisted as exercised in various ways.

Interestingly, most of the writers invited to explore power and possibility in theoretical terms occupy a middle ground between early versions of critical theory and post-structuralism. It is significant that the four thinkers here all argue emancipatory desires, knowledge and values remain integral to adult education. In various ways, and to varying degrees, the four authors also acknowledge the importance of established traditions of thought in adult education but they all suggest that these living traditions needs critique and development. There is also a consensus that theory building is a contingent and contextual activity which should be approached in a critically pragmatic manner. Each author also is at pains to stress complexities of identity and praxis in thinking and research; suggesting “we have to try to engage with a diverse and fragmented culture by means of an analysis that sees through its own fantasy of homogeneity [...] and seeks out complexity (Samuels, 1993, p. 11). Just as significantly emancipation is discussed in relation to multiple actors but with relatively little focus on the issues – such as movement organizing – which were once mainstays in theorizing power and possibility.

Both Lyn Tett and Leona English speak out of long experience of thinking and working through radical and feminist traditions and suggest ways of building on these bodies of thought. In Chapter 8 Lyn Tett approaches equality in a multidimensional manner, drawing on the work of Nancy Fraser. Tett uses Fraser’s concepts of recognition, redistribution and participatory parity, to analyze enduring inequalities experienced by learners and also the democratic possibilities opened up to adult learners in the context of family literacy. Tett concludes that participation in critical adult education does empower and enhance participation

and address misrecognition but she also indicates that equality requires wider efforts at economic redistribution.

In Chapter 9 Leona English makes a case for the importance of feminist analysis of power and possibility by bringing us back to the work of Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933), a community-based educator whose emphasis on collective action and the co-creation of power views democracy as an “ongoing project” and power as an integral part of human relations. In this reflection on the lessons of the past, English is also offering a way of thinking through and responding to discussion of identity and equality that are now so widespread and often very contentious. English also frames this in terms of global challenges and prospects for women and suggests that to think accurately about power and possibility we need to develop a genuinely internationalist perspective.

In Chapter 10 Kerry Harman argues that emancipatory possibilities depend on a critique of hidden assumptions which are held as normative, including by those who claim to be advancing emancipation. Drawing on the work of Jacques Rancière, Harman argues that increasing diversity and complexity in society has resulted in a less unified understanding around what constitutes progressive social change and makes the notion of a universal truth seem much less certain. The idea of vanguard knowledge, the expert and crucially envisaging equality as something worked towards on a distant horizon – and here Marxism and critical pedagogy is squarely in view – is criticized by Harman. Instead it is the immediate practice of emancipation in the here and now that is being argued for as the basis of emancipatory pedagogy and research.

Michel Alhadeff-Jones in Chapter 11 revisits emancipation and the democratic ideals of adult education through an analysis of time. Alhadeff-Jones looks carefully at the temporal dimensions of adult education, raising important questions about the experience of time and why the multiple and complex rhythms of human activity needs to be thought about carefully in research on adult learning and development. He proposes developing a rhythm-analytical approach to adult education to deal with the complex experience of time. He contends that a scarcity of time, the strict demarcation of learning activities and the acceleration of aspects of social life express something significant about contemporary power dynamics, revealing social inequalities in the way adults experience time in their struggle to manage the competing rhythms of life. Emancipation, he suggests, lies, at least in part, in finding one’s own rhythm, the appropriation of one’s own time, a proposition which throws up exciting challenges for adult education.

POWER AND POSSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD: LEARNING, EDUCATION AND GLOBAL MIGRATION

Power can be mapped relationally in terms of the possession, use and circulation of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals in social space marked by lines of division and structured inequality (Bourdieu, 1985, 1996). Grasping the dynamics behind the movement of commodities, people, images, symbols, practices and ideas

across social space is crucial to social analysis (Lefebvre, 1992) and as noted earlier we are in a period of accelerated flows (Rosa, 2013). The last two parts of the book explore how adult education is responding to this changing and changeable world in which questions of diversity, solidarity and participation are key.

We are living in a period of heightened interest in questions of migration and intercultural exchange. Current transnational flows of people through forced and voluntary migration fits into a longer-term historical tale of colonialism, displacement and crises. Power continues to be centrally evident in the policies and practices of how states manage these population shifts, using immigration policies to attract certain groups – usually on the basis of education skills and employment – and constrain the movement of other groups of people – through employment visas, border and migration controls, access to welfare and educational supports (Morrice, Shan, & Sprung, 2017). This raises significant questions for adult education in terms of access and recognition, pedagogical practices and community inclusion (Guo & Lange, 2015).

In this part of the collection, how power relations, migration and diversity are mediated in context is explored in three key sites of learning; civil society, formal education and workplaces. Firstly, in Chapter 12 Brigitte Kukovetz and Annette Sprung discuss the relationship between solidarity, power and with adult learning, in the context of migration regimes and within humanitarian refugee relief. They explore volunteering as an important learning process which responds to human need in a time of political crisis. But equally they highlight how this activity can be linked to a sense of the state divesting itself of responsibility in a neoliberal context and that such activity can serve to reproduce deep inequalities related to race, ethnicity and citizenship rights. To deal with this ‘doubleness’ of power they argue we need to be able to link everyday solidarity to a wider analysis of power structures.

In Chapter 13 Karen Dunwoodie, Susan Webb and Jane Wilkinson also identify the limits of efforts to address inequalities in the context of higher education. Their case study documents the complexities of equity and inclusion for certain groups of migrant. It reveals the symbolic violence evident in the apparently neutral admissions processes and practices of higher education institutions for students from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds through the organizational processes and procedures which reproduce systems of classification and require forms of evidence that reinforce relations of domination and subordination in higher education access and participation who applied to attend Australian higher education institution. Like Kukovetz and Sprung they make the case for multileveled and integrated power analysis as vital for research and institutional reform.

One of the most important developments in adult education in the past two decades has been the increasing importance given to workplace learning (linked most often socio-cultural perspectives and Actor Network theory). In Chapter 14 Joke Vandenabeele and Pascal Debruyne explore workplace learning in relation to interculturalism and diversity from a new perspective drawing on the work of Gert Biesta and Sharon Todd amongst others. They explore the lived experience in a ‘super diverse’ shopfloor

of Tower Automotive in Ghent and the organic forms of undramatic but nevertheless important forms of solidarity built through cooperation on an everyday level which reflect workers' understanding of diversity. Solidarity is practiced in a double sense: sharing and redistributing material and immaterial resources with 'newcomers' and also taking up the responsibility to renew this world in which we want to live, work and play together.

MAKING HOPE PRACTICAL

The issues raised by the contributors in this book highlight the challenges facing adult education and society more broadly. In many respects the collection as a whole indicates that responding to a diverse and complex world terms of theory, research and practice is far from easy. While there remains a strong sense of the potential of adult education we are struggling to make sense of rapid changes inside and outside of adult education and there is some tentativeness and even anxiety as we look towards the future.

The British adult educator and cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1980) argued that making hope practical and despair convincing was a fundamental task in critical intellectual work. Several of the contributions to the book (Elfert, English, Tett, Sork & Kapplinger) indicate the history of adult education is in itself a resource of hope we can draw upon. It is certainly worth recalling that adult education played an important role in democratizing societies through the elaboration of new practices, value and institutions – the process Raymond Williams (1961) called the 'long revolution' in the twentieth century. But the long revolution has been halted quite some time ago. And many of the contributors suggest we need to question and critically build on tradition while finding new ways to reimagine the space and time of adult education which match the challenges of the current conjuncture (Alhadeff-Jones, English, Harman, Milana). In several chapters (Olessen, Harman, Tett, Vandenabeele and Debruyne), it is argued that we need to pay attention to the power of everyday learning practices as a source of solidarity and change. But this needs to be framed in theories of power and possibility which pay attention to macro, meso and micro levels (Milana, Sork and K  pplinger, Barros, Hamilton, Dunwoodie, Webb and Wilkinson, Kukovetz and Sprung).

But how can such emergent practices alongside a realistic, multileveled and nuanced theory of power feed into a wider sense of social possibility and where are the sites where this can be advanced? This is the question that the final part of the book explores. The answer given by the three featured authors is that formal adult education should link and learn from contemporary social movements, and voluntary and civil society organisations inspired by the principles of equality and democracy.

Linden West in Chapter 15 bridges past and present and explores possible futures through reflections on his research (West, 2016) in a British post-industrial city to illustrate how a politics of hopelessness breeds racist and xenophobic politics, but also how we can begin to restore hope. He contends that we have:

... responsibilities as citizens, academics and educators, to question powerful neo-liberal trends and to illuminate their effects, and how they can be resisted in processes of democratic, dialogical community education ... how intercultural and community education can help forge new collective resources, at a time when cultural super diversity seems, for many, a threat.

He argues that we can draw on the history of adult education in imaginative and practical ways and seeks to create the conditions for careful dialogue and solidarity across settings. Here adult education is envisaged as a type of dialogical practice which takes place across a multiplicity of formal and informal settings in support of a reflexive democracy.

In Chapter 16 Marta Gregorčič explores counter-tendencies and alternative practices to neoliberalism, through case studies of the impact of experiments in participatory budgeting (PB) in Argentina and Slovenia. PB, in its optimal form, creates a system of co-governance in which self-organized citizens and engaged civic society can exert public control over the municipality. Gregorčič explores how creating and nurturing authentic, democratic, learning communities that aspire towards democratization of existing governance systems empowers citizens but also creates learning opportunities for city councils. Of particular interest is the claim that increasing participation in society is a deep form of learning which is transformative on a personal level but also leads greater solidarity and informed collective action. Like West she proposes critical dialogue across learning spaces as a source of transformative power.

It is fitting that a collection that explores the dialectic between local and global and power and possibility in complex times finishes with a chapter on climate change. In Chapter 17 Pierre Walter and Jenalee Kluttz explore learning in and from a climate justice movement led by indigenous people in North America. They argue that what is called for is a complete paradigm shift away from anthropocentric perspectives. The earth and non-human relations are moved centre stage and they argue for careful reflection on one positioning in terms of power in relation to networks of life and in differential and unequal social relations. They argue that the form of environmental education that took place within this movement indicates what might be possible through a wider 'decolonializing' dialogue in which the Earth is viewed as central to learning, culture, community, identity and human existence.

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