

“ADULT LEARNING & COMMUNITIES IN A WORLD ON THE MOVE: BETWEEN NATIONAL TENSIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES”

UNIVERSITY OF LOWER SILESIA, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
WROCLAW, STRZEGOMSKA ST. 55

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Annette Sprung, Christopher Parson, Linda Morrice, Angela Pilch-Ortega, Brigitte Kukovetz

Between the ivory tower and ‘scholactivism’: Political and social engagement in research on adult education and migration

The question if, how and to which extent scholars should engage with the public (civil society) and take responsibility to enhance social change has been discussed for a long time. Currently many countries face an increase in nationalist and identity-based discourse, the trivialisation and normalisation of racisms, the erosion of basic democratic standards and the spreading of far right wing and populist politics. Against this background it has to be asked how scientific research and university teaching faces up to the challenges to democratic values and human rights posed by current anti-migrant and anti-refugee discourses and actions. Members of the ESREA Network on Migration, Transnationalism and Racisms would like to open up a space for discussion on this issue. The round table should be characterised more by discussions about these underlying questions than by ‘presentations’ of research results as such. We will therefore introduce the discussion by providing some short inputs on the following aspects:

- What is the role of adult education (research) in migration regimes? How are our postures as individual scholars, but also as universities and scientific communities, influenced by ‘everyday bordering’ practices and the moral economy of migration? How do we contribute to the (re)production of problematic discourses and the perpetuation of repressive structures? How do we address the creeping instrumentalisation of adult education and training – language courses for migrants, training for citizenship etc. – which is often more closely linked to policies traversed by nationalistic and identity-based discourses than to any pedagogical or emancipatory considerations?
- Does a desire for ‘objectivity’ insidiously introduce a tendency towards neutrality on questions that require strong ethical positioning?
- Does a research network such as ESREA recognise a duty to defend and support academics and researchers threatened by anti-democratic regimes and political repression? The case of the appeal for solidarity from Turkish academics purged in the aftermath of the attempted “coup” is a case in point.
- How do we, as persons/ as academics / as representative of an institution (and who often do both, research and teaching) position ourselves and engage with the political discourse? What contribution could research in adult education in the context of migration regimes actually make to any kind of social or political change?