ESREA Active Democratic Citizenship and
Adult Learning Research Network

Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy,
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

MOVEMENTS FOR DEMOCRACY, CRITICAL LEARNING AND THE LIMITS OF WHAT WE KNOW

Book of Abstracts

Belgrade, 2023

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26–27 May, 2023
Belgrade

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Publisher:
Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy,
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

For the publisher:
Jovan Miljković

Editors:
Maja Maksimović
Nikola Koruga

Assistant Editor:
Kristina Robertson

Reviewers:
Scientific Committee of the ESREA ADCAL network conference

Artistic solution cover:
Dosije studio, Belgrade

Illustration:
Jelena Jaćimović

Pre-press:
Dosije studio, Belgrade

Print run:
50 copies

ISBN 978-86-80712-50-5

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The Story of(f) the Course: Initial Education on the Edge of the Unknown

Discussing the problems of contemporary education, scientists more and more often emphasize the issue of devitalization – mechanisation, repetition, reproduction and transmission as the basis of dominant practices – making education distant from the issues that shape everyday life and from the complex, creative and vital processes through which the world becomes (Colebrook, 2017; Krnjaja, 2016; Olsson, 2009; Semetsky, 2006). The novel currents of posthumanism and new materialisms in educational theory encourage us to rethink the everyday contexts and encounters as educational – as spaces for enlivening different possibilities for being and becoming in this world (Naughton & Cole, 2017), for creation in the field of possible effects on reality (Colebrook, 2017), for experimenting with the world and the self in creating new values and meanings through problem situations and learning from experiences (Semetsky, 2017). Such education leans on learning as a joint endeavour – performative, transformative, immersed and emergent, affective and cognitive, leaking as well as ineffable (Ulla et al., 2019); as an experience that enhances our powers to affect and to be affected, twisting at the same time the boundaries of the field in which it takes place towards the opening of new and different possibilities (Naughton & Cole, 2017).

However, through the ongoing experimentations in creating such a model of education, two dangers might be noticed: First, the danger of creating parallel systems and collectives or completely alternative forms which prove to be estranged and unworkable for the dominant world we keep coming back to; Second, the danger of urging exclusively for the changes on the level of systems or institutions, omitting from the story procedurality, everydayness and minority of the process of change – so as our individual responsibility.

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Striving to escape these dangers, we want to share the story of one semester of the elective course on the bachelor studies of pedagogy. Through this semester, we as teachers strived to open with our students the spaces of possibility – for practical engagement, for creation and transformation, for the development of a community, and for vitality. Our methods were not ambitious in the sense of form; we relied on discussions and creative activities but on everyday situations that arose during the semester in the different domains of faculty life, as well as in the wider context to which the faculty belongs. We've strived to follow the flows of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1984) and map the possible cracks in dominant mechanisms of functioning so as to further provoke the affective experience and professional engagement of our students. What was important for us was the balance – staying on the very edge of what we know and can predict, reworking the very edges of the course, the subject and our roles without erasing them entirely.

Mapping the pedagogical epiphanies (Cole, 2011) through the discussion of teachers and students after the end of this course, we strive to recognize the possible openings for the further process of joint learning on the edge of unpredictable and unknown.

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