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



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Where Have All the Flowers Gone: Learning from the Failure of the Posthuman Education Project

In the spring of 2022, a group of researchers, architects, and educators collaborated to develop posthuman artistic, scientific, and educational practices aimed at exploring the intricate relationship between humans and plants. The project was hosted at the Microgallery of the Centre for the Promotion of Science. We invited the community, our friends, and colleagues to bring dry houseplants to the Center, share their stories, and entrust us with their care. With the assistance of botanists on our team, we committed to the regeneration of these plants. One of the goals of this exhibition was to provide a space for slowing down, reflection, and dedication, especially in the current period of galloping digital capitalism. Our attention is continuously reformulated into "hyper-attention," which involves superficial engagement at the expense of focused awareness necessary for discernment and intimacy (Till, 2019). Moreover, consumers must not be attached to their objects; they must be unfaithful to them, consuming them by separating from them, destroying them, and discarding them to redirect the energy of their instincts towards newer objects (Stiegler, 2011). Therefore, we proposed the question: Can we consciously create relationships with plants to learn to dedicate ourselves to slow processes, respect perishability, and the power of regeneration?

As the lockdown was gradually easing up, this project also aimed to delve into the theme of decay and the potential for rejuvenation given the appropriate circumstances. Consequently, both people and houseplants were involved in a workshop, and the participants shared personal stories about the plants, with botanists "diagnosing" the plants' conditions and subsequently implementing all necessary measures. Plant owners (if we can speak of ownership) become co-authors of this exhibition, and its curation takes on the original meaning of the term – nurturing (Latin curare – to nurture, heal). Thus, the educational goal of this exhibition goes beyond familiarizing oneself with biological processes as such, but focuses on exploring a personal and intimate relationship with plants. By involving the broader community in the creation of the exhibition, a space has

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been created for recognition, encounter, exchange, and co-creation. The visitors of the Microgallery could take time, sit in front of the glass window with the plants and read the collaborative book we have created.

As time passed, some of the plants began to decay. After several months on display, some developed freckles, some were stolen while placed outside on the street, and some simply died. This prompted us to reflect on our approach towards care and its consequences. We ask ourselves: What kind of knowledge was produced within this failed participatory posthuman education project? In terms of democratic processes, we can look at the questions of participation and accountability. What happens to hope when promises are not kept? To answer these questions, we have collected stories from the authors and participants.

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Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Research Network

Aims and Themes of the Network

What, if anything, is the role of adult learning and education in fostering active democratic citizenship and the making of a democratic society? The ADC network is dedicated to exploring these central and longstanding questions through research, debate and discussion of active citizenship by studying and reflecting on these issues. We are currently particularly interested in adult learning in social movements; civic education for adults; the social and political construction of citizenship in relation to various discourses on adult learning and education and the historical and contemporary role of popular education. The ADC network welcomes a variety of approaches dealing with the nature, possibilities and limits of adult education in encouraging active citizenship and promoting democracy as well as relations between and changing roles of

- · adult education and active citizenship,
- adult education, democracy and democratization,
- popular education and social movement learning,
- adult learning and (active) citizenship, democracy and democratization,
- local, national and global citizenship.

Convenors:

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