

University of Malta, Valletta Campus

Thursday, 24 April 2014

**1300hrs: Registration**

**PLENARY SESSION (AUDITORIUM)**

**14.00hrs: Greetings and Introductions**

Carmel Borg (conference convenor) and Jim Crowther (on behalf of PEN)

**14.20hrs: Current and future options for research and practice in popular education**

Peter Mayo, University of Malta

The presentation will focus on the diptych of complementary adult education texts produced in 2012 and 2013, namely Mayo's book with Leona English, *Learning with Adults. A Critical Pedagogical Introduction* and his edited *Learning with Adults. A Reader*. The presentation will highlight some of the themes broached as part of an overview of what Mayo sees as important areas in the popular education field, notably independent working class education, Latin American popular education, education and cooperatives, rural development initiatives, Western and Southern social movement learning, women's education, adult learning and spirituality, university continuing education, environmental education, critical consumer education, social solidarity economy learning and more recently participatory budget preparation and learning, indigenous learning, museums and critical education. He will also suggest some options for future research concerning practice in the area, being very context specific as always. One important theme would be that of adult education and migration/anti-racist education. As someone who straddles the areas of adult (popular) education, comparative education and sociology, he would also focus on the relationship between such research on practice and key disciplines in the social sciences. This will be part of an attempt to guard against the danger of adult education/popular education remaining a pariah, not featuring in the larger more encompassing disciplines such as those of education studies in general and philosophy, sociology and political theory/science. The concerns are often the same and yet the various researchers and practitioners involved are often inclined to speak past the other.

## **1515hrs: Adult education, community development and democracy: renegotiating the terms of engagement**

Mae Shaw and Jim Crowther, University of Edinburgh

This paper is an attempt to address what is considered to be a widespread loss of confidence in the purpose, politics and practice of community-based educational work. It is informed by the authors' contact with a professional field which is increasingly beleaguered by managerialist imperatives and in which democratic engagement has become increasingly compromised. Although focussed on the UK, this experience will be familiar in many other national contexts. The purpose here is to re-engage with a significant historical tradition of theory and practice which has been largely neglected, and which offers a rich resource for renegotiating the relationship between those forms of adult education and community development with a particular interest in popular education. This presentation raises two questions which are particularly relevant to the PEN Conference and which we would ask participants to consider for discussion:

- \* To what extent is this conceptualisation relevant, transferable or generaliseable across diverse contexts?
- \* How far does this way of thinking about the relationship between community development, adult education and democracy help us to think about what popular education might mean today?

## **1610hrs: Welcome Refreshments**

### **PLENARY SESSION (Auditorium)**

#### **1645hrs: Panel - Liberatory Popular Education in Action**

**Chair: Maria Pisani, University of Malta**

#### **Popular education in the Ada Songor Movement (Ghana): women weaving identity and the past together to raise questions about the future.**

Jonthan Langdon, St Francis Xavier University, Canada.

For the past four years there has been an ongoing participatory action research study of social movement learning with the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum (ASAF), a movement defending communal access to West Africa's largest salt yielding lagoon. This communal access is the basis of an artisanal salt winning practice that is over 400 years old, and is the base upon which over 60,000 people make their livelihood. The study has been moving with ASAF as it has contended with challenges from forces internal and external to the area. Crucial to recent success of the movement has been women's leadership and organizing, centred on a popular education approach designed to take questions of culture, history and livelihood concerning the Songor into the heart of Ada's most important cultural

and political festival and destabilize attempts to globalize the resource by Ghana's central government and local elites. The paper will share this approach, how it emerged from questions of male power in previous iterations of this movement, and how it is connected to other aspects of learning and educational-outreach within the movement.

### **Political learning in the Egyptian struggle**

Helen Underhill, University of Manchester

This paper presents and explores the notion of *political learning* within the context of the 25<sup>th</sup> January uprisings and continuing revolution in Egypt, seeking to connect activists' learning during the struggle to the development of political identities and shaping of political trajectories. Based on the lived experiences of the Egyptian diaspora who travelled from the UK to Egypt in 2011, I examine the praxis of *political learning of* and *political learning for* politics within revolutionary protest and struggles for social change: what understandings and experiences of 'the political' engender mobilisation at 'home'? What is the relationship between political learning in social action and the continued mobilisation of diaspora?

Using examples from the Egyptian case, I illustrate moments and processes of political learning during and since the 2011 uprisings, and explore how diaspora activists develop their political identities as they continue their mobilisation within and across various transnational spaces of resistance.

### **Popular education, participatory democracy and social change: Renton - a case study.**

Ted Scanlon, University of Glasgow

The proposed workshop would explore some of the conclusions of my research whose aim was to examine to what extent participation in grassroots struggles leads to effective social change, empowers people and constitutes a popular education experience in which participants acquire really useful knowledge (Thompson, 2007).

The theoretical perspective was popular education understood as educational practices "rooted in the real struggles of ordinary people; overtly political and critical of the status quo, and committed to progressive social and political change" (Crowther et al, 2005,3).

This research examined a community practice considered intensely political; the struggle for social change in the village of Renton in the West of Scotland over the last twenty years. The main focus was on the educational processes which contributed to creating really useful knowledge in the struggle for social change.

## **The Popular University of Art and Science**

Vitor Pordeus, Popular University for Art and Science and Public Health Office of Rio de Janeiro

The presentation will foreground five-year work experience in Rio de Janeiro's Municipal Public Health, in the context of an artistic and scientific network, focusing on popular education. The network is a political movement composed of more than twenty-five popular culture and education collectives forming the Popular University for Art and Science.

**1845hrs: Documentaries**

**2030hrs: End of first day**

**2040hrs: Dinner**

University of Malta, Valletta Campus

Friday, 25 April 2014

**0830hrs: Registration**

**PLENARY SESSION (AUDITORIUM)**

**0900hrs: Panel - On Migration and Education**

**Chair: Darlene Clover, University of Victoria**

**Double standards in migration/integration policy, particularly with regard to the use of language learning as a criterion for excluding poorer migrants**

Christopher Parson, University of Geneva

One of the main objectives of the Swiss federal government's policy on integration of migrants is that of «encouraging and demanding » them to learn a national language. Whilst no one would argue with the benefits of being able to understand and speak a national language, the pressure put on certain categories of migrants to show goodwill in their efforts to integrate means *learning quickly* is fast becoming a criterion for evaluating *willingness* to integrate, with consequences for the granting or renewal of permits. Whereas better-off, highly qualified migrants, who often communicate in English, are under little or no pressure to demonstrate their efforts or willingness to integrate into the wider community or to learn a local language. My presentation will centre on concerns expressed by adult educators and trainers engaged in language courses for adult migrants that they are being instrumentalised in the wake of a recently introduced national framework for language teaching.

## **The illegalization of homo migratus: exploring the 'citizenship assumption' within critical pedagogy**

Maria Pisani, University of Malta

There is a toxic space where global economic forces meet the nation state – a tension that kicks off an illegalization process, rendering bodies illegal.

This paper will present the situation in Malta. Specifically, the paper explores the situation for sub-Saharan female asylum seekers who have been denied protection. Caught on a rock, in a hard place, excluded discursively, materially and legally, this paper questions the degree to which the illegal body may be able to confront domination and demand their right to rights.

The paper concludes that the prevalent, uncritical stance towards notions of the nation state and democracy within critical pedagogy is fundamentally problematic, inherently exclusionary, and out of touch with a global reality lived out by millions of people. An interrogation of core concepts such as democracy and equality is central in understanding the politics of forced migration, and, more importantly, the exclusion of the 'illegal body'. The paper concludes by calling for an epistemological shift in the way the 'illegal' non-citizen is framed and theorized.

## **Reflecting on 'othered' identities, creating spaces for culturally meaningful pedagogies**

Sean Bracken, Institute of Education, UK

Within schools the narrative of ethnic, cultural and linguistic inclusion is increasingly obscured by a focus upon competition and an infatuation with numerical data influencing how schools 'do' education. This occurs in a context where, when questioned about all key considerations, teachers in both primary and secondary schools feel least prepared for engaging with either linguistic or cultural diversity. The question remains as to whether, and to what extent, notions of 'othering', or constraining subjectivities, are adopted and ascribed within schools among more recently arrived immigrant groups. This key question was addressed in Doctoral research which took place in 2013 and involved two schools in rural England. The research was conceptually informed by Critical Race Theory and Deleuzian philosophy. Significant findings of cultural and linguistic elision will be shared and implications for teacher education will be explored.

**1030hrs: Break**

## **1105hrs: PARALLEL SESSIONS**

### **Session 1 – Community Service, Patriotism and Independence**

**Chair and Respondent: Jim Crowther, University of Edinburgh**

#### **The manifestation of the value of patriotism among Israeli trainee teachers - natives and immigrants: how will they educate their pupils in the light of this value?**

Sara Zamir, Achva Academic College and Ben-Gurion University at Eilat, and Tamar Horowitz, Ben-Gurion University, Beer-Sheba.

The purpose of this study has been to examine the expressions of the value of patriotism and its trends among trainee teachers. To what extent do the trainee teachers adhere to the values of patriotism? Have the values of the old Land of Israel patriotism been replaced by the values of globalism? What are the attitudes of immigrant teacher trainees towards patriotism? How do they believe students should be educated in light of this value, if at all? The methodology chosen was qualitative. The questionnaires distributed to natives and immigrants Jewish trainee teachers in various disciplines. It was found out that the majority of both sectors support instruction of literary texts that induce the idea of being "a citizen of Israel". Nevertheless, 20% of the immigrants, five times more than the natives, support the instruction of literary texts that induce also the idea of being "a citizen of the world".

#### **A Response to the Current Challenges in Higher Education through Community Service-Learning**

Milosh Raykov, University of Malta and Alison Taylor, University of Alberta

Policy analysts, media and educators are often critical of the performance and outcomes of national education systems, and this is evident in all countries regardless of the level of their educational development as measured by standard human development indicators. It is also evident that educational administrations, specialized government agencies, practitioners and scientific communities make continual efforts to improve the outcomes of all levels of formal education and increase the competitiveness of national economies through system-wide changes in the education system.

Beyond such external initiatives and measures that attempt to improve education systems, significant contributions to the quality and outcomes of higher education could be achieved through student-centred approaches to teaching and learning, a greater reliance on evidence-based education policies, and continuous formative evaluation of educational practice. To explore the possible effects of such approaches, the current study examines outcomes of community service-learning: a socially engaged form of learning, which is conceptualized according to the cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). The study also presents the results of an expanded, formative evaluation framework which combines

qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluate the long-term outcomes of student-centered community service-learning.

### **Young adults and participation in school and community: learning for citizenship or learning for democracy?**

Pyollim Hong, University of Edinburgh

The focus of this paper is on the way in which community is situated in learning citizenship for young adults. It draws on the experiences of young people learning *for* and *through* citizenship in school and in the community. The chapter will pay particular attention to how community and participation are constructed in ways that emphasise social capital (relationships and service work in communities) as an aspect of citizenship and how political capital (knowledge of formal political processes and procedures) is also a focus of this work. Nonetheless, the experiences, aspirations and interests of young people as active citizens are often overlooked as a resource for creating activist citizens as distinct from merely active ones. Whilst social and political capital are important, the disengagement of young people from formal political processes and institutions requires rethinking what participation means and how it might actually enhance democratic life in society as well as in politics. The interest in citizenship, democracy and young people is particularly important in Scotland today as legislation on the referendum for independence in September 2014 gave sixteen year olds the opportunity to vote on this issue.

### **Session 2: Older Age Adults, Cooperatives and Education**

**Chair and Respondent: Mae Shaw, University of Edinburgh**

#### **The older people's uprising as counter-conduct: some reflections on clientalism and the politics of anti-austerity in Ireland.**

Rosie Meade, *School of Applied Social Studies, UCC, Ireland.*

This paper analyses the 'Older People's Uprising' of 2008 with reference to the Foucauldian concept of 'counter-conduct'. In October 2008, following the announcement of the recession, the Irish government proposed the withdrawal of automatic entitlement to medical cards for those over 70. Introduced in 2001 the 'over-70s card' was one of a small number of universal benefits within the Irish welfare/health system. Over the course of a week government plans sparked a large-scale demonstration in Dublin and a range of other local protests and public interventions across the country. The cumulative impact was to force government to revise and dilute its plans, but not to completely abandon them.

Public commentaries on the recession or citizens' responses to austerity, typically reference the *Older People's Uprising* as an effective if singular demonstration of *people* or '*pensioner power*'. This chapter contextualises and explores its legacy. *The Uprising* reveals that 'counter-conduct' works with and within constraints. Protesters did not claim or hold out for new political horizons; instead, as I will show, they projected the Irish clientelist bargain on to the national stage. They won concessions with regard to eligibility thresholds and raised the spectre of a sensitive and mobile older people's vote, and they challenged ageism through their in their performance of protest and in their political discourses. However, *the Uprising* also exposed some troubling continuities in Irish political life. Among them: the resilience of a 'stroke culture' in the policy arena; the on-going subordination of social policy to economic rationalities; and the deployment of ideological dissimulations to undermine public debate about the substantive character of our welfare state.

### **Learning in, for and from cooperatives. A case study of two Maltese rural cooperatives.**

Mario Cardona, Ministry of Education, Malta

Mġarr Farmers Cooperative Society is a producer's coop established in 1947. Koperattiva Rurali Manikata was set up in 2007. These are two agricultural cooperatives from the rural north-west of the Maltese islands and which were set up in very different circumstances. I had lengthy conversations with committee members, employees, members and volunteers from both cooperatives. From my conversations with these people I will attempt a description and discussion of three kinds of learning. The first one is Learning IN the coop, that is, answering the question: what do coop members learn from their involvement? How do they learn it? A second kind of learning is Learning FROM the coop, that is, answering the question: What do others, particularly members of the local community and policy makers, learn from these two coops? Thirdly, I will look at Learning FOR the coop, that is, answering the question: Are coops a credible and effective way of addressing farmers' and rural communities' needs? I will also discuss some cross cutting themes such as the way farmers, activists and employees view themselves in relation to policy makers in Valletta and Brussels, the way they engage with these seats of power, and the 'structures of feeling' that hold these people together as they struggle to make their voice heard and acknowledged. Finally I will ask: is there such a thing as the cooperative intellectual?

### **The politics of older adult education**

Marvin Formosa, University of Malta

Older adult education has gained a solid presence in international and national policies on lifelong learning. However, its celebration generally follows a neo-liberal agenda, one which stresses the need for late-life learning as a productive investment on the basis that it engenders positive returns of economic growth, at the expense of a transformative rationale that highlights its emancipatory potential. Whilst much emphasis is made on the promise of older adult education towards more

optimum levels of physical, psychological, and social wellbeing in later life, there remains a lack of rigorous analysis as how most learning initiatives for older persons consist of 'mindless activism' that exclude the most vulnerable sectors of ageing populations. Undoubtedly, there necessitates a better understanding of the ways in which older people learn, how their learning could be enhanced, and how older adult education can result in social empowering . Such a move would help society move towards a more inclusive society where all forms of learning are valued, older people are held in higher esteem for the contribution they make, and where learning for everyone is truly acknowledged as a desirable lifelong process towards a more just and equitable society.

**1235hrs: Lunch**

### **PLENARY SESSION (AUDITORIUM)**

**1350hrs: Popular Education and University Education – A Critical Dialogue led by Gordon Asher, University of West Scotland and University of Glasgow**

#### **Adapting the concept of 'systematisation' to university teaching: a case-study from Scotland**

Liame Kane, University of Glasgow

In Latin America popular educators often talk about 'systematising' educational experiences, that is systematically engaging all involved parties in the documentation, recording and analysis of the formal, non-formal and informal learning taking place in a variety of situations. Learners are both the 'subjects' and 'objects' of this process. One of the aims of 'systematisation' is to deepen collective awareness of the learning processes and to intervene in its future trajectory. This presentation will consider a case study of an attempt to adapt 'systematisation' to an academic course on education in a British University.

#### **Resisting accountability to improve accountability in education**

Sandra Mathison, University of British Columbia

Resisting Accountability to Improve Accountability in Education Evaluation serves multiple purposes including accountability, which is meant to provide summative, comparable reports to many audiences about how well a system is doing. Evaluation serves this accountability need through standardized data collection, analysis and reporting. Evaluation in education also supports learning, at multiple levels in a system, and this is oriented to planning and improvement within particular contexts. These two kinds of educational evaluation often conflict with one another. Accountability is important, but accountability

as it is conceived and practiced pushes out evaluation that supports learning. I suggest three frames for resisting the hegemony of evaluation for accountability in order to re-conceptualize accountability and to foster evaluation that facilitates learning. These frames are dissent, parallel poleis, and small works. These frames of resistance are informed by Vaclav Havel's essay "The Power of the Powerless" and Vaclav Benda's analysis of the resistance in Czechoslovakia. Havel reminds us that the revolution came about because of individual acts of courage, what he describes as overcoming fears that lead people to "live within a lie." This notion and its corollary of "live not by lies" is key to understanding how we participate in and overcome the hegemonic narrative of accountability.

### **Making hope possible': creating a 'loop of learning' from the streets to the academy and back**

Cassie Earl, Manchester Metropolitan University

The paper would take as its point of departure for discussion my research involving creating a trajectory of democratic, critical education from social movements, in my case Occupy London, through a variety of cooperative and community based initiatives and into the university – and of course, back again – creating a 'loop of learning' from each other. As my work involved using a bricolage methodology, discussion would also include thinking about ways to use research as a tool to create more solidarity cycles for popular education. Radicalising research is necessary in order to develop alliances and strategic collaborations, ensure that education remained a political site of slippage, both in- and outside the academy and create publically useful research. To create a subversive, reinvigorated, and radicalised critical pedagogy we must begin to think about more innovative and creative ways to engage activists and communities with our research. This would allow the destabilisation of neoliberal agendas and create the possibilities and capacities for people to become effective change agents and move from the notion of the public intellectual toward an intellectual public.

### **Bringing community experiences into higher education**

Jeannie Daniels, University of the West of Scotland

A presentation in pecha kucha format, followed by a structured group discussion. Both relate to bringing community experiences into higher education to expand on and enhance privileged bodies of academic knowledge, and the challenges and resistances encountered.

Pechakucha, or pechakucha20X20, is a presentation format that consists of 20 slides each of which the presenter speaks to for 20 seconds. Here's further information about its origins: <http://www.pechakucha.org/faq>

## **1630hrs: Activist Café/Poster Session**

An informal dialogue with Maltese activists/ popular educators

## **1815hrs: PARALLEL SESSIONS**

### **Session 1: Codification and decodification - A research-based understanding of participation**

Maria Brown, University of Malta

During this workshop participants will engage with codification and decodification (Freire, 2005; Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011) as research tools. Codification involves “(r)epresentation in pictorial, graphic, photographic, auditory, written, or dramatic form, or a combination of any or all of these, of a *significant situation* or situations in people’s lives, in such a way as to include contradictions and embody *themes*” (emphases in original) (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011, p. 171). Thus, as an analytic tool, coding automatically fulfils other functions specified by traditional data analysis schools such as the formulation of a “coding frame” (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 79-81) - used for “data reduction” (Watling, 2002, p. 271-272) and synthesis techniques; open-coding - used to deconstruct data and organise it in thematic concepts or categories (LaRossa, 2005 in Docan-Morgan, 2010); and axial coding - used to link the retrieved themes to one another in a meaningful way (ibid.). The difference is that the Freirean component of the research design is enhanced by including participants as *co-investigators*” (emphasis in original) (Freire, 1993, p. 87). Decodification involves subsequent discussion of descriptive (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994) or inferential meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994); putting oneself into situations represented in the codifications and recognition of the situation in one’s own life – thus involving movement to and from part to whole and from representation to reality (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011).

Participants will engage with these techniques through micro groups, intra-group discussion and inter-group speed dating in the process of decodifying select codifications.

The session is rounded with a brief insight into potential shortcomings and mitigating measures to consider when using codification and decodification in research.

### **Session 2: Popular Education as Politics**

#### **The thinking of Jacques Ranciere, and its relevance to popular education as 'politics'**

Anne Harley, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Although the work of French Philosopher Jacques Ranciere is increasingly influential within a variety of disciplines, including adult education, its importance in this field (and more particularly within Popular Education) has not yet been sufficiently recognised. In his most directly relevant publication for the field,

The Ignorant Schoolmaster, Ranciere argues that "there is stultification whenever one intelligence is subordinated to another...whoever teaches without emancipating stultifies". This session will explore three interlinked key concepts seminal to Ranciere's work, namely: the axiom of equality; equality of intelligence; and his understanding of "politics" versus "police". For Ranciere, 'the police' is "an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies as assigned by a name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise" (1999, p.29). By contrast, 'politics' in Ranciere's work is "a specific rupture in the logic of arche...Political struggle is that which brings politics into being by separating it from the police that is, in turn, always attempting its disappearance either by crudely denying it, or by subsuming that logic to its own. Politics is first and foremost an intervention upon the visible and the sayable" (2001). The session will consider how we ensure that Popular Education is of the order of politics, and not of the police.

### **Learning from each other's struggles: Radical education and the politics of knowledge**

Brid Connolly and Fergal Finnegan, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

This session will reflect on our experience of working on the Masters in Community Education, Equality and Social Activism, which we developed with our colleagues in 2010. The idea was to bring activists from different social movements together, including disability, feminist, community, environmental, LGBT, and many others, in order to enable students to develop their practice of activism and to develop the power of social movements. The course is not an introduction to social activism, but rather aimed at people with a history of organising skills and/or participation in campaigning groups. The focus of the programme is on self-organization, political strategy and reflexive activist practice, supporting movement development.

We (Fergal Finnegan and Bríd Connolly) design and present the Radical Education module, drawing on Freire, Boal, and hooks. In this module, we interrogate the hegemonic educational theory and practice, in order to understand the ways in which it reproduces and reifies social order and knowledge. This work - hopefully - enables the students to reflect on the part that education has played in maintaining the status quo, and provide an alternative vision for their own practice.

This is particularly pertinent at the moment, when the trends in Higher Education had brought the focus on civic and community engagement. NUIM sometimes sees this MA CEESA as an ideal way of fulfilling this agenda, and we need to enable students and the wider activist community to resist institutional exploitation, on the one hand, and to influence the educational and engagement agenda on the other hand.

**Chair: Peter Mayo, University of Malta**

### **Session 3: Book presentations**

#### **'Popular Education, Power and Democracy: Swedish Experiences and Contributions' (Eds, Ann-Marie Laginder, Henrik Nordvall & Jim Crowther, NIACE, 2013)**

Book presentation by Henrik Nordvall and Anne-Marie Laginder, The Swedish Network for Research on Popular Education, Linköping University, and Jim Crowther, University of Edinburgh

#### **The Arts as Pedagogy for Community Based Research**

Catherine Etmanski, Royal Roads University, Darlene Clover, and Budd Hall, University of Victoria

This paper draws from three chapters in a new book about learning and teaching Community Based Research (CBR) so as to address the conference themes of radicalising research and making it 'really useful', developing curriculum and pedagogy, and developing more democratic, creative and expressive ways of working. We will explore key lessons from the three authors' experiences facilitating Arts-Based approaches to CBR in community and in classroom settings. We suggest that arts-based processes are not merely fun, but somehow unnecessary activities. In a world troubled by complex, interconnected challenges – challenges that knowledge produced through Western science has played a role in creating – the arts are not secondary to the so-called real work of science. They are essential. The seemingly intractable nature of the challenges we currently face suggests we can no longer solely rely only upon tried and tested strategies and solutions. The arts offer new possibilities for collectively co-creating innovative solutions, while building empathy and understanding and tapping into our collective creative potential.

**Chair: Darlene Clover, University of Victoria, Canada**

### **Session 4: Popular Education - Engaging the Scientific and Poetic**

#### **Learning science in environmental justice struggles**

Eurig Scandrett, Queen Margaret University

Studies in how the public learn science have varied from an elite 'public understanding of science' discourse, to co-generation of knowledge between professionals and interested parties, through to the generation of scientific knowledge from the systemising of lay knowledge in the interests of communities in struggle. What is the status of these understandings of science and the nature of knowledge that is being generated? what kind of education is occurring when non-professionals learn science, especially those with an individual or collective material interest addressing problems of a scientific nature? This presentation will draw on research from India and Scotland as well as observations from engaging in environmental justice struggles.

**Light forms and serious topics: the scientific investigation of some phenomena of popular culture (a cross-disciplinary approach)**

Eva Antal, Eszterhazy Karoly College, Eger, Hungary

As a Professor of Philosophy and English Literature, I tend to build my courses on the cross- or transdisciplinary approach. I teach literature and literary theory with the help of films (presenting the modern-postmodern techniques of story-telling and poetic imagery), and ethics with the help of literary works (focusing on human choices in famous narratives). Story telling is a universal activity, narratives path our ways and we are all readers: we are to understand, interpret signs, happenings, characters, motivations etc. In my lectures on literary theory, I keep referring to the cases and problem solving of the super intelligent investigators of the 21st century (for instance, the new Sherlocks, House M.D.). In my seminars, social criticism and critical thinking are mainly taught through the analysis of utopian and dystopian works (writings and films) since these provide good basis for the discussion of present global problems. Recently I have chosen clone-fiction and SF films on cloning to provoke lively dialogue in the class. In my short presentation, I show some examples of how fruitful it is to put literary works, films, and even musical compositions side by side in the class.

**Chair: Paola Supino, University of Roma Tre**

**1930hrs: End of Second Day**

**2030hrs: Dinner**

University of Malta, Valletta Campus

Saturday, 26 April, 2014

## **PLENARY SESSION (AUDITORIUM)**

### **0900hrs: Roundtable – Transnationality and Digitalization of Civil Societies**

Chair: Carmel Borg, University of Malta

#### **EU accession and civil society empowerment – the case of Maltese ENGOS**

Michael Briguglio, University of Malta

This study investigates whether European Union (EU) Accession has influenced civil society empowerment in Malta, with specific reference to Environmental NGOs (ENGOS). In particular, the study will examine whether Maltese ENGOS have experienced empowerment in the first years following EU accession. This study verifies (1) whether EU accession has effected lobbying of ENGOS; (2) whether EU accession has enhanced the empowerment of ENGOS; and (3) whether EU accession has led to the institutionalisation of ENGOS. This study analyzes the construction of environmental politics in relation to Malta's EU accession. For this scope, discourse analysis was applied to engage with respondents from ENGOS and with specific case studies involving ENGOS in particular. A major conclusion that can be derived from this thesis is that EU accession has generally enhanced the empowerment of Maltese ENGOS, but this process was uneven, was combined with other over-determining factors and depended on different issues and on different types of ENGO. ENGOS had greater access to opportunities that were unavailable prior to Malta's EU accession. The construction or otherwise of hegemonic formations related to the empowerment of ENGOS was related to sensitizing, procedural, structural and substantive impacts. Empowerment through hegemonic formations was not common, but ENGOS were successful in constructing nodal points and in benefitting from different types of impacts, especially sensitizing and procedural ones. Another important conclusion is that even though ENGO empowerment could also be related to their institutionalisation, this process is not pre-determined and does not exclude antagonism of such ENGOS to State structures and other social agents. Besides, the environmental movement remains characterised by both moderate and radical ideologies.

## **Critical education and postcolonial digital humanities**

Petar Jandrić, Polytechnic of Zagreb

As of recently, traditional colonialism has reached its technologically most advanced state often referred to as digital colonialism. Digital colonialism has many faces. There is traditional colonialism in the digital format, where a stronger country exploits a weaker country using information and communication technologies. Then there is ideological digital colonialism, where one country or even company (such as Google) implements own interpretation of freedom of information to another country (such as China). We can talk about cultural digital colonialism, which transfers music and films from emitting countries such as the USA to receiving countries (such as Croatia or Malta). The internet is based on Latin letters and English language, so linguistic colonialism underlies the whole virtuality. We are immersed in everyday digital colonialism, which transfers a significant part of our daily activities into virtuality. Since late 1990s, the emerging field of postcolonial digital humanities explores transformations of traditional postcolonial studies in the age of the internet. Conceived as the first part of a larger research project, this paper will place postcolonial digital humanities in conversation with critical education and explore its potentials for both disciplines.

## **Blogging the hyperlocal. The disruption and renegotiation of hegemony in Malta**

Alex Grech, University of Hull/University of Malta.

This paper explores the way blogging is being deployed to disrupt institutional hegemony in Malta. The island state is an example of a hyperlocal context that includes strong political, ecclesiastical and media institutions, advanced take-up of social technologies and a popular culture adjusting to the promise of modernity represented by EU membership. Popular discourse is dominated by political partisanship and advocacy journalism, with Malta being the only European country that permits political parties to directly own broadcasting stations.

The primary evidence in this study is derived from an analysis of online texts during an organic crisis that eventually led to a national referendum to consider the introduction of divorce legislation in Malta. Using netnography supplemented by critical discourse analysis, the research identifies a set of strategies bloggers used to resist, challenge and disrupt the discourse of a hegemonic alliance that included the ruling political party, the Roman Catholic Church and their media. The empirical results indicate that blogging in Malta is contributing to the erosion of the Church's hegemony. Subjects that were previously marginalised as alternative are increasingly finding an online outlet in blog posts, social media networks and commentary on newspaper portals. Blogging is increasingly operating as a component of a hybrid media ecosystem that thrives on reflexive cycles of entertainment: the independent newspaper media, for long an active partner in the hegemonic set up in Malta, are being

transformed and rendered more permeable at the same time as their power and influence are being eroded. A new episteme is more likely to emerge through the symbiosis of hybrid media and reflexive waves of networked individualism than systemic, organised attempts at online political disruption.

**1045hrs: Break**

**1115hrs: PARALLEL SESSIONS**

**Session 1: Does learning about the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child lead to more democratic, creative and expressive forms of working when educating young people in the social care field?**

Damian Spiteri, Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology

This study appraises how a cohort of students at MCAST who are attending for courses in social care, and who have critically appraised the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child as part of their overall training in the social care field, apply that knowledge once on placement with children or young people. It will also explore whether the organizations/agencies to which they have been assigned have developed their own policies and how the MCAST students link these policies together with what they already know about children's rights so as to enhance further the rights of the children and/or young people in their 'care'. The study thereby bridges together the world of education and the world of work, while exploring how students can be energized to become agents of meaningful change by promoting an awareness of children's rights and thereby fostering greater social inclusion of children and young people in care in Malta.

**Session 2: Creating a "Freedom School" movement**

David Greene, retired popular educator, the Freedom School in Licking County

A workshop/discussion on schools for social change and popular education based on the narrative of a "Freedom School" in Ohio. The school was established to develop consciousness and leadership.

**1210hrs: PLENARY SESSION (Auditorium)**

A round table discussion based on the book titled 'Learning for a Better World: The Role of Social Movements' (Editors: Budd Hall, Darlene Clover, Jim Crowther and Eurig Scandrett).

**1250hrs: Lunch**

**Conference moves to the National Museum of Fine Arts**

**1400hrs: PLENARY SESSION**

**Sponsored by: the Malta Review of Educational Research ([www.mreronline.org](http://www.mreronline.org)) and Heritage Malta**

**Museums and art galleries as critical public spaces**

Darlene Clover, University of Victoria and Peter Mayo, University of Malta

Historically, art galleries and museums have a well-deserved reputation for elitism, colonialism, racism, sexism, exclusion, paternalism, and classism and are frequently omitted from 'lists of sites of adult education' (Mayo 2012: 101). Yet these institutions perceive themselves as an essential social service providing 'informal individual as well as structured learning activities for diverse groups of adult learners' (UNESCO 1997: 3). Today's escalating social, cultural and ecological problems, however, have brought more pressure to bear on these public sites to become more responsive; to move issues of diversity, injustice, and inequality from their margins to the core and develop new forms of civic engagement, teaching and learning. Using selected examples, this presentation will map some key 21<sup>st</sup> century socio-educational initiatives and debates in public art galleries and museums, illustrating these institutions as contested, problematic, challenging, yet often progressive, critical and creative pedagogical spaces, which, against a backdrop of tradition, political intervention, and rising social problems, mirror concerns in the field of adult education and bring new foci and practices to broaden understandings of social education, learning and action.

## **Small museums in socially deprived areas and identity**

JosAnn Cutajar and John Vella, University of Malta

This study is an analysis of the potential functions and practices related with small museums situated within stigmatized communities. This paper explores which pedagogical practices can help empower residents living in such area, by critically assessing those adopted by Bir Mula Heritage, a small museum located in Bormla. Literature demonstrates that the small museum can provide different activities and learning opportunities which can help in one way or another to decrease the stigma with groups located outside the community, and help residents to build a more positive self-identity. With this literature in mind, this paper explores whether Bir Mula Heritage was capable of providing and facilitating inclusive museum pedagogy, and whether this helped to ameliorate the community's identity among the residents and outsiders, and how it went about to achieve these goals.

**Chair and Respondent: Sandro Debono, Senior Curator, Museum of Fine Arts**

## **1515hrs: Conclusions and Reflections**

### **Is the PEN statement still 'fit for purpose'? – a discussion led by Ian Martin**

The Popular Education Network was established in 1997. The core statement of definition and purpose, to which all members are expected to subscribe in general terms, has remained unchanged for 17 years. This statement was originally intended to politicise the theory and theorise the practice of popular education in a very particular and uncompromising way. To understand this intention fully may now require some clarification and elaboration. We can then address the questions: Does it still make sense? Does it work?

**End of Conference**