

George A. Koulaouzides & Dina Soeiro (eds.)

REIMAGINING TRANSFORMATIVE AND EMANCIPATORY ADULT EDUCATION FOR A WORLD TO COME

Proceedings of the 1st
Conference of the ESREA
Transformative and
Emancipatory Adult
Education Network
(5-7 July 2023,
Hellenic Open University,
Patras, Greece)





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Editors: George A. Koulaouzides & Dina Soeiro

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The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (www.esrea.org)

ESREA is a European scientific society. It was established in 1991 to provide a European-wide forum for all researchers engaged in research on adult education and learning, and to promote and disseminate theoretical and empirical research in the field. Since 1991 the landscape of adult education and learning has changed to include more diverse learning contexts at formal and informal levels. At the same time there has been a policy push by the European Union, OECD, UNESCO, and national governments to promote a policy of lifelong learning. ESREA provides an important space for these changes and (re)definition of adult education and learning in relation to research, theory, policy, and practice to be reflected upon and discussed. This takes place at the triennial conference, network conferences and through the publication of books and a journal.

ESREA Research Networks

The major priority of ESREA is the encouragement of co-operation between active researchers in the form of thematic research networks, which encourage interdisciplinary research drawing on a broad range of the social sciences.

These research networks hold annual/biennial seminars and conferences for the exchange of research results and to encourage publications.

The current active ESREA networks are:

1. Access, Learning Careers, and Identities
2. Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning
3. Adult Educators, Trainers, and Their Professional Development
4. Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Communities
5. Education and Learning of Older Adults
6. Gender and Adult Learning
7. History of Adult Education and Training in Europe
8. Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education
9. Life-history and Biography
10. Migration, Transnationalism, and Racisms
11. Policy Studies in Adult Education
12. Working Life and Learning
13. Spaces, Times, and the Rhythms of the Education of Adults and its Movements

ESREA Journal

ESREA publishes a scientific open access journal entitled The European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA). All issues of the journal can be read at www.rela.ep.liu.se. You can also find more information about call for papers and submission procedures on this website.

The Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education Network (TEAE)

Facing crisis confronts us not only with the challenge but also with the possibility to learn, grow, change and at times even transform our deep structures. In times of crises – such as the climate crisis, structural racism, or a pandemic – there is a need to transform our taken for granted ways of knowing and being in the world, this promises an opportunity for emancipation. The idea of adult education (lat. *educere*) as a way forward, *leading out* from the crises we currently experience, is at the heart of our network. As such, the ESREA Network Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education is concerned with researching and promoting ways of learning and “leading out”.

The mission of the “*Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education*” ESREA Network is to promote a space for enhancing international dialogue and research on transformative and emancipatory adult education. Our aim is to co-create a vital community in Europe that is devoted to cultivating research, scholarships, and projects about how learning can promote personal, societal, and global transformations.

Potential themes (but not limited to) that will be explored are:

- Critical traditions of transformative and emancipatory adult education
- Theories of and research methods for transformative and emancipatory learning
- Theory and practice of transformative and emancipatory adult education

Having as a basis the theoretical framework of transformative learning that was developed in 1978 by Jack Mezirow, the “*Transformative Processes in Learning and Education*” network, which recently ceased its operation, focused on the processes of transformative learning, and organized several conferences (in Athens in 2014 and 2016, and in Milan in 2018), where it brought together researchers and scholars from different countries. The “*Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education*” Network is also rooted in the idea of transformation and the tradition of transformative learning, and will emphasize the emancipatory potential of adult education. Our aim is to establish a vital community of researchers, scholars, and practitioners that will cooperate in order to increase the impact of transformative and emancipatory learning in the community of adult educators in Europe and in the rest of the world. Our scientific, ethical, and community principles, such as our co-creative and collaborative approaches, sociocratic leadership, openness, and transparency, as well as inclusion, diversity, and equity, provide our common ground for continuing to build a community of research and practice.

Convenors of the Network

Saskia Eschenbacher, Akkon University

George Koulaouzides, Hellenic Open University

Alessandra Romano, University of Siena

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THE THEME OF THE CONFERENCE

Reimagining Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education for a World to Come

In times of crises – such as the climate crisis, structural racism, social inequities, or a pandemic – there is a need to transform our taken for granted ways of knowing and being in the world, this promises an opportunity for emancipation. How can we re-imagine transformative and emancipatory adult learning to co-create a world to come? The idea of adult education (lat. *educere*) as a way forward, leading out from the crises we currently experience, is at the heart of our TEAE network. When we experience something truly transformative, deep, fundamental change, whether it is collectively or individually, we are losing our sense of (self-)direction and our way in the world. How can we regain a sense of (self-)direction? How can we lead ourselves -individually and/or collectively – out? What are possible pathways forward?

One way forward is concerned with radical questioning. In the midst of this global crisis, searching for ways forward it is "terrifying because it means giving up the familiar banisters and guidelines that we normally accept in orienting our lives; dangerous because, when such questioning is truly radical, it seems to leave us with nothing; liberating because it frees us from illusions and enables us to confront our subjectivity and inwardness without illusions" (Bernstein, 2016, p. 121)¹. What motivates our efforts to learn in a transformative and emancipatory way? It is our quest for self-knowledge and our hope to imagine and co-create a new, more sustainable, inclusive, and just world. Facing crisis confronts us not only with the challenge but also with the possibility to learn, grow, change and at times even transform our deep structures. Starting from those questions, the conference invited theoretical and empirical contributions that attempted to shed new light on this topic.

1 Bernstein, R. J. (2016). *Ironic Life*. Polity Press.

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Dear Participants of the 1st TEAE Network Conference,
Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure to present to all of you the Proceedings of our 1st Conference that was held in July 2023 at the premises of the Hellenic Open University at Patras. In these pages, you will embark on a journey through the diverse and dynamic landscape of contemporary knowledge, where leading minds have converged to explore, interrogate, and redefine the boundaries of transformative and emancipatory adult education. This collection of papers serves not only as a repository of the innovative ideas presented during the conference, but also as an invitation to join in the ongoing conversation that shapes the ever-evolving tapestry of understanding our complex field of theory and practice. As you immerse yourself in these proceedings, we encourage you to engage deeply with the nuanced perspectives, transformative practices, and groundbreaking research that collectively contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the fostering of intellectual curiosity.

The Proceedings of the 1st Conference of the ESREA Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education Network Conference are representative of the diverse geography of adult education. A geography where various themes interact and interfere with each other through a dynamic exploration of the intersections of individual learning, collective growth, and mutual transformation. In these pages you will have the opportunity to read about art and ecology as formative and transformative practice, about work and training transitions and the profound impact of Covid-19 on adult learners, especially in the context of smart working. You will encounter a fascinating array of topics, each contributing to the broader discourse on adult learning. From examining homeless people's career trajectories to discussing the outcomes of literacy interventions for adults with low literacy skills, the proceedings provide a platform to explore the multifaceted dimensions of adult education.

You will also read about the way that neighbourhood stores emerge as informal areas for learning and transformation, while you will also have the opportunity to critically examine and reconceptualize models of learning related to higher education. The role of critical thinking in teachers' engagement with gamification, the expansion of the Venetian civil society, and the dysfunctional assumptions in refugee parental involvement are among the critical discussions encapsulated in these proceedings. Second Chance Schools and migrant integration processes, Pasolini and his Manifesto Theatre, performative methodologies, spirituality, and transformative learning, all add depth to the exploration of alternative narratives for transformative and emancipatory adult learning.

Changes in self-directed learning due to the fast-growing internet and perspective transformation through adaptive teaching unfold as crucial areas of consideration. Moreover, the Kakalidis method, computational thinking, critical reflection through STEM education, and the ethical and political dimensions of critical reflection showcase the evolving landscape of adult education methodologies. Transformative learning theory in talent development processes, intercultural awareness in the community, and the experiences of refugee children take centre stage in addressing the challenges of our global society. From reflecting on the differences in motivation of adult migrants to participate in educational programs to women refugees confronting their past and regaining their future in a transformative way, these proceedings spotlight the transformative emancipatory potential of adult education.

These proceedings also offer an opportunity to explore how transformative pedagogy informs adult and higher education, how graffiti may become a tool for transformation, to develop an un-

derstanding of the way students reimagine themselves in relation to lifelong learning, but also an opportunity to discuss radicalization and violent extremism prevention through Freire's theories. A wonderful view on the power of education to foster dialogue, the role of embodiment in education and liberation is also discussed, while papers on the opportunities for transformation in dialogic spaces remind us that education is not just about acquiring knowledge but also about transforming our lives and our societies.

Join us on this intellectual journey as we explore the myriad facets of adult learning, seeking to inspire, challenge, and transform the way we think about adult education and its role in shaping our collective future.

Once again, we would like to thank all those who supported our effort to organize with such a success this conference. First of all, we would like to thank all the participants who came to Patras and presented their ideas. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Scientific Committee of the Conference and the Reviewers of the proposals, but also to express our deepest thanks to the Team of the Hellenic Open University that supported us during the days of the Conference.

We would also like to thank the Presidium of ESREA and the Italian Transformative Learning Network for their contribution to the success of this event. Finally, we would like to recognize the genuine support that we had from the Dean of the School of Humanities, Prof. Manolis Koutouzis and the President of the Hellenic Open University, Prof. Ioannis Kalavrouziotis. Thank you all for supporting us!

With these Proceedings, we would like to welcome you to our network!

Join us in a world of intellectual discovery and discourse!

The Convenors of the TEAE Network

Saskia Eschenbacher | George Koulaouzides | Alessandra Romano | Dina Soeiro

Building a Nest: Art and Ecology as Formative and Transformative Practices in Adult Education

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic crisis has been considered by some pedagogists not as a destructive event of a functioning educational system, but as the possibility of participating in the transformation of learning models. In 2021-2022, the Department of Human Sciences of the University of Verona promoted the training course “Practices and cultures of difference in educational and care work” which was attended by 35 professionals of social-health and educational services. The course proposed to move away from ‘expertism’ to rethink the care of oneself, of places and of others, as a common good, thanks to an ecological perspective that questions the link between learning and the environment, between daily work and community life, art-based methodologies as levers for processes of transformative learning. The third module of the training course was titled “Know how: community art practices” and was held at the Mare Memoria Viva ecomuseum in Palermo. The artistic workshop of intensive two weeks contributed to the creation of a new space for cultural fruition: an Ecodom structure in Superadobe in the shape of a nest.

Key words: Community Art Practices, Caring and Learning, Ecomuseum, Adult Education.

Introduction

The pandemic radically challenged our understanding of interpersonal relationships: the bond between the corporeal dimension, emotional life, and spaces for living and learning. We were all suddenly expected to find a personal measure between risk, health, fragility, self-care, and the care of others. The strenuous and often unresolved search for this balance also manifests itself if we consider this shared experience as a widespread learning process, which results in two primary forms of collective conscientization regarding educational standards.

The first form involves educational systems which have actually been in a stagnant state for decades. Some pedagogists have come to consider the pandemic “crisis” as a breakthrough in possibilities of participating in the evolution of learning models rather than being a destructive event for an educational functioning model (Fullan 2020). The second showcases the pandemic as a form of awareness of human vulnerability, of an inevitable interdependence, and the uncertainty that is intrinsic in scientific knowledge. In the post-pandemic era, the dimensions of “*learning*” and “*caring*” have proven to be unquestionably connected. According to Formenti, the affinity between

caring and learning reveals that the core of adult (self) education is “the art of learning to care and caring to learn” (2009, p. 1). This convergence of horizons between learning to care and caring to learn opens a space of experience and knowledge that is largely relational and ecological. This means that neither learning nor care can be considered property: namely, the ability, competence, or success of the individual. Instead, they must be interpreted as qualities that co-emerge from systemic processes and from a certain type of dynamics of interaction with the self, with others, and with the living environment (Formenti, 2009). Which theoretical tendencies and methodologies can translate these widespread learning practices into training practices for adults who are involved in the cultural and socio-educational fields?

Feminist and transformative pedagogy: an ecological perspective

Feminist philosophy (Zamboni 2009; bell hooks 1994) and transformative pedagogy (Formenti 2017; Mortari 2003) have elaborated a prolific reflection on the themes of caring and relationships in formative processes. These theoretical visions advocate towards shifting away from “expertism” (Illich 2008) and rethinking self-care and the care of places and of others as a common good. Instead of a training and learning logic that is reduced to objectives, needs, gaps to be filled, namely based on repairing what does not work, it is a question of approaching a “systemic wisdom, which requires understanding the complexity and intrinsic circularity of the world, of things, of situations, of relationships, before (and instead of) wanting to change them.” (Formenti 2017, p. 35)

In this sense, a valuable indication is given by the ecological perspective on learning and

knowing (Ferrante, Galimberti & Gambacorti-Passerini 2022; Mortari 2003, 2007; Mannino 2017). The ecological paradigm distances itself from any form of learning that breaks down reality into a series of separately knowable entities and individuals, isolating them from the contexts and relationships in which they are involved. In relation to this concept, Mortari proposes to investigate reality in light of a sort of ontology of relationality: entities are involved in a single, infinite, and mysterious pattern of reciprocity and retroaction, and this network of relationships not only involves them but also contributes to forming the quintessence of their being. Understanding this radical interdependence means adopting a systemic approach towards searching for the connecting pattern. This pattern should be interpreted in vital and dynamic terms, like a “dance” between forms that come together, joined by processes of a constant reaction and generation. It is a dance of complexity that involves polarities, where what is apparently in contradiction comes into contact: relationship and separation, order and disorder, coexist outside the logic of cause-and-effect, immersed in multiple connections. Therefore, any gesture of knowledge in light of the ecological paradigm is anchored in the principle of contextualization, according to which each and every phenomenon must be considered both in its own logic as well as in dynamic relations with the logic of its environment. In this regard, the relationship between the active subject of knowledge and the known object falls through: the basic units of cognition should not be identified in the individual but in the unit of co-determination and the self, the other, and the environment. In the perspective of radical constructivism, the subject-object relationship is resolved in a structural pairing of co-emergence (Ferri 2021).

According to Bateson, being “responsive to the pattern that connects” is the aesthetic dimension par excellence that arises when I ask

myself: “How are you related to this creature? What pattern connects you to it?” (Bateson 1979, p.9). From this point of view, artistic practices, therefore, help shape the conditions for formative experimentation.

Community art practice as a chance for adult learning

The artistic dimension should be regarded as an aesthetic experience of complexity. As the Greek word “*aisthesis*” (perception) suggests, this pedagogical orientation refers to paths of embedded knowledge that avail themselves of perceptions and senses, resonances, and differences, and of the connection between the material, emotional, and intellectual dimensions involved in the learning process, recognizing existing interrelations and recurrences.

Formenti’s “spiral of knowledge” (2017) proposes one of the formative approaches that integrates aesthetic-sensory elements. The spiral of knowledge is a model structured in four steps: The first is *authentic experience*, which allows us to come into contact with experience through narration, memory, philosophical practices, and bodily experiments.

The second is *aesthetic representation*, namely, the practice of transforming the authentic experience into a symbolic one, through which we attempt to restore more feeling than reason. The third, *intelligent understanding*, is the process of sense-making and meaning, starting from different representations to formulate a satisfying theory. It is on the basis of this theory that the fourth step, *deliberate action*, is taken. This consists of implementing the learning that developed from the process. For the purpose of reasoning, we will especially focus on the pedagogical value of the first two steps.

Experiential knowledge, intended as that fundamental level of connection with the world that makes us act and perceive its traits and ours, is the only one that allows us to find, introduce, and seek some truth and validity in our knowledge.

(Formenti 2017, p. 55)

Experience bases every desire for knowledge and transformation on the contact with a radical presence and memory: perform an act, rediscover a scent, work with materials, or sketch a drawn shape, are examples of actions that make the body feel and sense the beginning of a process. This authentic experience unpredictably spurs images, metaphors, intuitions, and stories, since they are not the result of reasoning nor of set goals. These will be the living materials of the second step: the aesthetic practice that gains leverage on what is perceivable and on the resonance of stories.

The interacting body – perception, movement, feelings – is the foundation of all experiences. But what are the conditions for learning? Our theory is that the aesthetic experience may be educational, even transformative, for an adult if, and only if, it develops through a specific process; pedagogy where the subjective and the embodied are woven together with the relational and dialogical dimensions.

(Formenti, Lusaschi & Del Negro 2019 p.126)

Highlighting the importance of the relational dimension in learning brings us back to the ecological dimension that holds together the intrasubjective, the intersubjective, and the transsubjective: seeking and creating forms to

embody experience has the power to connect, create bonds, arouse resonances, and reveal traits of the pattern that connects us. This is indeed the primary meaning of the aesthetic gesture in a formative setting: weaving the relational dimension, entering into dialogue with the materials, acknowledging correspondences and distances, consonances, and dissonances, and always nourishing the feeling of our need for others.

Tracing the essence of art back to common, everyday experiences, through sensoriality and the relationship with the living environment, is the theoretical foundation for turning artistic practices into authentic learning incentives in formative contexts. In concrete terms, it means paying attention to how space and time is set up as a learning environment, how the senses are involved, and through what codes and what materials relationships are shaped. This is from where the idea of a relational aesthetic stems, of a form of art that takes as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interaction and its social context rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space. Overcoming the individual creative dimension is undeniably one of the most interesting aspects of community art, along with the question of the use of open and public spaces. This means shaping the need for a responsible and creative relationship with the places one inhabits and the desire to give value to community life.

More precisely, by “community art” (Sossai 2017) we mean a form of art that, starting from a shared inspiration, initiates a collective process of creation. In this kind of practice, the creation site is public and open. It is found in spaces visited by those who have helped envision the work and who want to participate in making it real. This implies that its creation is not only entrusted to a stable nucleus of people and artists who have conceived it, but also to all those who, for various reasons, are called to take part in it. What happens unpredictably in

the space-time of the creation of the work acquires a fundamental value. The experiences of those who participate are named and described in the informal spaces of dialogue that accompany working and resting moments. They are also re-elaborated and documented through a shared daily journal or through poetry, photography, and videos. Accordingly, the learning of certain techniques that are required for creating the work goes hand in hand with the exchange of sensations, memories, stories, and reflections. What especially stirs emotions and enlivens discussions, analyses, and the re-elaboration of the process is a set of elements: the relationship with the materials and techniques that are being learned and used; the beauty and effort of teamwork, often carried out at a very intense pace; the difficulties and the technical, material, and economic decisions of the project; the introspection and contemplation of questions that emerge from group relationships and from the symbolic power of the form of the work; the shared transformation of the environment in which the object materializes.

A nest for the community that will be

Between 2021 and 2022, the Department of Human Sciences of the University of Verona initiated a continuing education program called “*Practices and Cultures of Difference in Educational and Care Work*”, which 35 professionals from social-health services and educational services attended. The training course focused on the fact that the established practices of social work often fail, therefore, exposing professionals to the unexpected, to crises, and to the need to create.

The Covid-19 pandemic made this impact even more blatant, and it made relationships in work and life environments increasingly complex, threatening the already fragile social fabric of many Italian cities. This, therefore, made

it necessary to propose formative methodologies that could address the widespread experiences of loss and vulnerability, and the need to nourish trust in community bonds and hope in the present.

The third and final module of the program, “*Know-how: Practices of Community Art*”, was held at the Ecomuseo Mare Memoria Viva in Palermo. It was not merely a temporary alternative preferred over the confined and hardly inhabitable academic spaces of the lecture halls during the pandemic, but rather a precise pedagogical choice that aimed at expanding the sometimes-narrow models of social work to a community horizon.

An ecomuseum is a cultural space founded on the agreement of citizens who choose to look after a territory in which the notions of care and sustainable transformation are central. Selecting the word “transformation” over “development” emphasizes an adhesion to those movements that aim at radically problematizing the model of neoliberal, colonial, and patriarchal development which led to the present-day mood and social crisis. An ecomuseum is a community place where processes of co-creation and shared care take place. What an ecomuseum values and protects are living heritages.

Along with those enrolled in the course and with several who volunteer in the ecomuseum, or its visitors, we have created a new space for cultural fruition: an ecodome struc-

ture in SuperAdobe¹ in the shape of a nest. *Building a Nest* is, in fact, the title of a community art workshop that was held at the Ecomuseo in June 2021. The project originated after the pandemic with the idea and need to promote one of the green areas of the Ecomuseo by setting up a symbolic and material space for hospitality, gathering, rebirth, and meditation. The shape of the nest refers to caretaking and caring as practices that create bonds and identities, but it also refers to movement, to coming and going.

*Touching and giving meaning
to the connecting pattern*

How does the formative context change when the reflective action and the relational work with the group take place starting from a sensory experience, from an immediate corporeal implication, with the practicality of the process of creation? Metaphors and narratives spring from sweat, from the silence of gestures, and from the consistency of materials. By establishing a circularity between the dimensions of theory, gestures, and actions, the conditions for knowledge are created, which fosters an awareness of oneself, of one’s ways of learning, of social ideals, and of the relational schemes and conceptual frameworks that guide social and educational work. In the experience of those who participated in building the Nest, this happens through coming into contact with the materials, through our body and its limits,

1 SuperAdobe is a green-building technique invented by the architect, Nader Khalili. It employs the ancient method of earth architecture with the integration of modern materials. “The architect devised this technique in order to find a solution for the many evacuees during and after catastrophic events, such as natural disasters, or in war. [...] Emergency shelters made in SuperAdobe are not just capable of being built quickly, but they also provide shelters that are much less susceptible to changes in temperature than tents or containers. Furthermore, they are also earthquake proof and bulletproof. In addition to being used for emergency shelters, the applications of SuperAdobe are varied: it can be used to build actual houses (round, linear, or domed), as well as create urban furnishings, interior decor, landscapes, tanks, curbs, arches, and much more.” From: Vide Terra website (<https://www.videterra.org/superadobe.html>)

through relational dynamics, and in the bond with the environment.

Working with the earth was special because it has the ability to bring us back to our roots, to a deep connection with ourselves, which is the foundation for a deep connection with others. Working the earth takes a great deal of effort. We sweated a lot together under the sweltering sun at the end of June.

(Gloria, social worker)

Giving back to pedagogy its nature of practical science. What fills entire manuals in the academic environment was experienced first-hand during this journey. Caretaking as a practical act, which manifests itself in concrete gestures and in sensations and perceptions of the body, mind, and soul. The movement of one's body in space, the narrative that gives meaning to experience, that creates relationships, and that helps understand one another... grappling with doing, doing things together, setting in motion hands and the imagination.

(Clara, researcher)

We found ourselves putting our bodies and muscles out there in a highly challenging manner, moving a lot of weight, and implementing construction tools that I did not know how to use. It was very easy to reach the limits of my know-how and effort, but we can rethink limits if we imagine we can share and support burdens through a common commitment.

(Leila, social worker)

Taking part in building the nest, and in moments of rest and contemplation, led many participants to elaborate questions and thoughts about themselves and teamwork: from specific situations regarding the Nest building process, to broader issues related to professional daily life. The most thought-provoking situations were often the “extreme” ones that, by bringing into play intense feelings such as fear and beauty, disruptive emotions such as nervousness and tension, or polarized ones such as agreement and disagreement, opened conditions for “transformative steps” (Mezirow 2003).

The effort and silence that came with it gave rise to stories that intertwined and made us feel very close, as if we recognized ourselves in each other's stories: life experiences that are certainly unique but also part of the collective experience of human beings. In doing so, this bond of solidarity can be perceived.

(Silvia, social worker)

Talking about care means understanding how to work together in moments of extreme tension, both physical and mental, and managing rather complex situations. Our most vulnerable part is exposed. In these moments, we ask too much of ourselves and much more of others. We sometimes talk back, but this is also when everyone shows their true character. How do we manage when we're really tired or stressed? How do we treat others? Extreme situations are good occasions for learning, and they're not necessarily negative, precisely because others sometimes show us what we never want to see in ourselves.

(Mery, artist)

Chiara explained how she experienced an extremely difficult and frightening situation.

There was an extremely difficult moment that scared me. As we gradually went up the circles that formed the dome, my legs started trembling whenever I had to lift the bags and continue going around. I was really worried. I thought: "I can't go any further." The following day, I went up and sat on the bags. Sitting down allowed me to have a calmer view. There, I thought, it was like in life: when you want to do something that requires an effort, there is an important dimension of fear, of being or not being able to do it. So, when your legs tremble, it's important to look for connections that allow us to support an extremely open and grand vision, to hope for grand visions, and be able to support and fulfil them. In this sense, the community is essential because it's scary when you have these moments where you feel that your body can't make it. In this sense, the community is able to support grand visions.

(Chiara, artist)

The public space in the southern coast of Palermo, with its living heritage, was the setting for a process of creation, learning, and community regeneration. The green area of the Ecomuseo now houses a Nest, a symbol of hospitality, rebirth, and care, especially for those who have become politically and sentimentally connected to this avant-garde place of education.

The ability to transform the environment around us and, therefore, the power to act for its change [...] is an inborn disposition human beings have towards improving the environment that surrounds them. And this might

be the purest and highest conception of what work is, and to the value we are placing in the creation of the nest, and in a community art activity, which is the desire that it can then accompany us as an experience in our future daily routines.

(Silvia, social worker).



Figure 1. The teamwork.



Figure 2. The Nest at the Ecomuseum, Palermo (Italy).

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The Proceedings of the first Conference of the ESREA Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education Network, which took place in July 2023 at the Hellenic Open University in Patras, showcases a wide-ranging and vibrant collection of current research. The conference examines the profound and liberating aspects of adult education, with a particular emphasis on topics such as art and ecology, transitions in employment and training, and the effects of Covid-19 on adult learners. The proceedings also examine the many aspects of adult education, including the career paths of homeless individuals, treatments to improve reading skills in adults with poor literacy levels, the use of neighbourhood businesses as informal learning environments, and the role of critical thinking in instructors' use of gamification. The discussions emphasise the potential of adult education to bring about significant positive change, particularly through self-directed learning facilitated by the rapid expansion of the internet, the promotion of perspective transformation through adaptive teaching methods, and the use of transformational learning theory in talent development procedures. The proceedings also explore the potential of education to promote conversation, the significance of embodiment in education and liberation, and the possibilities for change in settings that encourage discourse.