

## EDITORIAL

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# UNEQUAL MOBILITY REGIMES AND RADICAL ADULT EDUCATION IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

### ABSTRACT

*This special issue brings together contributions that explore the contemporary relevance of radical adult education foundations and existing and emerging radical adult education spaces and initiatives, which share an aim to critically examine and mobilise against today's unequal neoliberal migration and mobility regimes. The contributions focus on initiatives that have radical educational components in the broadest sense, are (co-)developed by migrants, refugees, and other migrantised and minoritized people, and which aim at a progressive intervention in the realities under investigation.*

**Keywords:** *radical adult education, critical pedagogy, unequal mobility regimes, migration, neoliberalism*

### UNEQUAL MOBILITY REGIMES IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

Access to and conditions of international migration and mobility today are historically structured by interlocking political and economic projects ranging from past imperialism to more recent neoliberalism. Neoliberalism emerged in the 1970s as an economic theory and project and became central to the political programmes of influential international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It has since been adopted and promoted by governments and supra-national bodies like the European Union across the globe (Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010). Neoliberal interventions value market exchange and increased competition and emphasize the significance of individual self-interest and contractual relations as a guide to all human relations and actions.

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The expansion of neoliberal economic policy and its market logic has meant large-scale deregulation and privatisation, de-funding of public life, welfare state retrenchment and the increasing commodification of education, health and other arenas of social life (Harvey, 2005; Samaluk, 2016; Sassen, 2015; Stenning et al., 2010). Neoliberalism has been influential not only as an economic project but also as a “governing rationality” (Shenk, 2015) that “economizes” everything and everyone, all social relations and institutions: “human beings become market actors and nothing but, every field of activity is seen as a market, and every entity (whether public or private, whether person, business, or state) is governed as a firm” (Shenk, 2015, p. 1).

Decades of neoliberal economic and social interventions have been responsible for increasing socio-economic inequality within and between countries and the growing power of individual and corporate economic elites the world over. Accordingly, in 2005,

the income gap between the fifth of the world’s people living in the richest countries and the fifth in the poorest was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960. (Harvey, 2005, p. 19)

This trend has further intensified since: since 2015 the richest 1% have owned more wealth than the rest of the planet so that today the richest eight men own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world (Hardoon, 2017). Since the 1980s there have been extraordinary surges in income inequality also *within* many countries undergoing neoliberal “shock therapies”, which has since the 1990s also included post-socialist countries. Today, we thus have the greatest economic inequality in modern history (Piketty, 2014). Even the IMF, historically one of the key architects and defenders of neoliberal politics, now recognises that “some” neoliberal policies – they highlight specifically the liberalisation of cross-border capital flows and austerity politics – have increased inequality (Ostry et al., 2016, p. 38) and the 2012 World Economic Forum, too, identified rising economic inequality as “a major threat to social stability” (Hardoon, 2017).

The impact of the neoliberal policies on migration and mobility has been complex and manifold. Yet, one overarching consequence of neoliberal capitalist globalisation has been that, reflecting growing socio-economic inequality, access to international mobility and migration, too, has become increasingly unequal (de Haas et al., 2018; Mau et al., 2015; Neumayer, 2009; Shachar, 2016). Brown (Shenk, 2015) argues that, as a governing rationality,

neoliberalism construes even non-wealth generating spheres in market terms, submits them to market metrics, and governs them with market techniques and practices. Above all, it casts people as human capital who must constantly tend to their own present and future value. (p. 1)

In the context of migration and mobility, neoliberal globalisation has implied the formation of regulatory regimes that facilitate the hypermobility of capital, goods, services,

information – and selected people whose mobility is framed as “valuable” within neoliberal capitalist frameworks (e.g., those labelled “highly skilled migrants”, “knowledge workers”, “expatriates”, “investors” or “digital nomads”) (Kunz, 2020b). Yet, free, self-directed and dignified mobility is increasingly reserved for the privileged few, while the global majority faces growing restriction, securitization and even criminalisation of their mobility. To understand these developments, an analytical focus on regimes of mobility thus

calls attention to the role both of individual states and of changing international regulatory and surveillance administrations that affect individual mobility [...] and reflects a notion of governmentality and hegemony in which there are constant struggles to understand, query, embody, celebrate and transform categories of similarity, difference, belonging and strangeness. (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013, p. 189)

In the current neoliberal global political economy, as Adamson and Tsourapas (2020) discuss, states are incentivised “to capitalize on cross-border mobility, treating both voluntary and forced migration as a commodity that can be utilized to enhance state revenue and power”. The “Neoliberal Migration State” (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2020), they argue, monetises migration flows, for example, via citizenship-by-investment schemes and the use of refugees and migrants to extract revenue from richer states or international organisations. Historically, the white settler colonies and immigration countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have been fore-runners in the neo-liberalisation of migration policies as “who is permitted into these countries, and under what circumstances, are leveraged by economic considerations of suitability” (Simon-Kumar, 2015, p. 1172). This neo-liberalisation did not replace but interact with these countries’ previous racialised rationalities of migration governance. Accordingly, Simon-Kumar (2015) has found a “complex inter-weaving between neoliberalism and race politics in New Zealand’s migration policy” (p. 1172). Her analysis of constructions of the “desirable migrant” shows that

while desirability was marked by race throughout the mid-1990s, in the new century, [...] in what seems to be an emerging form of new race politics, the desirable migrant is constructed as someone who shares similarities in global, consumptive ‘culture’, regardless of race. (Simon-Kumar 2015, p. 1172)

Today’s neo-liberalised mobility regimes thus need to be understood in a historical and transnational perspective. The process of neo-liberalising migration governance was one of creative destruction and selective recuperation. It entailed the transformation and dismantlement of prior institutional frameworks and powers such as traditional forms of state sovereignty, social and labour relations, welfare policies and provisions, and ways of life and thought (Harvey, 2005; Stenning et al., 2010). Yet, histories of immigration governance also show the transposition of imperial and colonial forms of governance and

pedagogy into present-day migration regimes. As Walters (2015) argues, modern migration policy took shape “in the space opened up by the breakdown of colonial systems and the formal shift away from [...] state racism”, “while also carrying over and reorganizing key practices invented by colonial power” (p. 15). While current neoliberal policies thus often rely on novel ideologies, logics, and technologies, they entail crucial continuities with capitalism’s historic drive for increasing accumulation that has always relied on unequal (im)mobility regimes that empowered the few and disenfranchised the many (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Imperial capitalism and expansion centrally relied on mobility and migration for its military and economic conquest of and rule over new territories and populations. The labour and settler migration regimes enabling colonial and new world economies and fuelling European industrialisation relied on interconnected (im)mobilities, ranging from the free movement of imperial explorers and corporate managers to the forced mobilisation of enslaved and indentured workers (Curthoys & Lake, 2006; Kunz, 2020a; Lake & Reynolds, 2008; McKeown, 2004; Mongia, 2018; Robinson, 1983/2000; Samaddar, 2020). After the wave of political decolonisation in the middle of the previous century, the Global North again relied on the unequal mobility of former colonial subjects and diverse other migrants into Euro-America, for example, to help build emerging welfare states and contribute to social reproduction in what was the post-war “welfare state compromise” (Paul, 1997; de Haas et al., 2020).

The neo-liberalisation of migration is further bolstered by the growth of “migration industries” that profit from and intervene in migration and mobility both at the privileged and the exploited ends of the spectrum. This includes, for example, a growing transnational intermediary (labour) migration industry, whose geographical expansion has been stimulated by the neo-liberal deregulation of various diverse local economies (Coe et al., 2007; de Haas et al., 2020; Samaluk, 2014). This industry includes for-profit operations ranging from formal transnational recruitment agencies to informal agents, smugglers, and other intermediaries (de Haas et al., 2020). These intermediaries offer services to migrants and employers and act as gateways through which migrants gain information about and organise initial working-living arrangements in destination countries. As such, intermediaries have the power to commodify and market migrant labour through sought after embodied and attitudinal features, condition their mobility, channel them into particular entry level jobs and shape their labour market outcomes (Findlay et al., 2013; Lindquist et al., 2012; Samaluk, 2014, 2016; van den Broek et al., 2016). At the other end of the spectrum, a fast-proliferating global citizenship and residence industry helps create purchasable mobility channels and new legal loopholes for the global rich (Boatcă, 2016; Kalm, 2022; Shachar, 2018). Residence and citizenship by investment (RCBI) schemes that allow residence or bestow citizenship regardless of regular naturalisation criteria in return for a one-off payment either into a government fund or a designated investment are a booming business. These programmes not only open up wealth-based channels of mobility in an era of hardening enclosure but have spurred the growth of a profitable industry that actively lobbies the further proliferation of RCBI and powerfully shapes the nature of such programmes. These firms advise potential “investor citizens” and administer their

applications, while also designing and sometimes even running RCBI programmes for governments, conducting due diligence, and putting on promotional events where states compete to sell their citizenship.

The institution of citizenship has thus been profoundly affected by the advance of neoliberalism as it, too, is increasingly re-articulated in contractual economic terms. To discuss today's contestation of citizenship, Sassen (2015) uses the construct of "economic citizenship", which "does not belong to citizens. It belongs to firms and markets, particularly the global financial markets" (pp. 38–44). Being "global" gives these actors power over governments and it is thus these new "economic citizens" are increasingly able to make claims on governments. These claims, in turn, contribute directly to the erosion of individuals' political, civil, and social rights traditionally associated with citizenship in the context of the formation of welfare states in the Global North (Marshall, 1950/2009).<sup>1</sup> As Sassen (2015) discusses, hypermobile capital is constantly in search of short-term profit opportunities around the globe, rather than long-term economic and social developments. This modus operandi of global "economic citizens", who rely on foreign direct investment, structural adjustment programmes, bailouts and trade agreements to affect the capacities of individual governments to (de)regulate their economies (Federici, 2012), has transformed the sovereignty of the nation state and eroded its solidaristic compromise and civil, political, and especially social citizenship rights: "today's welfare state crisis, growing unemployment, and growing earnings inequality in all the highly developed countries can certainly be read as signalling a change in the entitlements of citizens" (Sassen, 2015, p. 39). Indeed, research in these countries shows growing unemployment and precarity that is being addressed through workfarist social and active labour market policies, which are cutting social benefits and increasing market discipline on unemployed and precarious citizens (Greer, 2016), and through ever stricter migration policies restricting and conditioning the mobility of the global poor (Anderson, 2013, 2016; Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991). In this regard, Somers (2008, pp. 2–3) talks about a shift from *social* (Marshall, 1950/2009) to *contractual citizenship* that implies fundamental changes in the relationship between the state and its citizens, turning it into quid pro quo market exchange. The shift to contractual mobility and citizenship regimes thus evinces a neoliberal "contractual morality" that, as shown, recuperates old class divisions, racisms, and sexism to construct (un)deserving and migrantised citizens and (un)acceptable migrants.<sup>2</sup>

1 For a critique of this traditional, arguably Eurocentric and "methodologically nationalist" conceptualisation of the role of citizenship, and a discussion of its *other* function, namely to maintain global inequality, see e.g. Shachar (2009) and Boatcă (2016).

2 In this paper we recognise that the term "migrant" is neither clear-cut, stable nor neutral, and can varyingly include statistically or legally defined categories of "migrants" as well as "migrantised" citizens; as Anderson (2019) writes, "once migration is no longer at the border it becomes 'race', and minority ethnic citizens are often already 'migrantized'" (p. 8).

## NEOLIBERALISM AND RADICAL ADULT EDUCATION

Structural inequality, exploitation, and oppression are never maintained solely by force or coercion but, as Gramsci (1971/1992) argued in his famous *Prison Notebooks*, also by hegemonic ideologies that normalise or naturalize these social conditions and produce consent. By normalising the worldview of the rulers, hegemonic ideologies achieve a situation where those oppressed and exploited by unequal social orders still “consent” to the very social order that oppresses them. As Bates (1975) defined it, hegemony “means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the worldview of the ruling classes” (p. 352; see also Jones, 2006). These ideologies, as Fanon (1967) highlighted, create systemic double standards and ideologically reverse social reality by hiding the structural violence of the social system and reframing resistance as violence. Power is thus attained not (solely) through force, but through consent to hegemonic ideas, which are being (re)produced through education, media, and religious institutions. The list of these institutions today also includes powerful transnational actors, such as the IMF and the World Bank, which have contributed to the contemporary globalised hegemony of neoliberal ideas, which have “become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (Harvey, 2005, p. 3).

It is in this situation that radical adult education intervenes to “re-politicise” social conditions and inequalities. Since hegemony is built upon consent, there always emerge counter-hegemonic movements that challenge the established ideas, norms, and socio-economic order (Kump, 2004, 2012). Neoliberalism has thus also inspired resistance and transnational solidarity movements, many of which have drawn on principles of radical thinking and praxis to challenge neoliberalism’s supposed common-sense and inevitability, such as the Anti-Globalisation or Global Justice movement and its accompanying Social Forums (Holst, 2018). Radical adult education stands in a tradition of critical pedagogy that champions active learning with a goal of emancipation and social change. It derives from Marxist thinkers Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire, who developed their theories from their work within labour and literacy movements, and has been key to counter-hegemonic struggles all over the world. While these two thinkers operated in different times and contexts, and had diverse approaches, they both argued that education is not neutral, but linked to (counter-)hegemonic struggles, and a necessary element for the emancipation of oppressed groups (Kump, 2012).

Especially Freire’s work has had a profound and lasting impact on pedagogy and adult education, as well as the social sciences more broadly. His classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was first published in Portuguese in 1968. At the heart of Freire’s work stands a critique of what he calls the “banking” concept of traditional education, which he identifies as an instrument for oppression. In the banking model of education, students are asked to “receive, file and store” knowledge which the educator “considers to constitute true knowledge”, rather than to critically and actively co-create knowledge (Freire, 2005). Underwriting this banking concept is the assumption of a “dichotomy between human beings and

the world”, where people are not “historical beings” that actively intervene in their reality, but are “merely in the world” (Freire, 2005, p. 4, 75). Poor people especially are seen as passive, receiving entities, and education should “make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world” (Freire, 2005, p. 76). This model of education is thus “well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquillity rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it” (Freire, 2005, p. 76). As Simone de Beauvoir noted, “the interests of the oppressors lie in ‘changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them’” (as cited in Freire, 2005, p. 74). Banking educational theory and practice are thus “immobilizing and fixating forces” that “will never propose to students that they critically consider reality” (Freire, 2005, p. 4, 74).

This banking concept of education underwrites neoliberal hegemonic ideology, governance and pedagogy, whose primary aim is to raise individualised, flexible and complacent workers and consumers (Štempihar, 2020). As discussed, neoliberalism operates in different registers, as an ideology, economic and political governance, and as a form of public pedagogy, which is “at war against public values, critical thinking and all forms of solidarity, based on ideas of cooperation, social responsibility and common good” (Giroux, 2015, as cited in Štempihar, 2020, p. xxi). Such neoliberal education is corporate-driven and prescribes an endless accumulation of human capital that is supposed to make individuals more competitive and employable in a seemingly free and meritocratic labour market, which is in fact characterised by structural unemployment, growing precarity and segmentation and division of labour (Baptiste, 2001; McLaren, 2020; Moir & Crowther, 2014; Samaluk, 2021).

In opposing the “banking” approach to education, Freire (2005) advances a horizontal humanist and libertarian pedagogy that draws on Marxist, feminist, and anti-colonial thought. The principles of his radical pedagogy are dialogue, ongoing self-reflection combined with transformative action, and an understanding of the interrelations of the individual and the historical structures which it exists within. In this relational and constructive approach, all are both “simultaneously teachers and students”, they are critical co-investigators that engage in dialogue to learn from each other, as “the teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own” (Freire, 2005, p. 72, 80–81). Grounded in this constructivist and relational understanding of education, Freire’s literacy education in Brazil was not just about teaching people *how to read the word* but *how to read the world* (McLaren, 2021). Freire’s model affirms men and women as evolving beings and active agents in “a likewise unfinished reality” (Freire, 2005, p. 84). This “transformational” character of reality means that education must be “an ongoing activity” that “intervenes in reality” (Freire, 2005, p. 81). Education “as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination” is thus grounded in a recognition of people and their world as inter-dependent, it “denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world” (Freire, 2005, p. 81).

Education in this sense enables a process of conscientization that involves the development of critical literacy that helps understand and thus impact on the world. One of Freire's central terms, conscientization refers to "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 2005, p. 35). Liberating education "consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information" and conscientization is the process "by means of which the people, through a true praxis, leave behind the status of objects to assume the status of historical Subjects" (Freire, 2005, p. 79, 160). The Freirean approach encompasses a politics of critical literacy education that always starts with lived experiences of the oppressed:

that involves problem posing and positioning of students as teachers and intellectuals involved in intense dialogic exchanges and a continual interrogation of the world around them. [...] [T]his includes acknowledging one's own humanity as well as being informed and engaged participants in the process of social change. (Morrell, 2015, p. 55)

Ultimately, the greater humanistic and historical task of the oppressed here becomes "to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (Freire, 2005, p. 44). The aim is for everyone – those who benefit from the present social order and those who do not – to unlearn oppressive models of organising society.

Though Freire developed his approach and theory in working with illiterate adult peasants in Latin America, his practical and theoretical insights have been used in diverse educational contexts all over the globe. They were especially inspired by and relevant for anti-colonial liberation struggles that included literacy programmes, for example, in Tanzania and post-revolutionary former Portuguese colonies such as Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique that focused on the re-Africanisation of their countries (McLaren, 2021). While his work was initially taken up primarily in the decolonising Global South, it was later adopted also by educators, philosophers, and activists in North America and Europe working with urban youth, migrant and precarious workers (Fiedler et al., 2020; Holst, 2018; Kump, 2012; McLaren, 2021; Morrell, 2015; Precarious Workers Brigade, 2017). Ideas of critical/radical pedagogy and adult education have since been utilised and further developed within decolonial, feminist, anti-racist and global justice struggles (Holst, 2018; Hooks, 2013; Macrine et al., 2009; Smith, 2019). Freire's work has also had a lasting impact on scholarship. In 2016, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was found to be the third most cited book in the social sciences (Green, 2016).

Yet, this critical educational and scholarly legacy is often obscured by the above outlined hegemonic neoliberal ideas, governance, and education. Moreover, Freire's work and its critical legacy are also explicitly targeted by right-wing politicians and the culture wars they fuel, as exemplified by "Bolsonaro's attempts to extinguish Freire's memory or US Republican attacks on critical race theorists and Marxist educators" (McLaren, 2021, p. 1). As McLaren (2020) argues, all this makes Freire's work highly relevant today and the



future of critical pedagogy “can be seen on the streets, on the picket lines, among young and old alike working to save communities assaulted by corruption and neglect and striving amidst great odds to create sanctuary cities for immigrants” (p. 1247).

## **RADICAL ADULT EDUCATION ON NEOLIBERAL MOBILITY REGIMES**

Throughout history, uneven mobility regimes have been achieved not only through securitised border-zones and militarised push-back operations, or detention and deportation, but also through racialised, classed and gendered ideologies that pose unjust mobility regimes as fair, meritocratic or inevitable, that frame those called migrants as quintessential social Others or threats, and by accordant forms of education that supposedly aim to “civilise”, discipline or assimilate them (Lange & Baillie Abidi, 2015; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013). As shown above, unequal mobility regimes are today bolstered by a hegemonic neoliberal consensus that it is economically necessary to lift border controls for the flow of capital and its owners on the one hand, and restrict borders for less privileged migrants and refugees on the other (Sassen, 2015). It is thus important to understand how this consensus is built and how it can be challenged.

As a form of governance, neoliberalism has been found to bring about a profound “depoliticisation” of social decision making, including decision-making on mobility, where “neoliberal political rationalities act to condition the limits of political possibility” (Darling, 2016, p. 232). For example, Darling (2016) examines the UK Home Office’s 2010 decision to privatise the accommodation and reception services for asylum seekers. In this new context, “framing asylum seekers as a burden” is “both a move to position asylum as a specific and managerial issue, and at the same time reiterates an economic account of asylum as a question of resource allocation, cost and productivity” (Darling, 2016, p. 230). Ultimately, Darling (2016) argues, this move not only produced an “asylum market” but also represented a form of “depoliticization” that “acts to constrain the possibilities of political debate and to predetermine the contours of those policy discussions that do take place” (p. 230).

Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, although published more than five decades ago, reads decidedly current also in today’s context of migration and mobility. As Freire (2005) argues, in the oppressors’ narratives, “it is always the oppressed who are ‘disaffected’, or ‘violent’, ‘barbaric’, ‘wicked’, or ‘ferocious’ when they react to the violence of the oppressors” (p. 74). Importantly, Freire (2005) notes, oppressed social groups will not be called “the oppressed” but – depending on whether they are fellow countrymen or not – „those people“ or „the blind and envious masses“ or „savages“ or „natives“ or „subversives“ (p. 74). Nowadays, one might add “migrants” to this list. As Freire (2005) continues, oppression involves positioning the oppressed “as the pathology of the healthy society”, which must therefore be adjusted, „integrated“ or „incorporated” into the healthy society. This positioning of the oppressed as marginal and troublesome social groups, who need to be educated to help them adapt and integrate, invisibles and obscures not

only their already belonging and participation in a society, but also the social structures of oppression that actually need transforming:

The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not “marginals”, are not people living “outside” society. They have always been “inside”—inside the structure which made them “beings for others”. The solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become “beings for themselves” (Freire, 2005, p. 74).

Similar discursive strategies have also been identified in assimilationist and some integrationist political discourses on migration today. As Nghi Ha (2010) argues, “elements of colonial fantasies and discourses re-emerged in political debates around ‘integration’” (p. 162). This does not imply a direct and unaltered reproduction but a reliance on similar pedagogical strategies, for instance, when “integration courses as well as colonial education promise to transplant the superior Western rational knowledge, its more valuable culture and ultimately the enlightenment of liberal freedom to people of colour, who are subjected to this knowledge transfer process” (Nghi Ha, 2010, p. 162). Education was key to European imperial powers’ late colonial projects which professed a civilising mission, trusteeship and development and the education of colonised subjects. As Nghi Ha (2010) notes, “colonial education was significant in the attempt to fabricate an ideological and cultural consent between colonial authority and its colonized subjects” and “by promoting racist stereotypes and colonial objectives, pedagogy as a modern cultural control technique of the self in the Foucauldian sense, effectively helped to shape colonial societies within a world system” (p. 161).

Accordingly, Donaldo Macedo (2005), in his foreword to the 30<sup>th</sup> edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, recounts the relevance the book had for him as a young, colonised man in Cape Verde, and for fellow students from other nations “struggling to overthrow totalitarianism and oppression”. As Macedo (2005) writes:

Paulo Freire’s invigorating critique of the dominant banking model of education leads to his democratic proposals of problem-posing education where “men and women develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation”. This offered to me – and all of those who experience subordination through an imposed assimilation policy – a path through which we come to understand what it means to come to cultural voice. It is a process that always involves pain and hope; a process through which, as forced cultural jugglers, we can come to subjectivity, transcending our object position in a society that hosts us yet is alien. (p. 12)

This account has direct relevance for many migration contexts of today, further evidencing the way that migration governance draws on colonial modes of control (Schinkel, 2018);

and consequently, the relevance of radical adult education to disrupt these processes. In this spirit, the on-going force of neoliberal projects calls for further critical pedagogy and thought that offers concepts and methods to unmask the neo-liberalisation of migration and mobility (Kump, 2012; Macrine et al., 2009).

So, what should be the priorities of radical adult education on mobility regimes and migration in neoliberal times? What sort of questions might this scholarship pose, what theories and methods can it use, and what progressive and non-essentialist social identities and relations might it produce? While most existing scholarship on radical adult education has focused on social movements, their dominant analytical framework, which distinguishes between old and new social movements, does not capture well the current political and socio-economic context marked by an unprecedented mobilisation of precarious and mobile populations (Holst, 2018). While migrants have historically played an important, yet neglected, role in social movements and radical adult education, the current political and socio-economic context is marked by an unprecedented mobilisation of diverse migrant and other precarious populations often dis-embedded from the formal labour market and wider community (Grayson, 2014; Holst, 2018). These mobile and precarious populations are developing new demands and more inclusive radical education through horizontal, participatory, equal and direct forms of democratic action and mobilisation that also stimulate new spatial and organisational forms (Holst, 2018; Kump, 2012).

For instance, in the wake of the 2015 crisis of European refugee policy, emerging urban solidarity movements defied restrictive border regimes and the rise of right-wing parties across Europe, to develop inclusive municipal policies or (self-)organisational forms for the protection and social inclusion of people with precarious (migration) status (Christoph & Kron, 2019; Pistotnik et al., 2016). University-led “sanctuary scholarships” are being developed to challenge the neoliberal bordering practices specific to universities and the structural exclusion of forced migrants from higher education (Murray, 2022). We are witnessing new grassroots indie and hybrid unions, social movements, and other forms of (self-)organising that are all centred upon mutual learning and building “communities of struggle” co-organised by migrant and other precarious workers and social groups (Hansen & Zechner, 2017; Però, 2020; Samaluk, 2020). Nevertheless, we still know little about such *emerging migration-centred spaces of radical adult education that today form one of the most inspiring antidotes to neoliberal projects and resurgent right-wing movements*.

This special issue addresses this void by questioning who gets to frame and articulate what the problem is, whose voices are heard, and on what terms and topics. How can we re-historicise and “re-politicise” migration and refuge and free them from their economic and ethno-nationalist discursive straightjackets? What are the methods, means and spaces available for radical adult education today? How can today’s radical adult education strengthen existing and establish new solidarities, how can the criminalisation of solidarity be countered, how can new allies be won and new spaces of solidarity be fostered?

And finally, it asks how to transcend the methodological nationalism, individualism, and historical amnesia which underwrite neoliberal accounts of migration.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue brings together contributions that explore the contemporary relevance of radical adult education foundations and existing and emerging radical adult education spaces and initiatives, which critically examine and unmask the effects of neo-liberalisation and related unequal mobility regimes, while also challenging the status quo, improving the situation of migrants and migrantised and minoritized social groups.

First, Tomaž Grušovnik's essay shows the contemporary relevance of Freire's thought for the theoretical foundations of radical adult education. As he writes, Freire's relevance lies in his theoretical and practical fusion of Marxism and Existentialism. His Marxist foundations centre on structural exploitation and pose that this exploitation can only be overcome *with the oppressed* and through their empowerment within the pedagogical processes. Existentialism, in turn, gives Freire's pedagogical basis a human face and depth by linking it to human self-realisation and active engagement. These foundations are still relevant today. Yet, some of their elements have also become incorporated into the new ethics of globalised neoliberal capitalism, which in the name of individual freedoms and self-actualisation deepens inequalities and precarity. Grušovnik thus argues that in post-industrial societies, characterised by hyper-consumption and its negative environmental consequences, there is a challenge how to deal with *the pedagogy of oppressors*, who are far less motivated for critical pedagogy or even revolting against critical reflection on their privileged lifestyles. As the author argues, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* offers answers to the challenge of raising the consciousness of the oppressors inasmuch as he argues that exploitation does not only dehumanise the oppressed, but also the oppressors, and both need liberation. Freire teaches us that this liberation can only be achieved through the perspective of the oppressed. In other words, the oppressors' freedom can only be achieved by reading, seeing, and hearing the experiences of the oppressed. However, how to develop these foundations further within the contemporary globalised and neo-liberalised world, is a task for today's critical pedagogy and radical adult education and thus discussed also in other contributions of this special issue, presented below.

Špela Drnovšek Zorko's review of the book *Tukaj smo/We Are Here* (2021) highlights the role of oppressed groups in the conscientization of wider community. This is a collectively authored book written by "a small community of people living in Slovenia", most of them refugees hailing from countries including Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Algeria, Eritrea, and Palestine. The book centres on the voices of refugees, who share first-hand experiences of racism, exclusion, and the fight for recognition. Drnovšek Zorko's book review emphasises that the assertion of presence inherent in "we are here" is a powerful claim, a refusal of erasure, and a call to see and name political violence, which resonates with other histories of activism. It also resonates with fundamental radical adult education ideas that reject

the marginalisation of oppressed groups and instead positions them back at the centre of society, as historical agents of change able to transform the society which oppresses them (Freire, 2005). Furthermore, by making connections between the difficulties they themselves face and the difficulties faced by other precarious segments of Slovenian society, the book's authors shift the terms of engagement toward the possibility of cross-status solidarity. Departing from a radical adult education tradition, the book asserts that the basic condition for solidarity is critical literacy about structural inequalities (Freire, 2005). Therefore, this book is aimed both at refugees, who are often alone and isolated in their struggle, and Slovenians, who are mostly unaware of the complex problems forced migrants face.

Next, Barbara Samaluk and Katja Lihtenvalner's paper entitled *The Erasure of Permanent Residents and Their 30-Year Struggle: "Today My Only Wish Is That This Would Be Written in Textbooks, That the Erasure Is Not Concealed"* discusses the consequences of the unlawful erasure of 25,671 people (among these 5,610 children) from the Slovenian registry of permanent residents. Without any notification, the erasure was executed by Slovenian authorities in 1992, in a time when the former Yugoslavia was disintegrating and Slovenia had newly gained its independence. The rights of the erased have still not been fully restored 30 years later, also because the dehumanising systemic act of erasure was invisibilised for a very long time and the voices of the atomised erased silenced. Departing from a wider conceptualisation of integration as a multi-way process linked to social cohesion, this paper analyses what happens when a group of residents suddenly becomes positioned as a pathology within a society (Freire, 2005), erased and consequently excluded from welfare states' solidarity compromise in which they used to participate as workers and residents. Using secondary data produced by the erased, Samaluk and Lihtenvalner analyse the consequences of erasure, the responses of the wider community, and the struggle of the erased. In doing so, the researchers also explicitly position themselves in the role of learners being taught by the erased. The article finds that the unnotified ethnonationalist erasure that only targeted people from other Yugoslav republics caused their sudden exclusion from the Slovenian community's history and its welfare state's solidarity compromise. This meant that the erased formally ceased to exist and as such suddenly lost their previous rights to residence, work, health and social security, education and even the right to decent burial, without the possibility for appeal. This positioning of former residents as a pathology in a newly established Slovenian state triggered both control and hidden solidarity from members of the wider community. The erased thus faced new internal border regimes that were not only controlled by police and local authorities, but also by some neighbours. On the other hand, the erased also experienced hidden solidarity by those who refused to participate in this discriminatory practice and quietly helped the erased. Since erasure was executed in secrecy, it left the erased scared and even more isolated and thus unable to grasp its systemic nature for a very long time. This is powerfully expressed by the friendship of two erased people, who were friends for eight years before they confided in one another. Given this secrecy and isolation, there was a relatively late development of a community of struggle, which now, after 30 years, still demands the restitution of their rights and maintains the memory of this dark and on-going history. The

latter is powerfully proclaimed in the citation featured in the article's title that calls for the story of the erasure to be included in textbooks.

How critical pedagogy can enter educational institutions and guide children, pupils, students, and adults towards critical thinking are the main themes featured in Marko Štempihar's book *Essays on Critical Pedagogy*, reviewed in this special issue by Mojca Lukan. As Lukan highlights, this is a book about teaching practice that understands critical thinking as a formative foundation that goes along with reflections about the common good and how to create a more equal society in neoliberal times. This main message is articulated in the book's three thematic parts, organised into 25 chapters, in which the author-teacher discusses critical pedagogy, critical thinking in schools, democracy, freedom, and solidarity using contemporary examples, such as societal attitudes towards refugees. The author also argues for the critical use of film in school curriculums and provides concrete examples of how to do this, as well as discussing mindfulness, which he understands as the development of empathy and care for the community, which should be activated through social engagement.

Next, Sarah Kunz's interview with political essayist Sinthujan Varatharajah explores Varatharajah's work on the social media platform Instagram. In their work, Varatharajah critically engages with the politics of migration, movement and asylum in Germany. Social media is often understood to intensify social tendencies toward narcissistic individualism and to stall collective mobilisation and political intervention. In contrast, Varatharajah uses Instagram as a tool to reach often ignored or marginalised audiences and involve them in critical dialogue. The interview addresses Varatharajah's methodology of using this social media platform, and its potential as a new space for radical adult education. They also discuss two recent interventions on migration and integration debates in Germany. During an Instagram Live discussion in February 2021, Varatharajah and artist Moshtari Hilal posed the phrase "Menschen mit Nazihintergrund" (people with a Nazi background) as a response to the term "Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund" (people with a migration background). This categorical reversal not only makes visible, and problematises, the usually unmarked majority population in integration debates, but centres the on-going transmission of financial and material Nazi capital in Germany as a key social problem that needs addressing. A second Instagram Live conversation (Varatharajah & Hilal, 2022) critically addresses the growing use of the English language in Berlin, associated with the presence of English-speaking residents often self-identified as "expats". In their conversation, Varatharajah and Hilal analyse the exclusionary social and material impact of the way that the English language is used; they address the systemic double standards implied by the facilitation of English in a country that is otherwise overly concerned with migrants' "lacking integration" and the broader neoliberal city politics and gentrification that these language politics are part of.

Katja Lihtenvalner's paper is another contribution exploring new spaces of radical adult education. It focuses on a grassroots housing project, the squatted City Plaza Hotel in Athens, Greece, which operated between 2016 and 2019, during the crisis of the European

refugee policy. It particularly centres on the processes of radical adult education that were organised within this project and that aimed at the empowerment and social inclusion of people seeking refuge or asylum. The article is based on participant observation and in-depth interviews with residents, among them newly arrived migrants and local activists at City Plaza Hotel. It shows that the City Plaza Hotel project was established as a counter-hegemonic community project that challenged the social exclusion and poverty of newly arrived migrant populations. This community project emerged within a hostile local environment, characterised by racist violence against migrant communities, and had an explicit mission to eradicate this violence, challenge the hegemonic discourses and practices, and offer an alternative to the crisis of the EU and Greek refugee policies. In City Plaza Hotel, 350 residents with different cultural and language backgrounds created a community founded upon (trans)national solidarity, participatory involvement and collective learning. The emergent City Plaza community thus established democratic and inclusive modes of governance absent from hegemonic neoliberal policies. Through dialogical radical adult educational approaches, the community empowered new arrivals, offered the opportunity for social inclusion, and raised the awareness amongst the general public about this newly established community. The latter was done through open and innovative engagement with mass media, open educational events, and participation in protests.

The next contribution from Hana Radilovič and Borut Brezar shows how the Slovenian student and workers' "Movement for Decent Work and a Welfare Society", which is fighting growing precariousness, engaged in the struggle of foreign students to regain their rights. The authors, who are also activists in the movement, take a participatory action research approach to reflect on the conditions of foreign students in Slovenia and specific solidarity campaigns aimed at improving these conditions. Their radical adult educational practices combine class and intersectional identity struggles that arise from neoliberal and ethnonationalist attacks on labour, social, and migrant rights, including those of foreign students in Slovenia. The article shows how their internationalist organisation enables mutual learning, upon which also critical literacy about specific conditions of migrant students develops. For foreign students, conditions first started deteriorating in 2012 with post-crisis austerity measures that cut foreign students from state-sponsored scholarships and in 2021 the right-wing government further imposed stricter conditions for student visas and limited enrolment slots for foreign students at faculties of medicine. These conditions stimulated solidarity campaigns in which they collaborated with foreign students and other activists and organisations to stage protests, engage with mass media to raise awareness and put pressure on authorities and demand changes from them. These campaigns led to positive changes visible in the acceptance of all foreign students to faculties of medicine and the return to previous visa rules for foreign students.

In the next paper Gorazd Kovačič analyses the context and reason for the strike at Slovenian universities on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022, which broadly relates to wider neoliberal and post-crisis pressures that also stimulated the campaigns for the rights of foreign students explored in Radilovič and Brezar's paper. Through personal involvement and the use of

(un)published internal union material and documents produced by the main stakeholders of social dialogue in the public sector, Kovačič provides an analysis of stakeholders' policies, the relations between them and causes for the strike. The paper shows that the tipping point for the strike followed the logic of rivalry between public sector unions in the context of an acute intensification of social dialogue between the unions and the government; however, the immediate strike demands were related to goals internal to higher education institutions. The strike was thus addressing the accumulated consequences of the poor financial situation of higher education institutions, unequal working conditions, low salaries of certain groups of employees, and the failure to take into account specific work patterns and needs of higher education employees under the existing collective agreement. The two main goals of the strike were to ensure better working conditions in the collective agreement related to pedagogical norms, sabbaticals, individual research allowances, remote work, and increasing the salaries of certain groups of employees, comparable to other fields of the public sector. The paper provides insight into the problems faced by diverse workers in higher education and highlights the importance of trade union organising within Slovenian higher education.

The final contribution by Jana Lovrec Srša is a teacher's account within mainstream integrational programmes, which are based on a model of integration that goes along with the "banking" concept of education (Freire, 2005; Samaluk, 2020). As an experienced Slovenian language teacher on the programme "Initial integration for migrants" she talks about the linguistic barriers new arrivals from the former Yugoslav republics of Bosnia and Hercegovina and Serbia face when learning Slovenian. Her account provides useful examples and relates the methods that she uses in teaching these migrant groups the Slovenian language, and may be of use to other language teachers, volunteers or activists assisting those learning the Slovenian language.

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