

Learning landscapes in Europe: Historical perspectives on organised adult learning 1500-1914

Panorami dell'apprendimento in Europa: prospettive storiche sull'organizzazione dell'educazione degli adulti 1500-1914

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abstract

This paper explores the history of 'socially organised adult learning' in Europe. All too often, the historiography of adult learning is compromised by hagiographies of well-remembered organisational innovations that mark the standard national histories of 'adult education' in different European countries. As is the case with the history of 'education', as the 'history of schools', the history of 'adult education' is likewise largely narrated from the perspective of those social institutions that refer to themselves, and are recognised by others, as constituting national traditions of 'adult education'. From the perspective of a critical history of socially organised adult learning, dominant contemporary discourse on 'adult education' reduces historical analysis and description to under-theorised categories of specific forms of institutionalised forms of 'adult education', which have developed since 'nation states' first engaged in the organisation of 'education' in the early nineteenth century. Recent interest in trans-national history has also tended to reinforce the focus on nation states as the unit of analysis concerning policy questions. These approaches have largely failed to capture cross-cultural influences at work in the historical development of organised adult learning, particularly prior to the establishment of nation states in the 19th century, and have also failed to address the historical contributions of non-state actors, such as political, social, and religious movements, to the organisation of adult learning.

Keywords: historiography of 'adult education', critical historiography, historiography of organised adult learning practices, Europe, 1500-1914

Questo articolo esplora la storia della "educazione degli adulti socialmente organizzata" in Europa. Sempre più spesso, la storiografia dell'educazione degli adulti è compromessa con le agiografie delle innovazioni organizzative ben note che fissano le storie nazionali ufficiali della "educazione degli adulti" nei diversi paesi europei. Così come nel caso della

storia della “educazione”, o della “storia della scuola”, anche la storia della “educazione degli adulti” è ampiamente narrata dalla prospettiva di quelle istituzioni che si riferiscono a se stesse, e sono riconosciute dalle altre, come quelle che costituiscono le tradizioni nazionali della “educazione degli adulti”. Dalla prospettiva di una storia critica dell’educazione degli adulti socialmente organizzata, il discorso contemporaneo dominante sulla “educazione degli adulti” riduce l’analisi e la descrizione storica a categorie teoricamente insufficienti di tipologie specifiche di forme istituzionali di “educazione degli adulti”, che si sono sviluppate dal momento in cui gli “stati nazione” per la prima volta si impegnano nell’organizzazione della “educazione”, all’inizio del secolo XIX. Il recente interesse verso la storia trans-nazionale ha teso inoltre a rafforzare il focus sugli stati nazionali come l’unità di analisi riguardante le questioni politiche. Questi approcci hanno ampiamente fallito nel comprendere le influenze cross-culturali all’opera nello sviluppo storico dell’educazione degli adulti organizzata, in particolare prima della fondazione degli stati nazionali nel secolo XIX, e hanno inoltre mancato di affrontare i contributi storici all’organizzazione dell’educazione degli adulti offerti da attori non-statali, come i movimenti politici, sociali e religiosi.

Parole chiave: storiografia della “educazione degli adulti”, storiografia critica, storiografia delle pratiche organizzate di educazione degli adulti, Europa, 1500-1914

1. Historical research of organised adult learning in Europe

This paper explores the history of ‘socially organised adult learning’ in Europe. All too often, the historiography of adult learning is compromised by hagiographies of well-remembered organisational innovations that mark the standard national histories of ‘adult education’ in different European countries. As is the case with the history of ‘education’ as the ‘history of schools’, the history of ‘adult education’ is likewise largely narrated from the perspective of those social institutions that refer to themselves, and are recognised by others, as constituting national traditions of ‘adult education’. From the perspective of a critical history of socially organised adult learning, dominant contemporary discourse on ‘adult education’ reduces historical analysis and description to under-theorised categories of specific institutionalised forms ‘adult education’, which have developed since ‘nation-states’ first engaged in the organisation of ‘education’ in the early nineteenth century. Recent interest in trans-national history has also tends to reinforce the focus on nation-states as the unit of analysis concerning policy questions. These approaches have largely failed to capture cross-cultural influences at work in the historical development of organised adult learning, particularly prior to the establish-

ment of nation-states in the 19th century, and have also failed to address the historical contributions of non-state actors, such as political, social, and religious movements, to the social organisation of adult learning.

This article is intended as a contribution to the relatively ill-developed historiography of the ‘social organisation of adult learning.’ It argues that the historical development of organised adult learning in Europe can be best understood as social-cultural phenomena involving the social organisation of the cultural practices of ‘communication’ and ‘learning’ (Williams, 1961; Fuchs, 2017). Cultural practices are understood here as involving the social organisation of the ‘active dissemination’ and ‘active acquisition’ of knowledge, skills, and sensitivities. These practices involve the deliberate, systematic, and sustained efforts – by individuals, collective actors, and institutions – to disseminate and acquire knowledge, skills and sensitivities in response to economic, political, social, and cultural change. Historical analysis and description of the social organisation of communication and learning is focused on the relational ‘social forms’ in which adults either organised themselves, or were organised by others, for the purposes of disseminating and acquiring knowledge, skills, and sensitivities. Three key categories of such social forms are referred to here as: a) ‘self-organised’ learning involving personal schemes of inquiry undertaken by the autodidact without guidance by others or institutions; b) ‘mutual learning’ relating to the voluntary association of individuals who co-operate in order to learn collectively; and, c) institutionalised schemes of ‘public instruction’ involving learning organised for adult learners provided by publicly recognised ‘educational’ actors. These three major forms of the social organisation of communication and learning were historically characterised by significant variations in their availability and utilisation. While historical research tends to address the relative institutional stability associated with ‘other-directed learning’ with its anchoring in state-sponsored ‘educational’ institutions, it is also necessary to account for the pluralistic sociability and informality of ‘mutual learning’, together with the fragile existence and highly contingent use of ‘self-learning’ organised by autodidacts.

Historical description of these structured relationships calls for data relating to variable patterns of access to, and control over, cultural resources in order to analyse the social distribution of structured opportunities to participate in the active dissemination and acquisition of knowledge, skills and sensitivities in the public sphere (Habermas, 1962;

Thompson, 1963). Analysis of these social relationships depends on the availability of empirical data relating, on the one hand, to the specific social positions of the diverse 'cultural disseminators' engaged in the organisation of deliberate, sustained, and systematic efforts to disseminate knowledge, skills and sensitivities, whether as authors, journalists, translators, printers, publishers, booksellers, and colporteurs. On the other hand, empirical data relating to the specific social positions of readers, measured by sales or the lending figures of circulating libraries, makes it possible to examine the constitution and formation of 'publics.' This can elucidate analysis of subtle social distinctions between distribution to intended 'reading publics', and 'non-publics' (De Sanctis, 1984; Melton, 2001). Empirical data can also relate to local, regional, and national phenomena, for example, the membership of reading circles in the Dutch manufacturing town of Haarlem in the 18th century, more specifically in December 1794, but, at trans-national level, can involve, for example, participation by radical French women refugees in political clubs in London after 1848.

2. New worlds of print media and learning networks

From the long-term perspective of comparative history, the social roots of organised adult learning in Europe during in the 16th and 17th centuries need to be examined in relation to early modernisation, development of capitalism, technological innovations, trade, rising agricultural productivity, industrial production, and urbanisation. Following European 'voyages of discovery' to other continents, long-established trade routes linking the Mediterranean with Arabia, North Africa, Persia, and China made way for new trading networks, and colonial expansion to the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Throughout Europe, the consequences of early modernisation became manifest in political conflicts between empires, kingdoms, princedoms, republics, churches, aristocracies, landowners, merchants, farmers, tradesmen, artisans, peasants, and 'the common man'. These economic, political, and social conflicts constituted sources of cultural struggles to exercise control over ways of governing, ways of believing, ways of behaving, and ways of thinking. Invention of the printing press in the late 15th century was fundamental to transforming the social organisation of cultural practices associated with the dis-

semination and acquisition of knowledge, skills, and sensitivities throughout Europe.

From the mid-16th century Protestant reformation onwards, vernacular Bible translations stimulated adult literacy, heads of households became responsible for instructing their employees and children to read, while bible-study and parochial libraries were organised for adults. Such developments contributed, especially in Calvinist and Lutheran northern Europe, to comparatively high levels of adult literacy, and reading became a socially acquired habitus. Organised adult learning was encouraged on a non-profit basis by ecclesiastical authorities, philanthropic organisations, voluntary associations, and private reading circles. Demand for literature developed, primarily served by itinerant book-pedlars, or colporteurs, who knocked on doors selling bibles, prayer-books, and guides to good manners. The commercial book trade opened markets serving adults' interests in knowledge and diversion, while the first newspapers broadened reading publics. Including self-taught autodidactic artisans, the increasingly diverse literate urban reading public of the late seventeenth century was served by commercial publishers, printers, and bookshops, whose offerings expanded to include, almanacs, self-help texts, guides to domestic skills, compendiums of 'useful knowledge', popular encyclopaedias, and, increasingly, reports of travel to 'strange destinations'.

With sectarian religious struggles dominating early 17th century Europe – notably the Thirty Years War – the Counter-Reformation in the Hapsburg empire, Poland and Lithuania, France, and Iberia, constituted a vigorous reassertion of Latin liturgy, Baroque visual imagery, and denial of any need for the general public to acquire vernacular literacy skills. Protestant dissent was vigorously repressed; Jan Ámos Komenský, Moravian author of *The Gate of Languages Unlocked*, in 1637, and Pierre Bayle, French author of the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, in 1697, were just two among the tens of thousands exiled Protestants. Orthodox Protestant congregations were equally resolute in radical repression of organised Catholicism. In much of northern Europe, Catholic bishoprics were disbanded, religious practices banned or held secretly 'underground'. They remained illegal until restoration of Catholic hierarchies in the mid-19th century, with convents prohibited remaining in Sweden until 1977. Regarded as fomenting political and social unrest, the circulation of 'subversive' books and pamphlets gave rise to recurring cultural strug-

gles concerning rights to freedom of expression in writing, printing, and public performances, while ‘the right to read’ was hindered by conflicts surrounding censorship and bans to prevent rapid and widespread circulation of knowledge and information. These geo-spatial divisions between northern, central, and southern Europe were expressed in the very different historical dynamics of socially organised adult learning.

3. From spectatorial journals to constitutional enlightenment

From the early 18th century, gradual acceleration of European modernisation was driven by global mercantilism, agricultural reforms, industrial manufacturing, and application of scientific knowledge. Social reform movements were for organised on many fronts in campaigns to bring about economic, political, social, and cultural change. Opposing repressive forms of governance by *ancien régimes*, reformers at local, regional, state, and pan-European levels engaged in struggles to achieve a more democratic and equal ordering of society. Vigorous public debates addressed the contribution of knowledge, skills and sensitivities in reforming society, which should be governed not by superstition, repression, and self-interest, but by reason, human felicity, and the ‘common interest’. Social reformers supported ‘enlightening’ measures to advance and disseminate knowledge, improvement of skills required by commerce, agriculture and manufacturing, organisation of scientific demonstrations, public lectures, and encouraging the habit of reading for self-instruction.

Organisation of ‘mutual improvement’ was encouraged by circulating libraries organised by booksellers, commercial distribution of ‘spectatorial’ periodicals’, local literary societies, newspapers made available in coffee-houses, and the ubiquitous reading circles. Throughout Europe, the rental of books played an important part in the expanding book market, with circulating libraries actively seeking the patronage of women readers. Personal reading schemes of autodidacts were enriched by new ‘instructional’ genres, particularly the rise of the ‘novel’, focused on personal endeavours to lead virtuous lives in difficult circumstances. *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719, for example, was translated – in Italian from the French in 1720 – printed, distributed, and published throughout Europe, often with ‘instructional’ prescriptions as in Jean-Jacques

Rousseau's *Émile* in 1762 – including popular versions in chapbooks, tracts, and children's books, and it became a standard work in the collections of the first 'popular' lending libraries for the 'common man' in the 1790s. Indicative of its pan-European cultural significance, the Portuguese translation, in 1785, lacked many episodes with religious content owing to self-censorship by the translator, Henrique Leitão, who had been persecuted and imprisoned by the Inquisition for four years in 1778. Elsewhere in Europe, however, the sociability of mutual and self-organised learning activities was regarded as having an 'improving' influence on individual, and as serving the 'common benefit' of all. Beyond their own 'self-improvement', the bourgeoisie sought to popularise improving activities through a 'civilising offensive' targeting the 'moral improvement' of the so-called 'common man'. To this end, progressive manufacturers, rational improvement associations, and philanthropic societies at local level promoted 'popular enlightenment' by organising public lectures, 'popular' lending libraries, and 'adult schools' for working people, and the 'respectable' poor.

By the second half of the 18th century, continued expansion of the publishing trade, serving diverse reading publics, found expression in a vigorous political press. Organised political dissent among significant factions of the increasingly discontented middle classes and artisans was voiced by 'patriotic' political reform movements seeking to secure improved moral standards in public life, a greater sense of social justice, and more democratic forms of governance. From Ireland to Russia, from Finland to Greece, patriotic movements – with strong links to the struggle of the American colonies for independence – engaged in 'constitutional enlightenment' through 'patriotic instruction' addressing political and social issues. Patriotic and democratic movements were mobilised by journalists – calling themselves 'friend of the people' – while Patriotic networks of authors, publishers, printers, and booksellers disseminated agitational books, political pamphlets, and constitutional tracts. These organised learning activities involving corresponding societies, reading circles, political clubs, public readings of pamphlets in taverns were systematically censored, repressed, or banned. A growing stream of émigrés throughout Europe – among them 40,000 Dutch citizens, including writers, journalists, popular educators, and artisans, exiled in 1778, in northern France – sought refuge from political and/or religious repression at home. Following the French revolution in 1789, first National

Assembly passed a resolution stating that ‘The free communication of thought and opinion is one of the most precious rights of man; every citizen may therefore speak, write and print freely.’ Radical movements throughout Europe fuelled the organised circulation, often in translation, of political texts – such as Paine’s *Rights of Man* in 1791, and Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792 – giving support to ‘underground’ networks of organised adult learning. In 1793, Dutch female hatmakers, members of an underground Patriot reading circle in Haarlem, were imprisoned for reading Wollstonecraft in a vernacular translation. In effect cultural intermediaries, these women can be best described as bricoleurs of the self-made oppositional artisan culture and an artisan public sphere.

4. Popular instruction in industrial society and the nation-state

French revolutionary language and republican forms of government were appropriated, borrowed, and adopted during the 1790s by Patriotic factions elsewhere in Europe – the Batavian (Dutch) Republic, Ireland, Switzerland, and many in German and Italian states – prior to the Bonaparte dynasty from 1804. Following the 1815 Paris Treaty, long-term responses to 1789, however, found expression in mounting critique of monarchical absolutism, giving rise to political agitation and popular unrest organised by constitutionalist, republican and nationalist movements. Recognised in 1815, the United Dutch Kingdom disintegrated into two independent Dutch and Belgian kingdoms following the Belgian Revolution in 1830 and a brief war; while Greece secured national independence from the Ottoman empire in 1830. Throughout the ‘long 19th century’, nationalist movements became engaged in the construction national identities, wars of independence, and national (re-)unification, together with social organisation the ‘nationalist enlightenment’ of the people’. This long-term ideological work became manifest in linguistic struggles – in the Balkans, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden – which focused on ‘popular instruction’ in repressed vernacular languages, either ‘underground’; execution was the fate of convicted ‘book-smugglers’ on Czarist territories.

Reputations of nation states became increasingly judged in terms of

their economic performance, early or late industrialisation, skills of the national labour-force, systems of initial education, training of teachers, school inspectorates, and reports of innovations in other countries (Polanyi, 1957). In the context of mass rural exodus to expanding towns, (re-)training the workforce was largely ignored by the state and left to employers or ecclesiastical and philanthropic initiatives. More enlightened reformers – particularly protestant Pietists and Evangelicals – turned to ‘popular instruction’, involving reading (the Bible) and arithmetic, organised ‘for workers’ by Sunday and evening schools for adults, and Mechanics Institutes, while ‘continuation schools’ became available to younger workers. France’s 1833 law on elementary education referred to, albeit unimplemented, ‘adult classes.’ Initiatives by workers’ themselves to organise adult learning entailed workingmen’s associations – often anti-clerical – reading rooms, and lending libraries organised by working-class political organisations, trade unions, and women’s organisations. Although ‘self-help’ doctrines encouraged autodidacts to engage in the precarious pursuit of knowledge, they remained dependent on churches, philanthropists, and, increasingly, the commercial market for reading matter. Modernisation of public mail infrastructures with the development of railways stimulated ‘correspondence learning’ by post, while ‘face-to-face’ instruction, ranging from technical drawing to clothing design, was marketed commercially for a variety of occupations and professions, thus serving vocational ambitions of men and women. The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, held in 1851 in London, demonstrated the worldwide interest of governments and employers in disseminating applied knowledge and skills via vocational training and workplace learning, an example of ‘economic nationalism’ eagerly followed elsewhere.

Mounting political discontent with autocratic rulers found expression in collectivist political agitation, constitutional petitions, demonstrations, marches, popular lectures, reading circles, and autodidact study of political pamphlets. Organisation of ‘independent adult learning’ for artisans and workers was initiated by workingmen’s associations and women’s organisations. Mobilised by ‘popular educators’, itinerant ‘lecturers’ or ‘missionaries’, co-operative workshops were propagated, for example by Owen’s Association of All Classes of All Nations in 1835, while ‘utopian socialism’, as propagated by Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon, constituted a constant undercurrent of Christian Socialist communities

alongside Blanc's proposals for a centralised regulatory state. Working men's and working women's associations, sharing aspirations to mutually instruct themselves, were prominent in the pan-European revolutions of 1848, which also voiced secular principles of solidarity and social obligation. For a brief period in 1848, Minister for Public Instruction in revolutionary France advanced Saint-Simonian arguments favouring adult training in co-operative workshops. Following failure and vigorous repression in 1848, universal male suffrage was introduced in France in 1849 in order to 'educate the uneducated masters', but, as elsewhere, local activists involved in organising workers' associations were prominent among thousands of militant men and women – French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish – who became refugees, some permanently, in London and Switzerland, or emigrated to the United States. Working-class unrest resulted in the reformulation of class relationships in terms of the 'social question' posed by the rise of independent working-class organisations in rapidly industrialising and urbanising societies (Laot & Hake, 2008). This transformation was marked, in 1854, when Christian Socialists in London, inspired by their encounters with Saint-Simonian co-operative workshops in 1848 in Paris, established Working Men's College. In 1864, also in London, the erstwhile German refugee of 1848, Karl Marx, organised the International Working Men's Association, known as the First International and intended as the vanguard of 'proletarian enlightenment' and source of 'really useful knowledge'. The emerging class structure of capitalist society became manifest in struggles in the public sphere between: a) shifting coalitions of bourgeois factions seeking to steer the organised learning made available to workers, and, b) efforts of independent working-class organisations to establish an oppositional, even 'revolutionary', public sphere for proletarian collective learning.

5. Reformist ambitions and the social question

These ideological realignments gave rise to differing liberal, republican, radical, and free mason-inspired understandings of the 'social question' posed by the volatile urban working class in rapidly industrialising urban societies. In response to independent workers' libraries, such as the Library of Friends of Instruction in Paris, 1861, and reading rooms organised by workers' co-operatives throughout Europe, liberal/radical and re-

publican political parties understood ‘popular’ organised adult learning as a repertoire requiring support for popular instruction, reading rooms, and lending libraries. These were also regarded as appropriate channels for popularising social and political reforms favoured by radical republicans themselves. Following defeat by Prussia in 1870, and the Commune of 1871, tensions, between Church and state in France during the Third Republic, convinced Republicans to organise national instruction on a secular basis. The Education League, a Republican pressure group launched in 1866, established factory libraries, reading rooms, and lecture courses for adults, followed, in 1882, by free national public instruction for all, including for adults. Societies for Republican Instruction were established in 1881, leading to assertions that the Third Republic was a ‘République des professeurs’ (Auspitz, 1982). In similar vein, following Italy reunification in 1871, left-wing liberals, radicals, masons, and free thinkers promoted secular alternatives to Catholic public instruction. Indeed, transnational, national, and local networks of masons provided intellectual leadership for radical responses to the social question focused on sharing ‘informed responsibility’ for dealing with the consequences of urbanisation.

This social reform agenda – focused on exploitative working conditions, poor housing, public health, personal health, nutrition, vegetarianism, abstention from alcohol and tobacco – addressed the social question in terms of co-operation between middle-class reformers and working-class organisations to reorganise adult learning in order to improve society. This reformist repertoire of class co-operation focused on providing organised adult learning opportunities that encouraged individuals to engage in ‘self-improvement’. In the United Kingdom – with puritan, dissenting, and evangelical roots of reform movements – this repertoire of class co-operation informed the co-operative movement, university extension lectures for workers, settlements or social ‘Toynbee-work’, the Quaker adult school movement, Ruskin College for working men in Oxford in 1899 as a Christian Socialist initiative, and the Workers Educational Association (WEA) in 1903. Throughout Europe – from France to Croatia, from Spain to Finland – an over-arching component in this pan-European liberal-radical repertoire was the prominent place given to organised efforts to establish ‘popular universities’, reading rooms, factory libraries, ‘public libraries’, with an emphasis on the social dimension of support for individuals moving from illiteracy to literacy.

By the early 20th century, petitions, campaigns, demonstrations, and agitation for the right to vote – led by radicals, working-class organisations, franchise movements, and autonomous women’s organisations – transformed public debate of the social question into questions of electoral reform, male and female suffrage, citizenship skills, and the ‘forming’ of public opinion. Reports of ‘university extension’ – by visitors from abroad to Oxford and Cambridge extension summer schools – contributed to pan-European debates concerning the possible contribution of ‘extension of higher education’ to workers and the popularisation of science to ‘learning democracy’. The International Conference on Adult Education 1900, in Paris, demonstrated very different understandings of the contribution by organised adult learning – university extension lectures, settlements, popular universities, workers’ educational associations, popularisation of science, and folk high schools – to the development of democracy. While the folk high schools in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden – ideologically regarded as bastions of rural popular education since the 1860s – originally represented the interests of nationalist landowning peasants, state subsidies were extended to urban workers’ associations, first in Sweden in 1884, for ‘lecture courses’ and workers’ folk high schools; thus effectuating the long-term incorporation of workers’ organisations in the bourgeoisie public sphere (Berg & Edquist, 2017). In France, popular universities – regarded as mutual societies like credit co-operatives and friendly societies – were considered responsible for organising co-operative learning to acquire the habits of ‘solidarism’ propagated by the Radical party. Following collapse of empire in 1898, Spanish interest in university extension manifested a sense of ‘national’ economic decline, clericalism as hindering ‘civic’ awareness needed for modernisation, with libertarian/syndicalist workers supporting popular universities. In the decaying Hapsburg and Czarist empires, short-lived experiments with university extension in Czechia, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Romania were informed by nationalist aspirations, while Austrian anti-Hapsburg nationalists, many of them masons, promoted the popularisation of science in the Folk High Schools of Vienna. Supporters of university extension in Belgium were divided between French-speaking Radicals and Flemish-speaking nationalist initiatives. In the Netherlands, erstwhile liberal-radical supporters lost faith in university extension, while working-class intellectuals – including ‘Red Minsters’ of evangelical churches – became engaged, as elsewhere in Europe, in encounters with Christian Socialism, trade unions, and socialist parties. As

such, the university extension movement in Europe constituted a variety of modernising responses to the demands of universal suffrage and democratic citizenship. This demanded, however, complex negotiations between reform-minded parties and working-class organisations regarding the ‘civic enlightenment’ of worker citizens.

6. Vanguards of proletarian enlightenment

Envisaged as the vanguard for autonomous ‘proletarian enlightenment’, the First International launched in 1864 had been at first dominated by differences between French, German, Irish, Italian, and Polish patriots, some having been in exile since 1848. Despite the failed ‘internationalist’ intervention in the Paris commune in 1871, and the International’s own demise in 1876, workers were drawn to political organisations claiming to represent working-class interests including anarchists, syndicalists, socialists, and communists. In Germany, and France since 1848, workers’ organisations were encouraged by male suffrage introduced following the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Liebknecht’s 1872 pronouncement that ‘knowledge is power’ – at the first conference of the German workers’ educational association – was adopted as an integral part of the political programmes of organised working-class movements. Despite the Anti-socialist Law in Germany from 1878 to 1890 forbidding publication of socialist literature, socialist parties became well-established throughout Europe. Convened in 1889, the Second International was marked by an emerging schism between proponents of national parliamentary party and international revolutionary strategies. Economic, political, and social conditions shaped the organised adult learning provided by socialist parties and trade unions for their members. Robust social-democratic parties in Austria, Belgium, and Germany, organised adult learning activities for members, especially in large-scale industries, workers’ libraries serving particularly party cadre and trade union organisers. In France and Italy, however, labour activists were agrarian day labourers and small-holding peasants, often with strong syndicalist sympathies, poorly educated with restricted literacy skills, and suspicious of hierarchies.

Parties used organised learning to disseminate socialism via training members, congresses, regular mass festivals, and local branch meetings, the latter including Sunday-morning family meetings. Establishment in 1891 of the Social Democratic Party in Germany, with a Marxist pro-

gramme, marked a period of tense debates between socialist parties and rapidly growing trade union movements about 'revisionist' reforms concerning separate provision of organised learning for 'cadre', 'activists', and rank and file 'members.' Furthermore, although the Socialist Labour Party in Germany had regarded itself as the 'true party of education' since 1875, women continued to be excluded from membership until 1908, which led Dutch social democratic women to organise, in the same year, the Union of Social-Democratic Women's Clubs. In terms of organised adult learning, international solidarity was expressed in the work of activists, organisers, journalists, and translators, who were responsible for the rapid expansion of socialist and communist literature available to the organised working-class movements throughout Europe. Serving this purpose, workers' libraries in Russia, Poland, and the Baltic states were underground, clandestine self-help affairs, while in Poland the 'flying university' comprised underground learning opportunities feeding the Russian Revolution of 1905-1907, and para-military activities. International circulation of socialism was augmented by migrant workers themselves. Migrant Finnish and Swedish loggers returned home from north America with English translations of *Das Kapital*, and they contributed to the radicalisation of working-class movements during the early 1900s, particularly the Finnish revolution in 1906, resulting in national independence, and votes for women.

Socialist parties went to great lengths to mobilise grass-roots support by organising local activities for members and their families to occupy non-working time such as clubs for gymnastics, chess, theatre, singing, hiking, cycling, rowing, swimming, sailing, and football. Workers' associations encouraged public health, housing, hygiene, naturism, vegetarianism, teetotalism, and secular 'proletarian free-thinking'. Among the broader reform movements, social-democratic proponents of popular instruction throughout Europe also made good use of the ubiquitous working-class habit of allotment gardening in order to cultivate rank and file support. Workers' allotments, a consequence of industrialisation and urbanisation, manifested a pan-European movement embedded in a social ethic espousing industriousness, sobriety, respectability, and independence. To the surprise of social reformers – conservative, liberal, and socialist – workers and their families organized themselves in allotment associations that stimulated 'popular instruction' concerning techniques of tilling the soil, sowing seeds, tending for plants, harvesting, and storing produce. Workers' allotments throughout Europe were transformed

into ‘the practice of democracy’, providing the working class with unparalleled opportunities for grassroots political participation in civil society accompanied by the marked increase in working-class political awareness and democratic skills.

Such opportunities were undone in 1914, when the parties in the Second International declared their support for the nationalist ruling classes. This led an entire generation of young working men to the slaughter of World War I, and their premature deaths on the killing fields of Europe.

7. Conclusion

This paper has sought to remind readers that much current discourse on education is devilled by ill-informed historical arguments that contemporary developments constitute a neo-liberal reduction of rich national traditions of ‘adult education’ to the globalised markets and the commodification of ‘adult learning’. While it is necessary to critically investigate the social organisation of communication and learning in relation to historical phenomena such as the marketplace, adult learners as consumers, and the commodification of adult learning, it is also necessary to recognise that markets, and market failure, have been historically significant phenomena in the social organisation of adult learning throughout the process of European modernisation and capitalist social relationships (Hake, 2016). It is the task of the historian to study the historical consequences of markets for the structured social distribution of individual and collective opportunities to engage in the active acquisition of cultural resources and the barriers that effectively exclude ‘non-publics.’ The approach adopted here to historical analysis may hopefully also offer more informed understandings of the social and cultural transformations involved of the long-term transition from ‘traditional intellectuals’ of the ancient regime, through the ‘popular philosophers’ and radical ‘friends of the people’ in the 18th century Enlightenment, bourgeois ‘social reformers’ and ‘organic’ intellectuals of 19th century workers’ movements, to the ubiquitous professional ‘adult educators’ of the 20th century. It should also remind us that social and political movements have played very significant roles in the development of socially organised adult learning, and that they themselves were highly important historical sites of the ideological work undertaken to disseminate ‘really useful knowl-

edge' to their members. Socially organised adult learning worked actively at the intersections between dominant, oppositional, and alternative cultures, often expressing viewing adult learning as contributing to political, social, economic, and cultural change, sometimes operating in the vanguard of revolutionary praxis.

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