

# Civil Society as an Arena of Learning

ESREA Network Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning conference  
to be held in Stockholm, Sweden, June 11–13, 2009.

## Conference Announcement

The aim of this conference is to provide a meeting place for Swedish and international researchers focusing on civil society as well as social movement learning and *folkbildning* in relation to these issues.

The history of *folkbildning* is a history of social movements. Organised labour, temperance movement, and political movements – were all engaged in raising the educational level of the adult population. Today’s social movements largely share this commitment. This mission is acknowledged in UNESCO’s 1997 Declaration, stating that “adult education /.../ is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society”.

Promoting democratic civic competence, here understood as a cognitive and normative readiness to act for the common good and handle mutual commitments, is a core mission of *folkbildning*. However, “active citizens do not, except under crisis conditions, simply happen; they have to be made” (Field 1995:193). In a functional sense *folkbildning*’s contribution could be regarded as civic capacity

building. Through being active in the public sphere (e.g. by working in a non-governmental organization) one acquires knowledge, skills and sensitiveness to work with others and for others. This capacity building can thus also take place in civil society organizations other than those focused on adult education, which is also why this conference has a wider interest in the concept of civil society and not least in this sphere as an arena of learning.

Participants are expected to focus on the following areas of research/question:

- understanding *active democratic citizenship* – across disciplinary boundaries
- comparative analysis of how similar needs and similar activities are given different form or are framed by different institutional frames, economic conditions and power-games
- social movements (global-regional-local) and the learning process(es) that occur there

The conference will be organized by the Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Network, a part of the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA), that has a long tradition of gathering researchers from throughout Europe to share their findings, exchange new ideas and publish scholarly papers.

The co-organizers of the conference will be Södertörn University College (SUC) and Ersta Sköndal University College (ESUC) both located in Stockholm. At the SUC there is a group of political scientist, sociologists and adult educationists who study various aspects of civil society. At ESUC the multidisciplinary research group constitutes the Institute for Civil Society Studies.

The conference is planned to be a forum of exchange of theoretical considerations and empirical evidence between researchers studying civil societies in their

multitude of shapes. It will bring together researchers from different disciplines and countries who are interested in common topics. It is also open to practitioners who are working in organizations that academics are studying. Thus, the conference will bring insights from different parts of the academia together with insights from the field. Thus, the conference itself is to be a site of cross-disciplinary learning.

Full details about abstracts for papers, deadlines for submitting papers, fees, registration, venue and accommodation will be presented in the 1st Call for Papers to be announced soon. Similar information will also appear on the dedicated website.

#### Scientific Committee

Michal Bron Jr, SUC, Sweden, Michal.Bron@sh.se

Marie Demker, SUC/Göteborg University, Sweden

John Field, University of Stirling, Scotland, UK

Paula Gimeares, Minho University, Portugal

Staffan Larsson, Linköping University, Sweden

Pelle Åberg, SUC/ESUC, Sweden

#### Organization Committee

Pelle Åberg, SUC, Sweden, Pelle.Aberg@esh.se

Dominika Polanska, SUC, Sweden