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Social-diagnostic Perspectives on Adult Education

An Introduction to the topic

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Volume 48 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education is dedicated to Social-diagnostic perspectives on adult education. Since the so-called financial crisis in 2008, at the latest, society's problems and challenges have repeatedly been framed as crises. Since then, society has found itself in a variety of (supposed) crises, such as the climate crisis, the banking crisis, the refugee crisis, the Ukraine crisis, etc. The challenges facing society and the accompanying need for transformation are also increasingly reflected in sociologically based diagnoses of society and the times. In recent years, a large number of current diagnoses of society have been presented (for an overview, see Reese-Schäfer 2019). Adult education and adult education research must address crises (and diagnoses of crises), if only because they regularly give rise to new tasks. Examples include the need for adult education in the context of refugee movements, the role of continuing education in the context of post-truth, and others (see also Wittpoth 2002). In this context, adult education research has repeatedly called for an explicitly critical approach to social diagnoses in order to counteract the tendency to derive unchecked demands on the education system from crisis diagnoses, which ultimately reduce it to the task of coping. Rather, it is the task of adult education research to critically examine current crises and to reflectively determine its role in them (Wittpoth 2002). This introductory article will start off by briefly focusing on the relationship of adult education and socialdiagnostic perspectives. Next, the concept of this year's volume and articles will be presented. The article will conclude with some remarks on our own account.

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Social-diagnostic Perspectives on Adult Education. An Introduction to the topic

MICHAEL SCHEMMANN

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Since the so-called financial crisis in 2008, at the latest, society's problems and challenges have repeatedly been framed as crises. Since then, society has found itself in a variety of (supposed) crises, such as the climate crisis, the banking crisis, the refugee crisis, the Ukraine crisis, etc. The challenges facing society and the accompanying need for transformation are also increasingly reflected in sociologically based diagnoses of society and the times. In recent years, a large number of current diagnoses of society have been presented (for an overview, see Reese-Schäfer 2019).

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1 Adult Education and Social-diagnostic Perspectives

Adult Education can be referred to social-diagnostic perspectives in two ways. On the one hand they convey an impression of the societal circumstances in which addressees are embedded. As such, they are an important basis for program planning and they are relevant for adult education practice. On the other hand they allow to reflect and analyze the importance of adult education in processes of change and transformation of societies. Thus, they are relevant for adult education research.

There is a tradition in adult education research to deal with social-diagnostic perspectives. In 2001 Wittpoth edited a book which brought together an analysis of all in all six analyses of perspectives ranging from Ulrich Beck's risk society (Kade 2001) to Nico Stehr's knowledge society (Nolda 2001). In his reflections Wittpoth pointed out the am-

bivalence when dealing with social-diagnostic perspectives. They are very stimulating since they offer different perspectives on adult education. However, this productivity can be referred to the careless emphasis of certain social phenomena (Wittpoth 2001). Thus, Wittpoth pleads for the plural usage of social-diagnostic perspectives.

2 On the concept and the individual contributions

The basic concept for the content structure of volume 48 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education was for the contributions to take recent social-diagnostic perspective as a starting point, discuss them and also reflect on implications for adult education research and practice.

In detail, volume 47 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education comprises the following articles:

The article “The concept of ‘Surveillance Capitalism’ and its relevance for Adult Learning and Education” by Anke Grotlüschen and Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha focuses on the perspective of ‘Surveillance Capitalism’ by Shoshana Zuboff. First, the authors discuss and develop the core themes of the concept of surveillance capitalism, concentrating on the fact that the surveilling agency is no longer a government, but a set of companies. Analyzing articles and studies which use Surveillance Capitalism as a theoretical framework, the article identifies four different aspects of the social-diagnostic perspective in adult education: firstly, the question of data protection and data literacy as goals of adult education; secondly, research on AI driven job search platforms; thirdly, activism and learning in social movements ; and finally, learning analytics with regard to platforms. The authors make clear that Surveillance capitalism uses techniques of confusion, distraction and deception in all mentioned areas and thus argue for awareness and even protective legislation.

Julia Koller focuses on the idea of cooperation and network in her article titled “To Network or Not to Network in German Adult Education: Rethinking Networks as learning opportunities based on Stäheli’s sociology of de-networking”. Networking and networks have been considered a constituent element of adult education. Research on networks in adult education is well established (Bickeböller 2023) and always highlights the benefits of cooperative work in networks. Consequently, Urs Stäheli’s publication somehow questioning the general enthusiasm comes as a great challenge for adult education research. In his study titled “Sociology of de-Networking” (2021), Urs Stäheli focuses on the phenomena that can be observed when networks are dismantled and destabilized and thus sheds some light on the dark side of networks. On this background Koller carried out a systematic literature review of german adult education literature in order to identify de-networking topics.

The article “Die Externalisierungsellschaft als Reflexionsanlass für die Weiterbildung” by Henning Pätzold and Michael Schemmann takes Stephan Lessenich’s social-diagnostic perspective of externalisation as a starting point. According to Lessenich all capitalistic societies are externalization societies since they transfer costs of their

production mode and their capitalistic exploitation to the periphery. However, Lesenich's points out that the consequences of externalization are becoming increasingly visible in the center. The article analyses the role of adult education in this process of externalization and also what adult education can contribute to deal with these circumstances.

In addition to the articles to the main topic section, this year's volume of the International Yearbook of Adult Education also includes two articles in the Miscellaneous section.

In their article titled "Innovationen in der Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung: eine Dokumentenanalyse" Evelina Mania, Mara Winkens and Julia Koller use the method of document analysis to analyze the current situation of products and materials in the field of literacy and basic education. Adult basic education was the topic of volume 42 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education in 2019. However, the newly established Product Database for Literacy and Basic Education (PAG) hosted by the German Institute for Adult Education in Bonn offers a comprehensive repository of free materials and concepts developed under these funding programs. The article provides a criteria-based overview of the variety of products, including an analysis of the innovation topics, content areas, levels of action, addressees, and actors addressed.

Tim Roor analyzes the thematic focus and publication practices of adult education research in countries of the so-called Global South in his article "Adult Education Research Between the Center and Periphery – Publication Practices and Topics of Adult Education Researchers in Countries of the So-Called Global South". The article analyzed 830 empirical texts from mainstream and non-mainstream journals to identify topics in the texts. Roor found out that key from non-mainstream journals, such as sustainable development and social justice, remain invisible in the global publication space of adult education research.

This year's volume is completed by two reviews written by Jana Arbeiter and Michael Schemmann.

3 On our own Account

I would like to thank all authors of the contributions, who prepared their manuscripts within the deadlines. I am also grateful to all reviewers of the articles and to the authors of the review section.

My personal thanks go to Eva Bonn and to Tabea Leibold who run the editorial department of the International Yearbook of Adult Education. They both worked on this year's volume, Eva when developing the concept and starting the whole process and Tabea finishing this year's volume. After a long period of time Eva will leave the editorial department. I am grateful for a long and faithful cooperation and for Eva's constant effort to improve the quality of processes which guarantee the standard of the International Yearbook of Adult Education.

Volume 49 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education will focus on the topic "Adult Education and Democracies under Pressure". We welcome contributions to the key subject of this volume as well as contributions to the sections Miscellaneous and Reviews.

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