1 Introduction to the Adult Education Legacy of Sabina Jelenc Krašovec: The Transformative Power of Adult Learning and Education

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[B]elieving in the power of learning through life enables us to do new things: to transform identities, to cooperate and communicate effectively regardless of age, culture and place, and to forge better societies (Findsen, Golding, Jelenc Krašovec, & Schmidt-Hertha, 2017, p. 511).

1.1 Introduction: Setting the Scene

In her work, especially in the last ten years, Sabina was committed to adult education which a) is an important factor in the political, social and cultural development of society; b) is linked to social movements and the development of civil society; c) problematises the impact of education on the establishment of power relations in society; d) plays an important role in establishing democratic communication, democratising society and raising awareness of the hegemonic (social and political) practices in which people live; e) leads to a changed world view and to social action; and f) strengthens the capacity of adult educators to communicate publicly and react critically to political and economic influences (e.g., Gregorčič & Jelenc Krašovec, 2018; Jelenc Krašovec, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2017; Jelenc Krašovec & Hlebec, 2012). Some of the key concepts she explored in her work are informal learning, transformative learning, community-based learning and education, (active) ageing, social justice, marginalisation of (older) adults, learning in open public spaces, the public good, public pedagogy, the "public" adult educator, active citizenship, participatory democracy and participatory budgeting.

Given the above, it is not difficult to see that Sabina's work was theoretically based and drew primarily on the tradition of critical/radical adult education and, more broadly, on the Frankfurt School's critical theory of society (especially Habermas), although she also accepted elements of poststructuralism (Foucault's notion of power), phenomenology (Arendt's notion of the public sphere), and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel's ethnomethodological studies).

The authors of the Frankfurt School stressed the importance of human action to achieve radical social change; they developed theory with a practical purpose, drawing on Marx's Thesis Eleven on Feuerbach. They were not only concerned

with the theoretical interpretation and understanding of the world, but with a change of the world into one in which human emancipatory potential could be realised. In Alway's (1995) words:

> Theory with practical intent seeks not only to understand the world but also to transform it. The practical intent of such theory – its orientation to changing the world – is the expression of an emancipatory vision. Such a vision contains two elements. First, it entails a conception of a better world, an image of what the world could (or should) be […] And second, it involves a claim concerning how such a world can be realized […] (p. 2)

According to Brookfield (2005), the Frankfurt School's critical theory is characterised by, among other things, a) a firm commitment to a particular political analysis (capitalist exploitation); b) a commitment to providing people with the knowledge and understanding necessary for their liberation, the knowledge that will enable people to change the world; and c) a normative foundation (a commitment to a fair and just society, to the humanity of human beings).

In adult education, critical social theory manifests itself as critical/radical adult education, which has a long tradition (see, e.g., Kump, 2012; Popović & Koulaouzides, 2017). It advocates the importance of critical thinking and the empowerment of individuals and groups in order to change the social system – the critical individual is empowered to seek justice, to seek emancipation – it argues for the critique of ideology, supports social movements as spaces for adult learning and emphasises that education is not neutral, but rather closely linked to hegemonic and counter-hegemonic interests within a given society (Mayo, 2009; Morrow & Torres, 2002). The radical nature of education is revealed in attempts to help people change the existing conditions of their lives, not to adapt to them. A key reference for this type of education is Paulo Freire,[1] who enjoys "iconic status" among critical adult educators (Mayo, 2009, p. 270; Torres, 2019). Freire (2005) advocated transformative learning that takes the form of conscientisation (Portuguese *conscientizacão*) (see also Chapters 2 and 3), a process in which learners develop an awareness of the economic, technological, political and cultural structures in society that contribute to inequality and oppression; it is essential for learners to reflect on their world in order to change it, which brings about liberation on both personal and societal levels. Conscientisation/critical consciousness thus takes place through *praxis*, combining action (doing) and reflection (thinking) about the world in order

1 Critical/radical adult education has been significantly influenced by the authors of critical pedagogy (e.g., Peter McLaren, Michael Apple, Stanley Aronowitz, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor) as well as Ivan Illich, Ettore Gelpi, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci and others (see Mayo, 2009; Torres, 2019).

to change it. In Freire's "dialogical" logic of emancipation (Biesta, 2017; Biesta & Leary, 2012), emancipation is understood as a process of the collective discovery of oppressive structures, processes and practices, in which the teacher and learner are positioned as "co-subjects". One of Freire's most important contributions to education – to his/its political-pedagogical project aimed at humanisation – is, as Schugurensky (2014) notes, having established an explicit link between education, power and politics, situated it in an ethical and philosophical framework that emphasises human agency, justice and freedom, and complemented it with a vision of hope and possibility. It is therefore crucial for this kind of education to build on a vision, hope and utopia of a possible better world, in addition to a critique of different forms of oppression, to avoid today's fatalistic neoliberal agenda that denies the possibility of a different world (Ireland, 2018).

Freire's concept of authentic dialogue between educator and learner (for more on this, see Mikulec, 2019, pp. 60–61) links the ideas to Jürgen Habermas (1984, 1987) and his theory of communicative action and the ideal speech situation (Mayo, 2009; Morrow & Torres, 2002; Torres, 2019; see also Chapter 8). The latter was adopted by critical adult educators – "Habermas' projects are effectively adult learning projects" (Murphy and Fleming, 2010, p. 12) – as they recognised the fundamental role of adult education in sustaining democracy (learning to democratise, to be an active citizen and to act communicatively) and in building real democratic institutions that can withstand the corrosive effects of capitalism and state administration (Brookfield, 2005; Morrow & Torres, 2002). Given that Habermas' hope for the regeneration of democracy rests on adults' capacity to learn – learning is a social process that depends on adults' participation in communicative communities in which they seek to understand each other – Brookfield (2005, 2010) argues that the key to this lies in adult education. According to Habermas, adult learning is an integral part of communication. Since all humans communicate, learning is a natural phenomenon that can only be prevented by an act of repression. In a world where adults communicate regularly, the fundamental question, according to Habermas, is not how adults learn but, on the contrary, how it is possible that adults do not learn. In a society dominated by power and money, where the "colonisation of the lifeworld" happens, most communication is the very opposite of communicative action. In fact, communicative action is rare and needs to be deliberately encouraged. At this point, adult education takes on a special significance, because communicative action is something that adults can learn, and adult educators can teach it by fostering learning opportunities that enable democratic debate, by teaching adults to debate honestly so as to exercise democratic discourse and expand public space (Brookfield, 2005, p. 256; 2010, pp. 127–128).

The most influential author in the field of critical adult education who has applied Habermas' theoretical ideas – in addition to those of Freire and Marx – and based transformative learning theory on them, is Jack Mezirow (Connelly, 1996; Murphy & Fleming, 2010). This background gives transformative learning theory a "critical and social justice orientation" (Fleming et al., 2019, p. 8) and, at least in the European context, a basis in "social emancipatory learning" (Fleming et al., 2019, p. 21). According to Mezirow (1991), transformative learning is the process of bringing about change in a frame of reference. It refers to a change of perspective – a system of uncritically held beliefs – in order to become more inclusive, open, emotionally capable of change and reflection, to generate beliefs and opinions that are more truthful and justified. The focus is on individual change – change in one's worldview, behaviour, epistemology and ontology (Hoggan, 2016) – based on the individual's cognition and rationality, the capacity for critical reflection, without which there can be no transformative learning (Fleming et al., 2019).

Starting from this contextual background, the following section will highlight the topics that Sabina's research focused on and which form the three main thematic sections of the present monograph. Before that, let us briefly look at her problematisation of adult education policy and the participation of vulnerable groups in adult education.

At the level of adult education *policy*, Sabina noted that in most developed countries adult education did receive political support, but "mainly at the level of ideological discourse linked to labour market needs", which means that adult education policy is mainly "economically rational and calculating", rather than being "socially and developmentally oriented" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2010, p. 154). Influenced by neoliberalism and the discourse of lifelong learning, "in the 1990s adult education became a central element of national education policies, economies and welfare, and a key tool in equipping European citizens to compete in the global market" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2010, p. 154; see also Chapter 9). Consequently, the concept of "education as a public good, as a factor in the formation of a democratic welfare society", as well as adult education in general and its impact on "maintaining the quality and dignity of human existence", are declining under the influence of neoliberalism, the weakening of community values and the emphasis on individualism (Jelenc Krašovec, 2010, pp. 154–155). Slovenia has not been able to avoid these trends (Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016). The adult education system, under the influence of the European adult education policy, has been increasingly exposed to "privatisation and marketisation pressures" and it has been losing its original role, which it used to have after Slovenia gained independence in providing "socially

equitable and universally accessible adult education aimed at the personal and social development and empowerment of all adults" (Jelenc Krašovec & Mikulec, 2017, p. 82).

On the issue of *participation* in adult education, particularly for adults from vulnerable social groups (e.g., prisoners, migrants, people with low education levels, etc.) or, in the parlance of international intergovernmental organisations, "low-skilled adults", Sabina emphasised that the issue of participation is primarily a structural social problem. "The low participation of certain population groups in education is mainly the result of exclusionary social practices (including education) which are closely linked to the ideologies of power, the interests of capital, the strengthening of individualism and the erosion of social care by the state" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2012, p. 114). She concluded that without "appropriate critical social action, the situation of vulnerable social groups cannot be expected to change in any way" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2012, p. 124).

1.2 Learning and education of older adults in the community

Education is one of the ways in which we can combat older people's social exclusion and marginalisation. The importance of education and learning for older people is confirmed by the findings of various research studies and international documents highlighting the positive impact of education and learning in old age on the older person's health, quality of life, well-being, social activity and ability to gain and maintain power and influence (see, e.g., Findsen & Formosa, 2016; Kump & Jelenc Krašovec, 2010; Kump & Mikulec, 2017; Schmidt-Hertha et al., 2019; see also Chapters 4 and 6). At the same time, education is an element of the well-being of the local community since, in addition to learning, educational activities promote socialising, cooperation, the exchange of knowledge, skills, experience and information among older people and with members of younger generations, and solidarity is maintained (Cappeliez et al., 2008; Formosa et al., 2014; see also Chapter 7).

Sabina's points of departure for studying older people's learning and education in local communities were critical educational gerontology and critical gerontagogy (see also Chapter 6). The origins of critical educational gerontology can be traced back to Allman's (1984) policy call regarding the education of the elderly, in which he argued that an increase in the quality of life of the elderly would not come about through any other learning experience than liberating education. The perspective

of critical educational gerontology involves raising awareness of the elderly as a collective body that is not only a recipient of help, but also a subject in the process of social transformation. Critical gerontagogy, as an educational practice of critical educational gerontology aimed at emancipating and empowering older people (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990), conceptualises teaching and learning as a collective and negotiated endeavour among older people. Such dialogue-based learning presupposes liberation and change (Battersby, 1987). Older people ought to gain more power and control over all aspects of educational activity, including the content, organisation and planning of learning programmes (Glendenning, 2000). Critical educational gerontology is thus rooted in "a radical attempt at overcoming the oppression that forces older people into ignorance, poverty and helplessness", and it asserts that "older adults should control their own thinking and learning, and that they should have opportunities for further development, deliberation, questioning and reflection on what they already know and on new learning content" (Jelenc Krašovec & Hlebec, 2012, p. 7).

Subsequently, Sabina spent several years studying the motivations, barriers, range and conditions of older people's learning and education, especially in local communities, in particular learning and education for older men (see Chapters 2–7). This research sought to improve the quality of older people's education and learning. It examined how to develop more diverse and accessible educational opportunities for older people that meet the diverse needs of the older population and its different goals, as well as the needs of specific communities (Jelenc Krašovec et al., 2014, 2019; Jelenc Krašovec & Kump, 2009; Kump & Jelenc Krašovec, 2014). Sabina concluded that more attention should be paid to identifying older adults' life circumstances and resulting educational needs and interests. This should be addressed by developing appropriate local and national education policies and by local authorities taking responsibility for providing educational opportunities and leisure activities. There is also a need to encourage educators and various volunteers to use their critical practices to create communities (see the importance of the role of "the shed coordinator" in Chapter 3 and "the geragogist" in Chapter 6) that will become learning spaces for diverse groups of older adults (Jelenc Krašovec, 2011c; Jelenc Krašovec & Kump, 2014; Kump & Jelenc Krašovec, 2010). This is particularly crucial for older men, as "informal spaces where men have the opportunity to socialise with each other can build a sense of reciprocity that connects older men to the community and enables them to contribute positively to their community in their own way" (Jelenc Krašovec et al., 2019, p. 13; see Chapters 2–5).

Sabina reminded us that older people are not always treated as an equally important part of their communities or equally involved in decision-making processes; they remain socially, culturally and/or economically disadvantaged, or experience such disadvantages due to their shared characteristics that differ from the dominant (and desirable) societal characteristics (see Chapter 2). Similarly, under neoliberal influences, public issues in later life are projected as the private troubles of the elderly. It is therefore essential to create and/or maintain a public space through adult education in communities that will revitalise the significance of the community, promote informal learning and strengthen civil society. Older people in particular can make a significant contribution to the development of their communities if public space is designed in a way that promotes democratic ways of coexistence (Findsen et al., 2017; Jelenc Krašovec, 2015, 2016; see Chapters 4 and 8).

1.3 Informal learning in public space and active democratic citizenship

Today, a large number of researchers seeking new ways of redefining the theory and practice of critical (emancipatory) education (e.g., Biesta & Leary, 2012; Sandlin et al., 2013, 2017; Wildemeersch, 2012, 2014) share the view that adult education needs to focus on "public pedagogy" – that is, the different forms, processes and spaces of education and learning that take place outside formal educational institutions, including popular culture (films, television, the Internet), informal educational institutions and public spaces (museums, parks, squares, zoos, monuments), dominant discourses (public policy, neoliberalism) and public intellectualism and social activism (Sandlin et al., 2013, p. 4) – these learning spaces help form adults' selves (see also Chapters 8–10). Moreover, different spaces can either promote or hinder transformative learning, in which learners develop more open and inclusive worldviews and learn to recognise how unjust dominant ideologies are embedded in everyday situations.

The public sphere, as the sphere in which public relations can be established, is the space of civic action. But as Biesta (2011, 2012) observes, public space today is damaged or destroyed by the market relations of competition and financial gain and, as a consequence, the crisis of democracy. Citizens lack opportunities to practice citizenship – that is, opportunities for democratic engagement, debate, dissent and participation, and for translating private troubles into collective issues – through participation in open democratic experiments. Democracy is learnt from life, and learning democracy in this way is truly a lifelong task. In conclusion, the processes and practices that shape the everyday lives of children, adolescents and

adults contain important and influential "lessons" of democratic citizenship. Some of these lessons are positive, but often the messages are negative (Biesta, 2011, see also Chapter 8).

Citizenship is a dynamic, contextual, contested and multidimensional concept (see Chapter 11), because it contains four different dimensions relating to status, identity, civic virtues and agency (Schugurensky, 2010). This results in different conceptions of citizenship education: the liberal democratic tradition of "citizenship as status", the republican tradition of "citizenship as activity", and the communitarian tradition of "citizenship as identity" (Wildemeersch, 2017). Civic learning can be distinguished, *inter alia*, according to whether a) citizenship education serves to reproduce the existing socio-political order and to integrate individuals into that order (the so-called socialisation conception of citizenship), and b) whether civic learning contributes to political subjectivity and autonomy (the subjectification conception of citizenship) (Biesta, 2011).

For those authors who seek to redefine the theory and practice of critical (emancipatory) education (see Biesta, 2011, 2017; Biesta & Leary, 2012; Wildemeersch, 2012, 2017), democracy is a process of subjectification, a process in which new political identities and subjectivities emerge. In this sense, the democratic subject is not someone with a predetermined identity who can simply be taught; rather, they must be understood as someone who is constantly emerging in new and different ways through engagement in democratic processes and practices. In the subjectification concept of citizenship, such learning is related to exposure to and involvement in the experiment of democracy. In short, democratic education and active citizenship are learnt through participation in democratic practices, which are not necessarily related to the knowledge acquired to participate in society, but to practices in which all the potential members of a community, regardless of their status, can actively participate and speak as equal members of that community, thereby learning democratic practices (Mikulec, 2017).

A practice that promotes active citizenship and can be an important lesson in democratic citizenship is participatory budgeting. Its basic idea is to give citizens a certain amount of power over how municipalities spend a share of their money; that is to say, officially elected or appointed representatives give up some of their "power" and devolve it to the citizens in budget-related decisions. Participatory budgeting is therefore of paramount importance for learning citizenship and developing political capital, and thus people's ability to impact political decisions (Goldfrank & Schugurensky, 2019).

While we are witnessing the shrinking and even destruction of public spaces and the marketisation and privatisation of space, Sabina's messages about the preservation of public space and the importance of learning in it are critical. Sabina (Jelenc Krašovec, 2015, 2017; Jelenc Krašovec et al., 2017) advocated open public spaces that play an important role in the social life of the community, and she highlighted the importance of learning and education in everyday life, where people live and work together – in the community (see Chapters 8–10). "Social change is generated at the level of the community, with all groups of the population working together towards solidarity, justice and acceptance of diversity. This is crucial for further reflection on the importance of creating, revitalising and preserving open public spaces that are accessible to a wide range of social groups" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2015, p. 65).

She was convinced that democracy is learnt through "training in democracy", through practice, and that learning in the public sphere and public space can be understood as civic learning (Jelenc Krašovec et al., 2017). Following Biesta (2012) and his notion of public education, Sabina believed that "'top-down' educational interventions in public space should be as limited as possible (i.e. limited to specific events, spaces or occasional interventions) and that at least part of public space should be left as intact as possible" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2015, p. 64). However, as inequalities, intolerance and exclusion are our everyday reality, Sabina argued for the need to rethink

> the significance and form of educational action in the public sphere whenever it is not 'bottom-up'. How to encourage participants in activities in public spaces and ensure that educational interventions are, above all, constructive (and beneficial for the community) experiential and transformative learning? What should educational intervention in public spaces be, so that it promotes a critical re-evaluation and rejection of anti-democratic and militant movements that thrive in the 'deadened' public space? (Jelenc Krašovec, 2015, p. 64)

Learning in public space "takes place informally, in the context of other issues, it is spontaneous and unplanned […], it is unintentional, often unconscious, and it fosters the growth of tacit knowledge" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2017, p. 4). Although this is invisible learning with tacit knowledge, it is a very important, because the learning "takes place during everyday actions of individuals who want to influence the quality of their lives, democratic practices, their own personal and possibly also professional lives" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2017, p. 4; see also Chapters 8–10). This is evident in Sabina's research on participatory democracy and participatory budgeting (Gregorčič & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016, 2018; Jelenc Krašovec & Gregorčič, 2017).

In these studies, the author finds that a) participatory democracy contributes to a more transparent, efficient, fair and democratic governance; b) it creates privileged spaces for learning since, in addition to civic virtues (solidarity, tolerance, openness, responsibility, respect), citizens develop social, cultural and political capital (the capacity to self-govern cities, to influence political decisions); c) citizens broaden their instrumental and technical knowledge of politics and citizenship, develop analytical, managerial and deliberative skills, and are able to successfully translate new understanding and competences into new social practices; and d) participatory democracy provides citizens with possibilities for (self-)transformation.

This kind of learning with tacit knowledge is an important activity for adult educators, which they need to "be aware of, discuss and promote" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2017, p. 5). In the context of promoting learning in public spaces, Sabina reflected on the role of adult educators in such activities (see Chapters 9 and 10). Drawing on discussions of public education (Biesta), public sociology and the public sociologist (Burawoy), and the public intellectual (Hall), she concluded that the adult educator should be

> *a person who speaks and listens, but also learns and writes about the importance of preserving the public and learning through public communication and action. They should keep distance from the market, from the state, and maintain a critical stance towards political and economic influences, as this is essential for their credibility […]. The public adult educator should defend the importance of the public versus the private, the open versus the closed, the unstructured versus the structured and the informal versus the formal. […] we conclude that the public adult educator is a person who promotes and raises awareness of learning, verbalises its effects, draws attention to them and at the same time encourages their production. As part of the knowledge network or knowledge embedded in a network, as part of our interpersonal network, we can hope that in different structural social spaces (in the community, in the market, in the home, as citizens, as producers, as members of the world), we will be able to make use of the possibility of choice (Olivera, 2017), so that education and learning will not only occur in educational institutions, but at every level of social life, in every pore of our existence, in everyday activities, in a sustainable and dynamic way. This is our goal and learning task. (Jelenc Krašovec, 2017, pp. 5–6)*

To sum up, the task of adult educators is to contribute to the development of active civil societies, active communities, and open public spaces in which all members

of the community can participate, express their opinions and views as equals, and learn democratic practices that have the potential to create new ways of acting, new identities, new knowledge and new ways of co-existence.

1.4 The professional development of adult educators and guidance and counselling in adult education

The research community (e.g., Egetenmeyer et al., 2019; Jarvis & Chadwick, 1991; Nuissl & Lattke, 2008) as well as international organisations active in adult education (e.g., DVV International, 2013) emphasise the importance of well-qualified staff working in adult education. Nevertheless, the question of whether or not adult education should be professionalised to a greater extent has been debated since the 1920s. One camp is in favour of greater professionalisation because it can help improve the quality and marginal status of adult education in society, while the other camp is concerned that professionalisation could lead to the marginalisation or exclusion of diverse voices and approaches in adult education (see, e.g., Grotlüschen et al., 2020; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). In addition, the range of professionals working in adult education is wide and varied, their opportunities for formal education and continuing professional development are few, they work in precarious forms of employment, and most adult educators also lack formal education required for the tasks – teaching, guidance and counselling, planning, etc. – they perform (Andersson et al., 2013; Jütte et al., 2011; Schwarz & Mikulec, 2020).

This disconnect between the two poles regarding professionalisation in adult education is also evident in Sabina's work (Jelenc Krašovec, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2014). On the one hand, she highlighted the need for the professional development of adult education practitioners, basing her argument on the role of "adult educators as facilitators of change in the individual" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2014, p. 2) and advocating the need to be familiar with the different philosophical and theoretical traditions in adult education,[2] because this is "what separates professionally well-qualified adult educators from those who are not. Professionally qualified adult educators are not only aware of what to do, but also of the principles and reasons behind their actions" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2014, p. 7). Correspondingly, she shared the

2 Sabina was aware that many consider adult education to be a field of practical action, and she emphasised that it cannot be developed without adequate reflection and theoretical underpinnings. She wrote: "However, it is precisely the practice of adult education that shows how power relations (in setting objectives, designing programmes, teaching methods, etc.) are a key component with a significant impact on the perpetuation of social inequalities and inequities. Practitioners are mainly concerned with questions of how to motivate marginalised groups for education, what methods to use when working with them, etc., while the causes of exclusion are hardly ever discussed" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2012, p. 115).

belief that guidance and counselling in adult education, which she herself worked on intensively, "can only be properly carried out by qualified counsellors, because quality guidance and counselling require specific conditions and specific expertise" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2011a, p. 62; see Chapters 12 and 13).

On the other hand, Sabina was fiercely critical of, in Habermasian terms, the "colonisation" of adult education, that is, the orientation of adult education towards "techniques and competences at the expense of social action" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2014, p. 10), of the reduction of the role of adult educators to the transmitters of knowledge and skills (Jelenc Krašovec, 2014, p. 13), of adult education oriented towards vocational education and training and the needs of the labour market, and, finally, of adult education reduced to the summative assessment of learning outcomes. Such colonisation and reduced professionalisation of adult education deprived Sabina of hope in both institutional formal adult education and the increased professionalisation of adult education. To paraphrase Theodor Adorno – who defined critical theory as a "message in a bottle" waiting to be opened in the near future (Morris, 2001) due to the apparent lack of addressees for the kind of liberating spirit that critical theory of society was supposed to awaken – Sabina did not leave this kind of liberating spirit in adult education for the future; instead, she identified it in learning and education that transpire outside educational institutions – "outside the organised and goal-oriented education that often makes people small and powerless" (Jelenc Krašovec, 2017, p. 4) – in learning and education in everyday activities that address the needs of communities (see also Chapter 8).

1.5 Conclusion

Sabina's thought and action were part of the tradition of critical/radical adult education. As such, her work highlighted a) the importance of education in the community; b) the belief that education can create a better world; c) the importance of education for the empowerment of marginalised social groups; and d) the importance of actively practising democracy and engaging citizens in public affairs. Sabina's commitment to and advocacy of the orientation of adult education towards the social activation of adults, which – with the rise of individualism, populism and the emergence of authoritarian illiberal democracies in Europe – is more vital than ever, should not be ignored either at the level of adult education policy or at the level of adult education practice. We have already mentioned that Sabina's thought draws on the currents coming into the field of adult education from poststructuralism and phenomenology, raising questions about the need to redefine the theory and practice of critical (emancipatory) education. Namely, various authors (see

Biesta & Leary, 2012; Friesen, 2021; Sandlin et al., 2013; Wildemeersch, 2014) have identified certain blind spots in this type of education (e.g., in the emancipatory authority of the teacher-explicator, the empowering dialogue, the understanding of truth that is uncontaminated by power relations; see also Kroflič, 2018, pp. 86–88; Mikulec, 2019, pp. 107–114). The beginnings of these considerations are evident in Sabina's last texts, although they were not yet systematically developed. Perhaps this is most clearly reflected in her rejection of institutionalised adult education and the role of the (critical) adult educator in educational institutions, and in her search for new spaces of hope and practices of selfhood in self-organised local communities and the importance of informal learning that occurs in these communities, even though she was not yet able to formulate clear theoretical or practical answers on how to act as an adult educator in such communities. Let this remain our task for the future – to further explore the possibilities for emancipatory adult education, both in theory and in practice.

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