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AFTERWORD

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Los Angeles

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My first encounter with Carlos Alberto Torres dates back several years through the reading of his work. His deep intellectual concern for social justice, together with his long-term engagement with radical investigations of the relationship of power, politics, and education, has resulted in an extensive production; a production that has crossed geographical borders. Moreover, C.A. Torres's books have been adopted as textbooks in graduate courses in a variety of countries, while his availability to attend lectures, roundtables, and conferences worldwide has brought him to Europe on quite a few occasions. It was during one of these trips that we first shook hands.

C.A. Torres and I joined the launching meeting of a research network on Policy Studies in Adult Education, under the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA). It was 2009. C.A. Torres had just been called to serve the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning as an independent expert for the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UNESCO, 2009). In the same year, he had been appointed honorary adjunct professor at the Department of Education at Aarhus University (formerly the Danish School of Education), where I held an associate professorship in adult education. It did not take long for us to share our concern for the relationship between adult education and the State and how it was being re-shaped under contemporary globalization processes.

Torres is widely respected for his scholarly expertise in popular education as it took off and developed in Latin America, with a focus on adult learning and community development. Moreover, in much of his writing he advocates critical pedagogy and social justice as means through which to challenge the relations between power and knowledge in education. Not less important, he was a longtime friend and continues to carry the legacy of late Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose personal, political, and scholarly engagement clearly demonstrated how adult education is never neutral but inherently political, a theme that emerges clearly in this book.

I have primarily researched adult education within the European context to understand its potentials and concrete contributions to the formation of democratic citizenship. In doing so, I also have been concerned with patterns of participation in adult education and learning opportunities and how these are interconnected with public policies that condition not only their availability, but also the pedagogical quality and significance of learning opportunities. In recent years I have turned my attention to the ways that adult and lifelong education policies, and related practices, are being framed and reshaped under the effects of globalization, in interaction among

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a plurality of political actors, including inter-state and international organizations, thus expanding my interest well beyond the European region.

While our common interests laid the foundation for a productive discussion, our diverse data sources and foci of analysis proved rather complementary in enhancing our understandings of the challenges for adult education in the twenty first century. These have been (and still are) discussed at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), thanks to C.A. Torres' invitations to co-teach a graduate course on Non-formal Education in Comparative Perspectives (2011) and lecture in the International Summer Program (2011, 2012) offered by the Paulo Freire Institute he directs, and more recently, thanks to a Marie Curie Fellowship. This ongoing relation also gave me the opportunity to follow at a rather close distance the making of *Political sociology of adult education*.

In this afterword, I intend to address some of the issues that the above debates have brought to light.

Education vs. Learning: Redefining the Object of Policy, Scholarship, and Practice

In Chapter I, C.A. Torres addresses the need for re-conceptualizing lifelong learning, arguing that “the terminology of the field is subject to much controversy and needs to be retooled carefully” (p. 8). As a matter of fact, in the broader field of education, and adult education in particular, we have seen a radical shift in vocabulary from adult and continuing education to lifelong learning over the past few decades. This is evidenced in the rhetorical emphasis of political discourses as well as in the plethora of scholarly work. The most recent examples include the *International handbook of lifelong learning* (Aspin et al., 2001), now in its second edition (Aspin et al., 2012), and *The Routledge international handbook of lifelong learning* (Jarvis, 2009). While these books use “lifelong learning” as an overarching category to explore the complexity of learning processes in diverse socio-historical and geographical contexts, and across sites and ages, they also acknowledge a more or less silent shift in paradigm. As Kuhn (1996) clearly depicts, a shift in paradigm represents a fundamental alteration in the way we define an object of investigation and how the results of such activity can be interpreted and used. When it comes to adult education, a paradigmatic shift that emphasizes learning (e.g. the outcome dimension) rather than education (e.g. the process dimension) embeds a conscious or unconscious reframing of the set of practices that characterize the object of adult education policy, scholarship, and practice. Accordingly, it is worth interrogating how this shift came about. It is my opinion that Biesta (2006) has provided one of the most convincing accounts to date of this paradigm shift as grounded in changes in education theories and philosophies, as well as in observable societal changes. In particular, he suggests that four interrelated trends have contributed to the move from education to learning. These can be shortly resumed, on the one hand, in the emergence of a constructivist

or socio-cultural turn combined with a postmodern turn in educational thinking, and, on the other hand, in empirical observation that more people spend more time and money in learning activities, while we witness “the erosion of the welfare State” and the rise of the market economy (Biesta, 2006, p. 18).

Basically, from a theoretical and philosophical point of view, it is Biesta’s (2006) argument that scholarly work, for instance the influential book by Lave and Wenger (1991) *Situated learning*, have paved the way for pushing to the background the teacher-learner relation and/or the knowledge content of such interactions, while bringing to the foreground the activities through which people learn in interaction with others that may or may not include education professionals. This has been paralleled with a loss in appeal of education as a viable project of modernity – a project inherited by the Enlightenment and grounded in philosophical humanism and its creed in the rational autonomous being, hence entangled with a deep concern of what constitutes an “educated” person, thus with the type of practice this entails (*bildung*). This is a project that, from a postmodernist perspective, has failed, as provocatively captured by the catchy title *The end of education* by Neil Postman (1995).

From an empirical point of view, the above changes have been accompanied by an increase in individual investment of time and money by adult and mature learners in “individualized” and “individualistic” learning activities (Field, 2000). While the former refers to the form in which learning takes place, as it occurs in interaction between a person and one or more artifacts; the latter addresses the purpose and content of such learning, which are more often than not limited to the pursuit of individual satisfaction. In addition, Biesta (2006) highlights the changing nature of the State in relation to the rise of the market economy that has brought about a decrease in the redistributive function of the State, however coupled with a modification of the relations between the State and its citizens, now based on economic rather than political terms. C.A. Torres has amply addressed this trend throughout this book by contemplating not only the emergence of but also the crisis of such a “neoliberal State.”

Yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Milana, 2012a), at least an additional trend to those above mentioned shall be considered, namely political globalization and the increased influence of inter-state organizations in shifting social imaginaries on the relationship of education, work, and the socio-economic development of nation-states.

Seen in this perspective, transnational and inter-state entities with their own interests in education not only assign to the concept of lifelong learning particular values, meanings and norms about the world that become accepted truths; in doing so, they produce specialized knowledge in a conscious effort to legitimize specific political interests, to set the agenda of what can be discussed, and to influence State policies. Yet State membership in transnational and inter-state entities blurs the boundaries between knowledge production and

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knowledge appropriation or utilization; and this cautions against ascribing the shift from adult education to lifelong learning policies either to global or to local politics. (Milana, 2012, p. 106)

This trend also entangles the emergence of a “global polity” (Corry 2010), or mobilization of a set of social actors, toward the governance, specifically, of adult education. Accordingly, adult education has been made an explicit subject of political action based on de-territorialized norms (cf. Milana, Milana, 2012b). This is evidenced, for instance, by UNESCO’s CONFINTEAs, gathering representatives from governments, academia, other transnational entities, including non-governmental organizations, and civil society more broadly. This set of social actors jointly sign recommendations, declarations, and frameworks for future action in the field of adult education worldwide. Similar evidence is found in policy briefs, reports, and cross-national studies promoted by the OECD, with the voluntarily participation of its members, or in more recent communications, conclusions and resolutions by the EU’s joint institutions, representing its member states (Council of the European Union), citizens (European Parliament), and the EU as a sovereign body (European Commission), which result from wide consultations among a variety of social actors within and across member states. Still, much empirical research on adult education is still locked in a “nation-state, policy-as-government paradigm” (Ball, 2012, p. xii).

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS TO RESEARCH ‘GLOBAL’ ADULT EDUCATION POLICY

Taking as a point of departure that adult education is no longer just a State affair, but has mobilized a set of social actors in its governing, I now shortly discuss some theoretical and methodological parameters to study “global” adult education policy.

Public Policy and Values Permeability

Traditional accounts of public policy contend that governments are faced with social problems to which they should react by identifying the best possible solutions, and believe that government intervention is not only desirable but also necessary to increase national economic and social growth through redistributive measures (Simon 1961; Bardach 1981). Over time this approach showed its limitations for several reasons, among them its failure in delivering generalizable and predictable policy knowledge and outcomes (Wagner, 2007), thus it was replaced by a “structured interactionist” approach that, although still anchored in a similar understanding of policymaking as a rational instrumental process, acknowledges the existence of competing views (Lindblom, 1980; Wildavsky 1979). It was during the 80s and more prominently in the 90s, however, that a different tradition to understanding public policy emerged. This tradition, generally addressed as “post-positivist,” interprets public policy as a “social construction” that is spatially and temporally

determined, thus it questions the alleged value neutrality of public policy (Bacchi, 2009). In line with this argument, for instance, it has been noted that Keynesian economic theories, which used to structure much of public policy in the past, in the 80s and 90s had lost their appeal for governments under the new inspiration of market ideologies framed by neoliberal thinking (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Within this context, “the proliferation of sub-national discourses that dispute the authority of the nation-state, disrupt commonplace understandings of the nation-state as the natural scale of politics” (Ozga et al, 2006, p. 5). A de-naturalisation of the authority of the nation-state, however, does not deny that the regulatory functions of the State still hold.

By applying a post-positive approach to public policymaking, adult education policies within national contexts shall be seen, theoretically, as social constructs that authoritatively allocate country-specific values. These constructs depend on and condition the way social problems experienced within a nation are identified and addressed. However, through the complex relations that State officials hold with a variety of political agents within and outside governmental structures, the framing of social problems as well as governmental responses are permeable to global ideologies and imaginaries. Acknowledging these relations implies, from a methodological viewpoint, unlocking adult education policy research from a “State paradigm,” which delimits the study of education policy to only some of the places in which it is currently being done.

A Strategic-Relational Approach to the State and Agents' Positionalities

A review of recent theories of the State, as Pierson (2004, p. 77) has observed, although not exempt from controversies, highlights at least a greater historical sensitivity, with their acknowledgement of the uniqueness and contingency of particular State formations, as well as awareness of the complex relation between State and society. Against this background, the traditional definition of the State as an “organized political power” still holds true, however, the organizational means and modality through which it exercises such power in diverse societies is always the resultant of contingent factors and global forces. Poulantzas (1978), for instance, refuses the reductionist interpretation that the State is simply subordinated to the logic of capital or an instrument for class struggle and suggests that, as an “institutional ensemble,” the State has no power in itself. State power results from the balance of social forces that act within and upon such an ensemble, and which depends on particular institutional forms. Further elaboration of the State as a “complex social process in and through which specific institutional orders and their broader social preconditions are secured” (Jessop 1990, p. 5) can be found in Jessop’s (1990, 2002, 2007) distinctive “strategic-relational” approach. From this perspective, the State is always the result of the balance of social forces that are spatially and timely situated. This implies that the differential capacity of political agents to pursue their own interests within a time horizon is dependent on the complex relation between the

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strategies these agents adopt and specific State structures, rather than embedded in the State system. Thus the State cannot be reduced to an autonomous actor in relation to others, as its action is determined by the very nature of the broader social relations in which it is situated. In line with this argument, the State represents at the same time the site, the generator, and the product of “strategic selectivity.” As a site of strategic selectivity, any given State’s type, form, or regime is more or less accessible to certain political agents, and not to others, depending on the strategies these agents adopt to gain power. As a generator of strategic selectivity, politicians and State officials adopt strategies to impose some kind of unity or coherence on State’s activities. Finally, as a product of strategic selectivity, any given State’s type, form, or regime always results from past political strategies and struggles, thus current political strategies embed past patterns of strategic selectivity as well as their reproductive or transformative potentials (Jessop 1990, 2007).

In his latest work, Jessop (2007) combines the dialogical relation between structure and agency with that of ideation and materiality, recognising the relevance of discursive selectivity in the pursuit of strategic selectivity. From this perspective, the emergence, selection, retention, contestation, and replacement of discourses, although based on social imaginaries, always resonates to a certain extent with the agents’ material experience, thus providing cognitive templates that interact with strategic selectivity at the intersection of structural constrain and conjunctural opportunities.

By applying a strategic-relational perspective to the State, State power and action are the resultants of strategic and discursive selectivity by diverse political agents, thus policy processes (as well as their effects) are always contingent, and subject to negotiation and coordination that takes place at individual, organizational, and inter-systemic scales. Accordingly, I contend that forms and mechanisms through which States participate in the activity of inter-state organizations (as well as the effects of such participation) are spatially and temporally determined by strategic and discursive selectivity. Accordingly, membership in inter-state organizations can act as a conjunctural opportunity for (member) states to (re)gain (national) legitimate authority, at the same time as it can act as a structural constraint, in favor of inter-state organizations acting as state-like institutions (i.e. EU, UNESCO, OECD). State-like institutions define or implement collective decisions affecting member states, and their relative populations, in the name of a shared (inter-state) common interest. From a judicial perspective, even when ratified by member states on a voluntarily basis, these decisions still represent a formal agreement binding its signatories to cross-national cooperation (Reinalda & Kulesza, 2006).

Methodologically, this invites us to consider the positionality of countries in inter-state organizations that do policy work in the field of adult education by looking at factors such as the exchange of economic resources, the assignation of responsibilities to State officials within inter-state organizations or of staff from these organizations within national governments, continuity and ruptures in communications among governments and inter-state organizations over time, etc.

*Policy Sociology, the Anthropology of Policy and the Re-Bordering of the
Research Field*

The scenario depicted above has led several scholars to re-define how (public) education policy can be understood and studied, thus Ozga (1987) argues for a “policy sociology ... rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and drawing on qualitative and illuminative techniques” (p. 1444). Others comply with this claim, however stressing ways in which globalization processes affect public policy. Rizvi and Lingard (2010), for instance, argue that while old accounts of policy processes may still hold useful, these processes are now framed globally and beyond the nation-state, though differently articulated in nationally specific terms. Accordingly, in the authors’ view, policy sociology should not only describe power relations and processes through which policies are developed and allocated, but also point at strategies for progressive change that challenge oppressive structures and practices. Yet as Ozga (2000) contends, “policy is to be found everywhere in education, and not just at the level of central government” (p. 2), thus investigations of public policy should also take into account broader policy interpretations, mediations, and enactments in a variety of “policy settings,” namely “places, processes and relationships where policy is made” (Ozga, 2000, p. 1), which include, but are not limited to, governments.

Policy anthropology shares similar assumptions. Levinson, Sutton and Winstead (2009), for instance, comply with a definition of policy that goes beyond a written text, stressing the volition, or policy will, of a multiplicity of actors. Specifically, they speak of “appropriation” to depict the process of creative policy interpretation in which a variety of actors with policy volition engage in their everyday practice. Similarly to Levinson et al. (2009), Shore, Wright and Però (1997) define a policy as socially and culturally embedded within domains of meanings at the same time as it reflects those meanings. However, they take distance from more traditional top-down or bottom-up approaches to policy by introducing the concept of “policy worlds,” which encapsulate political processes that occur in different sites through the interactions of diverse agents, concepts, and technologies, and generate, consolidate, (and sometime resist) new forms of governance. Accordingly, they argue that any policy can be interpreted, theoretically, as possessing agency, or a complex social life in which it interacts with people, institutions, and other artefacts. In this line of argument while it is not always possible to trace back to an authoritative choice or agent, nor all policy actors involved, it is still possible to make a policy an entry point or lens through which to investigate relations of power and governance, by looking at the links among agents, institutions, discourses, and material practices.

Thus, while a policy sociology perspective conceptualizes policy as a process initiated well before the production of a text (or artifact) that has material and discursive effects on those who are governed through such processes, anthropology of policy assigns agency to policy. Both approaches have important methodological implications for research in adult education as they invite closer investigations

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of power relations and forms of governance using a policy as an entry point, and suggest at least two analytical categories that, despite their fluidity, can guide the research. These are the “policy setting” (Ozga, 2000) and the “policy world” (Shore et al., 1997). While the former captures a combination of places, processes, and interactions through which policy comes to life, the latter crosses different (geographical) sites and political issues, to capture the interactions of diverse agents, concepts, and technologies. Both categories prove fruitful in moving beyond the “nation-state, policy-as-government paradigm” when researching “global” adult education policy.

To Conclude

Let me now turn to this book, which raises the fundamental question: “What is left if adult education has lost its transformative and empowering vision and mission, and why did it happen?” (p. 20). In answering this question, C.A. Torres brings to light a set of rationalities for public policy in adult education that led to diverse ideal-types of State models. A set of rationalities that, although not exhaustive, points at ways in which not only conceptual developments within the humanities but first and foremost within policy discourses set the agenda of what can be discussed, which questions can be asked, and which answers can be provided when it comes to adult and continuing education policy and practice worldwide, as I have made the case in the preceding sections.

I interpret C.A. Torres’ approach as an invitation to bold scholarship that resists taken-for-granted assumptions as the only possible “consciousness of belonging across the world-time and world-space” (Steger, 2009). The main argument he puts forward in this book is to look at the crises of modern civilization as the bigger picture that can open a “window for alternative rationalities in adult education” (p. 39).

According to common sense, “crisis” points at a social event of unstable nature that often occurs abruptly, and is usually deemed to bring about negative changes, or at least uncertainty about established conditions. C.A. Torres seems to suggest a different way of looking at and interpreting these crises. When we draw on its original Greek etymology, “crisis” refers to judgment, power of distinguishing, decision, choice, etc, thus emphasizing its qualitative aspect that is either subjectively or objectively, for or against. In line with this perspective, a crisis represents a crucial, decisive situation, a turning point that can lead to a positive change in due time. In psychology, a crisis can bring positive changes in a person’s life. In a drama, the crisis represents the peak of a conflict that is finally resolved. Thus it is worth interrogating under which conditions the crises of modern civilization could bring about a positive change and finally resolve the peak of the conflict that contemporary globalization processes have brought about in the field of adult education.

With this book, C.A. Torres brilliantly does so; hence creating a space for affirmative action not by politicians, technocrats, or bureaucrats but by scholars

(and practitioners) who comply with the “untested feasibility” advocated by Paulo Freire as a guiding principle for their work. The concept refers to a combination of a personal belief “that the world is not in a state of being that can be taken for granted, and that a different world may be dreamt about,” however combined with “the idea of agency and possibility, meaning that another world is not only desirable but also possible” (Schugurensky, 2011, p. 74).

C.A. Torres “stands up for adult education” by claiming for a political sociology to examine adult education systems, organizational processes, institutional dynamics, rules, and regulations – including prevailing traditions and customs, however intertwined with a pedagogical perspective rooted in an epistemology that favors critical consciousness. Such an epistemology recognizes that all human interactions and experiences involve power relations; therefore it shall always be subject to constant questioning and systematic critique. In other words, it is an epistemology that refuses reducing adult education to vocational and work-based education, while expanding it to support a sense of community across culture, race, gender, and geographical territories. In short, his is an epistemology that problematizes the relationship between society and the environment, and re-appropriates adult education as a public sphere of deliberation rather than a good in exchange for money.

If we take C.A. Torres’s invitation seriously as scholars, we are called upon to establish new research agendas that investigate the effects of globalization on adult education and the relations between transnational policymaking and state models that are conditioned by different types of structural forces – ranging from power relations among different interest groups, economic relations between foreign aid donors and recipients, the functioning and role of the State, etc.

In ending this afterword, I would like to raise few questions that may guide future research in adult education: Which structural forces frame what counts as adult education? How do they delimit or increase the State’s maneuver in this field? Who makes policies at the global level? How are these policies remade through local implementation? And last but not least: What are the implications in very different contexts? How do they help to reduce the North-South divide?

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PRAISE FOR THE BOOK-BACK JACKET

“If we think of those who have linked adult education with the aspirations for truly equitable, democratic and participatory politics, we think of Richard Tawney and the Fabian Socialists, of Raymond Williams and birth of cultural studies, and Paulo Freire and the celebration of the power of all ordinary people to create new knowledge of transformation and to name the world. With this book, the best book in my opinion from one of our most prolific scholars, we add the name of Torres to those whose words leap from the page and into the strategies of possibility. Bravo.”

Budd L Hall

Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social
Responsibility in Higher Education
University of Victoria, BC, Canada

“This book offers a word of critique but also one of hope. In our dispiriting era, Torres provides a cogent political sociology of adult learning and education, based on a Freirian critical theory. Yet, the author also provides an inspiring perspective on how not-taken-for-granted realities can be reverted by new social movements and critical public intellectuals, which does fill scholars and educators with hope.”

Massimiliano Tarozzi

Department of Cognitive Sciences and Education
University of Trento

“Adult learning and education systems are potential corridors of communication that have the potential to link various spheres of life and subsystems of human activity... and to do so in more socially just ways. Our societies have yet to figure out how to develop these systems to achieve such a feat. This book is at the forefront of synthesizing what we need to know to make it happen.”

Richard Desjardins, OECD. Paris.

Adult education serves many sometimes contradictory purposes—for example, skill development, self realization, and political empowerment. In this lucid book, Torres shows how these multiple purposes reflect different understandings of the political subject, the state, and the possibilities and meaning of social change in our neoliberal moment. The reader is left with a powerful vision of adult education of, by, and for social justice.

Professor John Rogers, UCLA

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK-BACK JACKET

Through the rich insights of a political sociology of education, Carlos A. Torres provides a cutting-edge analysis of the systems and structures that currently shape and constrain adult education but also of the ways we might reconceptualise and reformulate those systems and structures for liberatory and democratic possibilities. At a time when we are in urgent need to re-engage our pedagogical imaginations for social justice education, this seminal book offers precisely the nourishment required to refuel our intellectual, critical and creative capacity to dream of and develop more equitable, reflexive and transformative educational spaces.

Penny Jane Burke
Professor of Education and Director of Paulo Freire Institute-UK
University of Sussex

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