The State, Civil Society and the Citizen

Exploring Relationships in the Field of Adult Education in Europe
Chapter 1

On the complexity of relationships between the State, civil society and the citizen within adult education

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The debate on the relationships between the State, civil society and the citizen is the major issue of discussion in this book, which focuses mainly on social, economic, political and educational changes that are being experienced at the present time in a wide range of contexts, and on how they interact with transformations of adult education. These transformations are caused, among other factors, by globalisation, the growing importance of supra-national and international organisations, the re-structuring of nation-states and eventually the re-definition of civil society, organisations and individual citizens. Indeed, the changes being mentioned are challenging adult education which, in its turn, either contributes to or resists them.

How are the relationships between the State, civil society and the citizen being shaped by social, economic, political and educational factors? How have these relationships been influenced by global, international and supra-national trends, as well as by the plural, diverse and heterogeneous perspectives generated in national and local settings? How is adult education dealing with such changes? The discussions, which are found in this book, try to answer the previous questions by focusing on issues that the authors found relevant.

Based on different theoretical perspectives and assuming diverse methodological approaches, the chapters of the book express the voices of their authors on themes that are characterised by complexity. For this reason the reader will not find a homogeneous theoretical framework supporting the analyses. However, the authors all agree on the need for understanding the new “realities”, since this book is reflecting on issues in times of transition (Beck, 1997), and on the fact that to do so new categories and approaches are needed. A major characteristic of these times of turn from modernity to what Bauman (2004) called liquid modernity is the disruption, in several national contexts, of the role of the State in social life from direct provider of services to the co-ordinator of several forms of provision that are State-funded. Consequently, new providers of
services, as well as earlier providers operating in new forms and with new functions, have emerged. In this context, the changes in the relationships between the State, civil society and the citizen were inevitable and they have affected in multiple ways, the field of adult education.

The analyses presented in several chapters of this book reveal tensions in the way that adult education is conceived at the international and national levels. They show different patterns of civil society intervention in the field, which some claim should be renewed, and they show how education and learning processes developed in non-formal and informal contexts vary across spaces.

Historically, the State has been a relevant player in the field of adult education. However, this role knew different formats in space and time, sometimes due to the fact that it has interfered in the sphere of civil society and of citizens – who often have had to fight for the preservation of their own learning spaces.

With the foundation and consolidation of the Welfare State, its intervention did become fundamental and adult education turned out in some countries to be a specific domain or a field of practice structured around pre-occupations with socio-cultural development and economic modernisation. In this context, adult education, as a State policy, pervaded political, economic, social and cultural spheres and gradually became a project for modernising society based on social justice and equality of opportunities. It is also in this context that in some countries, especially those in the north of Europe, the State supported non-formal education initiatives that strengthened social rights and the social and personal development of citizens.

Owing to the crisis of the Welfare State and the emergence of globalisation, the emergence of new practices and discourses in the field of adult education have been noticed, as a direct or indirect result of public policies. These new modes are profoundly related to new management policies and governance in a world where the place occupied by work is also changing. As far as the goals for adult education are concerned, qualification and training have new supporters for whom flexibility, adaptation and the acquisition of competencies for competing (Lima, 2007) are crucial. In this framework, emancipation, re-education, equality and social justice have new meanings. Due to this, initiatives of civil society are also being re-shaped, which has allowed Edwards & Usher (1998) to argue that adult education is not a field of practice anymore but a moorland, which presents new aims and participants, and which contains new tensions owing to the social and educational inequalities that public policies seem unable to solve.

Therefore, new meanings and articulations between education and citizenship are emerging, which allow pluralistic and complex perspectives on the role of adult education in social, economic and educational fields.

A significant number of chapters of this book address these kinds of issues through the analysis of the policies produced both at the State and interna-
tional levels, which include the appropriation of the official discourse of Euro-
pean Union agencies.

Civil society involves a wide range of constituent elements, such as or-
ganisations and individuals that are different from each other, which are pre-
senting various aims that are sometimes even contradictory. White defines it as:

(...) an associational realm between state and family populated by organiza-
tions which are separated from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state
and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their
interests or values (1994, p. 379).

Including individual citizens and their informal and formal associations, civil
society has a long tradition of being active in the adult education arena. In many
circumstances the initiatives it promotes are alternative forms of carrying out
adult education vis-à-vis the ones developed by the State. In other circumstances
it does what the State cannot or does not want to do.

In the context of the erosion of the Welfare State, and it should be re-
membered that this was – in some cases – a promise more than a reality, civil
society has been growing in importance by having a more evident involvement
in social policies. Therefore, a great variety of organisations have been called
upon to perform programmes of formal and non-formal education in multiple
national contexts. This fact has allowed relevant changes such as i) the estab-
ishment of many organisations that are providing very specific adult education
initiatives with public or EU funding; and ii) the re-configuration of organisa-
tions that have had a long experience in adult education and popular education,
which are now compelled to adapt themselves to the establishment of partner-
ships with State departments for developing different initiatives. As Offe (2005)
puts it, many organisations today are providing services that four decades ago
started to be a State priority and have now lost their radical identity. Sometimes,
in the framework of partnerships established between the State and the differen-
tiated but renewed civil society (Giddens, 2000), this latter entity seems to have
been co-opted by the State.

The changes mentioned above had a significant impact on the way adult
education organisations – and the individuals inside them – are looked upon, on
how the relationships among themselves are viewed and on how their interven-
tions are interpreted. In this book, different theoretical positions may be found in
this respect. Some authors are profoundly sceptical about neo-liberal policies, as
well as the hegemonic power of the State in adult education, which still needs –
according to them – to be conceived of as an arena for dissent. For others, the
building of new approaches that emphasise the new roles of the State, through
policies that are aimed at promoting the learning society, need to be stressed.
Still others find examples of a growing partnership between the State and civil
society in their strive towards achieving common goals.
In the contemporary complex context, very often the citizen has been imputed with new duties and responsibilities in his/her educational and training pathways. He/she has to learn to look after him/herself in order to become self-sufficient and conscious, as a consumer of educational goods and services that are to be found in the market.

In the framework of current transnational policies, lifelong learning has been a relevant idea for governments in European countries, since the beginning of the 1990s. The consensus created by the need for a global policy of lifelong learning stresses competitiveness and economic growth (Field, 2006). Duties and responsibilities of the individual citizen are emphasised, as well as the development of competencies to compete in the knowledge society. Social inclusion – and not social justice anymore – has become a major political aim, and employability, a relevant concern.

How do citizens cope with their own State in the context of such changes? And how is the State preparing itself to appease and/or engage citizens in the initiatives being implemented? These are other relevant questions examined by the authors of this book.

The topics analysed in this book reflect a wide span of orientations. Thus the book chapters express several voices that make it difficult to find a unifying line of concord (cf. Wildemeersch, Stroobants & Bron, 2005). Therefore, looking closely at the contributions in this book may lead to the conclusion that complexity characterises the issues discussed. Even so, it has been possible to organise the chapters according to three core themes: i) the changing role of the State and its influence in the domain of adult education; ii) adult education policies in national and international contexts that also includes civil society organisations; and iii) citizenship or the plurality of citizenships and how it is (or they are) exercised in time and space.

The changing role of the State

The first core theme of this book sets out the changes in the involvement of the State in adult education. The history of adult education has strong roots in civil society. Many initiatives of re-education and emancipation are geared outside the State and in some occasions against the State. The State, characterised by coercion instruments, represses the liberation ambitions of social groups that feel oppressed. In this framework, adult education becomes a strategy for emancipation and social transformation.

The consolidation of the Welfare State allows some sectors of adult education to be brought into the State. The providing State was in itself a political, economic and social formation defining social policies intended to correct inequalities provoked by the process of economic accumulation. Here, adult education seeks to promote social justice and equality for society.
However, the State itself contains contradictions that are the outcome of the attempt to combine the process of capitalist accumulation based on social reproduction and control and the process of legitimisation supported by the expansion of social rights. In a period of economic crisis, these contradictions generate the collapse (or re-definition) of the Welfare State. The emergence of deregulatory processes implemented by the State with respect to the economy in the framework of globalisation stands out as a most relevant sign of the changes in progress. The impact of globalisation on citizenship and on adult education, in particular, reveals that people are confronted with various challenges, which involve changes in lifelong learning as far as aims, forms and methods in adult education, contents, participants, etc. are concerned. The analysis of the role of the State also reflects the need to search for cosmopolitan aims in adult education owing to the fact that this field cannot be constrained by the borders of the nation-state.

Although the State is now required to have a restricted capacity for intervention, the emergence of the regulatory State shows its contradictory condition. Many authors emphasise a less evident intervention of the State but a stronger emphasis on accountability, control and evaluation procedures (see Afonso, 1998). Furthermore, although traditionally based on a specific nation and territory, State intervention these days has an international dimension by means of international and supra-national organisations (such as the European Union).

This book intends to be a contribution to these debates by analysing such questions and raising many other queries about the changes that are occurring. Jim Crowther and Ian Martin, in their chapter entitled *Civil society and the State. Some implications for adult education*, consider that since the mid-1970s, in the United Kingdom, as in other advanced capitalist societies, diverse trends in the relationship between the State, civil society and the citizen can be noticed in relation to adult education matters. Among these, the emergence of flexible capitalism that valorises the short-term nature of work must be emphasised, as well as the stress upon competencies and relationships among actors. The move from a providing State to a regulatory one is another aspect to be considered. The State seeks to limit welfare provision and wishes to socialise people for the market and for its most evident rules, which creates several divisions. The processes of individualisation and re-moralisation are central to public policies and lifelong learning, while active citizenship and social inclusion transform public issues into personal problems.

In this framework a growth of managerialism can be noticed in policy discourses, as well as a new importance given to aims intended to control policy outcomes. In this context, the fear of internal risks, such as unemployment, grows, as well as the fear of external threats leading to the reinforcement of repression and surveillance. On the other hand, the consequences of globalisation are more powerful today and new economic and political centres emerge in
competition with the State, which have obliged the State to re-organise into international or supra-national organisations. In this context, if power is concentrated in a distant body, legitimacy is maintained by the use of power and control instruments at a local level. As lifelong learning has become a wide consensus about what education, training and learning should be, the resistance tradition that for many years was characteristic of adult education seems to have become disheartened. So the authors raise the question: “Is current thinking dialectical enough?” and argue for the need to reinforce concerns for social justice and for the invention of a (new) cosmopolitan approach to adult education.

And this is the subject that is the central issue in the second chapter, Cosmopoliticity and adult education in the era of globalisation. Here, Carlos V. Estêvão discusses the impact of globalisation on the construction of a cosmopolitan conception of social justice and adult education, and identifies two types of cosmopolitism: the neo-liberal and the democratic. He defends his view that, if the cosmopolitan view issuing from a neo-liberal economic globalisation presents an attractive dimension of the concept of cosmopolitism, it omits the internal rupture of citizenship, thereby, giving the status of cosmopolitan citizens mostly to those who are more privileged within the market, while dismissing those remaining as “incompetent” or “irrelevant”. On the other hand, democratic cosmopolitism is motivated by certain goals, such as the control of the use of force, tolerance, respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy. However, it does not exclude the fact that the duty to protect the rights of citizens is mostly fulfilled in democratic States through constitutional procedures, guarantees and reforms. Therefore, the author presents the expression of democratic cosmopoliticity, as the most adequate to grasp the challenges of globalisation, due to the fact that it is related to a wider and more radical sense of post-national democracy. Besides, the idea of building a democratic cosmopoliticity encloses a dynamic view of the cultural and political identity of the political communities. Carlos V. Estêvão ends the chapter by proposing a cosmopolitan education that might be simultaneously a political education that is based on values, such as democracy and social justice, which respects difference and which goes against the hegemony of neo-liberal dominant trends.

The analysis of globalisation, civil society and citizenship is reframed in the chapter of Manuel Barbosa entitled Education, citizenship and civil society. New meanings and new articulations. The author discusses the impact of globalisation and of governance spread over several levels of intervention and on citizenship, which is in his view a concept characterised by plurality. He discusses three different models of citizenship: the liberal, the communitarian and the republican, and tries to establish relationships between these models and education. He raises questions about what might be expected from the relationship between civil society, citizenship and education, and in his argument, the intervention of the State in relation to the several levels of governance and to the
tension between centralisation and de-centralisation should be questioned. Presented in the framework, multi-culturalism, democratic management of difference, plurality and the participation of citizens become central issues for civil society and for the forms that democracy might promote.

**Adult education policies**

The second core theme of the book has to do with policies. Several chapters discuss variations of the involvement of the State, civil society and the citizen in adult education. In current lifelong learning policies, governance is often conducted through different methods that are aimed at making the citizen more active and responsible for his/her own life. For this reason, the adult is asked to allow him/herself to be guided by public policies and to guide his/her educational pathway according to the forms of education and training initiatives provided. For instance, in OECD and European Union documents and policy statements, it is possible to observe the need for combining education and work towards the promotion of social inclusion. The urgency of acting and reacting in social and educational domains in order to overcome unemployment and to achieve employability is considered not only a responsibility of the nation-state but also the task for supra-national organisations. This orientation is the basis for the building of policies and the development of programmes and projects that seem to reveal a recurrent pattern of intervention in different countries and regions. In this context and in the framework of public policies, what will be the goals and domains to be stressed and funded? What will be the place reserved for civil society? What will be the role of the citizen?

Therefore, in the second section of this book, it is possible to find several texts that discuss State policies or policies of international or supra-national organisations while other chapters analyse changes in discourses about the national or transnational contexts of adult education. The chapter by Andreas Fejes is a relevant example of an analysis of national public adult education policies – in this case Swedish – and of the influence of European Union policies concerning lifelong learning and the understanding of democratic and active citizen in that national context. Based on the key-concept of governmentality originally proposed by Michel Foucault, the author discusses the construction of the citizen in policy discourses in his chapter entitled *Active democratic citizenship and lifelong learning. A governmentality analysis*. If in the past the citizen was constructed in relation to formal education, nowadays he/she is seen as an entrepreneur and/or a rational individual, who decides upon his/her educational and training pathway and tries to find solutions for problems and needs with which he/she is confronted, as far as lifelong learning is concerned. In this framework, citizenship is considered a responsibility, which is fostered through education and lifelong learning in a society in rapid change that needs individuals to be
flexible and who should easily adapt themselves to competitive environments. These discourses that stress domination are supported by neo-liberal rationality and by the importance given to governance. Following Fejes’ arguments, there seems to be a lack of free space for opposition in these discourses, although according to Michel Foucault any power relationship has in itself the possibility for resistance.

In the chapter entitled *The needy and competent citizen in OECD educational policy documents* by Judith Walker, the discussion concerns citizenship and policies that are formulated outside the traditional space for intervention by the State. Based on the idea of an *inclusive liberalism*, the author looks at OECD discourses proposing a critical argument about the role of such an organisation and of the values associated with citizenship and lifelong learning. This approach seeks the articulation of the State, the market and civil society in the promotion of inclusive strategies. Judith Walker argues that lifelong learning should support a *call to conversion* of the citizen. In OECD discourses the worthy citizen is considered an active individual, who possesses the moral obligation of participating dynamically in society and in the economy by using lifelong learning to raise his/her productivity and to prevent social exclusion.

The following chapter stresses the impact of public policies in civil society organisations and also specific forms of adult education initially promoted by civil society organisations and progressively controlled by State intervention. In the chapter entitled *Changes in public policies in Portugal. Adult education and training courses* by Paula Guimarães, one can find a discussion about public policies concerning adult education and training in Portugal in which shifts can be noticed in the relationships of the three aforementioned actors (the State, the civil society and the citizen). The author argues that these changes may be linked with the re-definition of the role of the State in the framework of the crises in the Welfare State. This circumstance has compelled civil society organisations to change their role. The chapter focuses specifically on a third sector, non-governmental organisations and on adult education initiatives that are aimed at making the citizen more responsible for his/her education and training pathway and for his/her potential employability. In a changing environment, social justice and equality – two relevant ideas of the Welfare State – get new meanings, as the State prefers an intervention based on the regulation and co-ordination of tasks that in the past, were the responsibility of the providing State. Here, the aim is to provide conditions for the working of the market, even if it is supported by third sector organisations. In this framework, adults involved in training are the embodiment of *citizenships in transition* (cf. Afonso & Lucio-Villegas, 2007) and as so, they are taking possession of lifelong learning by attributing new meanings to the changes they experience in their lives.

The establishment of the regulatory State has been followed by (or has been following) the emergence of social movements and new civil society or-
ganisations of a cosmopolitan and counter-hegemonic character. These are aimed at resisting the centripetal trends of globalisation and global capitalism and at searching for other educational and social transformative possibilities. Thus, a significant outcome of these changes is that civil society too has been evidencing new forms of action. Civil society organisations in many countries are taking over the responsibilities for provision from the public governmental ministries in charge of vocational training or basic adult education initiatives. Apart from vocational training and basic adult education, the State also supports non-formal education initiatives. From these initiatives, *folkbildning* has been an example of a search for active citizenship and participatory democracy in Nordic countries and in others that have adopted this form of popular education.

However, civil society organisations today are more dependent on the State than in the past, even if these organisations are governed by values, missions and policies of their own. These differences, although appearing to be an advantage, contain profound contradictions when it is understood that these present societies are themselves in times of transition. Due to this, they seem to be willing to reinforce participation of communities and adults in regional and local settings, while at the same time strengthening the wide consensus around *life-long learning*. However, how does civil society deal with such tensions and contradictions? In this complex context, what may be expected from adult education carried out by civil society or run by State authorities?

The book contains two chapters that are centred on *folkbildning*, which is a quite specific form of popular education developed mainly in Northern European countries. The chapter by Pelle Åberg – *Co-operating across borders. Adult education and transnational civil society co-operation* – calls attention to issues of transnational co-operation involving civil society organisations working in adult education in two countries – Sweden, where *folkbildning* is widespread, and Estonia, where this form of popular education has not formerly been of significance. Current globalisation and its impacts encourage an increase in transnational co-operation but it is not just the market that goes beyond borders of the nation-state, due to the existence of multi-national enterprises, the flow of capital, or new forms of work. The same has been happening to civil society, as far as adult education is concerned. Supported by national and supra-national funding programmes, civil society has developed projects concerning the dissemination of the conception, methods and pedagogies of adult education. More cosmopolitan today than ever, adult education itself needs to be seen – in a context of rapid change – as a significant space, which leads to the questioning and eventual giving of new meanings to the role it plays in contemporary societies together with the organisations which promote such education.

This is what Ola Segnestam Larsson, in the chapter entitled *Folkbildning as ideology* discusses. The author analyses the role of ideology and its impact on civil society organisations. Ideology is defined as a system of ideas describing
the relevant reality, while also projecting a desired state of affairs and indicating possible ways of reaching that particular desired state. On the other hand, folk-bildning is usually presented as a specific domain containing pedagogical forms that evolve more freedom and that require free will from adults to join in initiatives. However, Ola Segnestam Larsson argues that in civil society organisations, as in many other organisations, ideology has other aims that allow the existence of shared expectations among participants in order to motivate them to take certain kinds of initiatives and even to lessen the difficulty of organisational change. The author goes further in his analysis by stressing that ideology may even transcend these aims when dominating adults and by rendering natural interests that promote the existing social order (without allowing them to be contested).

**Citizenship**

The chapters related to this core theme emphasise new ways of experiencing citizenship. Citizenship can be defined by the set of rights and duties to which social actors are subject. Central to the concept of citizenship is the discussion on rights. Among rights, the political ones are of particular importance. They allow adults to participate in decision-making about public issues and others related to State administrative affairs by which people take part in the election of political representatives and in the formation of government. Apart from political rights, economic and social rights also have to be considered. The expansion of such rights is tied to work. Work represents an important process for citizenship, as it allows the extension of other rights related to welfare, health, education, etc.

The expansion of the Welfare State permitted the consolidation of political, economic and social rights. In the Welfare State these rights favoured a concept of citizenship related to the nation-state and national identity. However, in more recent decades, neo-liberalism, globalisation and the re-definition of the State have led to the erosion of such rights. This circumstance is related to changes in the economy, which has been progressively reduced to the instrumental character of the market and of commercial exchange. It is also linked to the rise of structural unemployment and the precarious nature of labour relations.

The erosion of political, economic and social rights has allowed the transition from an unambiguous understanding of citizenship to a concept with multiple meanings. Citizenship today goes beyond national boundaries. It is European and cosmopolitan; it is also associated with social differences related to ethnicity, gender, etc. Thus, citizenship, as a concept, includes not only political aspects but also social, educational, cultural, environmental and other dimensions. Therefore, in a context of transition, the plural citizenship or citizenships
go along with the changes that the State has been through. The chapters which constitute the last section of the book, concern citizenships in transition; namely, changes in the roles of citizens, as well as the times and spaces related to the exercise of citizenship.

The chapter by Emilio Lucio-Villegas, António Fragoso and Ana Garcia Florindo, *Participatory citizenship. Reflections on the participatory budget and adult education*, describes a particular relationship between the State and civil society, i.e. the social movements that have been participating in activities concerning the participatory budget of the city of Seville in Spain. Owing to its political character, the participation of adults in the definition and execution of a public budget is a chance for the building of a collective identity and for emancipation. Focusing on a participatory process that is also simultaneously a learning process, the authors argue that important literacy processes were developed by the participants. In spite of the problems experienced, active participation started off an educational process oriented to achieving global literacy. This process was intended to help people to read their lives and the worlds they live in. Another process discussed is related to the expansion of civil society by the taking of an opportunity created by the State, which intentionally weakened its own action and the usual social control mechanisms that it, itself possesses.

It is precisely literacy that is the main issue analysed in the chapter by Maria de Lourdes Dionísio and Rui Vieira de Castro, *Re)Defining literacy. New roles of the workplace*. This chapter looks at an action-research project concerning literacies in the workplace in an industrial context. The relationships that the workers establish in a context of changes are emphasised. The authors discuss these shifts and the way literacies support these transformations. The context under analysis is characterised by multiple literacy requirements, including texts and practices that are diverse in format, content and complexity. The development of work-oriented reading and writing skills by means of training initiatives constituted a central requirement for workers. In the end, however, these training initiatives could be understood as an opportunity for developing the social, cultural and political dimensions of citizenship.

In the context of this time of transition, which is favouring the re-interpretation of the concept of citizenship, the role of adult educators has both new possibilities and new problems. In the framework of public policies, adult educators disseminate the official discourse and search for the development of practices consistent with political ends. Indeed, they may be respectable as Ian Martin sustains (Martin, 2006). However, there is also the possibility of recontextualising the use of this official discourse and favouring practices that respect the pluralistic character of citizenship, as well as an opportunity of maintaining the roots of adult education and being radical. For this recontextualisation, critical reflection about educational processes initiated by adult educators permits
the participatory and emancipatory education of adults, and also prompts social transformation.

Using the conceptual framework of Basil Bernstein in their chapter entitled *The use of the official pedagogical discourse by adult education agents. From reproduction to recontextualisation*, Armando Loureiro and Artur Cristóvão analyse the role of a civil society organisation; namely, a local development association involved in the promotion of State-funded forms of adult education. The authors start their argument by considering that, even if these forms of provision are strongly regulated within a framework of public policies, there are other possibilities for adult educators to articulate the official discourse with contextual and abstract knowledge. The professional activity of adult educators includes a recontextualisation of the official discourse that is supported by local knowledge stemming from the use of reflexive competencies. Consequently, the results of their study show that, even in areas strongly regulated by the State, it is possible to carry out activities that do more than just satisfy and, thereby, reproduce the guidance provided by State-dependent entities. Due to this reason, even when confronted with forms of provision in the framework of public policies, the system of adult education and training allows for the possibility of the participation of adults and their emancipation far beyond what is officially regulated.

The complexity of options that adult educators are faced with in the present is reflected in their identities as individuals and professionals. In a world in which change is the rule, new work contexts give rise to the learning of new roles. In this context, individuals experience biographies in transition (cf. Alheit, 1999). These biographies give new significance to the profession of adult educator, as well as further meanings to the individual and collective nature of adult education.

In the chapter entitled *Educational cultures, system change and university professionals in East Germany after 1989*, Rob Evans approaches changes in individual biographies, namely, in the biographies of professionals in adult education and specifically in higher education. The author addresses the theme of tensions and shifts in the relationship between the individual and a civil society caught in dramatic change due to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of an old world order. The changes analysed are related to higher education institutions in which professionals have had to rebuild their own biographies. Concerned with the need of demonstrating that he is facing biographies in transition, the author uses biographical interviews that stress aspects of these professional lives and the social, economic, political and cultural dimensions these people confront in the context of processes of rationalisation. From these ruptures new notions of self and of citizenship arise.
This book is the result of action by the Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Network of the European Society for Research in the Education of Adults (ESREA). Its chapters originate from papers presented at the ESREA Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Network Conference held at the University of Minho in Braga, Portugal in June, 2007. After having been selected by the editors, these papers underwent a peer-review process and have been re-written or revised by the authors.

For fifteen years, through the organisation of academic events, this Network has become a significant forum for presenting and discussing theoretical perspectives and research projects on topics that are within its scope. The continuous editorial activity of the Network closely linked to the seminars it has promoted has contributed to a wider dissemination of its outcomes. While the focuses of individual seminars have varied, the constant interest has been in the role(s) that adult education plays and could play in developing and maintaining a democratic and vibrant civil society.

As has been shown above, a variety of theoretical frameworks, methodologies and approaches can be observed in the different texts of this book, which is intended to contribute to the setting out of a new, more informed and complex basis for discussions about the relationships between the State, civil society and the citizen in distinct European countries and regions. The discussions are, therefore, useful to researchers in the field of adult education, as well as other social scientists interested in topics related to civil society, such as NGOs, social economists and the like, but also to professionals concerned with the trends that are forcing adult education to recontextualise its aims and practices.

As an outcome of the work of its authors, to whom the editors would like to express their thanks once again, this book is also the result of the involvement of translators and proof-readers that have had an important responsibility in turning these analyses into more comprehensible English. The editors are grateful to Anthony M. Lavender for the general English revision of the chapters of this publication as well as to Rosa Lisa Iannone (a Canadian and student of European education policy and management, living in Copenhagen, Bilbao and/or London) for her help in formatting this book and for melting many English languages into a comprehensive and consistent one. Her competent and devoted work, ongoing patience, persistence and resilience are greatly appreciated. The Unit for Adult Education of the University of Minho, Portugal is also acknowledged for its work in preparing the network seminar and in allocating manpower for preparing this book. In short, the involvement of its human resources and financial support were essential for this publication.