



LEARNING IN PRODUCTIVE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



Tulevaisuuden oppiminen ja osaaminen

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The project will analyze the nature and potentials of learning within productive social movements. Social movements are powerful arenas for learning how to initiate societal change and gain transformative agency. The motivational and interactional intensity of social movements is often seen as a desirable model for human learning in general.

Learning in social movements has been largely addressed in adult education literature as formation of political awareness and commitment to social justice through civic engagement. This literature tends to rely on case descriptions of specific social movements. Theoretically ambitious sociological and cognitive studies of learning in social movements are rare. Relatively little rigorous research has been conducted on the actual mechanisms and processes of learning within social movements.

The Learning in Productive Social Movements project will address that gap, bringing together advanced conceptual and methodological resources from the learning sciences – in particular, the activity-theoretical framework of expansive learning – and solid experience from cultural and cognitive studies of social movements.

In the present project, social movements are seen as embedded in fluid networks or multi-activity fields and connected to relatively durable forms of social production of tangible use values – thus the notion ‘productive social movements’. Social production refers to a model of socio-economic production in which the creative energy of large numbers of people is coordinated into large, meaningful projects mostly without traditional hierarchical organization. Social movements are a major vehicle for ordinary people’s participation in public politics.

The project will analyze learning in productive social movements focused on the control and uses of land, housing, and public space in both rural and urban contexts of living. This broad domain of issues and objects has proven to be a durable and growing source of social movements in the global scale. In this domain, political and civic struggles are often intimately connected to practical issues of livelihood and production of use values.

Most published analyses of social movements are oriented at understanding political struggles, issues of power, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion within and around these movements. In the present project, the analysis of data will be focused on the potentials of and obstacles to expansive learning in social movements.

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