

**Fergal Finnegan** is a lecturer at the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth, National University of Ireland and is a co-director of the Doctorate in Higher and Adult Education and the PhD in Adult and Community Education programmes. Before becoming an academic he was a community adult educator and literacy worker for a decade and these experiences have strongly shaped him. Fergal's research interests include biographical methods, social class, access and equality in higher education, transformative learning, popular education and social movements as well as critical realism and Pierre Bourdieu. Fergal is an active member of the European Society Research on Education of Adults (ESREA) for almost a decade and currently a co-convenor of the network on *Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning*. He is one of the editors of the journal *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* (<https://www.rela.ep.liu.se>) and one of the editors of the *Journal of Transformative Education*.

### **Reflections on the meaning, limits and possibilities of critical adult education research**

The presentation will offer reflections on the nature of critical research which is longstanding interest of mine\*. For over a decade I have been pursuing research which aims to capture and amplify the voices of students from 'under-represented' groups (working class student, students from ethnic minorities etc.) with a particular focus on biographical interviews. This was the primary basis for my co-authored book *Access and Widening Participation in Irish Higher Education* as well as edited a comparative study of non-traditional students across Europe entitled *Student Voices on Inequalities: Challenges for Theory, Policy and Practice in a Time of Change*. My presentation will discuss how I understand critical research, what I sought to achieve and what might be learnt from the limits and weaknesses of these efforts.

I look forward to our dialogue.  
Fergal Finnegan

\*As it is linked to the presentation colleagues may be interested in this edited book on critical and creative research in adult education that is free to download  
<https://brill.com/view/title/56609>