

# Critical AI literacy as sivistys: Designing hopeful adult education through struggle

In Nordic traditions of adult education, concepts like “Dannelse”, “Bildung” and “Sivistys” affirms the right to understand and critically engage with the forces shaping one’s life and work. As generative AI becomes embedded in work infrastructures, this tradition is challenged by upskilling agendas that treat AI as a neutral skill to be acquired by individuals, rather than as an entangled socio-technical system with profound consequences for professional autonomy and democratic participation. By prioritising functional adaptation over judgment, agency, and collective meaning-making, such AI upskilling agendas are actively contributing to the ways in which the AI technologies themselves are reshaping how labour is recognised, valued, monitored, and governed.

This contribution presents a work-in-progress, design-based research project that explores adversarial learning encounters with AI as a site for critical adult education grounded in inquiry, exploration and curiosity. Rather than treating critical AI competence as a predefined attribute to be measured, the project approaches it as a situated and emergent phenomenon that develops situated in, and specifically through, practical engagement with AI systems.

The research presentation will contribute to the educational discussion of adults’ right to understand and contest the technologies they are entangled with, even when that understanding cannot be cleanly taught, measured, or stabilised. We share this early-stage research as an invitation for feedback on our reimagining of adversarial interactions with AI from merely “hacking” an opportunity for engagement and as principles of adult educational practice grounded in uncertainty, experimentation, and democratic care.