### ESREA Life History and Biography Network, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2nd to 5th March 2017

# ‘Discourses we live by’ (How) Do they benefit the world we live in?

# Abstract

### Employability discourse and recruitment practices in Sweden – Consequences for non-traditional graduates

Employability is a concept that has gained much attention in European as well as national policies in Europe. The discourse of employability seems to be related to a labour market model where the individual is seen as responsible for their own employment and HE seen as a means for bringing students the competencies needed on the labour market. However, little emphasis is put on the policies and practices on the labour market itself. This paper focuses on the recruitment practices on the labour market and its consequences for non-traditional students’ employment.

The aim of the paper is to describe and discuss what consequences the recruitment practices have for non-traditional HE graduates’ opportunities to become employed. The paper deals with the following research questions:

1. How do employers describe the recruitment practices used in different organizations in Sweden and what dilemmas do they find regarding non-traditional students oppor­tunities to become employed?
2. What strategies do non-traditional students use to become employable and what struggles do they experience?
3. What are the consequences of the recruitment practices for non-traditional graduates’ oppor­tunities to become employed after HE?

The paper is based on ten semi-structured interviews with HR and sales managers in the public, private and third sector and three biographical interviews with non-traditional students in their last year of HE.