

Irit Rogoff  
**“Education  
Actualized” –  
Editorial**

01/03

*This month, we are very glad to have our first guest-edited issue of e-flux journal care of Irit Rogoff, whose activities we have followed with great interest over the years, drawn to her insights into the potentialities of education unbounded. Already a number of contributions to the journal in its first year (those of Tom Holert, Luis Camnitzer, and Dieter Lesage, in addition to Rogoff’s own immensely influential text, “Turning”) have surveyed current conditions and possible reformulations of educational structures. But at a time when even the status quo of many educational institutions is threatened by budget cuts, tuition hikes, and measures taken to standardize and regiment learning (see for instance the recent protests throughout the University of California system or the Bologna Process in general), and the art world increasingly seems to absorb an “educational turn” as a mannerist curiosity, it becomes all the more important to consider how forms of learning and exchange, of thinking and making, can take place within flexible, temporary, unstable configurations – which may or may not be educational or instructive – unrestricted by measurable outcomes or predetermined expectations.*

– Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

All around us we see a search for other languages and other modalities of knowledge production, a pursuit of other modes of entering the problematics of “education” that defy, in voice and in practice, the limitations being set up by the forces of bureaucratic pragmatism: a decade of increasing control and regulation, of market values imposed on an essential public right, and of middle-brow positivism privileged over any form of criticality – matched by a decade of unprecedented self-organization, of exceptionally creative modes of dissent, of criticality, and of individual ambitions that are challenging people to experiment with how they inhabit the field, how they inhabit knowledge.

Our notion of “Education Actualized” lies in the tension between these antagonistic spheres. If we think of actualization as the incarnation of an idea of “an education” within one particular educational system, we arrive at the duality we inhabit and work with. This issue is teeming with voices – angry and bewildered, critical and speculative, voices of ideas put to the test, producing fictions of impossible encounters – all efforts to grasp and locate, to actualize and inhabit this ongoing process in which we are all immersed.

You will see that almost every one of the contributions here reflects an unease and a recognition of the dangers and limitations

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wrought by attempts to regulate and homogenize a vast range of education cultures. The marketing of education, which began in the U.S. and followed in Britain, has now taken hold on the European continent. The dangers inherent in education becoming a market economy geared towards profit and revenue, privileging a reductive notion of “outcomes,” “transferable knowledges,” and “entrepreneurship” are clear to all. But the emerging dominance of cognitive capitalism over European education systems and their inscription into capital economies of debt and credit, of self-support, of precarities for both students and professionals, is only one side of these developments. The other is the politicization of “education” to an extent we have not seen since the late 1960s.

Not only are students – whose access and conditions have worsened considerably – being treated as paying clients with no say or part in determining their own education, they are also increasingly organized in effective and insistent ways.<sup>1</sup> But many other spheres and strata of education have also been galvanized and linked up with the proliferation of self-organized structures that have emerged in the past decade of waning public-sphere culture and increasing privatization.

This issue of *e-flux journal* aims to bring together and extend a series of projects and interactions taking place between 2006 and the present that involved extensive investigations into “education” as a site of knowledge production, alternative modes of questioning, new vocabularies, analyses of the conditions of contemporary education, and negotiations between institutional and self-organized cultures. The voices that make up this issue have all been involved with related projects: A.C.A.D.E.M.Y was a series of exhibitions and publications (Hamburg, Antwerp, Eindhoven) that saw life over the course of 2006–2007; “Summit – Non Aligned Initiatives in Education Culture” was a large-scale meeting held at the HAU theatres in Berlin in 2007; in other formations and in other conjunctions we met and collaborated through the “Dictionary of War” project, the “Edu-factory,” border academies, nomadic universities, committee meetings, conferences, discussions, and dinners. But, rather than document or build directly upon these activities, we wanted to bring about an “actualization” of these originary events – a constant process by which concepts acquire extensions and qualities.

This does not purport to be a representation of this vast field of thought, action, and agitation – the work collected here is in dialogue with many other exponents of this field, part of a network of shared concerns and open

collaborations. This might help to explain what could appear to be a fairly arbitrary conjunction of people who do not belong to any particular organization, institution, or profession. Some of us are academics, some activists, and others are artists, curators, or publishers; everyone seems to be turning their hand to forms of activity and articulation outside their typical sphere of operations. Our contact with “education” as a political platform, a polemic, and the site of much of our work seems to have stretched us in unexpected directions, as can be seen through the actual writing that has been produced for this issue.

The focal point of the issue is the specter that haunts European higher education – the Bologna Accord on education, the so-called reforms of the system across the continent of Europe that aim to standardize it with comparable entry points, degrees, outcomes, credits, funding structures, criteria of excellence, and so forth. This has undoubtedly produced a very “Eurocentric” view of the map of education, but so great is the potential upheaval of “Bologna” that we decided to focus on this part of the world, but also to place it in dialogue with colleagues and collaborators in the U.S. There is equally a decisive “geopolitical” drive to Europe’s education policy that fuses the former East and the former West into one knowledge tradition, thereby erasing decades of other models of knowledge in the East and producing an illusion of cohesion through knowledge economies and bureaucracies.

Our thanks to *e-flux journal* for giving us the space to elaborate the ideas included in this issue and for founding a platform hospitable to expanded discussions around creative practices. Our thanks to the Siemens Art Fund that initiated the A.C.A.D.E.M.Y project and to the Kulturstiftung des Bundes, Germany, that funded the “Summit” project, to Van Abbemuseum and MuHKA, which took part in extensive discussions and collaborated on these projects, and to the many other institutions, forums, and funders who have supported this work as it has progressed.

My thanks to Susanne Lang who took on co-editing this issue, to Ashley Whitfield who took on its production, and to the authors who rose to the challenge and explored the numerous facets of “education” as a vital, critical, and communal space.

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See the Web site of  
Emancipating Education for All  
for an overview of student  
activities,  
<http://www.emancipating-education-for-all.org/>.

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