

AN EDUCATIONAL TURN IN CURATORIAL AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following arts-based essay, structured as a three part article, is based upon research conducted during the past few months as a MA Curatorial Practice student, at University College of Falmouth, on the theme of *the educational turn in contemporary curatorial and artistic practices*.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my tutor, and leading supervisor, Dr Virginia Button, for her advice and support.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This introduction sets out to contextualize the following arts-based essay which has been conceived as a three-part article for publication in *L+Arte* journal, in Portugal.¹

L+Arte is probably the most read art magazine in Portugal and its audience is to some extent a specialized, knowledgeable one but mostly it is composed of gallery-goers and others with a general interest in contemporary art.

The aim of these articles is to provide readers with a sound and valid contextualization, background and critical information about projects occurring within the *educational turn*, informing and encouraging a much needed debate leading to their adequate framing and consideration.

Since the late 1960s, contemporary curating has morphed, diversified, and multiplied, from an activity primarily involved with organising exhibitions of discrete artworks to a practice with a considerable extended remit, with emphasis upon the framing and mediation of art and the circulation of ideas around art, rather than on its production and display. It is the curator's job to foreground, boost, and stimulate the critical and transformative potential of the extra-exhibitionary dimension in much recent work.

¹ The articles' spelling, references, notes, and bibliography comply with MHRA Style Guide and are not formatted for publishing.

The essay is divided into three separate, smaller articles to assure each one would have an adequate length for publication but also to allow approaching the subject from three different, complementary angles or perspectives: its history, its relation with the Bologna Accord and current situation of art education in Europe, and the analysis of some of its relevant projects.

There has been, in recent years, increased debate about the incorporation of pedagogy into curatorial and artistic practices. About what has been termed the *educational turn*.

In the introductory text to their book *Curating and the Educational Turn*, Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson state that discursive interventions and relays have long and historically played a supporting, secondary role to the exhibition of contemporary art but more recently, they have become the main event.² Curators and artists have absorbed into their practice educational models, formats, methods, mechanics and programmes, presenting their work as discursive platforms, temporary schools, laboratories, collaborative workshops, talks or symposia.

Most practitioners are anxious to avoid any suggestion of a single homogenous *style, movement, theme, or tendency*.³ Nevertheless, these disparate networks of curators, artists and art collectives are united by their intensive investigations into *education* as a site of knowledge production, motivated by a general dissatisfaction with current art education conditions, in response to it and

² Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, 'Introduction', in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), p. 12.

³ Tom Holert and Mick Wilson, 'Latent Essentialisms: An Email Exchange on Art, Research and Education', in *Curating and The Educational Turn* (London: Open Editions, 2010), p. 324.

analysing it: the Bologna Accord, its unified accreditation system, the standardization of courses and commensurability of curriculum structures, the decline of public institutions and the ongoing privatization, appropriation, and commodification of knowledge.⁴

It can be argued that this is not an only recent phenomenon - remember Joseph Beuys and his performance-lectures - but still, education as a form of art making constitutes a relatively new medium and only recently have these kind of projects reached a critical mass worthy of debate and discussion.

These new projects, including Anton Vidokle's *United Nations Plaza* and *Night School*, *Sommerakademie* (at Zentrum Paul Klee, in Bern), Kristina Lee Podesva's *colourschool* (in Vancouver), Pablo Helguera's nomadic *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, *Aftenskolen/The Evening School* (in Malmö, Sweden), *Copenhagen Free University* (in Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen's apartment) and *The Paraeducation Department* (Sarah Pierce and Annie Fletcher's project at Witte de With), just to name a few, 'trade the wisdom and charisma of a Beuysian figure for a collaborative and contemporary set of learning experiences and exchanges', observes Kristina Lee Podesva.⁵

Projects of the same educational, processual, and collaborative nature are also being developed and presented in Portugal: *Petit Cabanon* (Inês Moreira's project in Porto), Ricardo Valentim's *Film Festival*, Mariana Silva and Pedro

⁴ The Bologna Accord proposes to standardize all institutions and programmes of higher education within the European Union by 2010. The Bologna Process was launched with the Bologna Declaration on 19 June, 1999.

⁵ Kristina Lee Podesva, 'A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art', in *Fillip*, vol.6 (2007) <<http://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>> [accessed 12 July 2010].

Neves Marques' *The Escape Route's Design* and Margarida Mendes' projects in *The Barber Shop*, again just to name a few.

Unlike in other countries, these projects are happening more or less discretely and intuitively, and are not being discussed or contextualized under this overarching umbrella of the *educational turn*.

In a (still) conservative artistic environment, these projects often face public and critics' discredit. They are criticized for being unaesthetic, providing no sensory stimulation or visual engagement and gratification. In regard to these projects, critics, writes Grant H. Kester referring to dialogical works, 'still apply a formal, pleasure-based methodology that cannot value, or even recognize, the communicative interactions that these artists find so important'.⁶ Accused of being theoretically and practically indistinguishable from some forms of political or social activism, their status as *art* is continuously questioned and these projects are often dismissed as failed art.

Even at risk of simplistic homogenization, locating these projects within this construct of the *educational turn* would provide a more strong and relevant contextualization and inform a more consistent and profound debate.

This turn to education carries a unique charge that should not be disregarded or neglected. The ethics, politics, and social issues and questions behind this turn have had an immediate social and cultural affect but will also have a strong, longer term effect. They should therefore be discussed, drawn to attention, highlighted to a wider public and, if possibly, counteracted.

⁶ Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 10.

The first article takes the form of an in-depth discussion of early appearance of the *educational turn*. Mapping its history will create meaning and provide a more solid background to the readers, allowing them, when confronted with this kind of works, to frame them correctly and to better interpret them.

One of the earliest and most well-known instances of education as a form of art making is Joseph Beuys' practice beginning in the 1970s and especially his performance-lectures. Beuys presented several educational lectures as performances, documenting them in a series of photographs and blackboard drawings, intended to prompt further debate and discussion carried out by the audience. Beuys' practice laid the groundwork for subsequent movements such as Institutional Critique and Relational Aesthetics, which have, in turn, revived education as art.

Concurrent with the move toward the de-aestheticization (i.e., withdrawal of visual pleasure) and dematerialization of the art work was the ongoing dematerialization of site. As Miwon Kwon described in *One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity*, the use of dematerialized mediums such as lectures, classes and discussions prompted a shift from site-specific art making, in which particularized physical space was a paramount concern, to a subset of practices that treat site specificity more broadly, expanding the notion of site to include its sociological frames, institutional context, and economic and political pressures.⁷

In addition, Beuys' invitation to the audience to participate in his performances, to co-create meaning alongside the artist and to address the issues

⁷ Miwon Kwon, 'One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity', in *October*, vol.80 (Spring, 1997), p. 91.

he found pressing, placed the production of art and knowledge within the scope of the viewer just as much as that of the artist. In many ways, Beuys legitimization of collaboration and interaction as a means of making art is foundational to what is now called *art of encounter*.

The recent turn to pedagogy has emerged within this art of encounter, among other turns to cuisine, clubbing, sport, business, leisure, therapy, spectacle, retail and communication, lists Dave Beech.⁸ Considering that it is no more significant than any number of competing and equivalent formats in the repertoire of the art of encounter obliterates education's specific implications, charges and affect.

These works face several assorted critiques, from being unaesthetic to suppressing visual gratification, but also of miscegenation of the role of the artist with that of the curator. Or one can even agree with Hassan Khan who, in his essay *A Simple Turn: Notes on an Argument*, claims that such turn is just the 'one that the art industry demands with predictable regularity every couple of years', that it is an intellectual fashion.⁹

But what is the risk of grouping all these projects, artists, curatorial approaches and practices under this one term *educational turn*?

The second article discusses in further detail the relation between the educational turn, the academy, and the Bologna Accord.

⁸ Dave Beech, 'Weberian Lessons: Art, Pedagogy and Managerialism', in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), p. 48.

⁹ Hassan Khan, 'A Simple Turn: Notes on an Argument', in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), p. 119.

Undoubtedly one of the strongest drives behind the *educational turn*, the focal point of this article is the Bologna Accord, the so-called reforms of the educational system across Europe, which proposes to standardize all institutions and programmes of higher education within the European Union by 2010, such that degree programmes across all disciplines will be interchangeable and uniform following North American models, with comparable entry points, outcomes, credits, funding structures, criteria of excellence, and so forth.

Some of the fundamental issues underlying most of these projects are the dangers and limitations wrought by attempts to regulate and homogenize a vast range of education cultures and of imposing market values on an essential public right, gearing it towards profit and revenue.

Rather than simply lament the decline of public institutions, the ongoing privatization of knowledge, the resulting precariousness of access to education, and increased control and regulation, academics, curators, and artists are challenging themselves to respond to the situation, in a decade of unprecedented self-organization and of exceptionally creative modes of dissent and criticality.

The final article presents and analyses some of the projects that have helped shape this turn, both internationally and in Portugal.

From Anton Vidokle's *UnitedNationsPlaza*, that rose from the ashes of the unrealized Manifesta 6, to the polemic *Aftenskolen / The Evening School*, Goll & Nielsen's project in Malmö publicly accused of mismanagement of public money during the general election campaign in 2001, or *colourschool*, a somewhat parasitical school dedicated to the study of colours, these projects have shared

concerns and characteristics such as a school structure, a dependence on collaboration, a tendency towards process-based production, a free space for learning, and a preference for explanatory, experimental, and multidisciplinary approaches for knowledge production.¹⁰

Different in their genesis, methodology and protocols, these projects all evolved through cumulative processes of exchange and dialogue but had very different outcomes and public reception.

Even if not a formal art movement, these projects illustrate a specific form of art practice, autonomous and heteronomous, with its own characteristics and effects, related to, but also different from, other forms of art and other forms of activism as well.

¹⁰ Kristina Lee Podesva enumerates 10 shared concerns characteristics in her article 'A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art', in *Fillip*, vol.6 (2007) <<http://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>> [accessed 12 July 2010].

2 ARTICLES

2.1 AN EDUCATIONAL TURN

An apartment in Copenhagen opens its doors as a temporary school. A biennial plans to take the form of an art school on Cyprus and ends up as a series of seminars in Berlin. A night school in Malmö unites two sides of a troubled border. *Education* has become a new buzz word in the art world and everyone is talking of an *educational turn*.¹

It's not that curators or artists are adopting education as a theme but rather that they are operating as an expanded educational praxis, incorporating pedagogy into their curatorial and artistic practices. They have been developing intensive investigations into *education* as a site of knowledge production, proposing unconventional and unofficial frameworks for education, as an alternative to the corporization of the academy, in response to and analysing the conditions of contemporary art education in this *Bologna period*.²

Both curators and artists have appropriated into their practice educational formats, methods, programmes, models, terms, processes and procedures, in the form of laboratories, discursive platforms, temporary schools, participatory workshops, libraries, reading groups, lectures, talks, and symposia. Projects which

¹ As Mai Abu ElDahab noted on the occasion of the announcement of the plans for the 2006 Mnifesta Biennial.

² The Bologna Process was launched with the Bologna Declaration on 19 June, 1999, supposedly leading to the establishment of a European Higher Education Area in 2010.

manifest this engagement with educational and pedagogical formats and motifs have been divergent in terms of scale, purpose, *modus operandi*, value, visibility, reputational status and degree of actualization.

Anton Vidokle's *United Nations Plaza*, behind a supermarket in East Berlin and then travelling to New York under the name *Night School*, functioned as a one year temporary school, comprising monthly seminars and workshops, organized around three thematic tracks: progressive cultural practices, artistic agency today and self-organization in the field of cultural production;³ Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen's apartment was temporarily transformed into *Copenhagen Free University*; Pablo Helguera's nomadic *The School of Panamerican Unrest* went out to encourage debate about political and historical subjects amongst English, Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities; *ACADEMY*, a project reflecting the situation of students and teachers at art schools but also addressing the institution of the museum and its educational remit, was a collaboration between Hamburger Kunstverein, MuKha Antwerp, Van Abbemuseum, in Eindhoven, and the Department of Visual Cultures, at Goldsmiths, and to which Portuguese artist Ricardo Valentim has contributed; *Petit Cabanon*, Inês Moreira's project in Porto, and its *petit Think Tank*, promotes conversations revolving around notions of public, exhibiting and publishing.

One of the earliest and most well-known instances of education as a form of art appears in Joseph Beuys' practice beginning in the 1970s. His performance-

³ *United Nations Plaza* was a temporary, free school set up by Anton Vidokle in 2006, following the cancellation of Manifesta 6 in Nicosia, Cyprus, for local political reasons. Anton Vidokle's project was shown as an exhibition at Arte Contempo, in Lisbon: *Exhibition as School/Exposição como Escola*, 25 June - 18 July 2009.

lectures were documented in a series of photographs and blackboard drawings intended to prompt further discussions carried out by the audience post-performance. During the one hundred days of Documenta 5, in 1972, Beuys ran an office for the *Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum*, hosting daily discussions with visitors around the themes of education, minimum wage, politics, art, and religion. These projects illustrate *Social Sculpture*, a concept and medium Beuys devised and theorized in *I am Searching for Field Character* (1973), which articulates his belief in the creative capacity of every individual to shape society through participation in cultural, political and economic life.⁴

Beuys' practice laid the groundwork for subsequent movements such as Institutional Critique and Relational Aesthetics, which have, in turn, revived education as art.

Concurrent with the move toward the de-aestheticization (i.e., withdrawal of visual pleasure) and dematerialization of the art work was the ongoing dematerialization of site. As Miwon Kwon described in *One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity*, the use of dematerialized mediums such as lectures, classes and discussions prompted a shift from site-specific art making, in which particularized physical space was a paramount concern, to a subset of practices that treat site specificity more broadly, expanding the notion of site to include its sociological frames, institutional context, and economic and political pressures.⁵

⁴ Joseph Beuys, 'I am Searching for Field Character', in *Participation*, ed. By Claire Bishop (London: Whitechapel, 2006), p. 125.

⁵ Miwon Kwon, 'One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity', in *October*, vol.80 (Spring, 1997), p. 91.

Going against institutional habits and desires and attempting to resist the commodification of art in and for the art market, works within Institutional Critique became increasingly anti-visual (informal, textual, expository or didactic) and, sometimes, immaterial altogether (gestures, events or performances). Mel Bochner's *Measurement* series, beginning in 1969, played on the material fact of the gallery walls being 'framing' devices by notating the walls' dimensions directly on them.

As Miwon Kwon has observed, for artists representative of this shift, it was 'the art institution's techniques and effects as they circumscribe the definition, production, presentation and dissemination of art that [became] the site of critical intervention'.⁶

Simultaneously, Beuys' invitation to the audience to participate in his performances, to co-create meaning alongside the artist and to address the issues he found pressing, placed the production of art and knowledge within the scope of the viewer just as much as that of the artist. In many ways, Beuys' legitimization of collaboration and interaction as a means of making art is foundational to what is now called *art of encounter*. If the great issue was once the critique of the cultural confinement of art, and artists, through its institutions, the dominant drive of such site-oriented practices became the pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life.

These practices became more concerned with integrating art directly into the realm of the social, actively addressing urgent social problems such as the

⁶ Miwon Kwon, 'One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity', in *October*, vol.80 (Spring, 1997), p. 91.

ecological crisis, homelessness, AIDS, homophobia, racism, and sexism, or more generally, with employing art as one amongst many forms of cultural work.

Parting from the traditions of object-making, these artists have adopted a performative, processed-based approach. The aesthetic experience became durational rather than immediate, happening through a cumulative process of exchange and dialogue rather than a single, instantaneous shock of insight.

Nicholas Bourriaud has employed the term *Relational Aesthetics* to describe these works based around communication and exchange. First conceptualized by Bourriaud in 1998, Relational Aesthetics has categorized a number of practices that came to prominence in the 1990s. In his seminal book, Bourriaud argues that ‘over and above the relational character intrinsic to the artwork, the figures of reference of the sphere of human relations have now become fully-fledged artistic “forms”. Meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality, in a word all manner of encounter and relational invention thus represent, today, aesthetic objects likely to be looked at as such’.⁷ Rirkrit Tiravanija’s *Untitled (Still)*, at 303 Gallery in New York in 1992, is paradigmatic. The artist moved everything he found in the gallery and storeroom into the main exhibition space, including the director, who was obliged to work in public; in the gallery he cooked curries for visitors and the detritus, utensils, and food packets became the art exhibit whenever the artist was not there. The audience’s involvement was the

⁷ Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002), p. 28.

main focus of the work and the food was but a means to allow a convivial relationship between audience and artist to develop.

Claire Bishop takes issue with Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics' emphasis on *conviviality* and *immanent togetherness*, where all relations that permit *dialogue* are automatically assumed to be democratic and therefore good and where the quality of the relationships are never examined or called into question. Instead, she emphasizes an art that reveals real antagonisms within its social and cultural exchanges, in which relations of conflict are sustained and not erased, and highlights projects marked by sensations of conflict, division, and instability.⁸

Grant Kester has offered a third model, which neither limits its social encounters to convivial ones nor restricts its political antagonisms to those markedly present in the work. In his book, *Conversation Pieces*, Kester argues for a *dialogical* or *conversational* art 'which allows the viewer to "speak back" to the artist in certain ways, and in which this reply becomes in effect a part of the work itself'.⁹ Kester suggests that perhaps artists can also work from a position of solidarity rather than simply as provocateurs, and that the effectiveness of this solidarity depends on their sensitivity to local political dynamics, histories and cultures, and the possibility of a sustained relationship with participants, explains Claire Doherty in *Curating Wrong Places... Or Where Have All the Penguins Gone?*.¹⁰

⁸ Bishop, Claire, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', in *October*, Vol.110 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 65-66.

⁹ Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 8-9.

¹⁰ Claire Doherty, 'Curating Wrong Places... Or Where Have All the Penguins Gone?', in *Curating Subjects*, ed. by Paul O'Neill (Amsterdam: de Appel; London: Open Editions, 2007), p. 106.

It is located within this discursive field of relational, antagonistic and dialogical practice, that the educational turn can be evaluated in terms of its relative ethics, politics and social relations. Together, these three theories of the art of encounter map the context into which the turn to education has recently been made.

No more significant than any number of competing and equivalent formats in the repertoire of the art of encounter, this turn needs be considered amongst other turns to cuisine, clubbing, sport, business, leisure, therapy, spectacle, retail, or communication, but, at the same time, it carries a unique charge that deserves to be analysed in all its specificity.

One of the strongest drives behind the *educational turn* is an orchestrated response to the Bologna Process which proposes to standardize educational systems across Europe, homogenizing all institutions and programmes of higher education within the European Union by 2010.¹¹ These so-called reforms demand comparable entry points, outcomes, funding structures, criteria of excellence and a unified accreditation system. Some of the fundamental issues underlying these projects are the dangers and limitations wrought by attempts to regulate and homogenize a vast range of education cultures and of imposing market values on an essential public right, gearing it towards profit and revenue. Rather than simply lament the decline of public institutions, the ongoing privatization, appropriation, and commodification of knowledge, the resulting precariousness of access to education, and increased control and regulation, academics, curators, and artists

¹¹ For the full text of the Bologna Declaration see <http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf>.

are challenging themselves to respond to the situation, proposing alternative modes of questioning and producing knowledge, and of negotiating between institutional and self-organized cultures.

Concurrently, Dave Beech claims it would be ‘more helpful to see art’s specific turn to pedagogy as connected with the proliferation of educational formats in entertainment’.¹² He goes on to suggest that ‘the turn to pedagogy in contemporary art, like the turn to education-as-entertainment on TV, is tied up with the role of experts, expertise and managerialism’ within our modern society. The presence of the expert, neither alarming nor remarkable (some people simply know things that the rest of us don’t) can be seen as following the pattern of an increasingly rationalized, bureaucratic, managerial and administered society.

For Hassan Khan, however, this turn is one demanded regularly by the art industry, as a form of regulation inherent to its identity and functioning; an ‘intellectual fashion’, when art industry glosses these volatile moments to recurrently validate itself with a set of key words borrowed from philosophy, economics, sociology, political science, literary theory, psychoanalysis or pedagogy.¹³

These projects challenge conventional perceptions and systems of knowledge. Because of their immaterial, dialogical, political and durational nature, because they take place beyond the institutional confines of the gallery or museum, or because they replace traditional art materials by social relationships,

¹² Dave Beech, ‘Weberian Lessons: Art, Pedagogy and Managerialism’, in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. by Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), p. 58.

¹³ Hassan Khan, ‘A Simple Turn: Notes on an Argument’, in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. by Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), p. 119.

collaborative encounters and lasting conversations, they often face public and critics' discredit. They are accused of being unaesthetic, of having no possible visual engagement and of being another form of social and political activism, and dismissed as failed art.

Most practitioners are anxious to avoid any suggestion of a single homogenous *movement*, somewhat superficial and too easily commodified, but locating these projects within this overarching umbrella of the *educational turn* will perhaps provide a more strong and relevant contextualization, clarifying its mechanisms and specifications, and in time informing a more consistent and profound debate.

2.2 THE EDUCATIONAL TURN, THE ACADEMY AND THE BOLOGNA ACCORD

Pedagogical models are currently being explored, re-imagined, and deployed by artists and curators from around the world in diverse projects comprising laboratories, discursive platforms, temporary schools, participatory workshops, libraries, reading groups, lectures, talks, and symposia. They have appropriated into their practice educational formats, methods, programmes, models, terms, processes, and procedures. They are developing intensive investigations into *education* as a site of knowledge production, proposing unconventional and unofficial frameworks for education.

Rather than simply lament the decline of public institutions, the ongoing privatization of knowledge, the resulting precariousness of access to education, and increased control and regulation, academics, curators, and artists are challenging themselves to respond to the situation, in a decade of unprecedented self-organization and of exceptionally creative modes of dissent and criticality.

Some of the most pressing issues in these projects are the dangers and limitations wrought by attempts to regulate and homogenize a vast range of education cultures, and of imposing market values on an essential public right, as a result of the Bologna Process. One of the strongest drives behind the *educational turn* is the way in which art academies are involved this process. These so-called reforms of the educational system across Europe, which propose to standardize all institutions and programmes of higher education within the European Union by 2010, such that degree programmes across all disciplines will be interchangeable and uniform following North American models, with

comparable entry points, outcomes, credits, funding structures, and criteria of excellence, will (in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy) contribute to the establishment of the European Union as the world's biggest knowledge economy.¹

A reminder of a few crucial steps in the Bologna Process may be helpful in understanding the idea's emergence in continental Europe. The Bologna Process was launched with the Bologna Declaration on June 19, 1999, and all countries participating in the Bologna Process are supposed to do so of their own accord; the Bologna Declaration is not a legally binding document. With the 1999 Bologna Declaration, the then twenty-nine participating countries (today as many as forty-six) committed themselves, but were not formally obliged to the:

- Adoption of a system of *easily readable and comparable degrees ... in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system*;
- Adoption of a system essentially based on *two main cycles*, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require completion of the first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labor market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master degree as in many European countries;²

¹ For the full text of the Bologna Declaration see <http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf>.

² The third cycle, leading to a doctoral degree, only became a priority after the Bologna Follow-up Group meeting, in Berlin in 2003.

- Establishment of a *system of credits* - such as in the ECTS system - as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility;
- Promotion of *mobility* by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement...
- Promotion of *European co-operation in quality assurance* with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;
- Promotion of the *necessary European dimensions in higher education*, particularly with regard to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.³

Far from being consensual, every aim and every proposition of the Bologna Accord has been discussed, supported and opposed to.

For Irit Rogoff, the marketing of education, which began in the US and followed in Britain, has now taken hold on the European continent and the dangers inherent in education becoming a market economy geared towards profit and revenue, ‘privileging a reductive notion of “outcomes”, “transferable knowledges”, and “entrepreneurship”’, should be made clear to all.⁴

But the emerging dominance of cognitive capitalism over European education systems and their inscription into capital economies of debt and credit,

³ The emphasis on these points is Dieter Lesage’s, in ‘The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts’, *e-flux Journal* #4 (March, 2009) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/45>> [accessed 12 June 2010].

⁴ Irit Rogoff, ‘Education Actualized - Editorial’, in *e-flux Journal* #14 (March, 2010) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/127>> [accessed 23 June 2010].

of self-support, of precarities for both professionals and students, is only one side of the developments. 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; education is becoming increasingly politicized.

In the same editorial, Irit Rogoff argues 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’.⁵ To this argument, Dieter Lesage opposes that ‘this belongs to the standard anti-Bologna rhetoric of expanded academia to say that the Bologna Process leads to the homogenization of European education’.⁶ In reality, however, the Bologna Process is implemented in very different ways. One could claim that the Bologna Process is basically about setting up devices that allow for comparison between national or regional education systems only to discover how different these systems are; just because they have instruments of comparison at their disposal doesn’t necessarily mean that countries have become more eager to accept equivalences between diplomas and, in fact, an instrument of comparison may show the incomparability as much as the comparability of its subjects. As a result, the Bologna Process led to very

⁵ Irit Rogoff, ‘Education Actualized - Editorial’, in *e-flux Journal* #14 (March, 2010) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/127>> [accessed 23 June 2010].

⁶ Dieter Lesage, ‘The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts’, *e-flux Journal* #4 (March, 2009) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/45>> [accessed 12 June 2010].

elaborate discourses on the multiple differences between national or regional education systems, and on the singularity of particular educational systems. So far, the Bologna Process has proved more successful at showing all the differences between educational systems in its expanded version of Europe (which includes forty-six European countries, not only the twenty-seven member states of the EU) than at homogenizing them.⁷

The 1999 Bologna Declaration focused a great deal on the question of how to enhance the mobility of students and teachers, favouring the hyper-mobile, nomad artists and curators of today by whom it could have been welcomed.

While the Bologna Process facilitated the recognition of ‘artistic research’ as a fundamental task of art academies - a task which many of them were already performing *before Bologna* - universities and academies are now struggling both with the concept of artistic research itself and with the question of how to assess its outputs. On the other hand, the Bologna Process has also systematized academic work such that knowledge production operates according to market logic where patentability, utility, and quantitative methods are valued over collaborative, speculative, and qualitative approaches. According to Kristina Lee Podesva, the inevitable outcome to this hierarchical arrangement is that critical experimentation is discouraged, or worse, rendered obsolete.⁸

⁷ Dieter Lesage, ‘The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts’, *e-flux Journal* #4 (March, 2009) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/45>> [accessed 12 June 2010].

⁸ Kristina Lee Podesva, ‘A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art’, in *Fillip*, vol.6 (2007) <<http://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>> [accessed 12 July 2010].

Many participants in these debates about education and the arts clearly shy away from discussing the particularities of higher art education, refuting themselves behind the notion of the *expanded academia*, defined by an unprecedented number of self-organized forums emerging outside institutions, as well as self-empowered departures inside institutions. Their aim appears to be to include as many art institutions as possible within the field of expanded academia, rather than to define the specific role of the art academy as such. Thus, while rightly refusing the art academy the monopoly on art education, one conveniently allows oneself not to think about the art academy altogether. This doesn't mean that there aren't any relevant discussions going on within art academies, on the contrary. But many of the high-profile voices in the contemporary debates on education and the arts 'aren't going to tell you what these internal discussions are about, even if occasionally they may be very well positioned to do so'.⁹

Today, the academy is asking not to be considered as the only legitimate place of art education, but as a potential partner within this endeavour, re-situating itself as a credible accomplice and enabler in critical dialogue. Indeed, among other things, the Bologna Process could be described as a deconstruction of the old demarcations between higher arts education, universities, and the arts.

Due to what many people working and studying at academies experience (with good reason) as intimidation by the Bologna Process, the academy is also in the process of reinventing itself. In her essay *Academy as Potentiality*, Irit Rogoff

⁹ Dieter Lesage, 'The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts', *e-flux Journal* #4 (March, 2009) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/45>> [accessed 12 June 2010].

draws attention to the changing priorities of the academy and proposes an alternative to its corporatization through the adoption of research and knowledge projects that privilege what is *significant* over what is *useful*.¹⁰ The pressure in the field of expanded academia, in which many other types of institutions are readily offered as alternatives to the over-regulated field of higher arts education, certainly plays a key role in this process of reinventing the academy.

The big frustration of many academies all over Europe today is their lack of autonomy, which doesn't allow them to make the decisions considered necessary by those trying to manage them. If those responsible would like their academies to become or stay competitive within a field of expanded academia, in which there are many attractive alternative models of education, they should endow academies with enough autonomy to position themselves strategically within this field.

The Bologna Declaration as such does not constitute an absolute evil for education, but the institutional and political struggles to impose certain of its interpretations do present many dangers, of which most people working at art academies are well aware.

Projects within the *educational turn* may be a valuable and even indispensable tool to understanding education as a platform that could bring together unexpected and momentary conjunctions of academics, art world citizens, union organizers, activists and many others in such a way that they could see themselves and their activities reflected within the broadly defined field of

¹⁰ Irit Rogoff, "Academy as Potentiality," A.C.A.D.E.M.Y (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2006), p. 14.

education. These works engage with the academy as an institution, and are located discursively (but not necessarily physically) within the site of the academy. At the same time, they sidestep the closures of critiques, which narrowly focus on institutional failures, offering instead to open up the academy through reinvention.

2.3 EDUCATION AS ART MAKING: NOTES ON POSSIBILITIES

What follows is a collection of loose notes on projects happening within the *educational turn* since 2000. Different in their genesis, methodology and protocols, these projects all evolved through cumulative processes of exchange and dialogue but had very different outcomes and public reception. There is an inherent risk of simplistic homogenization in grouping these projects under this one overarching umbrella, but locating them within this construct of the *educational turn* provides a more strong and relevant contextualization that might be helpful to better understand their specificity and *modus operandi*.

In her essay *A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art*, Kristina Lee Podesva highlights the following shared concerns and characteristics in these projects:

1. A school structure that operates as a social medium;
2. A dependence on collaborative production;
3. A tendency towards process (versus object) based production;
4. An aleatory and open nature;
5. An ongoing and potentially endless temporality;
6. A free space for learning;
7. A post-hierarchical learning environment, where there are no teachers, just co-participants;
8. A preference for exploratory, experimental and multi-disciplinary approaches to knowledge production;
9. An awareness of the instrumentalization of the academy;

10. A virtual space for the communication and distribution of ideas.¹

In practical terms, curators and artists have appropriated into their practice educational models, formats, methods, mechanics and programmes, presenting their work as discursive platforms, temporary schools, laboratories, collaborative workshops, conferences, interviews, debates, talks or symposia.

One of the most well know projects is Anton Vidokle's *UnitedNationsPlaza*, in 2006.² The core programme was developed over a two-year research period for Manifesta 6, in collaboration with Liam Gillick, Boris Groys, Natascha Sadr Haghigian, Nikolaus Hirsch, Walid Raad, Martha Rosler, Jalal Toufic and Tirdad Zolghadr. Following the cancellation of Manifesta 6, three months before the opening due to local political reasons not related to the project, it had to become completely independent of Manifesta Foundation and to be realized at a location outside Cyprus. Taking place over a one-year period in a nondescript building in East Berlin, *UnitedNationsPlaza* was structured as a series of public seminars and an informal residency programme, and involved collaborations with more than one hundred artists, writers and theorists, as well as a wide range of audience members. Conceived as an *exhibition-as-school*, it was not a school in the conventional sense of teaching a specific skill, requiring attendance, giving exams or assigning grades; like an art exhibition, anyone could come and engage as much or as little as they wanted to.

¹ Kristina Lee Podesva, 'A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art', in *Fillip*, vol.6 (2007) <<http://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>> [accessed 12 July 2010].

² <http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/>

United Nations Plaza's afterlife, *Night School*, took place at New Museum in New York, between January 2008 and January 2009.³ Again, Anton Vidokle organized a yearlong program of monthly seminars and workshops, this time using the Museum as a site to shape a critically engaged public through art discourse. *Night School* was composed of eleven seminars organized around three thematic tracks. The program began with three series of seminars, workshops and film/video screenings conducted by Boris Groys, Martha Rosler and Liam Gillick that examined progressive cultural practices. During the spring and summer months, the focus of the program turned to artistic agency today, and included seminars with Walid Raad & Jalal Toufic, Paul Chan, Maria Lind and Owkui Enwezor. The fall program considered self-organization in the field of cultural production, presenting seminars and workshops with Rirkrit Tiravanija, Zhang Wei and Hu Fang, Natascha Sadr Haghighian and Raqs Media Collective.

I would argue this proves that innovative projects and concepts do have a place within more traditional institutions and structures. Such projects are actually happening from within the institution, as was also the case of Sarah Pierce and Annie Fletcher's *The Paraeducation Department*.⁴

In September 2004 *The Paraeducation Department* opened on the first floor of Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, in Rotterdam, as part of *TRACER*, a collaborative project between Witte de With and TENT. *The Paraeducation Department* created a physical and organizational structure where informal groups, personal encounters, and impulsive gatherings facilitated a

³ <http://museumashub.org/node/48>

⁴ http://www.wdw.nl/event.php?act_id=68

learning process. The *Department's* activities included presentations and seminars, discussing whether education is an activist position, how institutions operate along the lines of education, and what potential education presents for arts practice. The *Department* hosted a Reading Group, for people 'interested in moments of collective learning, whose practice involves models of education or who organize projects around unofficial or alternative frameworks for education', that met regularly with the purpose of acting as source of support and solidarity for its members.

Happening in a more *parasitical* way, inside the infrastructure of a traditional institution but maintaining its independence, *colourschool* (Kristina Lee Podesva's project in Vancouver) constitutes a subversive gesture, creating a space for learning that simultaneously rejects the institution's structural hierarchies, professionalization and lacklustre pedagogy while taking advantage of its resources, especially space.⁵ To date, both The University of British Columbia and Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design have each hosted a yearlong instalment. *colourschool* is dedicated to the speculative research and exploration of five colours: white, black, red, yellow and brown; as its overall premise, *colourschool* takes an interest in colours as cultural codes rather than as formal elements. Providing a free and open space for critical investigations of colour, identity, art making, and knowledge production, *colourschool* attempts to develop a collaborative colour consciousness through a variety of events including reading groups, film screenings, listening labs, interviews, roundtable discussions, brown

⁵ <http://www.colourschool.org/>

bag lunches, performances, and installations, among other activities. *colourschool* provides a contemporary art library, meeting room, performance space, high speed internet access, colour research materials, screening equipment, and can also be used as a workshop, classroom, or meeting space.

The value of a *meeting space*, of providing a physical space for discussion and production of knowledge was a paramount concern in *Copenhagen Free University*.⁶ In 2001 Danish artists Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen founded the *Copenhagen Free University* in their apartment and began to offer a free space and online resource ‘dedicated to the production of critical consciousness and poetic language’. The *Copenhagen Free University* re-imagines the form and function of art making, knowledge production (and by extension the academy), and authorship (collaborative versus autonomous). Additionally, it attempts to dissolve the barrier between the public and private by siting educational activities in a residential space. The familiarity of a lived space, of a living room, seems to make participants feel freer and more comfortable compared to institutional spaces like auditoriums and galleries. The discussions went on in an informal way and participants were able to stay with their everyday language when speaking. For Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen informality was not a problem; they saw it as empowering.

Pablo Helguera went even further in trying to provide this communal space of discussion. His nomadic project *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, travelling from Anchorage, Alaska, to Ushuaia, Argentina, between 2003 and

⁶ <http://www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk/>

2006, included a collapsible and movable architectural structure as a schoolhouse.⁷ Combining performative and educational strategies, creating new forms of presentation and debate of political and historical subjects, and creating a discussion infrastructure that broke with the usual academic formats and predictable means of communication normally used in the art world, *The School of Panamerica Unrest* was destined for a very diverse audience. In the debates, programs and roundtable discussions, the project offered alternative ways to understand the history, ideology, and lines of thought that have significantly had an impact on political, social and cultural events in the Americas, promoting interregional communication amongst English, Spanish and Portuguese speaking America, as well as its other communities in the Caribbean and elsewhere, making connections outside its regular commercial and economic links.

Equally highly politicized was the project *Aftenskolen/The Evening School*.⁸ In 2001 Goll & Nielsen, invited by the artist run, publicly funded space Signal in Malmö, presented *Aftenskolen/The Evening School* as an attempt to respond to a regional development in the *Sound Region*, the area of Skaane in Sweden and Zealand, Denmark. The goal of the project was to take a close look at the process of integration between Denmark and Sweden, one year after the inauguration of the Oresound Bridge. They invited a number of artists, researchers, and musicians of different background, gender, race, and sexuality to each perform an evening school course addressing the subject. One of the courses in the program was called *Living it Up in the Sound Region – Alcohol in Theory*

⁷ <http://www.panamericanismo.org/index.php>

⁸ <http://mortengoll.org/?p=242>

and Practice; its purpose was to investigate the Danish' stereotype view of the Swedish's drinking manners and vice versa. During the general election campaign in 2001, Thor Pedersen (from the neo-liberal party Venstre) publicly accused Goll & Nielsen of mismanagement of public money, having used it to support an evening school course in partying and drinking. The press was generally in support of Pedersen's attack, and the organizers became trapped in the crossfire of a dirty political campaign.

Sommerakademie, one of the most enduring projects, has been happening every summer since 2005, at Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern.⁹ Using professional training, promotion, sponsorship and mediation, the *Sommerakademie* aims to promote both artistic productivity and reflection on art among artists, at the same time allowing the public to be part of this process. The academy programme of public lectures, workshops, and guided tours are also to be attended by invited international speakers and fellows.

Portuguese artist Ricardo Valentim was invited for the 2009 edition and this year Rita Sobral Campos, Pedro Neves Marques, Mariana Silva, and Filipa Ramos will also be part of the *Sommerakademie*.

While Portuguese artists are showing their projects in Europe and parts of North America, there remains some resistance in Portugal. There are, however, some examples that contradict it but these projects are happening more or less discretely and intuitively, and are not being consciously discussed or contextualized under the *educational turn*.

⁹ <http://www.sommerakademie.zpk.org/en.html>

The Barber Shop, Margarida Mendes project in Lisbon, exchanged the traditional exhibition model for a short duration, specific moment of presentation and discussion.¹⁰ *The Barber Shop* gives carte blanche to curators and independent programmers to propose an ephemeral project; its aim is to promote debate between artistic praxis and research upon multiple contexts, proposing a renewed set of discussion themes, through the participation of agents from diverse countries and backgrounds. Casual encounters provoking a reflexive dialogue and the establishment of a local community of shared interests are the main concerns of this project.

Looking at the *world's map of the educational turn*, it becomes clear that these projects are happening mostly in Europe and North America. Current conditions within the field of education in general and of art education in particular - the Bologna Process, market driven policies, homogenization of education cultures - are driving many artists, curators and academics to expand their field of action, replacing the traditional academy and learning institutions.

Assuming an active political and social role, these artists and curators (whose position becomes so many times undistinguishable) and their projects often face public and critics' discredit. Accused of being theoretically and practically indistinguishable from some forms of political or social activism, their status as *art* is continuously questioned and these projects are often dismissed as failed art.

¹⁰ <http://thisisthebarbershop.blogspot.com/>

I would argue that art is intrinsic to all of these projects, but no longer in terms of presenting discrete art objects: the paradigm of display is largely ignored in favour of art in many other shapes and forms. Perhaps they are closer to an older model, like Aristotle's *Lyceum* in Athens, which involved a group of people meeting under a tree to listen to and discuss ideas.

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