

Homework, Assignments

In November 2013 we went to Athens with 28 Master students, in the context of a course on the design of educational spaces. The city derives its name from the goddess Athena. She was the protective goddess of the city, but also the goddess of wisdom and the arts and more generally of the practitioners of science. Ancient Athens, as we know, had (and still has) a large influence on the formation of Europe, not only through its art and ideas, but also because of its material inventions that are still traceable in the present: the agora, the democracy, the theatre, the school and the academy (to name just a few). Today we associate Athens with lots of other issues and especially with the crisis in and of Europe. In today's Athens, all our students individually walked a marathon: 21 kilometres from a point on the outskirts of Athens to the Acropolis and 21 kilometres back. During these walks, the students made observations and registered all kinds of parameters (informal settlements, benches, abandoned buildings, graffiti, et cetera), they talked to people, captured smells and sounds and shared moods. Every night they translated their observations into common maps, which covered about 1200 km of Athens' streets. They extensively discussed their observations and conversations. For example: the distance that the Trojka covers when they land in Greece to dictate the EU policy is about 40 kilometres, not by foot of course, but by car. The walks really impressed everyone involved in this educational exercise. Thousands and thousands and thousands of vacant shops and abandoned buildings (including huge Olympic stadiums, complete factories, large shopping malls), closed universities, closed hospitals, the extreme duality of society, the very precarious situation of migrants who were scared to death, walls and streets trying to speak (massive graffiti, demonstrations), occupations (of national broadcasting stations, public spaces), huge numbers of empty billboards, violent attacks, the guile of the mobilization (the auto-mobility in every sense as an anaesthetic and incantation), more than half of all young people unemployed (and not because they were "incompetent"!!). And of course the students visited the Acropolis. But the Acropolis could not arrest their attention or move them. In fact, they literally and figuratively turned their back at the Parthenon and despised the bubble of happy tourist consumption in the immediate surroundings of the Acropolis. It was too different from the reality that confronted them during their walks and it had become vacant of

meaning itself, empty. Which did not only confront them (us) in a very existential way with what a crisis means, but also made them (us) think in an equally *existential* way about Europe itself. Athens as a magnifying glass for Europe's general condition? What about Europe, indeed?¹

In May 2014, with over 70 students, we were involved in a collective research on mapping Europe as part of a course on educational policy. The aim of the mapping was to formulate an opinion on Europe and education. An opinion is not a personal thing. Or rather, when personal ideas are made public, and hence, considered to be worth making public, they turn into opinions. An opinion is a personal viewpoint that is shared. We thought Europe was in need of such opinions, that is, it was worth exploring how Europe could be turned into a matter of public concern. For that purpose, we did a simple exercise. Each student was given one European policy document or report, and was asked to make two things: a network visualization of all actors and agencies related to the document and a word cloud that gave an overview of the relative importance of words in the document. Without wanting to make major claims, everything was put together, resulting in a network with several hundreds of nodes and a word cloud based on more than a million words.² We pictured Europe as a network and as a vocabulary. These visualizations attempted to turn Europe into something to think about. The network images showed, for instance, the complexity of multi-layered governing, and more importantly, the visibility of soft governance, and the absence of politics. Is this what made European policy actually hard and influential? The alliance with the OECD became manifest. Something we already knew: we turn the OECD – think about PISA – into an 'obligatory passage point' (Callon, 1986) through our will to know about our performances. Representation is spread all over Europe, but not as a central node. The central nodes – the European Commission, European Parliament, Directorate General for Education and Culture – have an enormous hinterland of small actors and agencies. Is that hinterland showing how important the central nodes are? Or, perhaps, is that hinterland Europe's power, and hence is it indicating that European power is actually dispersed. Not a hierarchy but a netarchy. Europe, for sure, is the name for a powerful infrastructure, for empty symbols waiting to be filled and for fast communication circuits. Europe is discourse, and discourse is powerful. The

word cloud showed that learning and education were part of the European vocabulary. That was no surprise. But these words were immediately surrounded by the words qualification, training, quality, mobility and level. Europe, thus, is the name for that which loves to speak about managing education, about mobilization, about the recognition of learning results. Education refers to learning, and learning, for Europe, is too important not to be managed and valorized. The words 'European' and 'national' are also omnipresent. Europe clearly is in need of those words; Europe wants or has to talk about itself when it comes to education and learning, but always in relation to the national level. As if there is no European education (yet) and no national education (any more), and all other words just fill that gap. We made maps of the most visible actors and agencies, and we constructed clouds of words used in European documents. These visualizations and articulations helped us to regard Europe as something to think about, but also to listen to what only murmurs in Europe's presence. It allowed us to actually formulate our opinions about all those things and issues that are present in their absence, still looking for words and opinions to become public. European issues?

Lesson Planning

The American philosopher Susan Neiman, who is actually living in Berlin for many years now, recently gave the so-called Socrates-lecture on the future of Europe (2014). She stated that whereas many arguments to support the further formation of Europe (and the European union/project) often either appeal to fear (the fear of war, of threatening economic and political irrelevance), or point to personal or collective benefits and advantages that Europe would offer, it is important to stress that Europe is more than an organization and an infrastructure to satisfy (individual and collective) needs or interests (related to trade, mobility, etc.) Europe is actually also the name and materialization of some ideals and the question is, she says – reminding us of the famous words of JF Kennedy: 'Do not ask what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country' – what are we willing to do for this continent named Europe, not just as geographical entity, but as continent of ideals that are still worthy to maintain? We agree with Susan Neiman that today it is absolutely necessary to talk about Europe while not only appealing to fear or possible profit, but pointing to the ideals and believes it names. But whereas

Neiman mainly refers to the ideals of the Enlightenment, we wish to recall an older belief. We wish to recall the at once maybe familiar but also unique and radical belief that human beings are all equal *and* that they have no natural destination. Precisely therefore they can educate themselves. This is the belief that is materialized in the European invention of schools and universities as particular ways to deal with the new generations and to take care of the world that is disclosed for them. If *education* is the response of a society to the arrival of newcomers, as Hannah Arendt (2006/1958) formulates it, and if schools and universities are particular ways of doing this, ways that are different from initiation and socialization, ways that offer the new generations the possibility for *renewal* and the opportunity of making its own future, i.e. a future that is not imposed or defined (destined) by the older one, ways that imply to accept to be slowed down (in order to find, or even, make a destiny), ways that accept that education is about the common world (and not individual resources), then the question arises whether there is still a will in/of Europe to support schools and universities and to elaborate an *educational* policy that allows them to exist? Whether schools and universities are in themselves still a public European concern? It should be possible to address this question and concern in seven short lessons.

Lesson 1: European Education Policy is a Learning Policy

Twenty years ago the 'White Paper on Education and Training' of the European Commission already clearly stated that education is all about employment and competitiveness (White Paper, 1995: 1). However, it still started by indicating as a first approach to this challenge one that was 'focusing on a broad knowledge base' that should allow 'grasping the meaning of things', 'comprehension and creativity' and developing 'powers of judgement and decision making' (pp. 9-11). 'Developing everyone's employability and capacity for economic life' (p. 12), being the second response. Things have developed since then. The recent document of the European Commission on 'Rethinking Education' (EC-document 2012) does not hesitate to put the emphasis right from the start on 'delivering the right skills for employment' and on 'increasing the efficiency and inclusiveness of our education and training institutions' (p. 1), the starting point being that education is about 'boost[ing] growth and competitiveness' (p. 1). The Erasmus+ program, which started in 2014 and is the main

concrete EU-programme regarding education and teaching, states first of all that it 'aims to boost skills and employability' (Erasmus+, 2014). The conclusion being that 'Europe will only resume growth through higher productivity and the supply of highly skilled workers, and it is the reform of education and training systems which is essential to achieving this' (p.13).

There is also no doubt about what this reform entails. It is about 'stimulating open and flexible learning' and 'improving learning outcomes, assessment and recognition', indeed 'achievement should be driven by learning outcomes'. The argument is as follows: 'Education and training can only contribute to growth and job creation if learning is focused on the knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired by students (learning outcomes) through the learning process, rather than on completing a specific stage or on time spent in school.' There are very concrete frameworks set up that have the 'learning outcomes approach' as their basis: the 'European Qualifications Framework', and the (new or adapted) national qualification frameworks are based on it. However, the document complains that 'this fundamental shift towards learning outcomes has not yet fully percolated through to teaching and assessment. Institutions at all levels of education and training still need to adapt in order to increase the relevance and quality of their educational input to students and the labour market'. In order to do so 'the power of assessment needs to be better harnessed' since 'what is assessed can often determine what is valued and what is taught. While many Member States have reformed curricula, it remains a challenge to modernise assessment to support learning... the power of assessment has to be harnessed by defining competences in terms of learning outcomes and broadening the scope of tests and exams to cover these.... In this context, the potential of new technologies to help find ways of assessing key competences needs to be fully explored' (ibid. p. 5).³

It is difficult to state it more clearly than the document itself does. 'Rethinking Education' means to conceive of education as the production of learning outcomes. This 'fundamental shift', as the document rightly states, implies that educational policy is essentially about 'stimulating open and flexible learning' and 'improving learning outcomes', i.e. increasing the performance of 'learning environments' (including the performance of institutions, teachers, students) which can be assessed through benchmarking

(i.e. performance indicators). The overall aim being a more efficient and effective production process, employability (i.e. competences that are learning outcomes) being the product. And this implies even explicitly questioning the meaning of 'time spent in school' (p. 5). Indeed, it seems that schools are 'over' as reads the title of a 2008 report of the European Commission Joint Research Centre with the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies: 'School's Over: Learning Spaces in Europe in 2020: An Imagining Exercise on the Future of Learning'. It is a report that welcomes 'the marginalization of institutionalized learning' (2008, p. vii) and echoes with the increasing number of publications that want to unschool or deschool (Bentley, 2000; Griffith, 2010).

The European Commission is of course not alone in formulating its educational policy in terms of producing learning outcomes and in questioning the meaning of school. This 'fundamental shift' lines up with the policy of most nations worldwide and with the policy framework that is established by the OECD. It is therefore no surprise that it is increasingly providing 'frameworks' to influence 'learning' which address 'educational effectiveness' (analysing 'whether specific resource inputs have positive effects on outputs'), 'educational efficiency' (referring to achieving 'better outputs for a given set of resources' or 'comparable outputs using fewer resources') and 'educational sufficiency' (considering 'necessary conditions for providing the affordances most likely to impact on student learning'). It summarized as follows: 'The idea behind these concepts is that resource inputs... are used in educational activities so that they produce desired outputs for the individual, school and community' (Blackmore et al., 2013: 4).

Lesson 2: Learning Means to Accelerate and Mobilize

As we have seen, the actual European policy with regard to education is taking 'learning' and especially learning for increased employability as its core concern: 'the nexus is learning' and we develop into a 'learning-intensive society' (School's Over, 2008: ii; Miller, 2007). In this context, there is a tendency to maximize learning gains and optimize well-being and pleasure in fast and personalized learning for each and all. Behind these calls lurks a strategy that reduces schools and universities to service-providing institutions for advanced learning, for satisfying individual learning needs and optimizing individual learning outcomes. The

focus on learning, which today seems so obvious to us, is actually implicated in the call to conceive of our individual and collective lives as an enterprise focused on the optimal and maximal satisfaction of needs and even more explicitly requires an extreme flexibility (Simons & Masschelein, 2008, see also further). In this context, learning appears as one of the most valuable forces of production, one that allows for the constant production of new competences and operates as the engine for the accumulation of human capital. Time as time for learning is equated here with *productive time*. The issue of offering good education now becomes the issue of the efficient and effective production of *employable outcomes*, with learning actually being an investment that can be measured in terms of rates-on-return. Or, more precisely, learning becomes a matter of constant calculation keeping one eye on future income or return and the other eye on useful resources to produce learning outcomes. In fact, this is remarkably close to what Nietzsche (1872/1910: 37) already observed: "The purpose of education, according to this scheme, would be to rear the most "current" men possible – "current" being used here in the sense in which it is applied to the coins of the realm." Learning becomes a personal business, a matter of productive and investment time, something that is open to endless acceleration, and wants to produce just-in-time.

Therefore the space of a learning environment seems to be the perfect mirror of our hyperactive, *accelerating* society. Our schools and universities – when developing towards effective learning environments – become places for 'fast learning', or, at least, trying to increase the learning input-output ratio. Or as Nietzsche (*ibid.*) clarified very strongly: '... what is required above all is 'rapid education', so that a money-earning creature may be produced with all speed...' As a consequence, learning environments do not constitute the materialization of free or public time, without defined or private destiny, or of time of delay. Instead, this time becomes one of investment and production. The school and the university are no longer places where society puts itself at a distance from itself, or where someone is allowed to be slowed down by anything that provokes thinking. As far as still useful, schools and universities become a public service provided to individuals and to society, the community or the economy itself in order to reproduce itself, to strengthen, grow or expand. The 'learning environments' articulate the dictates of continuous

self-improvement, proactive self-adaptation and permanent self-mobilization. They mobilize everyone (teachers, students, institutions) as mobile learners. At the level of the experience of these learners this translates into the experience of having no time. Of course there is still 'vacant time', but if it is not altogether consumption time (fuelling the economy), then it is recovery time (to reload the batteries, and hence, refuel the economy). In Arendt's phrase it is 'left-over time' and not strictly speaking free time, free time being 'time, that is, in which we are... free *for* the world and its culture ...' (Arendt, 2006/1960: 202).

Reading these policy documents, it is clear that all of us are called upon to deploy our talents and competences for an economic war that, as these documents proclaim, must be permanently waged to ensure a prosperous society, to provide opportunity for all and to make Europe the world's highest performing knowledge economy. 'Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it maximizes and employs the talents and capacities of all its citizens and fully engages in lifelong learning as well as in widening participation in higher education' (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009: 1). Governments have to engage in this permanent struggle and remind everyone of their duty to mobilize their competences and talents to contribute to the effort and, above all, to ensure that our competences and talents are *deployable* and *employable*. We are being mobilized and called to duty: we must apply ourselves totally and always. In all of this European policy there seems to be a biblical combination of logics that makes it compelling, but at the same time destructive; on the one hand, a kind of humanistic logic of equal opportunities claiming that every talent, and hence, everyone of us, counts, and on the other hand, a kind of economic logic of exploitation that claims that we have to mobilize all available talents and turn them into competences in order to remain competitive. Also, this is again very similar to the 'two seemingly antagonistic tendencies, equally deleterious in their action' that Nietzsche (1872/1910: 37) observed in the nineteenth century: '... the first-named would... spread learning among the greatest number of people; the second would compel education to renounce its highest, noblest and sublimest claims in order to subordinate itself to some other department of life – such as the service of the State.' The combination of both tendencies actually leads to a situation where the main reference point of education is minimizing input and accelerating the

learning process in order to maximize output. Fast learning for a fast society in which there is no time to lose. The message is: time is not something you receive, and it is not something you give; it is a *resource* that can and must be *managed*. In this sense, there can be no 'free time', and we *have* no time – we can only set priorities for how to use always-already occupied time. This condition is aptly articulated in the now well-trafficked terms 'permanent' and 'permanence'. Being a learner means being permanently busy and being a learner is a permanent condition in order to remain, as Nietzsche called it, a 'current' man.

Lesson 3: Culture turned into a Resource for the Professional Learner

Mobilization (maximum exploitation of resources – human, physical, social, cultural) and personalization are seen as adequate responses to challenges that are understood in terms of productivity (i.e. increasing added value). If you don't want to sink into the swamp of waste of talent and loss of production time, you should resist the temptation to be overly concerned with the common everyday world in which we live. The mobilization of students and, more particularly, of the resources or talents that they embody is one of the most important strategies to increase Europe's competitiveness, but also that of member states, universities, research centres and teaching programmes. Part of this strategy is to address the students as *professional* learners who invest in their human capital (and therefore have to be entrepreneurs who manage their private businesses), produce competences to increase their employability. Precisely in order to enable and optimize this production process, education and educational programmes must become totally transparent in terms of output (learning outcomes, competences) and means. This transparency is a logical and necessary request from the viewpoint of professional learners who are always in a hurry. For them learning is a stressful affair: looking for study trajectories or credits with market value (added value), niches, opportunities to invest, choices with high returns, creative accumulation of competences and credits to accredit themselves. They have to manage and accumulate these credits, ECTS-points and count the hours of study and learning.

It is no surprise that the educational relationship becomes a contractual relationship (in the first place a legal agreement concerning the service between a provider and a customer –

customer who can be motivated only by the return, or in today's parlance 'incentives'). Nor that education is organized as a collection of individual learning trajectories to guarantee optimal learning gains (improvement), nor that professors are also asked to become professional teaching staff – not in the service of truth, but in that of the learning outcomes of individual learners – and that they are asked to think of their teaching as production of learning outcomes with the learners. Such a professional attitude (aimed at performativity and efficiency in terms of learning) is not experimental, but implies submission and obedience to a permanent economic tribunal, combined with the fear to lose time and to not be productive. It turns professors and students into individual learners who make private use of their powers of reason, are not relating to a commons but to resources, following individualized trajectories, and who have no time, or better, know only productive time.

Lesson 4: Learning as Investment and the Risk of Speculation

The learning policy as a policy founded on the capitalization of learning in terms of competences is increasingly creating 'credit bubbles' that are not so different from the ones being produced in the financial world. Following Marx' theory of the 'tendency of the rate of profit to fall' within capitalism, David Blacker convincingly argues that we can now witness a 'falling rate of learning' (Blacker, 2013) – learning being the new labour force to produce added value. Indeed, apart from the fact that less and less 'workers' (and 'a fortiori educated ones', p. 79) are needed, there is the inherent tendency that the added value of competences (the learning outcomes) decreases and that therefore there is a need for ever more learning, ever more competences (the ultimate competence being the one to learn to learn everything) in order to produce added value and to keep the rate of profit high enough (both at the level of the individual workers and the companies that 'employ' them). There is the increasingly empty and endless acquiring of competences that return the curriculum 'to its etymological roots and revolves back into a race. The word curriculum is a Latin derivative from the verb *currere*, which means 'to run' and 'to move quickly'... this race is in 'perpetual motion'... [and] is always left open as the ultimate flexibility' (Storme, 2014: 291). Maximizing flexibility or producing one's own 'empty'

productivity – without content or world – is becoming the aim of the fanatic learner who is the ideal worker that, for instance, Google is looking for. In a brief article on ‘How to get a Job at Google’ in the NYT, Thomas Friedman quotes Laszlo Bock, ‘the senior vice president of people operations for Google – i.e., the guy in charge of hiring for one of the world’s most successful companies’ saying that ‘... for every job, though, the No. 1 thing we look for is general cognitive ability, and it’s not IQ. It’s learning ability.’ (NYT, Feb 22, 2014)

As Blacker (2013: 3-4) further indicates for the neoliberal world in general, but is certainly also true for Europe, the imperative to engage in this race to acquire ever more competences and being ever more flexible is so effective because we are so well-prepared by the tradition of our religious narratives, which encourage us to look for guilt within our ‘sinful selves’; the guilt of not yet being the most competent and competitive learner or the most competitive knowledge economy. The actual narratives that sustain the learning policies strongly suggest that if we could make ourselves stronger, smarter, i.e. learn more, better, faster, then ‘our bright futures would once again be assured’ (p. 3). We have only to blame ourselves: burdened forever by ‘the new original sin, of which we are perpetually guilty: our all-too human failure to keep pace with the exponentially increasing drumbeat of production’. But ‘fortunately’, as the many discourses that surround and support the learning policies assure: ‘... we can become ... plastic ‘lifelong learners’, in other words, infinitely malleable human material’ (p. 4) that can be used to keep the economy running and produce growth. Growth and well-being, so the story goes, are all in our own hands, and the cardinal sin is not to acknowledge that.

Moreover, one should consider whether another great illusion is being created and perpetuated here, based on the highly questionable premise that it is actually possible to realize an effective link between acquiring certain knowledge and skills on the one hand and the labour market and society on the other. The objective of employability (and hence, no longer employment), combined with a focus on competences, is actually based on that premise. It often echoes the dream of learning and education that is finally useful, that is finally connecting with the real world, and hence, the often announced but now welcomed realistic turn in education and learning: ‘professional learning (preparing) for life’. But actually, it is based on a very speculative mode of rea-

soning. If competences are the goals of education and these competences are assumed to be underlying certain activities, education and learning – when focusing on competences – is actually oriented towards assumptions. One may wonder whether we are confronted here with a gigantic ‘speculative’ or ‘transcendental’ operation that consists of trying to ‘presuppose’ what unique sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes are needed to ‘perform’ certain activities. Ironically, the engineers of fast learning seem to subscribe to a grand and old metaphysical tradition that actually tried to recover or reveal and carefully articulate the presuppositions of our knowing and speech activities. One almost needs (again) a training in metaphysics if one wants to make sense of those long, amazingly detailed and carefully constructed competences lists.

Lesson 5: A Crisis in Education is a Crisis in Culture

If we take as our starting point Hannah Arendt’s suggestion that culture refers to ‘the mode of intercourse of man with the things of the world’ (2006/ 1960: 210) and more specifically to ‘[taking] care of the things of the [common] world’ (p. 211, our italics), then we can state that pedagogic forms – and especially the school and the university – are among the most important ways in which this intercourse and ‘loving care’ (p. 208) take place. This is so because they deal in a particular way with the new generations which constitute always *both* a ‘threat’ to the common world (which ‘needs protection to keep it from being overrun and destroyed by the onslaught of the new that bursts upon it with each new generation’ (Arendt, 2006/1958: 182)), and a promise of its continuance *and renewal* (‘our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings’ (p. 189)). Schools and universities deal with the new generations in a particular way, in that they do not want the old generations to control or dictate how the new might or will look (i.e. they represent the world by putting something on the table, but in that act, also setting it free) *and* in a way that they form the new to be fit to take care of the common world (i.e. they promote the *cultura animi*, (p. 211)). Schools and universities do this to the extent that they offer ‘free time’ or ‘leisure time’ (*scholè* in Greek), which is not simply vacant time (‘left-over time’, see above) but ‘time to be devoted to culture’. (Arendt, 2006/1960: 195) From this perspective, culture is not just simply referring to works of art, or habits or systems of signs. It always also includes ways of taking care of (the things of) the

common world, that is, very specific practices and technologies that allow shaping oneself in relation to the world.

When using the terms 'school' and 'university' in referring to specific pedagogic forms, we are actually referring to the rich practices and technologies (of lecturing, of researching, of rehearsing, of looking,... all making study, exercise and thinking possible) that, on the one hand, allow for people to experience themselves as being able to take care of things, and, at the same time and on the other hand, to be exposed to something outside of themselves (the common world). It is a very specific combination of taking distance and (allowing for) re-attachment. As a consequence, the terms 'school' and 'university' are not used (as is very often the case) for so-called normalizing institutions or machineries of reproduction in the hands of the cultural or economic elites. There is reproduction and normalizing, of course, but then the school or university does not (or does no longer) function as a pedagogic form. There is an important element of slowness in these pedagogic forms, exactly because immediate political, social or economic requests and claims are, for a while, put at a distance or suspended (hence, not ignored or destroyed). Or more precisely, when being engaged with the world, and hence, when taking care of things, there is no point in meeting economic, social, cultural and political requirements and expectations that accelerate because from these outside perspectives and within their rationale there is no time to be lost (especially not at school).

Focusing on the existence of schools and universities as particular pedagogic forms along these lines, also means to be ready to put society at a distance from oneself. In other words, a society that accepts schools and universities always runs the risk that reproduction or the cycle of fast learning in view of permanent employability is broken down. Actually, in order to allow the coming generation to be a new generation, a society that accepts schools and universities must give and make (free) time, must prevent that the claims from society overrule the claims made on society by the new generation, must put something on the table and set things of the world free, and as a consequence, allow these things to slow down. This also means that such a society is forced to engage in a discussion about what kinds of 'grammars' one wants to offer to the new generation so that it can take its future into its own hands. Competences may, although this is highly speculative, guarantee

employability, but there is no possibility, that is, no grammar, to create distance. The basic grammar of society slows down, but it also allows to begin, to relate, to give shape to oneself.

Education, thus, is not in the first place about needs and functions, not even about values. As Arendt states, 'values' — even 'cultural values' — are 'what values always have been, exchange values, and in passing from hand to hand they [are] worn down like old coins' (p. 201). Education is a whole of practices to keep the things of the world out of the circles of consumption and the business of use and exchange value. It is about 'common things' that have 'the faculty of arresting our attention and moving us' (Arendt, 2006/1960: 201) and therefore it is cultural. In this sense, we can consider 'schools' and 'universities' to belong to the most elementary part of Europe's 'cultural heritage', that is, they belong to the heritage that allows us to take care of the common world. And precisely because Arendt also states that this heritage is today offered to us without testament (p. 3), it seems that it is in need of our explicit support when the common world is transformed into a pool of available resources for fast learning and producing predefined outcomes. Or to put it differently: the actual European educational policies that focus on learning and learning outcomes, and that equate 'slow time' with 'lost time', imply a direct attack on the taking care of a common world and, thus, on European culture. A crisis in education is then a crisis in culture.

Lesson 6: Reclaim the School and the University

There are modes of learning outside the school and the university, and there are also practices of initiation, apprentice-master relationships and on-the-job training. It is not our intention to disqualify these other forms of learning. But schools and universities are different. They organize collective and public forms of learning, and they impose a different responsibility on society as well. A responsibility to decide on basic grammars, and hence, to gather people around these grammars (and creating a public in that sense), and as such it is about creating relations between generations, about relating to a common world, about making knowledge and practices public, and about allowing for renewal. The university and school offer time that is freed from the needs and urgencies of the world, and to use that time to contribute to things in common. It is time to reclaim the school and the university.

To reclaim the school and the university means first of all to take them from the hands of those who do not acknowledge that the coming generation is a new generation. Not only from the hands of the political and cultural conservatives, but also from the hands of those who in the name of progress turn schools into learning environments and implicitly or explicitly favour fast learning. To reclaim the school is not about restoring classic or old techniques and practices, but about actually trying to develop or experiment with old and new techniques and practices in view of designing a pedagogic form that works, that is, that actually slows down, and puts society at a distance from itself. In these attempts, we wish to stress two issues that may be taken into account.

First, the school and university as pedagogic forms include a very specific idea of equality. In line with Rancière (1991), one could argue that pedagogic action starts from the assumption of equality, that is, the assumption that everyone should be able to know, understand, speak.... Equality in pedagogic terms is not a fact, but a kind of assumption that is verified in pedagogic action. This equality is closely related to the assumption that human beings have no natural (or culturally or socially imposed) destiny, and hence, they can and have to find and shape their own destiny. This assumption is not making education impossible. On the contrary, there being no destiny, natural or otherwise, makes education – in terms of shaping oneself – possible and gives it meaning. It is important at this point to stress that a pedagogic perspective is different from and not to be reduced to a political, ethical or cultural perspective. We cannot elaborate upon this in detail here, but one could think of the pedagogic perspective as referring to the assumption of equality and freedom in terms of 'being able to...', whereas the ethical perspective often includes a point of departure in terms of 'having to' or 'being unable not to'. Furthermore, both politics and pedagogics are concerned with change, but collective change through reform is different from renewal initiated by a new generation. Yet, it is clear that politics often uses schools and universities for reform, and hence exploits the coming generation as a resource for solving problems in the current society. Perhaps the school and university should not be politicized, but we should acknowledge that allowing schools and universities to exist – as sites of pedagogic renewal – is in itself a political act. Finally, schools and universities should not be

mistaken for forms of initiation into a culture, or into norms and values of a society. In a sense, at schools and universities culture is always already put at a distance, that is, it becomes a common thing that allows for study, exercise and thus renewal. But spokespersons of 'the culture' often claim the school and university as sites of initiation. In our view, this does not do justice to schools and universities, but equally, it reduces cultural work to school work. This is not to say that schools and universities are not cultural, or have nothing to do with culture. As far as the world and shared, common things take central stage, they actually 'make' culture and prepare the new generation for culture.

Second, it may be interesting to distinguish between different 'levels' within pedagogic forms. In the previous sections, we have not distinguished clearly between the meaning of the school and that of the university. Suggesting distinctions probably reaffirms that education is cultural in the sense of 'putting the world' first, and therefore it is worth formulating some theses about what could be called the 'finality' of the different levels of education. Each level is somehow involved in putting the world at a distance, but at the same time making care or attachment possible. Perhaps, the kindergarten is about 'playing'. In kindergarten, something is brought into play, and that thing becomes something to focus on. Learning through playing is then not just an artificial activity, but the play allows children to be engaged in something because it temporarily keeps parts of the world (that is, requests and utility) outside. Primary education could be about offering the basic grammars, and hence, allowing young people to acquire a basic shape. These grammars are needed in order to be able to relate to what (in the world) is influencing us. The grammars do not impose a destiny on each and all, but allow each and all to find a destiny. In this vein, one could think of secondary education as the place and time of the formation of 'interest' (fascination, curiosity about something). It is about making possible that something outside of your life-world and common horizon touches you, and slows you down in your orientation to study, exercise and think. Finally, one could argue that higher education is about the formation of the faculty of judgment and taste. This means that basic grammars and cherished interests can always be questioned. In higher education, it is always about a kind of learning through research, in the broad sense of transgressing the limits of what is of interest or what the basic grammar is, and hence allowing for a distance

and care that makes judgment and taste possible. These distinctions need elaboration, but they can serve as touchstones in order to develop and experiment with pedagogic forms within Europe, at least if Europe allows for schools and universities to exist.

Lesson 7. The Price for Europe to have a Future

A European *educational* policy that does not put 'learning' and 'resources', but the renewal of society, the care of the common world and especially the possible future of new generations at the centre, should allow for schools and universities to remain. Or, in stronger words, it should focus on the support and reinvention of these pedagogic forms. Therefore, such a policy must not offer benchmarks but touchstones, i.e. no measures of performance but measures of authenticity, in order to investigate whether new forms of gathering people and things can be considered as being truly a school or a university. Such a policy would include the awareness that the existence of schools and universities requires the European community to deliberate democratically on the grammars that it wishes to offer to the new generation. Or, put differently: the will to have schools and universities confronts Europe with the responsibility to articulate what is common and therefore urges Europe to engage in a public debate on what is common. By contrast, a policy that is focusing on learning needs, learning resources and learning outcomes reduces 'European frameworks' and 'European spaces of (higher) education' to an infrastructure to promote private interests instead of allowing it to be a space of exposure to common things, a space to take care of the common world and become fit to take care of that common world. These frameworks and spaces are not operating in the name of a common world, but in the name of private interests, choices, preferences and concerns and in name of their own survival. They just enable or facilitate an ongoing capitalization of learning, a permanent mobilization and acceleration and an increasing speculation.

To us, what Arendt writes at the end of her famous text on 'The crisis in education' is now more valid and right than ever: 'Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children

enough not to expel ... from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world' (Arendt, 2006/ 1958: 193). Relating this back to her recollection of Cicero's *cultura animi* as a training and cultivation of men in order to be 'fit to take care of the things of the world', we could maybe state that 'education', this particular way of dealing with the new generation which is materialized in schools and universities, is one of the most essential cultural heritages of Europe. Moreover, one that would support that other heritage which we call democracy, since it forces it to have a debate on what it wants to put on the table in relation to the new generation. It is clear that a society does not put itself at a distance of itself spontaneously, and certainly not at the moment that it is dominated – as Stiegler (2010) discusses in great detail – by all kinds of media powers that are used 'to form opinions' and 'capture attention'. Gaston Bachelard (1967/1934) once spoke about 'une société faite pour l'école' (that means a society that fits the school, not a school that fits a society). He asked whether society is ready to recognize the school as such, as having its own 'public' role and to provide it with the means to 'work', a society which does not ask of the school what it cannot do but provides it with the means to be a school: to provide 'free time' and transform knowledge and skills into 'common goods', and therefore has the *potential* to give everyone, regardless of background, natural talent or aptitude, the time and space to leave their known environment, rise above themselves and renew the world and thus change it in unpredictable ways. The price such a society has to pay is to accept that it is *slowed down* (because there could be something more important), that it gives its future out of its hands (and reconfirms that there is no destination, fundamentally accepting its finitude) and is ready to trust people enough to free them of requirements of productivity in order to enable them to make school happen. The price for Europe to have a future therefore is focusing its educational policies on the support and reinvention of schools and universities.

Questions?

Is a learning policy actually an adequate response to what Athens reveals of the European condition? Is it not just one more step in the acceleration and speculation which, confronted with the

falling rate of learning as the new resource to capitalize, now is going towards the total exploitation of time?

Is the 'fundamental shift' towards learning outcomes and lifelong learning as the permanent production and valorization of the learning ability in itself not related to 'a generalized inscription of human life into duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning ... a time that no longer passes, beyond clock time' (Crary, 2014: 8)? Is it part of the creation of a '24/7 universe', as Crary calls it, which implies the 'mobilization and habituation of the individual to an open-ended set of tasks and routines' (p. 83) and is 'continuous with a generalized condition of worldlessness' (p. 18)? Is there still a world for the fast learner since 'world' refers to something that is not a resource to be used, and hence, something that asks too much and slows down?

Does Europe still want a future beyond what is anticipated in the logic of investment and innovation? Can it accept to be slowed down? Can it accept 'un-productive time'? That is, school-time, university-time? Does it still allow these words to be used? Is it still listening to the murmurings of what is not connected, what is not waiting to be connected or prefers not to be connected in the power networks? Can it leave behind the words 'European' and 'national', or at least bracket their pressing operations, in order to allow for schools and universities to look for meanings and futures? Perhaps Europe is in need of another liberalism, a kind of pedagogic liberalism, and hence, an assumption of trust in schools and universities, since we have to find our own destiny.

Notes

- 1 The findings (including maps, photographs, texts) were discussed at a four day public workshop 'Educolabo' in May 2014. See: <https://ppw.kuleuven.be/ecs/onderwijs/labo/toelichten/labo>
- 2 For more information, see: <https://ppw.kuleuven.be/ecs/tes/mediapaginas/meningsvorming-publiek-debat> (in Dutch).
- 3 As the document further states 'A number of European instruments such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Europass, European credit transfer systems (ECTS and ECET), the multilingual classification of European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) and quality assurance frameworks have been implemented in the last decade to support the mobility of learners and workers.' (p. 5) These instruments 'will contribute to real European mobility where a person's knowledge, skills and competences can be clearly understood and quickly recognized'. It is accompanied by the 'creation of a European Area of Skills and Qualifications' (p. 5) and finds also an articulation in the 'European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning'.

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