

# Intro

## The double crisis: living on the borders

### The Edu-factory collective

**EDU-FACTORY** IS A TRANSNATIONAL COLLECTIVE ENGAGED WITH THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE GLOBAL UNIVERSITY AND CONFLICTS IN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION. THE WEBSITE OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK ([WWW.EDU-FACTORY.ORG](http://www.edu-factory.org) <[HTTP://WWW.EDU-FACTORY.ORG](http://www.edu-factory.org)>) COLLECTS AND CONNECTS THEORETICAL INVESTIGATIONS AND REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY STRUGGLES. THE NETWORK HAS ORGANISED MEETINGS ALL AROUND THE WORLD, PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE INTERTWINING OF STUDENT AND FACULTY STRUGGLES. MEMBERS OF THE EDU-FACTORY COLLECTIVE ARE: MORGAN ADAMSON, MARCO BARAVALLE, PEDRO BARBOSA MENDES, CLAUDIA BERNARDI, ENDA BROPHY, ANNA CURCIO, PAOLO DO, LUDOVICA FALES,

The old institutions are crumbling--from central banks to political parties, from museums to newspapers, from broadcast television to schools. Caught between the continual rollout of crises and the encroachment of networks on their borders, they struggle to cope. Most are trying to brand their way out of their dead ends. Some will doubtless survive, but the majority will become unrecognisable in the process. In any case, radical politics can no longer be committed to the long march through these institutions.

Needless to say, universities are undergoing a period of turbulence, too. 'As once was the factory, so now is the university'--the edu-factory project began with this plain and apparently unproblematic statement--not to affirm, but to interrogate it. The university does not at all function like a factory. While we are proud of the factory and university struggles of the past we cannot afford to be content with simply being nostalgic for them. 'As once was the factory, so now is the university'--this statement is therefore an indication of a political problem. If we begin with the incommensurable differences between the actual functions of the university and those of the factory, what are the political stakes of putting them into relation? If the factory was once the locus of struggle under Fordist capitalism, what is the site of political contestation under present conditions? How can the problem of organisation be rethought in the aftermath of the decline of its traditional forms, such as the union and the political party?

The edu-factory web-journal extends the previous efforts of the edu-factory network to find answers to these questions. We know that this problem concerns prognosis more than diagnosis, and its urgency is only deepened by the current global economic crisis. Within edu-factory, we refer to this state of affairs as the *double crisis*. On the one hand, this involves an acceleration of the crisis specific to the university, the inevitable result of its outdated disciplinary divisions and eroded epistemological status. On the other hand, it is the crisis of

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postfordist conditions of labor and value, many of which are circuted through the university.

Situated on the borders of this double crisis, the edu-factory web-journal will be devoted to analysing how the university works--the 'occupations' that it enforces and those that it incites as well as the 'anomalies' that take exception to its homogenising translations. In this way, the journal seeks to derive ideas and practices for a new organisation of knowledge production, one that is entirely within the purview of social cooperation and its collective control. This is what we call the construction of an *autonomous institution*, which is possible through the invention of the *university of the common*, in other words university of the common can become so only by becoming autonomous.

## OCCUPATIONS

Four central points inform the zero issue.

First, the double crisis is global. To say this is not to imply the existence of a homogenous global space, or the construction of a flat world. Rather, it signals a global scenario of change, characterised by different forms of declination and /or *translation into particular regional contexts*. In fact, there is a great deal of differentiation within the heterogeneous space-time of the double crisis. This differentiation reveals the process of hierarchisation operating within the planetary education market. Old coordinates no longer suffice in its analysis, however, as this process of hierarchisation no longer follows the classical lines of division between centre and periphery. Consider the emergent roles taken on by China or India, and their higher education systems. The changing geopolitics of higher education is tightly linked to the disequilibrium between the debt deficit of the Western countries and the saving surplus of the so-called 'emergent countries'. The U.S. has had to come to terms with its Asian creditors. In order to trace the genealogy of the contemporary crisis, it is necessary to move outside the 'West'. As Miguel Carmona and Nicolàs Slachevsky rightly remind us, Chile was one of the first laboratories for the Chicago Boys. And as George Caffentiz points out, Africa's double crisis began in the 1980s. That decade saw the World Bank become a kind of 'Knowledge Bank', making loans to African universities in the hope of priming a knowledge economy that was out of step with the continent's position in the international division of labour. While universities across the world now face varying degrees of economic instability, debt, in its many forms, has been the central source of the contemporary crisis.

Secondly, we define the current crisis as an economic crisis, not only a financial one. Far from making the old distinction between the real and the financial economy, following the collective theses developed by Uninomade, we can say that finance is precisely the real form of the economy, when knowledge becomes both the central source and means of production. There is no outside to financialisation, because it represents the perverse form and the capture of what it is produced in common. Rating agencies such as Moody's and Standard and Poor's are evermore important actors in the formation of the hierarchy of the global education market.

In this context, and this is the third point, management strategy spans and in a certain way dissolves the dialectic between public and private. As Marc Bousquet's article emphasises, education leaders don't demand a 'bailout' or a 'New Deal' for universities. On the contrary, they impose austerity and control on the academic workforce--that is, students, faculty and precarious employees. These leaders seek to maintain and reproduce their positions based on the rent and 'capture' of living knowledge. The university is not only a part of, but also a paradigmatic site for the double crisis. More precisely, as Bousquet also observes, it is a leading 'innovator' in the production and engineering of the lousy forms of employment that have gutted the global economy. It is a laboratory for the 'capture' of value, or what it refers to as 'human, social and cultural capital'. Therefore, its current situation provides a good standpoint from which to analyse the contemporary global crisis and the new conflicts and struggles that have emerged with its unfolding. Chris Newfield analyses the 'logic of cuts that contradicts the knowledge economy's apparent requirement of a *mass* middle-class, a society that has a majority of college graduates and of knowledge workers', highlighting the changing terms of the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production. In other words, Newfield examines the processes of hierarchisation in the labour market and of differential inclusion in the education market. Extrapolating from his analysis, we can venture to suggest that today the labour market is immediately an education market, and vice versa.

Finally, the double crisis is not a stage or phase of the capitalist cycle: it has become permanent. Contrary to the proclamations of governments, global elites, and think tanks, the crisis isn't over. The growth of precarisation, unemployment and poverty, the decrease of salaries, the funding cuts to university departments all demonstrate that the crisis is ongoing. When the bubble becomes the contemporary form of economy, crisis becomes a new form and technique of governance. In other words, the problem for rulers, from those operating in the university to those active in the broader society beyond it, is that of continuous adaptation to a permanent crisis.

This double crisis is also manifest through the insurgent knowledges that still are produced or find place in the existing university set up, yet which the university as an institution finds extremely difficult to identify with, use, or contain. This is fundamentally a post-colonial scenario, where the past and the present of the university are caught up in an impossible paradox. In this post-colonial set up the managers of capital may like to do away with mass education, but popular democratic politics simply do not allow the gate crushers to the university to melt away. This makes the double crisis even more acute.

To the double crisis there also corresponds a double fantasy of exit. On the one hand, there is a reactionary idea: that is, to rebuild the ivory tower, with its separation between production on

the one hand and the 'fortress of knowledge' on the other. Not only is this separation impossible, but more importantly it works against the reality of contemporary cooperation and the subjective desires of living labour. It is the dystopia of academic elites, which seek to reproduce their rentier position. On the other hand, there is a liberal fantasy: to make the university--or 'metroiversity', to use the category proposed by Stefano Harney--the engine of a new economic cycle. Knowledge, in this fantasy, is understood not only as the basis of the contemporary economy, but also as a positive and 'neutral' aspect of cognitive capital. Yet the university remains the most anomalous institution. Neither can capital eat it up, nor can it vomit it away.

All of the articles in this zero issue illustrate a double opposition. They reject nostalgia for the university before it ended up 'in ruins'. And they oppose the vision of the university as a cognitive factory of accumulation and exploitation. Edu-factory is not interested in rescuing the corporate university. As Jon Solomon points out, innovation is not a form of value-added, but the expression of the *common*. In this decisive transition, a new role for the university is only possible through social cooperation and conflicts. This means turning the university from a place *occupied* by capital to one occupied by the bodies of living labour.

## A N O M A L I E S

Far from approaching the crisis as a dialectical synthesis of danger and opportunity, edu-factory points to the profound ambivalence and uncertainty marking the contemporary moment of global transition. We have to be careful not only about the spirit in which we appropriate the term crisis but also attentive to the multiple agendas that the term has been made to meet. These range from a revolutionary desire for crisis, as if it promises an insurrectionary moment more than reactionary tendencies, to governmental logics that posit crisis as a means for justifying actions that might otherwise be difficult to carry out. On the one hand, it is necessary to ask what the declaration of a crisis conceals, modifies or amplifies of the underlying conditions to which it seeks to draw attention. On the other hand, there is a need to interrogate the multiplication of crises, if not their constancy as a mode of motivating and justifying governmental interventions in the present order of people and things. The writings collected in this zero issue point to perilous futures: the drop in the quality of living conditions of millions and millions of people around the world, the decomposition of labour, and the so called war among the poor. At the same time, they point to the possibility of radical change. The crisis has created a sort of social battlefield upon which these poles of experience take their uncertain shape.

This zero issue is coming into an already moving world. This world is marked by the ambivalence of the double crisis. More than this, it is a world of global struggles and movements within the double crisis. Just to quote some powerful and recent examples: the graduate student struggles in Canada and the U.S., the occupations in the University of California, as well as in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Croatia; the student claims for freedom in Teheran, or the conflicts for academic freedom in Africa. There are many others. All are against budget cuts, the dismantling and marketisation of education systems, the 'precarisation' of labour, the introduction of new systems of measure by means of audit cultures, and so on. But they also highlight emergent claims for new models of education and practices of self-managed knowledge production.

Therefore, the current struggles and conflicts in the 'global university', as well as the various experiments in 'auto-education', are not only the description of potentially transformative lines of exit, out of the crisis. They also provide the lineaments of a method. They are squatting the crisis, to use the effective words of Lina Dokuzović and Eduard Freudmann. We propose to read the heterogeneous global space-time of the double crisis beginning with its anomalies. From this standpoint, Claudia Bernardi and Andrea Ghelfi analyse the development of the 'Anomalous Wave' movement in Italy, framing it in the European context of the Bologna Process and explaining its main slogan: 'we won't pay for your crisis!' Similarly, Carmona and Slachevsky show how practices of conflict exhibit the contradictions at work in the neoliberal model of university. Perhaps we should say the contemporary crisis marks the modulation of neoliberalism. This does not mean that the effects of neoliberal politics are over, but rather that they are undergoing deep transformation and that their capacity to form a system can no longer be assumed. As Caffentzis highlights, the role of African students in gaining access to university education is part of the genealogy of the contemporary crisis. The appropriation of the 'global knowledge deal' by these subjects transforms it into a source for radical transformation, just as the 'enlightenment discourse' discovered by the French revolutionary bourgeoisie became incendiary in the hands of those for whom it was not meant, such as the Haitian slaves after 1789.

As global space-time is heterogeneous, struggles take different forms in different contexts. The problem is not to find a universal form or means of communication among them: on the contrary, the question is their *composition*. This has nothing to do with the exportation of a model, or communication among homogeneous subjects: it is immediately the question of *translation*, to recall the analysis provided by Solomon. Everyday capital must translate the production of the common into the language of accumulation, taking the 'heterogeneous and full time' of the movement and cooperation of living knowledge and turning it into the 'homogenous and empty time' of the capture of value. This is *homolingual translation*; global English is the homolingual idiom of the corporate university. But there is no place for utopian (or dystopian) ideas of 'outsides' or happy islands: the ghettos are definitely compatible with the system of governance. The global university is our battlefield: it is the space-time axis for experimentation in the ordinary event of *heterolingual translation*. Pitted against the multiple technologies of border management, security and identity that make the university into a key site for the management of global populations, we explore the struggles among its knowledgeable bodies and their possible composition in a common process.

The double crisis also marks the crisis of the traditional organisation of the knowledge and its borders--i.e. the disciplines. The articles collected in this zero issue also highlight emergent claims for new educational models and practices of self-managed knowledge production. The crisis has exposed the limits of traditional disciplines to conduct a reading of contemporaneity. Last spring various mainstream economists signed a document entitled *The Financial Crisis and the Systematic Failure of Academic Economics*. In this text they assert that the discipline of economics was not only unable to foresee the incipient crisis but also partly responsible for it. The discourse of other disciplines is not much different. Meanwhile, interdisciplinarity, which is everywhere proclaimed in rhetoric but so rarely practiced in fact, promises little change in the organisation of knowledge. The disciplines, which in many jurisdictions are now assigned codes and statistically subdivided in order to register in audit and so-called quality exercises, are more and more

the bare shells of hierarchisation and measure. To be succinct: the organisation of knowledge becomes a central battlefield, within rather than the outside of power and productive relationships. In contrast to this, Pedro Barbosa Mendes describes the experiments with a new university model in Brazil, based on the practices of social movements. This experimentation could indicate a possible form of conflict and constituent power within the crisis of contemporary forms of governance.

In conclusion, if the double crisis is a permanent condition, we cannot use the old schemas to read it. We need new lenses to understand the patterns of occupation in the global university. And we need new, anomalous tools to escape from its borders. These tools are already discernible in the anomalous waves, in the motions of the body called the university. It is in this strange co-existence of the reality and the possibility that we find the post-colonial predicament of knowledge shows the lines of its resolution.