

# The Learning Society and Governmentality: An introduction

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## Abstract

*This paper presents an overview of the elements which characterize a research attitude and approach introduced by Michel Foucault and further developed as 'studies of governmentality' into a sub-discipline of the humanities during the past decade, including also applications in the field of education. The paper recalls Foucault's introduction of the notion of 'governmentality' and its relation to the 'mapping of the present' and sketches briefly the way in which the studies of governmentality have been elaborated in general and in the context of research in education more particularly. It indicates how the studies of governmentality can be related to a cartography of the learning society, a cartography which helps us to get lost and to liberate our view.*

*\*The order of authors' names is purely strategic.*

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This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.

M. Foucault

We are (or should be) the inhabitants of a (future) learning society. At least, this is what is taken for granted in different contexts. For policy makers the learning society is the horizon to reflect upon their decisions and to frame governmental instruments. Also teachers, pedagogues and educational researchers focus on the learning society to select important issues, to reflect upon them and to rationalise what they and others are doing or what they or others have to do.

Furthermore, in all these contexts technologies and procedures are introduced to address us as lifelong learners and to create an infrastructure to operate in the learning society. The learning society thus not only seems to have become a necessary notion in the vocabulary to think and write about ourselves, others and the world, but is related to rather specific technologies and procedures to understand and guide ourselves as a particular kind of subjects i.e. subjects for whom learning is a natural force to live our life.

The main aim of the collection of articles in this special issue is to map the present by focusing on some of the heterogeneous components of the learning society.<sup>1</sup> The contributions do not only share a common interest in and attitude towards the present, but also focus on the present at a common level. They focus on the components of the actual governmental regime being installed in relation to the learning society. Michel Foucault could be named as the ‘father’ of this research attitude and approach. However, this goes without saying, the authors of this collection are not his well-educated children, if they are related at all. Maybe what Foucault claimed himself could be invoked here: ‘I prefer to utilise the writers I like’. Nevertheless, a short overview of some work of Foucault and of the concept of governmentality could be helpful to explore this beloved use.

### 1. Foucault and Governmentality

During his courses at the *Collège de France* in the late seventies (*Sécurité, Territoire et Population* (1977–1978) and *Naissance de la biopolitique* (1978–1979)), Michel Foucault elaborated his analysis of power-relations (Foucault 2004a, 2004b; cf. 1978a/b, 1981). While previously he analysed disciplinarian forms of power (giving shape to modern institutions such as schools, hospitals and the prison), his interest shifted to broader governmental issues to address the exercise and development of power relations throughout the modern state. However, his point of departure was not to analyse the power of the state or the growing ‘étatisation of society’, and his aim was not to discuss the legitimacy of the state’s power. Instead, his main interest was to analyse the exercise of power by focusing on the development of governmental rationalities and related governmental technologies. For this domain of analysis he introduced the neologism ‘governmentality’, combining ‘government’ and ‘mentality’. In order to understand this particular domain of analysis and its importance, we should mention that Foucault was addressing also a specific development in the early modern period, i.e. the birth of the modern governmental state.

From a genealogical perspective the birth of the modern state is related to a crisis in the theological-cosmological order (of sovereign power) through which government became a problem, i.e. something that is not evident anymore and that opens up the question of ‘how to govern?’ and ‘who and what should be addressed in government?’. The early modern reflections on the ‘reason of state’ and the focus on ‘the population’ are part of the early modern art of government or governmentality. In his lectures Foucault offered a detailed analysis of this art of government and its further development: mercantilism and Kameralism as governmental rationalities, the *polizey* (and related science) as a governmental technology (and as a secular pastoral technology), liberalism as a reaction against governing according to the ‘reason of state’, the incorporation of disciplinarian settings and apparatuses of security as governmental technologies, ‘the social’ as a governmental theme and domain of intervention, the crisis of the social state and the birth of neo-liberalism as both a reactivation and reformulation of the liberal attitude at the level of government. Referring to these rationalities and technologies, Foucault claims that the modern state—up to the twentieth century—is a governmental state, i.e. a

complex of centralising governing relationships that aims at governing people. Or to put it otherwise: what characterizes the modern state is a 'governmentalisation of the state'.

In order to have a clear understanding of what is at stake in this governmentalisation it is important to focus on how Foucault understands government. Foucault describes government as 'conduire des conduites' or 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 1982, p. 237). This formula expresses that the object of government is not a passive pole (outside) but people who are governing themselves in a specific way. Government thus is acting upon the self-government or 'conduct' of people. This self-government is not something natural, but is being shaped. In the eighties Foucault focused explicitly on (the history of) technologies of the self which allow human beings to relate in a particular way to themselves and to constitute themselves as subjects (cf. Foucault, 1984a, 1984b, 2001). Although in his lectures on governmentality Foucault does not (yet) address this level of self-government and the formation of subjectivity throughout (ethical) technologies of the self, it allows us to clarify what is at stake in the 'government of self-government' and the 'governmentalisation of the state'.

Modern governmental rationalities and technologies seek to promote a kind of self-government or subjectivity that is of strategic importance for its operations. Modern liberal governmentality for example correlates with a rather specific individual freedom. Individual freedom is thus not a natural state of human beings but implies a kind of self-government. And within liberal governmentality bringing about this self-government or these subjects (e.g. people who understand themselves in terms of freedom, having interests and a guiding reason and who understand their environment as a civil society) is of strategic importance. Therefore, liberal governmentality is recoding settings of disciplinarian power (such as schools and factories) in order to secure the existence of freedom upon which it can act. In short, in a regime of liberal governmentality individual freedom is both an effect and instrument. This illustration clarifies that the 'governmentalisation of the state' is closely related to the 'governmentalisation of freedom'. It is not through brute force that people are being incorporated within the modern state. Instead, throughout a rather particular form of self-government and at the level of our very subjectivity, people are being included in the governmental state. Within the modern state freedom, as a particular practice of self-government, is being governmentalised.

Although Foucault focused mainly on past forms of governmentality, he also analysed more recent developments. He noticed that after the Second World War a new crisis of government occurred and he focused on what could be the beginning of a new rationalisation of government, new governmental technologies and finally new forms of self-government (Foucault, 1980, p. 94). Neoliberalism is the central concept here. Within neoliberal governmentality people are not addressed (any more) as social citizens (whose freedom or autonomy is guaranteed through social normality or who have a normalised relation to the self) but as entrepreneurial selves and entrepreneurs of the self. Entrepreneurial self-government implies looking at oneself as inhabiting an environment, having needs and producing goods (or investing in human capital) in order to meet or satisfy these needs. For government

addressing the self-government of the entrepreneurial citizen the main task of 'the state' is creating and controlling a market environment to enable entrepreneurial freedom. Confronted with the early crisis of the social welfare state Foucault thus described a new phase in the 'governmentalisation of freedom'. It is a regime of government and self-government in which 'the economic' (redefined as entrepreneurship or the 'permanent economic tribunal') plays a central, strategic role. And this analysis of actual governmentality has been an important background of the so-called 'studies of governmentality'.

## 2. Studies of Governmentality

As Foucault's lectures on governmentality have not been published (until recently), the access to this domain of analysis has been relatively difficult. Only some courses, interviews and short summaries have been published. Important for the introduction to the idea of governmentality has been the book by Burchell, Gordon & Miller, published in 1991 and titled *The Foucault Effect. Studies in governmentality (with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault)*. Besides the rather detailed introduction of Colin Gordon, two of Foucault's lectures and an interview, this book includes original work of researchers examining themes inspired by Foucault and governmentality: the reason of state, the police-state, civil society, government and poverty, work, insurance, risk, statistics. During the 1990s the 'Foucault effect'—at least with regard to governmentality—has grown and meanwhile scholars all over the world have been engaged in studying issues related to governmentality. It is not unimportant to mention that this interest in governmentality and especially in Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism was first developed in the Anglo-Saxon world. Recalling the influence of Thatcher and Reagan could help to explain this interest. Meanwhile, the group of researchers dealing with governmentality or 'studies of governmentality' is still growing. Let us point to a few more important publications that could help to give an impression of the focus of these studies and their topics.

In 1996 *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government* was published (Barry, Osborne & Rose, 1996).<sup>2</sup> As the subtitle of the book suggests, the essays focus on liberalism and neoliberalism as rationalities or mentalities of government, i.e. strategies aiming at governing people. The main interest is neoliberalism, or to use the formulation of Rose, 'advanced liberalism' (Rose, 1996, p. 50). What the essays have in common is that they use analogous 'analytical tools' to map actual forms of governmentality. One could refer to these studies as 'studies of governmentality' and as a kind of new subdiscipline within the humanities (Dean, 1999, p. 2). However, the term 'discipline' may not be adequate since these studies are very diverse, both at the level of research domain and at the level of method (Rose, 1999, p. 9). What they share (beside some general 'analytical tools') is an interest in actual forms of governmentality, understood in a minimal way as the strategies of governing people and governing ourselves. This interest is also underlying the German collection entitled *Gouvernementalität der Gegenwart. Studien zur Ökonomisierung des Sozialen* (Bröckling, Krasmann & Lemke,

2000). What the essays in this collection, which received a lot of attention in Germany, have in common is '[...] die (Selbst-)Zurichtungs- und Herrschaftseffekte neoliberaler Gouvernementalität präziser in den Blick zu bekommen.' ('... to try to have a better view on the effects of self-discipline and domination of neoliberal governmentality') (ibid., p. 32).<sup>3</sup> Both collections illustrate that from the 1990s onwards a relatively autonomous line of research has been developed that focuses on actual forms of government and self-government.<sup>4</sup> The following list could give an idea the variety of topics being studied: the constitution of the consumer (Miller & Rose, 1997); the government of the unemployed (Dean, 1995); the government of love in a therapeutic setting (Kendall & Crossley, 1996); risk and responsibility (O'Malley, 1996); self-esteem and 'empowerment' as correlates of government (Cruikshank, 1996); quality-management (Bröckling, 2000); the neoliberal command 'be-yourself' (Greco, 2000); government and mathematical justice (Schmidt-Semisch, 2000); contractualism (Yeatman, 1998); performance appraisal (Findlay & Newton, 1998).

### 3. Foucault, Education, Governmentality

Foucault is of course not a new name in educational research and theory.<sup>5</sup> As it is not possible to mention here all studies in education inspired by or based upon Foucault, we limit ourselves to some main directions in educational research. Foucault's genealogy and related concepts such as normalization have played a major role in the history of education, and more specifically the history of the school and the classroom and the history of educational science (cf. Depaepe, 1998; Hunter, 1994). At a more analytical level *Surveiller et Punir* (Foucault, 1975), a book that dealt with the birth of the prison and related settings of disciplinarian power, influenced researchers to focus on power relations within education as well as the power effects of educational research (e.g. Pongratz, 1989; Ball, 1990). During the 1990s, the meaning of Foucault for educational research could be situated at a continuum with two poles going from theoretical to analytical.

At a theoretical level Foucault has been used to reflect upon and redirect central concepts (autonomy, liberal education) within philosophy of education (Marshall, 1996). More generally, he has been seen as representing postmodernism and post-structuralism and his work played a role in discussions on (epistemological and ethical) relativism and the (modern) conception of the subject underlying educational theory (e.g. Smeyers, 1996; Wain, 1996; Blake *et al.*, 1998; Biesta, 1998). Within poststructuralism Foucault has been used to argue for the value of historical materialistic approach (Olssen, 1999) and for a reformulation of the concept of the self (Marshall, 2001). Furthermore, he has influenced reflections on methodology for educational research, sociology of education and underlying epistemologies (Ball, 1994; Popkewitz, 1996; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997). Although this list is not exhaustive, it allows us to have an idea of the influence of Foucault at a theoretical (philosophy, epistemology, ethics, sociology, methodology) level.

Also at an analytical level there are many studies based upon a Foucauldian approach. Examining specific practices and developments, these studies are inspired by Foucault's (genealogical) research attitude. They make use of his analytical tools

(analysis of discourses and power relations) or adopt parts of his genealogical analysis. It is at this level that during the 1990s ‘studies of governmentality’ (combing both a specific theoretical framework or attitude and a domain of analysis), have inspired educational research or have been adapted to and reformed for educational topics. The following examples could give an idea of these studies: governmentality, busnoper and liberal education (Marshall, 1995a, 1995b); pastoral power at the university (Howley & Hartnett, 1992); classroom management (Tavares, 1996); entrepreneurship and education (Peters, 2000); the soul of the teacher, teacher reflection and teacher identity (Popkewitz, 1998; Ball, 2003; Fendler, 2003; Zembylas, 2003); mobilization and lifelong learning (Edwards, 2002); the permanent quality tribunal in education (Simons, 2002; Wain, 2004); neoliberalism, globalization and democracy (Olssen *et al.*, 2004); Europe, governmentality, immunization (Masschelein & Simons, 2003); the care of the self in a knowledge economy (Drummond, 2003); see also the collection in Baker & Heyning, 2004; Pongratz *et al.*, 2004 and Ricken & Rieger-Ladich, 2004.

Parallel to the general reception and use of ‘governmentality’, these studies in education were developed mainly in an Anglo-American context. The postponed reception of Foucault and governmentality in some countries of the continent is difficult to explain. With regard to the German reception of Foucault, Peters states: ‘[...] the question of why was it postponed has much to do with the lack of interpenetration of philosophical traditions, intellectual antipathies and defensiveness on both sides, and Habermas’ early polemic intervention when he accepted the Adorno prize from the City of Frankfurt in 1980 with a piece that drew sides in the debate between modernity and postmodernity, indicating that he held that modernity was an “incomplete project” and calling the French poststructuralists “neo-conservatives” likening them to the conservatives of the Weimar Republic’ (Peters, 2004, p. 197). However, meanwhile the situation has changed. At least some indirect observations point in the direction of a growing interest in Foucault and governmentality. In Germany the book mentioned earlier *Gouvernementalität der Gegenwart. Studien zur Ökonomisierung des Sozialen* is a rare academic bestseller (Bröckling, Krasmann & Lemke, 2000/2004). And with regard to (philosophy of) education in 2004 two edited books have been published: *Nach Foucault. Diskurs- und machtanalytische Perspektiven der Pädagogik* (Pongratz *et al.*, 2004) and *Michel Foucault: Pädagogische Lektüren* (Ricken & Rieger-Ladich, 2004).

The growing interest in Foucault’s ideas on governmentality (and in its elaboration in ‘studies of governmentality’) could also be linked to social developments and more specifically changes in government (and the welfare state) and educational policy. During the 1990s and in the beginning of the twenty-first century one could notice a general tendency towards de-centralisation in educational policy and towards an autonomisation and responsabilisation of schools. Furthermore, there is a growing impact of ‘Europe’ on (higher) education—a kind of re-centralisation. The European project of the knowledge society and knowledge economy has been (and still is) the background for (national) regulations and redirections of education. These changes at the level of educational policy stimulated and still stimulate looking for adequate tools and frameworks for critical analysis (see Wain, 2004).

The growing importance of 'studies of governmentality' and to a certain extent also its introduction within or translation to many different intellectual traditions could be understood against this background.

This brings us finally to the scope of the special issue. The collection of articles that is presented here articulates a common interest in the present, i.e. for our actual society that is addressed in many different contexts as a (future) learning society. Furthermore, the articles focus on how the learning society is related to specific governmental rationalities, governmental technologies and forms of self-government. They look at educational ideas and programmes as being part of the history of the ways in which human beings conduct and govern themselves and others. They assume that there is an intrinsic relation between the intellectual and practical educational technologies on the one hand and the way in which political power is wielded in our societies as well as the way in which we govern ourselves on the other side. In this way these studies also indicate how educational practice and educational theory (and science) have played and do play a constitutive role in practices of subjectivation which are crucial to our 'learning societies'—as societies which interpellate us to become lifelong learners.

Almost all authors are related to universities on the continent. Therefore, this special issue could also be regarded as an introduction to the Continental reception of governmentality and perhaps also as an illustration of the force of intellectual traditions. Although some authors take as a point of departure present developments in their home country, we think their analysis is exemplary for developments in other countries as well. Moreover, and this could be a question for future research, it is interesting to notice how developments at the level of governmentality are similar within different countries. Could it be explained by the use of similar research methods (too much focus on method instead of a kind of critical attitude towards one's present)? Or is there something underlying or outside regimes of governmentality that is directing these regimes all into the same direction?

#### **4. Mapping the 'Learning Society' and its Limits**

The 'learning society' expresses principles of a universal humanity and a promise of progress that seem to transcend the nation. *Thomas Popkewitz, Ulf Olsson and Kenneth Peterson* let us see how this society is governed in the name of a cosmopolitan ideal which despite its universal pretensions embodies particular inclusions and exclusions. These occur through inscribing distinctions and differentiations that distinguish between the characteristics of those who embody a cosmopolitan reason that brings social progress and personal fulfilment and those who do not embody the cosmopolitan principles of civility and normalcy. Mapping the circulation of the notion of the 'learning society' in actual arenas of Swedish health and criminal justice, and Swedish and US school reforms permits the appearance of the mode of life of the citizen of this society, the learner, as an 'unfinished cosmopolitanism' and also directs attention to its 'other(s)'—those that are outside.

The commitment to cosmopolitanism as commitment to reason, science and principles of human rights is embodied in a particular way in Europe and placed

in a landscape of lifelong learning. *Anna Tuschling* and *Christoph Engemann* describe how the discourse on and the administration of lifelong learning in the European Union is generating a European population of self-organizing learners. They trace the origins of lifelong learning to the discussions on alternative education in the 1960s and 1970s and demonstrate, along the lines of the distinction between formal and informal learning, how the field of learning is transformed from enclosed environments into a totality of learning events, while simultaneously, as a strategy of subjectivation, individuals are provided with the necessary skill-sets to become inhabitants of Europe as a learning society. We can see from this how 'Europe' is not to be considered so much as a kind of super-state, but rather as an assemblage of discourses and governmental techniques and strategies.

In their contributions both Pongratz and Liessner sketch how some of these 'European' strategies and techniques are operating. Taking the turmoil caused in Germany by the results of the PISA-study (Programme for International Student Assessment) as a starting point *Ludwig Pongratz* indicates how this turmoil points to a self understanding and self-government which is generated through the disciplining effect of educational reform measures as governmental strategies, of which the PISA study is itself an element. This linkage of 'technologies of the self' with new governmental strategies of control—the 'voluntary self-control' of individuals—manifests itself at all levels of the education system: at the level of individual learning processes (through which the participants in educational processes are to be transformed into 'I-Ltd.' firms), at the level of methodological-didactic arrangements (increasingly using post-Fordist, 'soft' forms of regulation), and finally at the institutional level (through the reconstruction of educational institutions as market-oriented, profitable agencies, trading with knowledge as a commodity).

Taking up these different levels and concentrating on the German university landscape, *Andrea Liesner* analyses the transformations that are at work in the so-called 'harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system' which finds its origin in the 'Sorbonne Declaration' (1998) and in the 'Bologna Conference' (1999). She sketches how teaching and learning appear in the 'new' higher education area and indicates how in the reorganisation of the curriculum the university appears as an environment that fosters students and teachers to conceive of themselves as entrepreneurial customers and service providers. As such the political 'Europeanization' program of the universities puts a new mode of government and self-government at work. This actual government of the learning society involves a claim to freedom.

Quaghebeur and Bröckling explore this freedom as it takes shape in the invocations for participation and creativity that are very popular today. As *Kerlijn Quaghebeur* states, 'participation' has become a buzzword and has been linked up with personal promises of self-fulfilment and with democratic ideals. Through the analysis of a concrete training programme for participation she shows how the possibilities and opportunities that are offered in participation are actually governing the subject in a particular way—they have as an effect a specific practice of freedom as obedience to particular norms. And she asks whether practices of freedom have to imply subjection to a norm.



Ulrich Bröckling's 'brainstorming session' indicates how the appeal ('be creative') and self-understanding ('I'm myself to the extent I'm creative') come together and how creativity appears simultaneously as an anthropological capacity, a binding norm, a *telos* without closure and a learnable competence. Moreover, he shows that the imperative to be creative entails many paradoxes, contradictions and ambiguities and that the response to it cannot be another imperative—'don't be creative'—but a turning away from speaking in the imperative and stopping wanting to be creative.

Being an inhabitant of the learning society means not only to want to be creative and to want to participate, but implies in a more general way the will to invest with regard to a future return, i.e. to subjugate under a permanent economic tribunal. Taking the 'European Space of Higher Education' as a starting point Maarten Simons indicates how the regime of learning implies that the distinction between the social and the economic becomes obsolete. His investigation is focusing (following the perspective of Bröckling) on the intersection between a politisation and economisation of human life. Using Foucault's understanding of biopolitics and discussing the analyses of Agamben and Negri/Hardt he argues that the actual governmental configuration, i.e. the economisation of the social, has a biopolitical dimension and that what is at stake is a 'bio-economisation' which could turn into a regime of terror. Or to put it differently: fostering the (lifelong) learning (to learn) i.e. fostering life (as learning process) could turn into 'let die' and even into 'make die'.

But, one could ask, what makes us governable and enables us to govern? Norbert Ricken addresses this issue by rephrasing the question 'what is power?' into the question: 'to what power can be seen as a response?'. This allows us to keep the 'power of power' in sight. He then elucidates the 'how' of power through some conceptual explorations and theoretical clarifications as well as through an explicitly anthropological problematisation of power, as the way in which power is understood depends always also on the way in which people understand themselves. Reassessing Foucault's rejection of anthropological reflections Ricken sketches a structural matrix of human self conceptions through which power and also critique can be reconstructed systematically.

This brings us to issue of the (possibility of) critique of the actual regime. Following Foucault, critique could be regarded as being the art not to be governed in this way or as a project of desubjection. Jan Masschelein tries to show how such a project could be described as an 'e-ducative' practice and explores this idea through an example which Foucault himself gave of such a critical practice: the writing (and reading) of 'experience books'. Thus it appears that such an e-ducative practice is a 'dangerous', public and uncomfortable practice that is not in need of pastoral care but requires generosity, presence and attention. As such it demands a pedagogy of experience which is to be invented in order to 'make' oneself into a question, to transgress the limits of a governmental regime.

## **Premature Epilogue: E-educational Maps**

What could be the meaning of mapping our society, i.e. a society referred to in educational and political discourse as a learning society? Are these maps drawn and

presented with a specific reader in mind? Are the cartographers addressing someone who is in need of orientation and guidance, someone who could not find her way without a carefully designed map in her hands? Are we putting ourselves as cartographers into a critical Kantian position, claiming that what is needed in our society are guidelines or orientations for our thinking? (Kant, 1786/1981) Do we want to provide an orientation? (Elden, 2001) Do we want to help to find a place in the world? (Crampton, 2004) And do we ask the reader to judge whether we succeed? No, or at least, we had something else in mind. We believe—and this is a confession-without-address—that what is and should be at stake are gestures of disorientation and maps that are helping us to get lost, maps that are not simplifying but making everything more complex, maps that are not offering an overview or a liberating view but that liberate our view.

And let us be straightforward about this by using a positive formulation of what we believe. Being orientated, to have an orientation, to have a direction (be it a utopia) is the state of mind of a subject, of whatever kind of subjectivity and implies (taking) a position (be this, as Kant would have it, a subjective feeling). In contrast, being disorientated, being without direction is about having an experience, it is the state of mind of a being that is exposed, of a being out-of-position. Or to put it otherwise: while reason, knowledge, and learning could be regarded as giving orientations, experience is what is happening to us, and that something is happening to us. Experience thus, is not to be understood as what is blind without an orientating reason and reason is not what is empty without real-life experience. What we would like to do is to resist the blackmail of Enlightenment, to go beyond the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical and to point to another idea of experience (Foucault, 1984c, 1984d).

Our belief is that the meaning of mapping or cartography is neither to offer a representation nor to be a construction or to reveal a unity behind the complex diversity in order to find our place. Instead, its meaning is to generate places and moments for experience and this experience has an e-ducational value. Therefore, we believe that a map is not an (edifying) story or a narrative (about ourselves, about education) that is transmitting a personal experience and that has a learning potential. Mapping the learning society or our actual being is a gesture of education, of leading out. Or, if one would like: it is an act of enlightenment, not through reason and learning but through experience. It is an act of critique, but not in the sense of defining the limits of reason and claiming the blindness of experience. Critique is about transgression. But going beyond is not entering that space of emptiness and darkness (without reason) as the blackmail of Enlightenment would let us have it. Transgressing our actuality or present, transgressing who we are and what we should be like is entering the world of experience and education. And in order to do so, we believe that it is necessary to leave behind our intellectual, pedagogical and academic comfort.

This comfort is about having a 'position', a particular position. It is the position of someone who is speaking in the name of a court (of reason, truth, science, humanity, history ...) and regards people, including oneself, as in need of permanent (spiritual) guidance and orientation (to find their place in society, to survive

in this society, to enter the kingdom of reason, to become truly human, to become a learning citizen, to be a scientist ...). We believe that mapping the present starts by resisting precisely the comfort of a 'position' and by refusing to bring that present before a court. The point of departure is being ex-posed or out of position. What is at stake then can be indicated in terms of the kind of questions this being exposed allows, and in a certain way also forces us, to ask. The initial questions are not: 'what is the learning society?', 'what is lifelong learning?', 'what is participation?', 'what is creativity?', 'how does all this affect education and people involved in education?', 'how do we have to judge this learning society?'. Instead, the initial question is: who are we, we for whom the learning society is important (to organize, to reflect upon ...), we who regard ourselves as inhabitants of a society in which learning is a fundamental process or we for whom learning is a notion to refer to when we think on what life is about?

And the question is: what is there to say when we leave the comfort of the position and the court? Is there still anything to say? To whom?

## Notes

1. For the notion 'map' and 'mapping' see Flynn, 1994, 2005.
2. This collection of studies came out of a conference at Goldsmiths College (University of London) in 1992, and was supported by the journal 'Economy and Society'. Topics related to governmentality are often discussed in this journal, including also the presuppositions and critical dimensions of studies of governmentality (O'Malley, Weir & Shearing, 1997; Stenson, 1998).
3. *Eine Kritik der politischen Vernunft. Foucaults Analyse der modernen Gouvernementalität* (Lemke, 1997) has been important with regard to the introduction of governmentality in Germany. The author offers a detailed overview of Foucault's two courses on governmentality as well as links with his later work.
4. Examples of other collections include Hänninen, 1998 (Finland); Dean & Hindess, 1998 (Australia).
5. For an overview of Foucault in Anglo-American research see Peters, 2004. With regard to the Foucault reception in educational theory in Germany see Balzer, 2004. For a recent collection see Baker & Heyning, 2004.

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