

After the Strike?

Part 2: Solidarity In and Out

Jane Rendell

Day 5: Wed 28 February – *Solidarity In and Out*¹

Wednesday 28 February

Crit-Out

9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

BREAK//LINE will present their union banner and manifesto, and talk about developing a critique of the trespass of capital into practice and pedagogy.

We are keen to reach out to design staff and students. So anyone with a project relating to the themes of the strike — inequality, precarity, debt, intergenerational equity — please come along to a crit which will take place inside at the front of the foyer and on the street.

Current PhD students will talk from the street about themes of civic pedagogy, participatory and performative practice relating to their research located inside the building in the PhD show.

Take up a position wherever you feel comfortable.

March for Education: Back Pension & Pay Strikes

12pm: Assemble Malet St, London WC1E 7HY

uculondonregion.wordpress.com

The crit-out took places under umbrellas in the snow, and we discussed the need for solidarity outwards as well as inwards, with, for example those at the Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, making connections with issues around the treatment of international staff, and in particular students, for whom the marketised university relies on for fees, but who is often under surveillance and deported from the UK as part of the 'hostile environment'.² A BBQ was set up for a brunch grill, but had to be moved by a few inches, so it occupied Camden rather than UCL property, and so any

potential fire was no longer a risk for the institution. Having eaten, we took up the placards made out of remnants from the workshop, fashioned with suitably architectural slogans, and set off to march through central London, with ice underfoot, and some dressed in very thin coats.

Day 6: Monday 5 March – *Strike Again*³

Monday 5 March

Picket

7:30am: Quad, Gower Street

8:30-9:30am: RIBA, 66 Portland Place

Delegation to lobby the UCU/UUK talks facilitated by ACAS.

Global Prosperity and the University Teach-Out

10-12pm: Maple House, 149 Tottenham Court Road

Chris Harker and Matthew Davies from the Institute for Global Prosperity will lead a teach out discussion on global prosperity and the university outside Maple House.

Strike Meeting

12-1:30pm: Congress Centre, 28 Great Russell Street

Day 7: Tue 6 March – *And Again*⁴

Tuesday 6 March

Picket

7:30am: Quad, Gower Street

Ungovernable Space Teach-Out

10-11am: 22 Gordon Street

James O'Leary - Ungovernable Space: Threshold, Picket, Barricade, Peaceline.

Blacklisting Teach-Out

11-12pm: UCL UCU, 52 Gower Street

Organized by UCL Laws

Tariq Ali Teach-Out

1-1:50pm: UCL UCU, 52 Gower Street

Day 8: Wed 7 March – And Again⁵

The third week brought with it a new daily rhythm: the early morning picket, the late morning teach-outs on the picket-line, a lunchtime UCU UCL meeting at a venue in the neighbourhood to be announced, followed by an afternoon teach-out, followed by a scattering to cafes and pubs in the vicinity and the planning of the events for the next day and the writing up and up-dating of various media platforms. And as evening pressed in, the thorny issue arose of whether or not to do email, and to consider which of the pressing tasks – PhD drafts, unfinished papers, references, reviews, conference talks – could possibly be categorised as ‘not-work’ and therefore attended to. In my case, I decided to cancel everything. The only ‘academic work’ I carried out in that four-week period was to read PhD final drafts for students with immediate non-negotiable hand-in deadlines and to give a keynote address for a conference on critical practice, not in person as planned, but via skype, on the topic of the strike.

In that time, our research activities focused on deepening our knowledge of the specific issues at stake, including the economic perspective on pensions and the nature of the negotiations between

our employers (Universities UK), USS and UCU. At the UCU UCL meeting at the TUC building we discovered from the secretary how it was the cost of the venues that was influencing where we could hold lunchtime meetings. The strike revealed the economic geography of the Bloomsbury area, how the cost of renting premises outside the university for even an hour was astronomical, and that the reason we kept reverting to the private sports club was because it was the cheapest.

On the third day of week three a teach-out specifically addressed the question of urban space and design. Colleagues from Just Space, presented their critiques of the London Plan, and we started thinking about the connection between the pension strike and the role of universities as property developers. The distinction between the phrases the neo-liberal university, the marketization and financialisation of higher education started to come into focus, in particular around the borrowing required for expansion.⁶ As an excellent article in the USS Briefs series made clear, the financial commitment to pensions was something that could stand in the way of a university securing a loan on which to base a new building project, depending on the kind of financial model they chose to use.⁷

1. The financialisation of higher education is bringing about a sea-change in how the public purpose of higher education — and the role of students, teaching and research within it — are conceived.
2. The dispute over pensions discloses the integral relationship between the adoption of particular models of university financing and the consolidation of unaccountable systems of centralised and hierarchical management.⁸

Day 9: Thur 8 March – *Living An Academic Life*⁹

Thursday 8 March

Picket

7:30am: Quad, Gower Street

BodyPolitic Teach-Out

10-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

On International Women's Day, Clare Farrell and Miles Glyn of #BodyPolitic will join The Bartlett picket line to host a special Solidarity-Complexity workshop.

#BodyPolitic works to encourage and facilitate others to use their bodies as a space for creative response and positive resistance; through workshops, and the re-use and re-purposing of clothing and materials.

Join #BodyPolitic to turn your body into space for EXPRESSION/DEMONSTRATION. Bring your favourite or LEAST favourite jacket/garment and an umbrella – no further materials required.

International Women's Day Rally

11-1pm: 20 Bedford Way

Organised by UCL Women's Network and Students' Union UCL. Marketization of universities have lead to a legitimization of the gender gaps since it allows employers maximise profits, job insecurity, feminisation of poverty caused by having less pensions but more people dependent on us. These cuts to pensions will disproportionately affect women.

Strike Meeting

12-1pm: UCL UCU, 52 Gower Street

International Women's Day Feminist Teach-Out

1-3pm: UCL UCU, Gower Street

This feminist teach-out, convened by Bartlett staff and students, opens up space to bring together UCL researchers, educational practitioners and activists who are addressing precarity, inequality and protest in relation to gender and through intersectional approaches.

- Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite: *Women on the picket line in the miners' strike of 1984-5*
- Justine Canady, Women's Officer at UCLU: *Current campaigns and activities at UCL*
- Bella Webb and Alizay Agha: *Our Bodies: Sexual Assault & Harassment on Campus*
- Laura Marshall and Ben Campkin: *LGBTQ+ night-spaces & safer spaces for women in London, from 1986 to the present*
- Sarabajaya Kumar: *Intersectionality: the birth of a new non-profit organisation and our agenda for action*
- Maria McLintock: *Between the picket lines*
- Miranda Critchley: *Yarl's Wood hunger strikers*

Open Mic: if you would like to make a contribution to this event, through a reading, talk, poem, etc. please let us know at the start as there may be space in the programme.

To celebrate International Women's Day, textile designer, Rachel Siobhan Tyler invited Body Politic, who brought along an incredible range of texts and textiles from which participants could dress themselves for International Women's Day. Their repertoire included huge yet gently fluttering silk flags, and smaller patches in a range of rich colours screen printed with their designed icons of symbols for readers and writers – books, pens and hearts, which prepared us well for the feminist teach-out chaired that afternoon by Ben Campkin and Laura Marshall.

It was no surprise that we started to talk about feminist practices, and the role of Sarah Ahmed's concepts of the 'feminist killjoy' and the 'feminist snap' came up, out of her brilliant book *Living a Feminist Life*, as well as Rosalind Gill's passionate call to arms in her 2010 essay, 'Breaking the Silence'.¹⁰ I had been exploring in my own work, the practice of *parrhesia* as described by Foucault,¹¹ where towards his later lectures Foucault turns to examine the function of *parrhesia* in terms of the crisis of democratic institutions, and moves on to discuss how *parrhesia* occurs as an activity in human relations, with respect to oneself and the care of the self, and in relation to others, specifically through three kinds of relation: individual personal, community and public life. Foucault talks of how, in the shift from a political to a Socratic or ethical form of *parrhesia*, the relation between *logos*, truth and courage alters to include *bios*, and to focus on the balance between *bios* and *logos* with respect to truth:

Here, giving an account of your life, your bios, is also not to give a narrative of the historical events that have taken place in your life, but rather to demonstrate whether you are able to show that there is a relation between the rational discourse, the logos, you are able to use, and the way that you live. Socrates is inquiring into the way that logos gives form to a person's style of life; for he is interested in discovering whether there is a harmonic relation between the two.¹²

Writing after the strike, Gail Davies has pointed to the ways in which university staff 'have inhabited the tensions of the knowledge economy for a while'.¹³ Davies draws on the work of Jenny Andersson, who, following Riccardo Petrella, explores how this is a 'tension between solidarity and competition — between an emphasis on the public good of learning and education, and the need to turn knowledge into a marketable good'.¹⁴ As Andersson writes, Petrella suggests that the concept of solidarity was the very underpinning or founding principle of the welfare states and contracts:

The 'golden era' welfare states institutionalized solidarity, in their public services and social transfers that encouraged the recognition of the relationship between my needs and the needs of others.'

This balancing of self-interest and the interests of the other is inherent to Foucault's work on care of the self and *parrhesia* as a truth-telling enacted in the service of democracy, and art critic Gerald Raunig has linked this balancing of social and self-critique, to the complexities of internal and external positioning in the practice of institutional critique:

What is needed here and now is *parrhesia* as a double strategy: as an attempt of involvement and engagement in a process of hazardous refutation, and as self-questioning. What is needed, therefore, are practices that conduct radical social criticism, yet which do not fancy themselves in an imagined distance to institutions; at the same time practices that are self-critical and yet do not cling to their own involvement, their complicity, their imprisoned existence in the art field, their fixation on institutions, and the institution, their own-being institution. 'Instituent practices' that conjoin the advantages of both 'generations' of institutional critique, thus exercising both forms of *parrhesia*, will impel a linking of social criticism, institutional critique and self-criticism.¹⁵

Day 10: Mon 12 March – *Collapse*¹⁶

Monday 12 March

Picket

9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

Museums & UCL Teach-Out

10am: 22 Gordon Square

Join us to discuss the crucial roles played by museums at UCL! Speakers include:

Dr. Chiara Ambrosio (Science & Technology Studies), Dr. Georgina Brewis (Education, Practice & Society), Dr. Emily Dawson (Science & Technology Studies), Dr. Emma Richardson (History of Art), Dr. Marquard Smith (Culture, Communication & Media) and Dr. Alice Stevenson (Institute of Archaeology).

Still the Enemy Within Teach-Out

1-3pm: UCL UCU, 52 Gower Street

Teach-out on the Miners' Strike with Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners: Nicola Field, Mike Jackson and Mike Simons, UCU Convening.

The City as a Network of Learning Teach-Out

3-4pm: 14 Taverton Street

Teach-out by Stephen Marshall and Daniel Fitzpatrick on *The City as a Network of Learning: Reviving A Pattern Language for the Smart App age?* In his classic book *A Pattern Language*, Christopher Alexander and coauthors imagined the city as a 'Network of Learning', weaving education into the physical and social fabric of urban life. Here we revisit and reimagine these ideas in the age of the Smart App, asking how (where, and by whom) such a network of learning could be created today. Organised by Bartlett School of Planning.

That Monday I had an early morning dentist appointment, and after consulting the curriculum for the day, realised that the public university on the streets of Bloomsbury was fully in flow. I realised my complete exhaustion, and that being on strike was at least double my usual workload. And so I stayed at home and read Henry A. Giroux's *On Critical Pedagogy*.¹⁷

Day 11: Tue 13 March – *A Different Kind of Impact*¹⁸

Tuesday 13 March

Picket

9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

(Art) Histories of Protest Teach-Out

11-12pm: 20 Gordon Square

- Mignon Nixon, *Let the Pants Fall Where They May*
- Marta Zboralska, *We Are Not Sleeping*
- Bob Mills, *Why University Strikes are Positively Medieval*
- Johannes von Müller, *The Art of Throwing a Stone*
- Maria Mileeva, *Art and Hooliganism in Putin's Russia*
- Stephanie Schwartz, *The Time of Protest*; Tamar Garb, *Rhodes Must Fall*.

From 9:30-11am please come and add your image of protest to the gallery we will erect across from Gordon Square. This can be a work of art that is itself a protest, a portrayal of strike or protest, or visual culture associated with a historical protest movement. String and tape for installing images will be provided. Organised by UCL History of Art.

Overall one of the most beautiful and inspiring things about the strike was the way, that even in the sub-zero temperatures, it had been possible to turn the university inside out, and when talks, seminars, and discussions occurred on the street, they were shared across disciplines, departments, and with passersby, offering education for the public good, and for free.¹⁹



THE BARTLETT UCL // DAY 12 OF 14 // WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH 2018

THE STRIKE CHRONICLE

"REVISE AND RESUBMIT"

Day 11 Dispatch

Bartlett staff & students on strike for education as a public good, accessible & affordable for all!

Tuesday 13 March: *A Lesson in Democracy* The mood on Tuesday's picket line was initially tense, with worries that that UCU would accept the offer put to them. But as images of strong solidarity from the demo up the road at UCU HQ appeared on phones, and **#no capitulation**, from UCU UCL's Saladin Meckled-Garcia, trended on twitter, the mood brightened. Emeritus Professor, Adrian Forty was at 22GS, showing support for the strike, and admired the vitality of our architecture picket. He argued that since the defined benefit pension scheme offers such good support in retirement, and if people like him are able to enjoy the benefit from one, why shouldn't the same deal be on offer to future generations of university academics? We couldn't agree more! **(Art) Histories of Protest** was a wonderful lesson in the form of the teach-out itself and a **great example of the public intellectual in action**. With the door to their department firmly shut, one after another, influential (feminist) art historians of all generations, spoke from the steps about the history of protest from a visual perspective, with a gallery of protest images pinned to the railings. Drawings pinned to boxes acted as props, reminiscent of lectures from the 19th century, **but the content here included the tactics of Pussy Riot, the removal of the Rhodes statue**, and reflections on the temporality of acts of engagement in the picket itself.

ALL WELCOME

We are striking all 5 days this week and with colleagues across UCL are organizing teach-outs to provide spaces for positive learning.

DAY 12: WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH

10-11am, outside 22 Gordon Street

Housing Teach-Out with **Anna Minton**, author of *Ground Control* (Penguin, 2009) and *Big Capital* (2017) and **Harvi Chera** (UCL Cut the Rent Campaigner).

10-11am *Rubber Stamping* Teach-Out with

Day 12: Wednesday 14 March – *Crisis*²⁰

Wednesday 14 March

Picket

9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

Housing Teach-Out

10am: 22 Gordon Street

Teach-out on housing with Anna Minton, author of *Ground Control* (Penguin, 2009) and *Big Capital* (2017) and Harvi Chera (UCL Cut the Rent Campaigner).

Rubber Stamping Teach-Out

10-11am: 22 Gordon Street

Rubber-stamping workshop with illustrator Judit Ferencz.

University/Interrupted Teach-Out

11-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

University/Interrupted: a creative workshop on the affective impact of striking led by Claire Tunnacliffe (Bartlett School of Architecture) and Jade French (QMUL).

March for Education Demonstration

12pm: *Assemblée at Malet Street*

London Region UCU demonstration to Parliament ending with a rally in Westminster Central Hall from 2pm, confirmed speakers to include: Joanna De Groot, UCU President; Catherine West MP; Sean Wallis, UCU NEC and HE Convention.

Education is under a massive attack. Tuition fees for university have gone through the roof and colleges are in frantic competition with each other to recruit students. Now the employers want to wreck the pensions of Higher Education staff. Workers ranging from senior academics to postgraduate teaching assistants have begun a programme of an initial 14 days of strike action, closing 65 universities across the UK. We have seen massive pickets on our campuses, and the overwhelming support of students.

16 colleges of Further Education are also in dispute in defence of their pay and conditions. Further Education has lost 15,000 jobs, and one million adult education places, and lecturers have seen their wages cut by 21% since 2009.

This was a day of two halves, both of which addressed the wellbeing of the student and staff body in a condition of crisis. In the morning writer Anna Minton came to talk about the London Housing Crisis and its link to the UCU strike, while a group of students leading rent strikes, including Harvi Chera, came to talk about their actions in response to the conditions of their university accommodation, and exorbitant rents they had to pay.²¹ One key aspect of the expansion of UK universities post the introduction of student fees, has been the use of particular kinds of debt package which allow universities to borrow money but to keep this debt off the balance sheet, many of these are tied into the development of student accommodation. As Clive Barnett wrote in USS Briefs:

A third aspect of debt-financed expansion is the turn to 'lease based structures' by universities to access capital with long maturities 'indirectly' (the borrowed money is therefore kept off balance sheets). For example, University Partnerships Programme (UPP) provides universities with 'special purpose vehicles' to raise the capital to build and run student accommodation, ownership of which only passes on to universities when the original debt is paid back.²²

And yet at the outset of the strike, in an earlier USS brief, John Holmwood and Gurinder K. Bhambra argued that DB scheme was an asset to borrow against:

The USS pension scheme is a 'last man standing' scheme, which means that all institutions are collectively responsible for each other. Should any institution fail (a likelihood that has increased as a consequence of the market reforms to higher education mentioned above) then the assets of other institutions are potentially available for meeting any deficit. This collective backing also enables individual institutions to leverage finance for new buildings etc. Part of the argument for dismantling the DB scheme is – in a competitive market – to stop those institutions without substantial assets themselves being able to leverage the collective assets of the pension scheme to build new buildings that then enable them to compete more effectively with these other institutions. The other reason for dismantling DB is that should any institution wish to come out of the collective pension scheme to become a fully private institution (after the fashion of US private colleges) it is cheaper to buy out obligations under a DC (Defined Contribution) scheme than a DB one.²³

In the afternoon, two PhD students convened a workshop called 'strike/interrupted' which addressed directly the question of mental health, the rise of student suicides and other psychological issues that have become a major problem in the current university system, often

exacerbated due to the combined pressure of paying off loans and the need to perform well when so much money is at stake. This was a slow and reflective workshop, quite hesitant in tone ... it was exactly what we all needed, to pause, still striking, to really talk about the emotional impact this long drawn out crisis was having, not only of the strike but the marketization of education overall. There was a lot of anger to process, and doubts began to surface about how the split between 'us and them' would get addressed when we on the outside were back on the inside. On the one hand, could we forgive those who had not joined us in this exhausting effort to protect the pensions for the sake of the sector at large; on the other, would they forgive us, for as they saw it, abandoning our students? As the strike approached its final days, these were the questions on our minds.

Day 13: Thursday 15 March – *Spinoza on Strike*²⁴

Thursday 15 March

Picket

9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

The Counter-Economics of the Strike Teach-Out

9:30am: 22 Gordon Street

Peg Rawes - Some thoughts on the counter economics of the strike.

The Dream University Teach-Out

10:30-11:30am: 22 Gordon Street

Teach out with Pearl Ahrens and Angus O'Brien. This workshop dreams up an ideal university. We'll consider four areas: space, administration, education and research, how we want them to work, and how they interact. The neoliberal university model is failing; let's plan the alternative.

What is Modern Slavery Teach-Out

TBC

Virginia Mantouvalou with Kate Roberts, Head of the Human Trafficking Foundation - What is Modern Slavery?

Bernard Coard Teach-Out

1-3pm: Congress Centre, 28 Great Russell Street

Teach-out with Bernard Coard (Grenadian politician, teacher and critic of institutional racism; helped draft the communist Worker's Liberation League manifesto in Jamaica) hosted by UCL Dept of the Americas, Josh Hollands convening.

Universities as sites of power and resistance: a view from the Global South Teach-Out

3-4:30pm: 14 Taviton Street

This event focuses on universities as political actors in contested societies. Our attempt is to highlight the ways in which universities function as sites of state power and violence as well as sites of resistance. Chair: Dr. Barbara Lipietz, Bartlett Development Planning Unit.

- Prof. Vanessa Watson School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics at the University of Cape Town
- Dr. Catalina Ortiz, Bartlett Development Planning Unit - *Public Universities as enclaves of critical dialogue in the Colombian peace making process*
- Prof. Haim Yacobi, Bartlett Development Planning Unit - *Israel/Palestine: Universities, Militarism and Colonialism in the Occupied Territories.*



THE STRIKE CHRONICLE

"AGAINST THE SLOW CANCELLATION OF OUR FUTURE"

JOIN US

We are striking all 5 days this week and with colleagues across UCL are organizing teach-outs to provide spaces for positive learning.

DAY 14

Strike Chronicle Write-Out

10-12pm: outside 22 Gordon Street

Strike Chronicle collective write-out

Strength in Numbers Photocall

11:30: Main Quad Entrance

Mass picket to mark end of strike

Governance, Ethics, Divestment Teach-Out

1-3pm: UCL UCU, 52 Gower St

Speakers include Saladin Meckled-Garcia (UCL Political Science), Jane Holder (UCL Laws), Jane Rendell (Bartlett School of Architecture), Diana Salazar (Development Planning Unit), Julia Schaff (UCL Fossil Free).

Collective Organisation in Architecture Teach-Out

3-4pm: 14 Taviton Street

Concrete Action on the History of Collective Organisation in Architectural Practice, including a live interview with Jonathan Charley from Glasgow Letters and Space (GLAS). Organised by UCL Anthropology.

NEXT WEEK

Inaugural meeting of the BSA UCU UCL

Tuesday 20 March, 1-2pm, 5.04 22 Gordon St

Day 13 Dispatch

Bartlett staff & students on strike for education as a public good, accessible & affordable for all

Thursday 15 March: Spinoza on Strike Unlucky for some, the 13th day of our strike started with rain ... but by 9.30 the sky cleared, and our picket began with still new striking members joining, support offered from staff members not on strike, and an extremely perceptive talk from our very own Bartlett feminist philosopher Prof Peg Rawes. Peg's 'think out' on the economics on the strike took us back to Spinoza and his concept of ratio, which Peg argued brings together rationality and emotion, so rebalancing much feminist practice which focuses solely on affect and rejects rationality as that inherited from the kind of enlightenment thinking that divides mind and body. Peg suggested that Spinoza's ethics offered a good ethical framework for considering the different modalities of this strike together – **combining a feminist practice of the picket, which acknowledges emotional impact and favours conversation over confrontation, and the extraordinary and reasoned contributions from economists and statisticians.** Their analyses of risk and valuation have provided a deep structural understanding on which our arguments, for example, to reject the offer of 11th March, have been based. We moved onto a great workshop lead by UCL students on re-imagining the university, where the staff and students assembled were briefed – not to discuss the problems with the current model (which was taxing for some!), but to imagine new ones along the lines of space, education & research, and administration. **This was a great place to wonder about the university as cooperative, one that might be located across this city, the world even, with no fees, and no exams or assessment!! Why not do this now, at UCL East, some asked.** Full of utopic impulse, we headed to Congress House. All present admitted their complete exhaustion – we gauged striking to be at least twice as hard as our usual jobs – which as academics is saying something (do we hear a 100-hour week?). But all present reiterated a commitment to win this strike, and to demand nothing less than the status quo. This means pushing the strike into term 3, and into the far more volatile area of the exam period. For those with any energy left, there was a more intimate teach-out planned for MA Situated Practices students, at Bank Job, a participatory site-specific installation by artist Hilary Powell and filmmaker Dan Edlestyn in the old HSBC on Hoe St, Walthamstowe. <https://bankjob.pictures>. This brilliant project includes printing new money peopled with the heads of local figures involved in supporting their community in the years of imposed austerity, as well as talks on alternative currencies. And we had a great conversation about economics, education and Marxism. After three hours of sharing perspectives from China, Taiwan, Chile, Canada, the US, Denmark and good old Peckham it seemed like the new university was more than imagined.

Day 14: Friday 16 March – *Another University is Possible*²⁵

Friday 16 March

Picket

9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

Project X Crit-Out

9-1pm: 22 Gordon Street

BSc Architecture and Interdisciplinary Studies, Project X.

Strike Chronicle Write-Out

10-12pm: 22 Gordon Street

Strike Chronicle collective write-out: What have we done?

Governance, Ethics, Divestment Teach-Out

1-3pm: UCL UCU, 52 Gower St

Speakers include Saladin Meckled-Garcia (UCL Political Science), Jane Holder (UCL Laws), Jane Rendell (Bartlett School of Architecture), Diana Salazar (Development Planning Unit), Julia Schaff (UCL Fossil Free).

Collective Organisation in Architecture Teach-Out

3-4pm: 14 Taverton Street

Concrete Action on the History of Collective Organisation in Architectural Practice, including a live interview with Jonathan Charley from Glasgow Letters and Space (GLAS). Organised by UCL Anthropology.

For the final day of the strike, the sun came out, and many colleagues from the design studios, specifically the BSc Architecture and Interdisciplinary Studies came out to support us and hold their end of term crit. This second crit-out was less intense than the first, partly due to the softening effect of the sun rather than the snow blizzard, and also with the end of the strike in sight, we felt cheered by the fact that by acting together in solidarity we had achieved something – though at this stage it was not clear quite exactly what!! The playing out of the effect of the pensions dispute was still to come, but across the UK higher education system we found we held in common the same disappointments and disillusionments with the development of a financial model of academia that was being pressed upon us, and shared many of the same hopes, not necessarily for the return of

the university in its earlier form, but a form of education that would be more just and fair, organised by academics and students for the public good,²⁶ nothing short of utopia in fact!²⁷

The final teach-out of the strike, was focused on ethics and divestment. And we finally got to address the issues of what happens to a university when its public funding is withdrawn, and how it searches for investment in the private sector - thus raising the possibilities of conflicts of interest, something I had been heavily engaged in when I stood down from my Vice Dean position in refusing to endorse a financial gift from a fossil fuel company to set up an Institute of Sustainability.²⁸ In that process of resisting the university on this, I became aware of the multiple positions held, from they don't influence us to we influence them, to money has no value, you can take 'bad money' and do 'good' with it, to state funding is as value laden as private funding.

At the time, in 2013, I was acting on principle, but had no expectation that this event, would lead me into ethics as part of my academic research, and no sense of 'critical university studies' as discipline. But it helped me understand first-hand those tensions between logos and bios, between what you say and what you do, and how working between activism and academia is a balancing act – when your activism focuses on an issue outside the university you work for it is less contentious, easier to handle, but when it comes back to bite the hand that feeds, and questions the operations of the university itself, it can start a fire.

The strike did not result in a simple retention of the DB scheme, nor yet have we lost it, the struggle continues through a complex set of twists and turns.²⁹ But while the actions of the UCU management turned out to be a disappointment, the solidarity gained from striking with colleagues, showed me what it means to enact a critique, that is also a hope for change, when you are one of many, not alone. The amazing collection of essays – USS Briefs – written during and after the strike shows what academics are capable of as researchers, but also as a community of activists. The short, clear essays, on the pension strike and connected issues concerning the contemporary academia, are producing a different university. Writing for USS Briefs a few months ago, Gail Davies, commenting on the testimonies sent to her by academics concerning how they felt both during and after the strike, sums it up beautifully:

I am interested in what happens to what universities are, what universities do, and the kinds of knowledge that universities produce and reproduce when it is no longer felt possible to

meet the conditions for being with others, in ways that may put the collective practices of knowledge production at risk.³⁰

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When writing about my experience of the UCU strike of 2018 in 'After the Strike' I had no expectation that, just less than a year later, when returning to the text in response to reviewers' and editors' feedback, I would be revising my words after a further two strikes. In the year between July 2019 and July 2020, while the writing above the asterix made its way through the slow process of academic double-blind peer review, this writer was on strike for another 22 days – eight in November–December 2019 and 12 (out of an intended 14) in February–March 2020. These two strikes were organized not only to continue to defend pensions, but, under the banner of the *Four Fights*, to directly address key issues impacting academic workers as a result of the marketization of the university sector, including pay, workload, equality and casualization.³¹

The focus on casualisation in these strikes of 2019 and 2020 was vital in raising the massive problem of precarity in the academic work force, and because of this focus many more Post-Graduate Teaching Assistants joined the picket line, and student support was overwhelming. The solidarity shown by my own students from the MA Situated Practice and MA Architectural History programmes at the Bartlett School of Architecture was incredible. At one point in December 2019, while the first-year students joined staff in teach-outs on the outside of the building on the picket-line, the graduating cohort masked their final exhibition, staged on the inside of the building, but visible through the full-length windows to the street, in black cloth in support of the strike.

As reported in two evidence-based pieces of research published by UCU, in UK higher education 37,000 teaching staff, and around 70% of the 49,000 researchers in the sector, are on fixed-term contracts, and the majority of the former are hourly paid. In addition, a further 71,000 teachers, employed as 'atypical academics' and as 'casual workers', have fewer employment rights. They are on the lowest contract levels, not counted in the main staff record, and yet conduct 25-30% of the teaching in many universities. Around 50% of them are employed by the richest 'Russell Group' of universities.³² On the first day of the 2020 strike, I spoke aloud these powerful words, taken from the second report, *Second Class Academic Citizens*, which had just been published, on Martin Luther King day – 20 January:

Casualisation renders academic workers invisible and vulnerable, denies them agency, and prevents them from forming a coherent narrative of future work that can render life meaningful. In short, it treats academics primarily as things not people. It is dehumanising, and UCU believes it should be ended.³³

But the visibility of the *Four Fights* strike did not quite reach to the end of that second phase. On the evening of 12 March 2020, reading an 'Open Letter to the Trade Union Movement' from *Labour Transformed* encouraged me to close our picket at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, as an act of social solidarity with the National Health Service, and to help to 'flatten the peak' of the COVID-19 infection. I posted this message to the outside of our building:

Staying at home and self-isolating is an act of social solidarity, one that ensures that the burden of ill bodies falling onto the shoulders of our brothers and sisters in the NHS is somehow manageable.³⁴

At the start of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, some citizen-academics called not only for governments to take action to protect citizens, but also for universities to close down their site-based activities.³⁵ While the strike had created an interruption to the business-as-usual model of financialized education, pausing the picket signalled the vital need to slow the transmission rate of the virus which was spreading at a rapid rate. As a former scientific advisor has recently made clear, the UK Government's delay in taking decisive action and installing a 'lockdown' has resulted in the unnecessary loss of at least 25,000 lives.³⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic, like a strike, created an interruption. In the space of several months, from the weak and often ineffectual responses generated by populist right wing governments and the stringent measures enforced by more authoritarian ones, as well as the decisions many chose for themselves, from self-imposed isolation, quarantine, and shielding, to physical distancing, the usual patterns of behavior under capitalism – everyday practices of producing and consuming – changed. As a result, annual carbon emissions globally are estimated to have dropped by around 4–7.5%.³⁷

The virus is just one symptom of the ongoing ecological crisis, itself the result of centuries of extractivism perpetrated by colonial capitalism. The Extinction Rebellion protests of 2019 organised to highlight the Climate Emergency have now been joined by Black Lives Matter activists and their allies who demand immediate responses to the injustices of systemic and historic racism. These emergencies – the UCU Strike, the COVID-19 pandemic, The Climate Emergency, and Black Lives

Matter – have different relations to the ecological crisis and the extractive form of neo-liberal capitalism that produced it. Although each one has its own temporal mode of intensity and duration, they intersect, and interact and amplify each other. It is clear that these ongoing emergencies are not going to end any time soon.

So there is no 'After the Strike'. There will be no end to interruption, no final moment of success, and no return to how things were 'before'. The future is uncertain, and since we must not return to the past, we have to stay in this present, recognizing the ecological emergency as a permanent and urgent crisis, doing as Haraway advises – 'staying with the trouble'.³⁸ To do so, we have to remain in that striking state: to stay alert to problems, to be oppositional and critical, to withdraw and refuse, but also to hope and act. We need to resist our desire for a time after the strike, and instead strike in a way where we can rest as well as struggle, and find a way of imagining and engendering alternative possibilities together.

¹ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/2/28/strike-chronicles-issue-four>

² See for example, Unis Resist Border Controls, 'The Hostile Environment: Racism, and the Value of Migrants in UK Universities' #USSbriefs38 (8 August 2018). See https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/ussbriefs38_08082018_0801.pdf. See also The International and Broke Campaign, 'The "Hostile Environment" in British universities', (20 June 2018) #USSbriefs24. See https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/ussbriefs24_200618_1200.pdf

³ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/5/strike-chronicles-issue-five>

⁴ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/6/strike-chronicles-issue-six>

⁵ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/7/strike-chronicles-issue-seven>

⁶ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/borrowers-will-universities-debts-pay>

⁷ Clive Barnett, 'The Financialisation of Higher Education and the USS Dispute', #USSbriefs16, (10 April 2018). See https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/ussbriefs16_100418_1600.pdf.

⁸ Barnett, 'The Financialisation of Higher Education and the USS Dispute'.

⁹ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/8/strike-chronicles-issue-eight>

¹⁰ See Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017), and Rosalind Gill, 'Breaking the Silence: the hidden injuries of the neoliberal university', Rosalind Gill and Róisín Ryan-Flood, (eds), *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: feminist reflections*, (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 228–244.

¹¹ Jane Rendell, 'Critical Spatial Practice as *Parrhesia*', special issue of MaHKUscript, *Journal of Fine Art Research* (2016). <http://www.mahkscript.com/articles/10.5334/mjfar.13/>. See Michel Foucault's lectures on *Parrhesia* (1983) edited by Joseph Pearson as *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).

¹² Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, edited by Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), p. 97.

¹³ Gail Davies, 'Goodwill hunting after the USS strike', #USSbriefs66, (10 January 2019). See. <https://medium.com/ussbriefs/goodwill-hunting-after-the-uss-strike-3b2e302d0dc7>

¹⁴ Jenny Andersson, 'Solidarity or Competition? Creating the European Knowledge Society', Lars Magnusson and Bo Strath (eds), *European Solidarities: Tensions and Contentions of a Concept* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 295.

¹⁵ Gerald Raunig, 'Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming', translated by Aileen Derieg, in Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (eds) *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: MayFlyBooks, 2009), pp. 3–13, pp. 10–11.

¹⁶ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/12/strike-chronicles-issue-nine>

¹⁷ Henry A. Giroux's *On Critical Pedagogy*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

¹⁸ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/13/strike-chronicles-issue-ten>

¹⁹ My original copy, edited by Barbara Penner for the *Strike Chronicle*, issue 11. See <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/14/strike-chronicles-issue-eleven>

²⁰ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/14/strike-chronicles-issue-eleven>

²¹ Anna Minton's *Big Capital: Who is London for?* (London: Penguin, 2017)

²² Barnett, 'The Financialisation of Higher Education and the USS Dispute'.

²³ John Holmwood and Gurinder K Bhambra, 'The Pensions Dispute and the Marketisation of Higher Education, #USSbriefs3, (3 April 2018). See https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/ussbriefs3_030418_10001.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/15/strike-chronicles-issue-twelve>. See also my original copy for the *Strike Chronicle*, issue 13. See <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/16/strike-chronicles-issue-thirteen>

²⁵ <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/3/16/strike-chronicles-issue-thirteen>

²⁶ There are many versions of possible new kinds of university, such as a co-operative, as recommended to me by David Cross, see for example, Mike Neary and Joss Winn's, 'The Abolition of the University: Beyond Public and Private: A Framework for Co-operative Higher Education', *Open Library of Humanities*, v. 3. n. 2, (2017) p. 2, see <https://olh.openlibhums.org/articles/10.16995/olh.195/> or The Silent University, recommended to me by Thandi Loewenson, see <http://thesilentuniversity.org>

²⁷ See for example, Grace Kraus's blog, <http://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/rsrc/2018/03/12/sadness-and-solidarity-the-strike-as-utopia/>, also recommended to me by Thandi Loewenson.

²⁸ Jane Rendell, 'Giving An Account Of Oneself, Architecturally', Special Issue of the *Journal of Visual Culture* (2016).

²⁹ See USS Briefs for a range of articles on the current situation, one of the most helpful summaries is Nick Hardy, 'USS pensions dispute: The state of play', #USSbriefs65, (19 December 2018).

³⁰ Davies, 'Goodwill hunting after the USS strike'.

³¹ https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10715/Our-four-fights/pdf/ucu_four-fights-explainer.pdf. For an excellent discussion of the distinction between financialization, commodification and marketization see for example, Ewald Engelen, Rodriguez Hernandez, and Reijer Hendrikse, 'How Finance Penetrates its Other: A Cautionary Tale on the Financialisation of a Dutch University', *Antipode*, v. 46, n. 4, (2014), pp. 1072–1091.

³² See UCU, *Counting the Costs of Casualisation in Higher Education: key findings of a survey conducted by the University and College Union*, (June 2019). https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10336/Counting-the-costs-of-casualisation-in-higher-education-Jun-19/pdf/ucu_casualisation_in_HE_survey_report_Jun19.pdf (accessed 16 July 2020) and UCU, *Second Class Academic Citizens: The dehumanising effects of casualisation in higher education*, (January 2020). This report is based on research conducted by Nick Megoran and Olivia Mason of Newcastle University, endorsed by UCU, with a foreword by Chi Onwurah, MP for Newcastle Central, and launched on Martin Luther King Day 20 January 2020. https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10681/second_class_academic_citizens/pdf/secondclassacademiccitizens (accessed 16 July 2020).

³³ UCU, *Second Class Academic Citizens*.

³⁴ 'An Open Letter to the Trade Union Movement from Labour Transformed', see <http://links.org.au/britain-coronavirus-social-crisis-open-letter-trade-union-movement-labour-transformed> (accessed 25 June 2020).

³⁵ See Warren Pearce, Reputation over responsibility: UK HE and the Covid-19 crisis', #USSbriefs92, (12 March 2020). <https://medium.com/ussbriefs/reputation-over-responsibility-uk-he-and-the-covid-19-crisis-dc0b5745e429>

³⁶ See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-lockdown-coronavirus-death-toll-neil-ferguson-a9559051.html> (accessed 25 June 2020).

³⁷ <https://www.cnet.com/news/covid-19-lockdowns-caused-an-extreme-reduction-in-carbon-emissions/> (accessed 10 July 2020).

³⁸ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, pp. 7 and 35.