

ANTI THESE

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#2

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EDITORIAL

Antithese is a new platform run by and for student activists involved in the recent protests at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and abroad. In our inaugural issue, the main focus was on the eleven days of the Bungehuis occupation, in order to collect and share testimonies, reflections or creations related to this preeminent moment of the current student struggle. This second issue builds further on what directly proceeded from the eviction of the Bungehuis: reclaiming the administration building of the UvA, the Maagdenhuis. It recalls the (re)appropriation from its very beginning, when hundreds of angry protesters broke the doors of the building in a burst of spontaneity, to its brutal end: an unnecessary intervention of riot police, violently interrupting the opening of the Festival of Sciences and Humanities, what was already decided upon to be the closing of the occupation.

It is not exaggerated to remember the phase of the Maagdenhuis (re)appropriation as strong in emotions. The speech held by Rudolf Valkhoff a few minutes before the

breaking of the doors on February 25 and the auto-ethnography of the eviction on April 11 written by Julie McBrien, both included in this edition of *Antithese*, are two great capsules of memory giving a taste of the heat of the moment. Neither is it an overstatement to call those 45 days of community living a real social experiment. It shaped *De Nieuwe Universiteit* (DNU) over the course of an ongoing series of lectures, workshops, debates, seminars, film screenings, concerts, general assemblies and direct actions that merged with everyday life.



The tactic of (re)appropriation in itself can be seen as more inclusive and lasting than the barricaded occupation, and brought protesters and authorities on an unknown terrain. This concept is addressed from a theoretical perspective by helios guia in the following pages. While the reclaimed but open administration building became the domicile of a core group of “professional activists” (as the mayor of Amsterdam said in an attempt to delegitimize DNU), its function was enlarged by the daily presence of different supporters and action groups springing forth from the student movement. Rethink UvA, a collective of concerned staff members, used the Maagdenhuis as their headquarters to establish an alternative to the current top-down governance structure. In the text on Rethink by Umut Kibrit we even see their reflection taking account of their own horizontal participatory structure. Particularly substantial for our movement is the rise of the University of Colour, a group emerging from the lack of diversity

in our movement itself and paving the ways toward an intersectional struggle. Their call to decolonize universities together with social movements is also figuring in this *Antithese* issue.



Immediately following the Maagdenhuis takeover, repercussions were already perceptible outside of Amsterdam, and continue to expand to this day. Many factions of DNU are growing in Utrecht, Rotterdam, Maastricht, Groningen, Nijmegen and Tilburg. A delegation of DNU was directly involved in the recent wave of occupations in London and brought ‘red square solidarity’ as far as Istanbul. More than 8000 academics

around the world (including Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler and Simon Critchley) signed a support letter and over 70 lectures were held inside the Maagdenhuis, bringing many international critical thinkers like David Graeber and Jacques Rancière to the epicenter of our movement. This outgrowth shows the significance of what happens here, and proves that our movement is not restrained to Amsterdam. What was initiated here at the UvA embraces the global struggles for the liberation of universities from neoliberal management.

In this context it is furthermore not astonishing to witness an increase of repression against these empowered student movements, here as well as abroad. The board of directors (CvB) of the UvA showed with disgrace how far the managers of the neoliberal university will go to silence the contestation by abusing their authority, intimidating the dissent community members, lying in court and in the media and using racist arguments to delegitimize the Maagdenhuis occupants. Fortunately, the solidarity within the academic community, offended by the outrageous eviction, forced the

president of the CvB Louise Gunning to resign from her position.

Even though this resignation can be seen as a small victory for our movement, we cannot ignore the worrying use of state repression against us: a total of 67 students and staff members were jailed following the Bungehuis and Maagdenhuis evictions. Six students had been transferred to foreign detention, thereby pressured to identify themselves, while Dutch laws are supposed to safeguard anonymity. Many of us are now monitored by police forces, if not followed in the streets by silent cops. This continued adherence to state repression as a tool to enforce the neoliberal agenda of the administrators of universities ignites disorder on campuses around the globe. Their intolerance to dissent leaves us no choice: *when injustice becomes law, resistance is a duty.*

Taking part in this resistance, the texts compiled in this current issue of *Antithese* each shed light on and raise awareness of the recent events in Amsterdam. They will, hopefully, inform and inspire new front lines of the global student struggle.

| Antithese |

13ESTE MENSEN

Wij zijn in opstand gekomen tegen het rendementsregime dat nu al 25 jaar het onderwijs in zijn greep heeft. Wij worden dagelijks geconfronteerd met de perverse prikkels van dit regime. Schandalig dure marketingcampagnes.

De uitschakeling van medezeggenschap. De centralisering en micromanagement van de universiteit. Steeds verder dalende kwaliteit en nominalisering van onderwijs en onderzoek.

Één perverse prikkel van het rendementsregime, en wel de belangrijkste, is de angstcultuur die als een deken over ons en de samenleving is neergedaald. Studenten die uit angst hun passie opzij zetten en meewerken om binnen kunstmatige deadlines dode stof te reproduceren. Docenten die uit angst hun eigen verantwoordelijkheid vergeten en apathisch de directieven van het bestuur uitvoeren.

Bestuurders op alle lagen, die uit angst naar boven likken en naar beneden trappen en niet voor de werkvloer opkomen.

Mensen, de afgelopen dagen heb ik een generatie leren kennen die deze angst van zich af heeft geworpen. De bezetters van het Bungehuis en al hun sympathisanten hebben aangetoond dat zij niet bang zijn om voor hun overtuiging uit te komen. Om uit te komen voor een menselijke universiteit, een universiteit waar studenten leren om de kritische en zelfstandige burgers te worden waar de samenleving zo'n schreeuwende behoefte aan heeft! Om te zeggen: CvB neem je verantwoordelijkheid en treed af, u heeft ons vertrouwen verkwanseld. Om uit te komen voor een menselijke samenleving.



Mensen, in de cel hoorde ik de politie zeggen "het tuig van de UvA is binnen". Mensen liever tuig dan mak schaap! Lang leve de bezetters van het Bungehuis! Lang leve de generatie van 2015!

| Rudolf Valkhoff |

OCCUPY FOR A REAPPROPRIATION MOVEMENT: A QUEST FOR A NEW ECOLOGY OF IDEAS

On the 5th of March of 2015, *De Groene Amsterdammer* issued a small article in which Casper Thomas called on the New University to develop a language of their own, that is to say, a conceptual space that supersedes the ideological schism proper of the left/right binary which dominated the political imagination of the 20th century and now, at the turn of the new century, stands with one foot on the grave and with the other on the way of progressive change.

In other words, what Thomas indirectly and perhaps also unconsciously asks for is a new ecology of ideas that conveys and

embodies the spirit and challenges of the 21st century; a mental ecology engendered by the full consciousness of human history. Bringing forth such an ecology of ideas is the venture of a movement for a New and Free University that stands for the revalorization of the humanities, the ethical integrity of research and science, the ideological and monetary decolonization of the university and the foundation of a truly democratic form of governance that assumes and reaffirms the ethical practice of scholarship. We occupy in order to reclaim the space needed to question, challenge and debate the management of



education and research as assets of investment capital. By occupying we open up doors and shape board rooms into Red Squares where everyone is invited to do, say, and be... political and creative.

Occupation is the alpha of this movement. Inevitably, its omega is the process of performing critical thought as the production of new social values that allow us to discern a new horizon of change. While the horizon remains beyond now, occupation rapidly evolves into a reclaimed functional space shared by different voices. Which is precisely the place needed to *Reappropriate* the practice of our rights in the public sphere –beginning with the right to speak. As a performative act, the liberation of the Maagdenhuis showed that through this form of thought we can rediscover politics as transformation and invalidate politics as merely the financial, rationalized management of life at the service of the petite interests of petite elites who employ ventriloquism to preach democracy in public, while, in the scenes of private space, are invested in restoring a new form of plutocracy. Or as Ewald Engelen recently put it ‘Corpocracy.’

We occupy university buildings and thereby take on the responsibility of legitimizing our actions by upgrading the spaces where politics happen. By occupying, we aim to open up doors and transform key symbolic spaces into zones of debate and experiment. We debate the policies that favor speculation and forget to aim at creating new models of joint decision-making process. We fight for the dissemination of research and thereby resist the politics that signify the management of petite interests over the needs of society at large because this form of politics is rapidly degenerating into politics as conspiracy.

If there is a word with which we can typify politics during that strange place in human history called feudalism, this is the word ‘conspiracy.’ During the feudal phase of Western history, politics as conspiracy entailed the formation of power relations among territorially powerful family units conspiring against other powerful family units aiming at the expansion of their territory. Territorialisation was their logic of power, and technologies of war, such as cavalry, afforded them territorial expansion and control. While families conspired against

each other, for instance through the institution of marriage, the peasantry, who through their creative labour power had previously appropriated, populated and transformed parts of the intrinsically free land of planet Earth, was systematically excluded from any

bilateral and transnational economic treaties. Imprinted in history records, there are many more forms that derive from this imperialist and colonialist mindset. Today colonialism has new visual records entailing the cartography of corpocracy. The complex network of

boards in which Louise Gunning figures illustrates how corpocracy is cartography of corporate boards and their interconnections of power relations. Corporations are job creators, they say. Well, they are not very good at creating democratic spaces concerning the



decision affecting their settlements and the management of their land. *Such is the dynamics of appropriation in history.* The product of their labour power had been reappropriated by a new movement of power as territorial domination.

In today's geopolitical power relations, economic blocks have replaced the feudal family units, and, territorial power is secured through

decisions taken around those workspaces. Besides they no longer offer long term jobs anyway. This is true of many sectors, whether we speak of the health, educational, or any other public and semi-public sector such as the media. Hence over the past years, workers and students have been losing rights or their rights are being transmuted into some sort of deprivation.

'I "feelthink", therefore I occupy' is our motto. When we feel an institution of social value devalues, it is healthy to show that we disagree. That is what anyone does when they take umbrage at what is being taken away from them. Therefore, to respond with resistance is our best therapy while to re-open the private sphere to the public is our best policy.

Because without decision making being public and inclusive, there can be no transparency. By occupying we aim to create transparent, inclusive spaces, that is, to reclaim what should be a place of democratic practice; the public sphere. By reappropriating a symbolic space, we encouraged participation and increased the possibility of co-creating a more horizontal and inclusive form of democratic practice.

Social history could be narrated from the perspective of movements of reappropriation. Take for instance the communicative production underlining the transition from welfare state to neoliberal state and,

in regression, the transition from laissez-faire to welfare state. In this sense public economists like Milton Freedman were part of yet another reappropriation movement, one that questioned and challenged the Welfare State. This is to say that any reappropriation movement derives from seeking to transform some form of status quo. For instance, the

labour movement of the 19th century sought to transform the sweatshops of an emergent industry.

Today, the response of the left to the free market process of reappropriation of public policy has been to defended an

archaic social order rather than reinventing it, for instance, by upgrading its own convictions. Other so called left groups, on the other hand, make compromises with so called 'liberals' and end up disappointing their voters. Indeed, these are attempts, yet none of them seek to truly transform the politics behind those policies. There is simply no visionary substance to their convictions because they have

"Therefore, to respond with resistance is our best therapy while to re-open the private sphere to the public is our best policy."

forgotten to ask: what is the meaning of life?

@theMaagdenhuis, our program featured a wide variety of speakers whose research and public engagement illustrate not only what kind of ideas and challenges characterize the society of the 21st century, but also the need to stress and nurture our own humanity through education. Their contribution illuminated our sentiment that, today, education is more important than ever. We may educate ourselves for different reasons in different periods, but individual reasons don't make the social meaning of the institution of education as much as policy and common sense do.

Throughout the past half year, we have felt the need to question and challenge the governance of our university. The reluctance of the board to enter into a constructive and transformative dialogue fed our protest with the hope of bringing forth a new kind of policy through a new kind of governance. Our program signified the purpose of this occupation, that is, to reclaim space for joint decision-making, for horizontal participation, but most of

all, to intervene in the political discourse as equal intelligences. It is from the experience of co-creating space for political participation that polyphony of voices can imagine politics as transformation; that is policies with a long term vision. For that we need to reclaim more time and space.

As above as below, says an old wisdom. In the recognition that the small politics of the university reflect the reality of many other semi-public and public sectors of the Netherlands, we, university students, raise our voices in a Red Square drawn inside the system to say: "you may see us as consumers and clients, but we no longer buy this policy." We reclaim our brain, our health, our notebooks, our voices, our lives, our bodies, our food, our planet, our hearts, our creative power and the right to self-determination through education because only then another world is possible.

We feel the time is right and necessary to rethink the Bildung of the 21st century. 'Weg met de angstcultuur' means farewell to the politics of fear, *another world is possible!* Inside the university, we

shaped the Red Square to redeem politics as transformation. By this act we occupy the public sphere with the spirit of Dissent. We embrace diversity, honesty and justice; we create spaces of debate and revalorisation of work and education; we aim at stimulating units of direct democracy and governance. Anyone embracing those values agrees with us about the need to articulate disagreement with the politics behind today's policies.

Red Squares are being drawn everywhere in the public space. Now as part of the commons, they invoke the revalorization of labour and

education. Because the myth of progress is unveiled and collapse is its actual teleology, the time has come for us to feel that so much of this form of de-regulation and austerity talk is deliberately exhausting. In other words, 'Screw with us and we Multiply.' Our conviction is strong: we bet that by shaping the appropriate squares for dispute the silent majority will not be so silent anymore.

To be continued as Red Squares continue to appear *somewhere...*

| helios guia |



MAAGDENHUIS 1969-2015

Dear friends,

We would like to read you a letter that comes from the heart.

We have been in this building before, now almost 50 years ago, when it had been occupied in the spring of 1969 from May 16th till the 21st of that month. We remember it being a warm spring in Amsterdam and, if our memory does not fail, this very building was blocked off on Monday the 19th and during the night from Monday to Tuesday the improvised bridge that got us into the Maagdenhuis was torn down. What we remember else is that one did not sleep too well and that there were vehement, passionate discussions, by far not as relaxed as the ones you are having right now here. Upcoming were the first confrontations between the talking, deciding males and the rightfully protesting women who tidied the building and cooked the food. A sign of things to come.

But nevertheless we were surfing on an endless ocean, surfing on the rebellious tide of Paris, Berlin, Berkeley, Mexico, Tokyo. A truly global world way before finance

globalised the world in its own disastrous way. But we don't need to tell you that story because you experience the disaster of finance in the world of academia every day.

Although both of us were part of the movement of '68 and '69, we did not represent it, neither then nor now. Because we felt and feel that representation, so someone speaking in your name, inhibits you from becoming all the things you are capable of. Not only we wanted our lives changed, even more important was it to change it ourselves.

No one can speak for you, no one can represent you and no one can change your life for you. That was true then and it is equally true now.

Let us briefly compare the then and the now. It's a comparison not based on nostalgia. Because there is no need to be nostalgic, especially not now, when you people made this wonderful breakthrough by the occupying, reclaiming, organising and commoning activities.

So here a short comparison: It seems to us that somehow the perhaps overoptimistic times of 68/69 are over. We mean the times when for

example the Italians workers and students in the autumn of 1969 could say: "If we are offered a raise of five lire, we want hundred and if it's a hundred, we want thousand". *Vogliamo tutto*, was their slogan; we want everything, which is more than you – meaning the other side - ever can give to us.

Maybe, however we need to stress this maybe, maybe it's more realistic to say in the present conditions that we should first try to prevent the worst, the destruction of human energy and commonality by the powers that rule the world of academia and elsewhere. In a way it seems that our situation now is more ambivalent than it was fifty years ago. We would like to quote in this context a word by Syriza's finance minister Yanis Varoufakis. He said: "We have a contradictory mission: to arrest the freefall of European capitalism in order to buy the time we need to formulate its alternative". We think that Varoufakis' words are close to our current situation here as well.

A second aspect of the comparison: For us the years 68/69 have become unforgettable and still energetic parts of our life. A joyful

enzyme, forever stored in our body and mind. We took advantage of the wonderful momentums life sometimes provides us with and we wish you the same; that you may do things here and now that will enrich you irreversibly and make you for ever young, creators of your own life. A bit of literature to end with. It's about the momentums of life that we mentioned before and we think it is of a rare beauty. It is Brutus speaking to his companion Cassius towards the end of Shakespeare's Julius Ceasar. Brutus suggests that they should wage the battle against Marcus Antonius while they are still – but not for long anymore - in a stronger position. Here is what he says:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on
to fortune,*

*Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries*

Amsterdam, March 2015

| Friso Roest and Jos Scheren |

THE QUESTION OF HUMANITIES

Louise Gunning: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. As you may know, the UvA has an enduring relationship with many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. For more than two decades, fruitful collaboration has taken place in a wide range of academic fields, including medicine, law and even linguistics for animals. We are currently studying the benefits of multiple language acquisition in chimpanzees. As the saying goes, “If you put a billion monkeys with typewriters in a room long enough, eventually they will produce Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.” I am very proud to reveal to you that we did even better. It no longer takes a billion monkeys to write *Hamlet* – which would cost an enormous amount of money, considering the required training, accommodation and maintenance. Now, we have produced a programme of excellence with maximized efficiency. One monkey alone will allow us to keep up with the ISC: the international standard of culture. To demonstrate this, I have invited miss Red Josephine, a former chimpanzee

who has followed our excellence programme and who has, by now, far exceeded the cultural level of the average European. [*To Red Josephine:*] Miss Josephine, would you like to tell us something about yourself?

Red Josephine: Thank you, misses Gunning. [*To the audience:*] I was actually planning to talk to you, the Academy, concerning my past life as an ape. I was planning to tell you about my education – not as an escape from my animal nature, but as a fulfilment of my human nature. After all, I have become human by studying the human, by reading, by thinking, by expressing myself in the Humanities. But there is something else I have acquired, besides a cultured mind: I have acquired a feeling of guilt, a feeling that is exclusive to human beings, maybe even characteristic, according to Franz Kafka. I feel guilty, because I am the only monkey in the room with a typewriter. I am privileged. And that is why I have to speak up. Misses Gunning argues that a room filled with a billion of monkeys is too expensive. But what if you keep reducing the size of the room? What then? I will tell you: the walls will

creep up on you and you will end up in a cage. Eventually, there will be no place to grow, no place to develop yourself.

LG: You see here, esteemed Academy, that miss Josephine has not only acquired the finer technicalities of speech but is also politically engaged – something we pride ourselves with as the University of Amsterdam. It appears, however, that Miss Josephine is under the impression that she is still at liberty to enjoy the unbridled freedom of her uncivilized motherland – a freedom in all directions. But everyone should realize that a university cannot exist in the anarchy of a jungle. A university needs rules and restrictions.

RJ: No, I do not mean that grandiose feeling of freedom in all directions. Freedom is not what I want. Only a way out; to right, to left, no matter where. When I was captured, I had no way out; but I had to make one for myself, for I could not live without it. And I think nobody can. No human being can live without a sense of direction – without asking



what it means to be human, without asking about the value of life. These

questions are in danger when you question the significance of the Humanities. You refer to *Hamlet*, misses Gunning, and rightfully so. Because who would bear the whips and scorns of time without something of value, without something that transcends the hustle and bustle of everyday life? The question you should ask, misses Gunning, is not: to cut or not to cut, but rather: To be or not to be? Because *that* is the question.

LG: *[with her head held high, regarding the audience]:* As you can tell, dear members of the Academy, miss Josephine did not have the time to get used to the economic ways of a civilized society. *[To Red Josephine:]* But you see, Josephine, it is very simple. We have to make budget cuts, because the Humanities are not profitable.

RJ: *[getting agitated, scratching her head:]* Tell me, please, what remains of the world if you reduce it to economic value, misses Gunning? What if you cut off every hand and foot, in order to sell them on the market? It is funny you should talk about Shakespeare, because you act like Shylock. You are cutting off the flesh of the people, because they owe you money!

LG: Miss Josephine, I want to remind you of the academic decorum that we as a university –

RJ: *[getting more and more agitated, moving around:]* You know what? You don't even deserve to be compared to Shylock. Shylock at least had eyes, organs, dimensions! You, however! You treat us like animals. Not just me, but everybody. You dragged us out of the

Bungehuis, two months ago. We had locked ourselves into the building, because we preferred our own imprisonment. You had transformed the university into a lecture hall in prison and called it freedom. We had occupied the Bungehuis, because you were ignoring us – both the students and the teachers. Because your budget cuts reduced the quality of our education and our scientific research. We occupied the Bungehuis to make you listen, since you only listen to matters of real-estate! And you dragged us out, anyway.

LG: *[to the audience:]* You see once again, ladies and gentlemen of the Academy, that our University is rich with competent rebels: students who do not shy away from speaking up when they feel like it. This attitude is encouraged in the Humanities in order to cultivate an entrepreneurial ethos, which is essential to survive in the current job market and –

RJ: *[with a look of disbelief, talking slowly:]* The current job market? You talk about the job market, while half your staff can be thrown out any minute? Seriously? *[Steadily growing*

angrier:] You talk about an attitude of rebellion and at the same time you send riot-cops to us? Why did you even use police force to evict the Bungehuis? Why did you drag us away like animals? Aren't we the university then, more than bricks and money are? Are we not all human, we the students and teachers of this university? I ask you: If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? *[Panting, stooping forward:]* and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?!



[Pause]

LG: *[calmly and pedantic:]* You want a dialogue, but you keep interrupting me. I thought you wanted a

dialogue? Yes? *[RJ checks herself and sits down, LG continues:]* Okay, very well. As I wanted to say, you were not asked to be in our Bungehuis, you were not allowed and therefore we had to call the police. That is simple jurisdiction. If you would only behave like rational human beings, but no – you let your emotions dominate your actions. You want a dialogue, but you cannot control yourselves. That is why the police had to take control instead.

RJ: *[disillusioned, turning to the audience with a look of desperation:]* Where the truth is at stake, ladies and gentlemen of the Academy, every high-minded person will cast the refinements of behaviour aside. We could no longer tell the truth while keeping up the refinements of behaviour. We had to occupy the Bungehuis, because our civilized ways were not effective. We had to behave like animals, because we are human beings. *[Pause, looking towards the ground, then lifting her head:]* That is all I wanted to say. *[Walks away]*

| A play by Latara Schellen
and Dion Dekkers |

HUMANITIES RALLY'S SPEECH FOR THE FESTIVAL OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

On November 4th the faculty of Humanities was buzzing, because all of a sudden we were facing budget shortages of 7 million, or maybe even 10 million. A plan by the faculty board to address these shortages was called Profiel 2016, and was only known to heads of departments. There were two possibilities presented in this Profiel 2016, the first plan was to face this shortages by creating one Liberal Arts program for all Humanities studies, meaning all studies would have the same mandatory classes, and after those you could choose a track, a major, in the study you were actually interested in. The second plan was to form five bachelor schools, meaning, merge all studies into five studies with a shared first year and then let students choose tracks or majors in their field of interest. This would save money, and it wouldn't diminish the quality of education because what we're now learning in three years can be learned in two years if we just work harder. This, and wanting to attract those high

school students who don't know what they want to study, were presented as Profiel 2016.

First these plans mostly hit the Philosophy and history departments, they had to cut maybe as much as 35% of their electives and fire a huge part of their staff. So on November 10th Humanities Rally was founded by concerned philosophy students at the first Monday meeting, not knowing what a central role those Monday meetings would come to play in our movement. Personally I still wonder how it's possible that students of the one study that is deemed the most theoretical and abstract study, were the persons who were the most active. In this I should credit the teachers, because at the Philosophy Platform that took place on the fourth of November it were the teachers that were shouting for the students to do something, because Profiel 2016 was not publicly presented until the tenth of November, leaked by teachers and students. Fortunately the absurd plans named Profiel 2016 spread, and not only philosophy students came to this first meeting. I was really swept up in the energy that took hold of this group of

students, the first two weeks are still a complete blur, we did so many things. We wrote so many letters, press statements, newspaper articles. We analyzed so many documents and most of all we had so. Many. Meetings. We were just in continuous meeting-mode. This came to a head on the Night of Protest two weeks after the first meeting, on November 25th Humanities Rally temporarily “occupied” the Oudemanshuispoort.

We had invited teachers and students to give lectures and organize workshops. It was an enormous success. When security came to tell us that we had to leave the building because it was

closing, Tivadar climbed on stage and said: “Security wants us to leave, we want to stay”. And a huge applause came from the audience. And we stayed, until an hour later the police came to tell us we really had to leave, and because we didn’t

want to actually occupy the building, we left. But the energy I felt during those weeks had spread, and two days later five hundred people gathered at the Spui, in front of this very building, to shout at the College van Bestuur these budget cuts should stop. We had gathered over five thousand signatures on a petition, which we handed over to Louise Gunning. She actually invited us in at that very moment to talk with her about what was happening.

We politely declined because we didn’t want emotions to get the best of us. But when a few weeks later, when we had set a date for a meeting with the CvB they cancelled on us. We had asked for all relevant

documents concerning the situation at the faculty, amongst others the financial frameworks so we could have a *real* discussion. On top of this, very reasonable demand for all parties being equally prepared, we asked to set the agenda ourselves

“The CvB cancelled this meeting, not wanting to meet our demands. One of the reasons given for not wanting to make the documents available was that “Louise could explain it better anyway.”

and for the meeting to be public, because after all we are a democratic movement. The CvB cancelled this meeting, not wanting to meet our demands. One of the reasons given for not wanting to make the documents available was that “Louise could explain it better anyway.”

Even though we were still trying to arrange this meeting, we continued our actions. The Dies Natalis, the birth day of the UvA, seemed to be a good opportunity. So in the pouring rain students and teachers made their way to the Lutherse Kerk to sing birthday songs in the courtyard, while important looking guests wriggled their way into the building. But at January 13th we finally had our meeting with the board, by which time the financial framework had already been set, so there was little we could actually accomplish. And we didn’t accomplish much. What we heard most were phrases like: “It has been a misunderstanding”, “This is decided in parliament”, “We are financially cut from The Hague”, “We don’t want this either”. But as the chairman put it at the end of the meeting “We accomplished a minimal success, namely that this

side of the table [indicating the board] is late for their next appointment”.

Meanwhile the faculty board had heard our call, and set up four working groups to investigate the possibilities and best options. Those working groups had four weeks to investigate and draw up an advise, and though those people worked hard and mostly wrote very good things we had been calling for, for months, when the faculty board presented their new version of Profiel 2016, again leaked by Humanities Rally instead of presented by the board, we felt they had mostly copied those things that were in accordance with their point of view, and not the more alternative possibilities. And while first philosophy and history seemed to be hit hardest, it were the language studies that were almost completely wiped out in this version. Small languages, meaning all but the languages taught at high schools, were to be merged into one study: International Studies, with tracks in different languages. In this plan, language acquisition only took 24 ECT’s, not nearly enough to learn a language like Arabic with any

fluency. So again we rallied the humanities, and on the 13th of February we marched to the Bungehuis. The Bungehuis is where the faculty board is seated. But suddenly it was not the faculty board that occupied the building, it were concerned students. Some protesters climbed in through the windows, and for more than two weeks you could find a large part of Humanities Rally at the Bungehuis, climbing up the legendary ladder and through the window. We worked with the occupiers, with De Nieuwe Universiteit, and when they got evicted at the 24th of February many ralliers were there, blocking the police from doing their jobs. And I, for one, am very proud to have been part of that. When about 1500 people walked with us in the demonstration we organized with De Nieuwe Universiteit and ASVA two days later, I was even more proud. And I think I don't speak for only myself when I say the energy I felt during the first weeks of Humanities Rally came back when we stood in front of the Maagdenhuis, with the newly released occupiers of the Bungehuis, and some people decided to not take this anymore and banged open the doors.

Since that moment, since that bizarre evening, we have accomplished many things. Profiel 2016 has been cancelled, Humanities Rally has founded a student council party – on which you all should vote ofcourse! – a faculteitsberaad has been formed by students and teachers to create a better faculty, and Humanities Rally is working with De Nieuwe Universiteit, RethinkUvA, CSR, COR and ASVA to form commissions that will evaluate the university and advise the CvB on what should change. And although the period at the Maagdenhuis is nearly done, we continue. With new friends and strong alliances, I have high hopes for what we will achieve in the time to come. If what we have achieved so far is any indication, the future generations of students won't believe the university as we now know it, ever existed.

| Catherine Hooijer |

A PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

Some people may stammer when a journalist or some curious asks them which reasons are behind this protest. Many may have felt it is difficult to explain because there is not a big issue to blame for having triggered the protest, in fact, there are many. But are you fighting against tuition fees, against budget cuts? – they will ask you – of course we struggle against that, but our movement passes over those things and beyond them it starts its own attack.

Most of the biggest student movements nowadays in the world are in a defensive phase. The government decides to impose a reform of the education system or to make cuts in the budget, and then the educational community in response, carries out a protest to avoid those measures to be implemented. These movements are absolutely necessary to contain the attacks on education and without

them the power of capital would advance freely mastering the universities. I know the case of Spain where the student movement has been historically massive and currently conducts a protest which organizes successful strikes every month and fills the streets in every demonstration. This heterogeneous movement is fighting at the moment

“These movements are absolutely necessary to contain the attacks on education and without them the power of capital would advance freely mastering the universities.”

an outrageous reform of the system that would make high education only accessible to the ones who can afford it. The Spanish movement, though much bigger and historically more important, finds

itself in a very different juncture than the one in Amsterdam. Its character can only be conservative, in the sense that its aim is to preserve the current education of being worsened. Spain is simply an example; we see this happening in many countries.

On the other hand, in states like The Netherlands, United Kingdom and Denmark where the attacks on the



quality of education have not been as harsh and deep as in the South of Europe, we find the conditions to carry out a progressive protest.

The DNU and the groups who are gathering around her actions are striving not to restore a previous system before the neoliberalization, but to build a new university serving general interest, which only could be ultimately accomplished in a new reality. The six initial demands of the DNU [see www.newuni.nl] – specially the number one [democratization and decentralization of the UvA] – are courageous attacks on the former system and its implementation would mean the establishment of a university never seen before. I ask people not to be disappointed if these demands are not immediately achieved, for its revolutionary character makes them impossible to be fully applied in the current system and its triumph will

be a long and international struggle that we are only starting.

As the occupations and actions advanced, we realised that though apparently the demands seem very logical, the current political power is absolutely reluctant to accept them, for they are an offensive on its own essence and the way it subsists. It may seem absurd to many people that the CvB members have been clinging to their seats enduring the rejection of the biggest part of the university, but if they resign the pressure to democratize the government of the institution will be huge, and of course they are not willing to take that risk. Such a victory would trigger an unstoppable process of reforms that quickly would spread to all the educational institutions in The Netherlands and nearby countries. A clash with the economical and social system upon which our society lies will be unavoidable.

Although this movement is just born, her achievements are enormous. The CvB knowing how big this can get and fearing being overcome, presented a reform plan to 'democratize' the institution. This proves how powerful our movement can be, for we have pushed the withering power into changing. But we will not be satisfied with a makeup amendment; we are potentially able to achieve a deep reformation.

The fact that the actions in Amsterdam have inspired the birth of new student protests in the rest of the country, England and Denmark is a definite evidence that we are on the right track and that these protests are heading a movement that will continue spreading and developing for the next years and decades. There will be no rapid and ultimate victory, but we are accelerating the process towards it, keeping in mind that this has just begun.

17 April 2015

| Samuel Witteveen |

NO DEMOCRATIZATION WITHOUT DECOLONIZATION

The recent wave of student protests and occupations in Amsterdam have made significant progress in forcing the issues of democracy, transparency and accountability to the heart of a debate about the manner in which the higher education system is currently managed. Such an achievement without doubt represents a positive development for the future of knowledge production in our society and should be commended. However, we of the University of Colour believe that if the word "democracy" is to be applied consistently, then we must address the glaring disparity between the diversity of the city of Amsterdam's population on the one hand and the uniformity of the university student body and academic staff on the other, along with the underlying reasons for this discrepancy. If the issues of race, class, (dis)ability, gender and sexual orientation remain absent from our critique of the higher education system, steps toward democratisation of the university will remain necessarily

limited. In short, the University of Colour advocates a democratised University of Amsterdam (UvA) in which people of all colours, genders and sexualities are represented equally.

Education and structural racism

There are historical reasons for the persistence of structural inequalities; the colonial era may have come to an official end during the latter half of the twentieth century, but it cannot be denied that the global dynamics of power and privilege that it created have remained firmly intact up until today. We believe that these dynamics continue to operate in insidious ways that serve to naturalise and carry these inequalities into the present. This can be seen for example in the

Eurocentric tendencies of educational curricula that often downplay and sidestep issues that may shine a negative light on much lauded periods of economic advancement. For example, in a study of Dutch primary school textbooks, the American sociologist Melissa Weiner found that 49 out of 203 mention Black slavery in the Dutch colonies, while only 10 books mentioned resistance by slaves on the plantations. This is indicative of a tendency within the education system to present slavery - and the dehumanisation and brutality that necessarily accompanied it - as a mere “shadow side” of our success during “golden” times, if even discussed at all. This falsely separates the perceived “shadow sides” from the success itself,



depicting it in terms of an isolated anomaly rather than an integral part of the system that yielded significant material gains for Europe.

It is not surprising that in an investigation carried out in 2014 into the question of whether or not the Black Pete tradition is racist, a commission of the United Nations concluded that the Netherlands is “blind to racism,” that it “lacks knowledge” of its colonial past, and that Black Pete does indeed constitute racism. The UN commission also concluded that education in the Netherlands does not give enough attention to racism. This lack of knowledge about the Dutch colonial past is not only illustrated by the way it is presented in school textbooks and the discourse glamorising the slave period as a “golden” age, it is visible in many ways. For example it can be seen by the fact that the Dutch royal family feels no shame in riding its golden chariot every year with paintings of slavery on it. Or by the statement made by former minister Balkenende, addressed to the parliament: “the Netherlands should be optimistic again, let’s say the Netherlands can do it again, that

VOC mentality” (our translation). That a prime minister of the Netherlands would display such nostalgia for the colonial period does not come as a surprise if we look for instance at the website of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, a Dutch university, which described the VOC in the following manner: “It must have been great! We, as a small country, dominated world trade in the 17th and 18th century” (our translation).

Due to the manner in which education is used to glorify the past, many assume that the process of overt (geopolitical) decolonisation represented a clean and full ideological break with this past, and that the structures of racism and their underlying assumptions of superiority and inferiority simply ceased to matter. On the contrary, there is much evidence that shows the ideological underpinnings of such structures have persisted in various subtle ways that influence public discourse, culture and institutions today. Dutch National Ombudsman Alex Brenninkmeijer described Dutch political culture in 2013 as follows: “The political discourse in the Netherlands is

discriminatory, it is racist. I am not talking about one political party but integral, the mood in the Hague is against foreigners. (...) The Netherlands is very populist and very nationalistic, if you would ask the organisation of European Economic Association, then the Netherlands would be in the third place in Europe, after Greece and Austria, when it comes to discriminating against people" (our translation). This statement from Brenninkmeijer was made in response to an investigation carried out by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, whose goal was to investigate racism in the Netherlands. It advised that a "national strategy should be developed against racism and racial discrimination".

All of this contributes to a climate of structural racism in the Netherlands, whereby people of colour (usually demeaningly referred to as 'allochtonen'): have lower chances of getting a job in comparison to white Dutch people, receive lower school advices even if they have the same CITO-score as a (white) Dutch person, are structurally profiled against by police on the basis of their

ethnicity, are structurally stigmatised as criminal and/or primitive by media, politicians, school books, movies and comics and they have a higher chance of getting sentenced in court and also receive higher sentences for the same crimes. Indeed, even the Dutch word 'allochtoon', which literally means foreigner, is used to exclude and stigmatise non-white people - including ones born in this country - and never to describe white non-Dutch immigrants.

Education, equality and inclusion: the role of the UvA

As we have demonstrated, the education system has a crucial role to play in legitimating and perpetuating ideas of racial superiority and inferiority. The education system must therefore play an equally central role in challenging and discarding these destructive ideas. As an internationally renowned centre of academic knowledge, the UvA should offer us the means to think critically and to analyse the world around us. However this rarely translates into critical reflection on the UvA itself and how it could better practise the principles of

equality and inclusion; only one out of four management positions at the UvA is carried out by women and only one out of five professors is female. When it comes to the presence of people of colour within our staff, numbers are lacking, but it cannot be denied that there is a crisis of under-representation. In this sense, a photo of the Humanities faculty is telling.



These problems of representation often accompany a strong euro-centricity of university curricula, structurally depriving students of knowledge and expertise from beyond the Western sciences. How much of our literature is non-western? How often do we consider that every possible science has a Western bias, and that Western perspectives should be viewed as subjective cultural views rather than universal laws? When we consider

outsourcing to India (economics and business), UN Human Rights (law), artifacts of Medieval Latin America (archeology), the effect of rap music on our youth (sociology), the effect of EU rules on the global south (European studies) or rain forest destruction in Brazil (future planet studies), do we ever read articles and books by the scientists who live there, do we ever get lectures from someone who didn't just travel there but is actually from there? To give a few examples, "literary worlds" at comparative literature is not taught by a non-western professor, archeology doesn't offer courses in non-western areas, English language and culture offers no knowledge in non-western English knowledge. It is no wonder, then, that the Dutch/South African feminist researcher Chandra Frank has stated: "Try get funding as a scholar to research racism in the Netherlands or set up Black, postcolonial, 'critical race' or any critical studies departments in this country – it will never happen."

In this institutional background, racism and bigotry within the university walls are to be expected. The management board of the UvA

(CvB) painfully demonstrated this when they prohibited *all* study-related travels to *all* 54 countries that happen to find themselves on the African continent, which is three times the size of Europe. This decision was made at the height of the Ebola crisis, an epidemic that since its inception in 2013 has spread to a total of eight countries, including the United Kingdom, Spain and the United States. The University of Colour had to negotiate with the same CvB about the terms for leaving the appropriated Maagdenhuis. It comes as no surprise then, that our delegate was forced to storm out of the meeting twice because issues such as racism were met with laughter. Fittingly, when the negotiations finally blew up, the CvB argued the necessity of eviction by stating in the subpoena that: “two young boys, presumably Moroccan, and clearly too young to be students of the University of Amsterdam, were in the Maagdenhuis” (our translation).

Within this context, what steps might be taken to address the persistence of structural inequalities and their ideological underpinnings? The University of Colour’s aim is a

decolonisation of the university, of knowledge and of the mind. That is to say that we view the inherent discrimination of the contemporary national and global power structure to be largely an outgrowth of colonial times, and that the dismantling of all vestiges of this period is a prerequisite to any meaningful form of democracy. In practical terms, this could entail a diversification of university curricula to include more non-Western scholarship and literature, funding and support for outreach programs that aim to help people overcome structural barriers to education, and efforts to diversify academic staff to better represent the LGBTQIA+, disabled, coloured, and other minority communities. In our view, the UvA has not made a sufficient effort to break with persistent modes of exclusion. This deprives the university of the leading role it could and should have in promoting equality within the university and within society as a whole.

For an online version of this text including sources, please consult: <http://universityofcolour.com/post/113871317488/no-democratisation-without-decolonisation>

| University of Colour |

THE IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY

ReThink UvA spontaneously emerged after a meeting of staff members in the Maagdenhuis on the first Saturday of the appropriation. It started as a collective of staff members without an organizational structure, leaders, and clear distribution of tasks. Yet, in a matter of weeks, ReThink UvA has evolved into a full-fledged movement with several hundreds of supporters, regular general assemblies (GAs), working groups dedicated to specific topics and tasks, and something akin to an enlightened politburo.

The establishment of working groups was prompted by actual needs of the movement, had a bottom-up character, and could count on the support of the ReThink community as a whole. However, it also facilitated the empowerment of a group of individuals within the movement. They (and here I include myself) have come to the forefront in a variety of ways. They have articulated visions, written press releases, talked to journalists, maintained contacts with politicians, managed mailing lists, run a website, drafted proposals for GAs, and been

involved in negotiations with the Executive Board and other parties. The establishment of the so-called agenda working group and its evolution into a de-facto coordination and short-term strategy working group—the enlightened politburo—has further contributed to this tendency.

In response, a number of ReThinkers (and here too I include myself) have expressed concerns, particularly on the lack of transparency of and access to decision-making processes within ReThink UvA. In order to respond to these concerns, however, we would first need to gain a better understanding of the dynamics within the movement. This article is an attempt to this end and aims to trigger a discussion on how we should organize ourselves.

Understanding elite-mass dynamics within ReThink UvA

The *raison d'être* of working groups is that they carry out tasks that cannot be carried out by a mass of disorganized people. Thus, establishing working groups in fact implies the creation of two categories of people within the movement: the organized and active

few and the passive and disorganized mass. These are certainly not fixed categories: individuals from the first category may move the latter and vice versa, as has been the case also within ReThink UvA, but overall the distinction is maintained.

This differentiation has practical purposes, i.e., carrying out tasks effectively and efficiently, but also moral consequences. It establishes varied notions of legitimacy within the movement. The communications working group, for instance, is entitled to speak on behalf of ReThink UvA. When individual members of the passive and disorganized 'mass' speak to the press, they may only do so on their own behalf. Their actions do not carry 'legitimacy' within the movement if they do claim to speak for ReThink. Only if they join or coordinate with the communications working group they become 'legitimate' speakers of the movement. As this example illustrates, the establishment of working groups automatically

leads to the funneling of the initiative into the hands of the few.

Secondly, establishing working groups implies a distribution of tasks, which leads to specialization within the movement. A select number of individuals gain experience, knowledge, skills, and contacts while carrying out tasks within working groups, which others lack for the very reason that they are not part of the working group. Unless completely new tasks arise or working groups sense a lack of manpower, the active few will attend to tasks because they have this advantage over others. This too has a moral component: the very fact that the people in question have this advantage will make them



entitled to run the show in the eyes of many.

Thirdly, establishing working groups leads to differentiation of communications too. Communication and information on certain topics and tasks become restricted to the designated working groups. This contributes not only to the above-described specialization effect, but also, quite importantly, to group thinking and feeling. The higher intensity of communication within working groups generates greater harmony in thinking, familiarity with each other and cohesion. This increases the distance between the group of individuals in question and the mass at the intellectual, personal, and emotional level.

Fourth, differentiation leads to institutionalization of role patterns and expectations. The active few increasingly commit themselves to various (new) tasks at the same time, suspecting that nobody else will volunteer, and the passive larger group of individuals don't volunteer because they assume the job will be done by the usual suspects. This process is not only apparent in the

relation between working groups and the wider ReThink community, but even within working groups.

A final important consideration is the lack of manpower in the face of a constant flow of challenges. This is as such not a result of the differentiation process, but does complicate the matter. The experience of the last few weeks is that the active few is pressed to respond to a series of events and deal with a variety of tasks at the same time, leaving little time to consult with or report to the community. Despite good intentions, this lack of communication contributes to the increasing distance between the active few and the passive mass.

This brief exercise offers a number of clues on how to understand the dynamics within ReThink UvA at this stage. It seems fair to say that once we started organizing ourselves we have set in motion processes that differentiate between an active few and a passive mass of ReThinkers. These processes are not caused by power aspirations of those active few—having been at the center of the movement from the very beginning, I can confirm that all have

honorable intentions—but rather seem to be an inevitable result of organization as such. Thus, it looks like we have ended up with what Robert Michels long ago identified as ‘the iron law of oligarchy’. An ‘oligarchy’ is surely not how we would like to come forth, but how then should we deal with this reality?

Acknowledging leadership

Social movements often find governments or other hierarchically organized entities against them in their struggle for change and are therefore usually thoroughly suspicious of leadership. This is also apparent in the current protest movements at the University of Amsterdam, which all oppose the top-down managerial governance structure at the university and call for democratization. This skepticism sometimes translates to a complete denunciation of leadership, leading to claims of being a ‘leaderless movement’, such as in the case of De Nieuwe Universiteit. I suspect that

many ReThinkers tend to view our movement in similar terms, even though we have never explicitly stated so in public.

Teachers want*

MORE
AUTONOMY,
LESS
BUREAU-
CRACY

Centralization has led to heavily bureaucratized procedures, adding to workload and needlessly reducing the autonomy of professionals.



(*)to teach, but...

Leadership exists in different forms, however, and there is no point in denouncing it in its entirety. In fact, as the exercise above shows, leadership seems rather inevitable for a movement the size of ours and our experiences so far

seem to confirm this. Instead of ignoring and concealing it with idealist one-liners, I would contend that we gain more from acknowledging that leadership does exist. We should contemplate which forms of leadership fit the purposes of the movement the best. Considering ‘horizontal’ leadership forms, sometimes also described as ‘shared leadership’ or ‘peer leadership’, may be a good step forward in this regard.

| Umut Kibrit |

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TOGETHER

I arrived at the Maagdenhuis. The students were packing up the few personal possessions they had. No one, myself included, seemed to know what we should do. Prof G and Assistant Prof E arrived. E got us some coffee. We began talking with the students. We decided that the festival would go on but now outside. We left the Maagdenhuis.

I stood on the steps with my colleague and officially opened the Festival of Sciences and Humanities. I introduced our first speaker, my colleague from political science. He began to talk about imagination and the political. It became a conversation. Another colleague joined us. We were four on the stairs, talking about imagination, the relationship between the vision and the material; young Kyrgyz women, and then the French revolution. We were surrounded by students. Every once in a while one of them would take the mic and reflect on the university, the problems with it, the

happenings of the last weeks, and of course, the CvB.

The first police vans arrived. Rows of police marched down the street in front of us.

I placed my hand on Colleague N's and whispered in her ear. "I'm afraid".

"Me too," she answered.

I found it hard to keep talking. I lost track of the 'lecture' I was giving. I looked to my left and there stood Student M. I looked him in the eyes and silently willed him to be my classroom full of students. The more I stared the more I forgot the police that continued to fill the square. I found my words. I taught.

Not long thereafter, Student M, in the square, was picked up by four plain-clothes cops. They grabbed hold of each of his limbs and held him suspended in the air. They took him away.

We moved our festival, our classroom, downstairs and across the street onto the square. I looked at G.

"Professor G, you study medieval history, what was a medieval university really like?" G began to talk and we began to learn.



We decided to move back towards the Maagdenhuis. Our backs to the wall with a ring of students, teachers, and PhDs around us, the four of us kept talking. When we faltered, the students encouraged us: "Keep teaching us. Continue with your lesson".

My colleagues and I stood in front of our students as the police marched up the square. We kept lecturing, hoping our authority would protect them. When the police pushed others away and came close enough

to reach me, students moved in and stood between the police and me.

The plain-clothes police never said a word to me. Two of them grabbed

my arms. A student and Prof G grabbed my leg. I was being pulled from both sides. I looked at the student and was about to ask him to let me go, when he must have lost his grip. My shoe fell off and the police, twisting my arms, turning my wrist into an unnatural position, and pressing so hard on my body that it bruised,

dragged me away. I told them to let me go. I told them it hurt.

I was forcibly dragged away by plain-clothes cops and condescendingly referred to as a little girl.

I had run to the other side of the square when I saw students being carried off down a small ally on the west side of the Maagdenhuis. What would happen to them down there? Would they be hurt? Who would see? I looked for journalists...

The students and Prof G had been kettled to the middle of the square. There was pushing and shoving, beating with batons, movement everywhere. People fell and were nearly trampled. I stood very close to Colleague P, silently willing him to protect me and help me know what to do.

The horses came. I watched as people were pushed around near, next to, and into the horses.

And then, I don't know how it happened. I was trapped in a ring of horses and police. I was alone. I walked towards the police and asked them to let me out. The police turned me around and shoved me toward the horses. I turned back and found a female police officer. I looked her in the face and asked again for permission to leave, to walk between the police and leave, they refused. They told me to go the other way, toward the horses.

I said, "There are horses there, I don't want to walk between the horses." They forced me to walk

between the hind legs of two horses standing ass-to-ass.

Later when the students sat on the square and the horses moved in front of them, Colleagues G and P moved themselves and stood between the students and the police. I ran through the crowds to try to reach them. A journalist got angry as I tried to maneuver passed him. "I was here first" he said.

"I'm doing something else," I said. And I pushed him aside.

I found myself standing next to G, horses to my back, students before me. Before I knew it E was next to me, then N. And then we did what university teachers do best – we started talking and we didn't stop, not until the police went away.

This Auto-Ethnography of the Maagdenhuis Eviction presented on April 13th, 2015 in REC

| Julie McBrien |

CURRENT STUDENT STRUGGLES

CANADA

In Québec, the students on strike against austerity cuts since March 21st are confronted with state repression in the street as well as on campuses. All the protests are violently interrupted by riot police. At the Université du Québec à Montréal, nine student activists face the threat to be expelled from the university. One student is now in jail for having disrupted classes, despite the democratic vote in favour of the strike. 15 000 teachers and 192 community groups joined the students for a social strike on May 1st, and outdoor occupations has been set of on many campuses.

The teacher assistants of University of Toronto and York University, two of the biggest universities in Canada, end their strike starting last February. Their fight for better contracts, framed in a rejection of a “factory education”, turns out partly successful since they obtain arbitration that will be binding for their employers.

CHILE

After the historic series of student protests in 2011-2012, Chilean students still mobilized about 150 000 people on April 16th in Santiago. They are still protesting against corruption and for a free, quality public education accessible to all. Despite a significant support from the population, the protest had been violently repressed by riot police.

DENMARK

Taking part in the recent wave of occupations in European universities, students started occupying rectors’ offices in Copenhagen, Aarhus and



Roskilde on April 15th. In a manifesto, they claim the necessity “to reclaim our democratic rights of influence on our universities”.

INDIA

A movement of parents across India protests against recent tuition fee hikes imposed by school administrators. On April 14th, 20 000 of them signed a petition directed to the Prime Minister, asking the central government to stringent legislation governing fee hikes.

The students at the Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education & Research in Calcutta struggle for student democracy while a student union, together with the authorities, are blocking the election process since three years because of the chances for a socialist organization, the All India Student Democrats' Union, to be elected.

MACEIDONIA

The last series of student protests, including 14 days of occupations in different universities last February,



has been successful for the academic community. Students and teachers were struggling against changes in the legislation on education. They will now be taking into account in the process of writing a whole new law for higher education.

SOUTH AFRICA

On the 9th of March, students of the University of Cape Town rose up against the statue of Cecil Rhodes, a metaphor for white supremacy, and occupied their university's administration offices in the Bremner Building in order to attain the removal. The statue was ultimately removed one month after

the demonstration had started, on April 9th. The initial protest was a symbol for a much bigger



movement, addressing the institutional racism and colonisation at the UCT. The #RhodesMustFall protest quickly spread over the whole of South Africa, calling for the decolonization of education, and students in Oxford too rallied against the statue of Rhodes on their campus. The University of Berkeley, and Amsterdam's University of Colour, echoed and fought against the sentiments of black marginalisation in academic spheres.

TURKEY

The Turkish government recently bypasses the democratic election of a left-wing rector at Istanbul University, making sure to appoint a rector who reflects the ideology of Erdoğan's regime. Even though the police forces have recently obtained

the legal right to use deadly weapons against protesters, students are organizing themselves at many universities to improve democracy in the academic community and fight against neoliberal politics.

UK

Since March 17th, a wave of occupations has been triggered in London. In four universities, students under the banner of "Free University of London" occupied the administration offices to protest against the neoliberal agenda of managers and for a free and emancipatory education. Since they were threatened by court cases and evictions, protesters at London School of Economic and Political Science, University of Arts London, King's College London and Goldsmiths University of London decided to end their occupations.



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