



THE SAUSAGE FACTORY

ROU Launch

The public launch of ROU took place on March 2nd, when over fifty students, staff and members of the larger community came together to discuss, 'What is a Really Open University?' This group was brought together by a recognition of the need for alternatives to the current educational system which puts everything - teaching, learning, our daily lives - up for sale, and makes efficiency drives such as the current budget cuts seem inevitable. Through a collective and participatory process, this group developed several vision statements about what education without restraints would look like. While not completely polished, these statements provide a point of departure for the creation of a ROU:

- The ROU is a process of challenging education and society as we know it. We imagine a world in which there are no students and teachers, but instead everyone shares knowledge and skills equally. We aim for it to be accessible to all by making it free socially, financially and personally.
- We envision an open university to be aimed at unlearning our preconceptions surrounding education, promoting a continuous and organic form of learning that engages with communities and their knowledge. That is multi-layered and non-hierarchical in terms of skills, organization and participation. We believe in a collaborative knowledge production that is not subordinated to the false logic of competition. We want to be a network that confirms an egalitarian status for everyone in order to avoid elites forming due to prior conditioning and experience. We will constantly look to open more and more doors, where before we had not even begun to see the existence of a doorway.



- We believe that it should be free and open. As such, it should be without borders between ourselves and the wider world. Not fixed to a particular location (geographical or ideological), but committed to allow critical thought for the purposes of transforming ourselves and society. Most of all, this will be fun.
- Freedom of knowledge is both a principle and a mechanism. Knowledge wants to be free and by freeing knowledge, we want to free people. Rather than closed journals, locked classrooms and guarded libraries, we envisage knowledge created and held in common. Freeing knowledge means including as many voices as possible in its creation, making our common knowledge richer in the process.
- We want to make education and knowledge accessible to all who wish to access it. Recognising that currently a variety of factors exclude people from education. In response to this we want to share a free, open source information, without barriers of language, finance and ideology.
- Spatial accessibility starts with the physical environment. There should be no boundaries to local persons in accessing education. Learning

- environments should be mobile, and knowledge should not be bound by any walls of the classroom. Spatial accessibility extends to other scales – knowledge should be accessible virtually and education should use collaborative and open media forms.
- The ROU is a process of challenging society through the unlearning of norms. We aim to do this in a collaborative fashion through participation and a deconstruction of hierarchy. We would like to create an environment where knowledge is shared.
- Education has become a factory dictated by the rules of profit. The Really Open University seeks to create free participatory, critical, non-hierarchical, mobile university that interacts with the community and society as a whole.

At the next ROU meeting on Tuesday, March 15th, we will focus on the implementation of our alternative visions for education. This meeting is open to anyone who is interested in engaging in a participatory process to transform education. For anyone interesting in becoming involved in the ROU organising meetings, please join us on Monday evenings at 7.30 upstairs in the Packhorse pub.

On March 2nd a group of students, staff and members of the larger community came together to envision what a really open university would look like.

At the next meeting on March 15th, we will discuss the implementation of the really open university and start building alternatives.

Please join us.

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Do It Yourself

This is not a financial crisis we are seeing at Leeds University, it is a crisis of identity. The University of Culture collapsed long ago, prey, like so many of our welfare institutions, to the ideology of the free marketeers. The university is now a business: students are customers, teachers are workers and knowledge production has been written into the Excel spreadsheets. Competition controls life and when the market dictates, our belts are tightened. The crisis we see around us, quite simply, is the death throes of those in denial to this.

But don't panic, there are alternatives.

At Really Open University we are encouraging people to take control of their own education and create a university beyond business, unaffected by budget cuts and the broader economic crisis. We are not waiting for Lord Mandelson or Michael Arthur to offer us this. They don't know what is best for us, and if they did, they would have no intention of letting us have it.

ROU reject party bureaucracy and political ideology because we think that people deserve better. For centuries philosophers have dedicated themselves to the task of showing that people have the capacity to manage themselves co-operatively, without the need for government. Communication and camaraderie are amongst the most powerful tools that we have at our disposal.

ROU reject the idea that teachers should be any different to students, that students should be any different to maintenance staff, campus security or the population of Leeds more generally. Every person's voice should be heard, no matter their age or ability. No one person is more important than any other, and no one person should have the power to control another's future. ROU will never tell you what to think, say or do. We don't have the answers.

It is the goal of ROU to carve out a slice of space and time in which to experiment and find something new. Everything is up for reinvention. We are rejecting prescriptive dogma so that we can promote innovation and creativity, and build the future into the present.

Only by constructing alternatives can we make them feel normal.



Get ready to strike folks!

Talks between UCU and the VC have hit a wall and strike action has been called for March 18th.

Be sure to pass on your support to teachers and tutors.

Send us your art and articles.

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UCU threaten strike as things heat up

In complete disregard to confidentiality, Leeds University VC Michael Arthur yesterday published details of his negotiations with the University and College Union. In an email to students, UCU were blamed for a breakdown in talks and a return to strike. In response, UCU president Malcom Povey has slammed management for their underhand tactics and for pre-empting their call to strike action on March 18th.

These events follow a flurry of activity in the UK anti-cuts struggle.

On March 1st around 200 people rallied against 285 proposed job cuts at Westminster University. More than forty of the protesters stormed the governor's meeting and demanded VC Geoffrey Petts answer their questions. For three days they controlled the management and administration offices at the Regent Street Campus making sure to minimise disruption of the day-to-day activities of teachers and students. Following the occupation, management called on individual faculties to identify those students who engaged with the occupation.

Following the 27 hour 'flash occupation' at Sussex University on the 8th of February participants were branded as 'animals' by management and 'domestic extremists' by Lord Peter Mandelson. When on the 3rd of

March an attempt was made to replicate the occupation, riot police used questionable tactics to disperse protesters. A High Court injunction has since been taken out against "remaining" on campus and six students face an uncertain future.

Successful days of action have also been held at University College London, and University East Anglia.

ROU wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate the need for transformation.

The value of the strike comes in its ability to grant the time with which participants can construct new narratives. While it temporarily inverts power relations, the real strength of the strike rests on its promise of return to work. Until it is generalised, strike action will remain inherently reformist.

Used strategically, the occupation too must undergo transformation. An occupation forces open space as well as time, enabling buildings and resources to be put to new and creative use. It is a powerful and confronting tactic, but only if it is employed in the creation of alternatives.

Really Open University stands in solidarity with UCU strike action and all those struggling around the UK, in Sussex and Westminster, as well as at UCL and UEA.