

Ed4SJ conference
March 2022



Rent strikes in the neoliberal university: Critical pedagogy for reimagining educational futures



Dr Helen Young, London
South Bank University
Dr Lucy Wenham,
University of Bristol





RENT STRIKES



- Qualitative research exploring the lived-experience of participating in these rent strikes.
- Analysis shed light on the neo-liberalization of higher education.
- These accounts also illustrate the concepts of Paulo Freire - dialogue and praxis pervade the data.



DIALOGUE

"It is through critical dialogue that students enter together into the process of problematization. And, by way of their critical exchanges, they experience important breakthroughs of knowledge that emerge from rethinking their historical and contemporary conditions." (Darder, 2020, p. 52)



DIALOGUE

1) Engaging through listening, debating, questioning

"But it's really just, like, talking to these people."

"There was someone that I met in my own halls who was interested in doing a rent strike um but then that chat just grew from there so, like, it was five people then it got to 10 then it got to 15 then it got to 20 um ... more and more students in halls kept getting added to that WhatsApp chat..."



DIALOGUE

2) Learning together sharing ideas, knowledge, expertise and theoretical arguments

"I guess, like, sharing resources and things um and also almost, like, creating an environment and just showing support. ... I think even just saying to people, 'No, this can work', in and of itself is probably quite a helpful thing to do."

"People who had activist experience previously ... they've been fantastic."



PRAXIS

"Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world."
(Freire, 1996 [1970], p. 68)



PRAXIS

"To actually go through it... I feel like I learn more in engaging in actions ... because it's actually how it is in real, like, lived experience, which is probably more um powerful in a way."

"like, slowly, like, this process of, like, people's personal experiences kind of led them to being more, like, becoming more, like, educating themselves on what was actually going on."



RAISING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

"the concept of actually forming a movement to try and counter what they did, would never really have kind of been in my head. Um so I think what things like rent strike has really shown me is that um there's no need to just accept that what these institutions... just accept what these institutions are doing when, if you're part of them, you can actually try and change things."



EDUCATIONAL FUTURES

- Dialogue
- Praxis
- Critical consciousness

"I am hopeful, not out of mere stubbornness, but out of an existential concrete imperative"
(Freire, 2004 [1992], p. 8)

THANK YOU!

Twitter:
@helen_hyyyy



Rent strikes in the neoliberal university:
Critical pedagogy for reimagining educational futures



REFERENCES

Darder, A. (2020). Chapter 4: Conscientização. In S. L. Macrine (Ed.), *Critical pedagogy in uncertain times: Hope and possibilities* (2nd ed.). Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan.

Freire, P. (1996 [1970]). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.

Freire, P. (2004 [1992]). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.



PHOTO CREDITS

1. [Alidade Hickson from Flickr](#)
2. [Challenge magazine](#)
3. [The Guardian](#)
4. [BBC](#)
5. [Hypotheses](#)