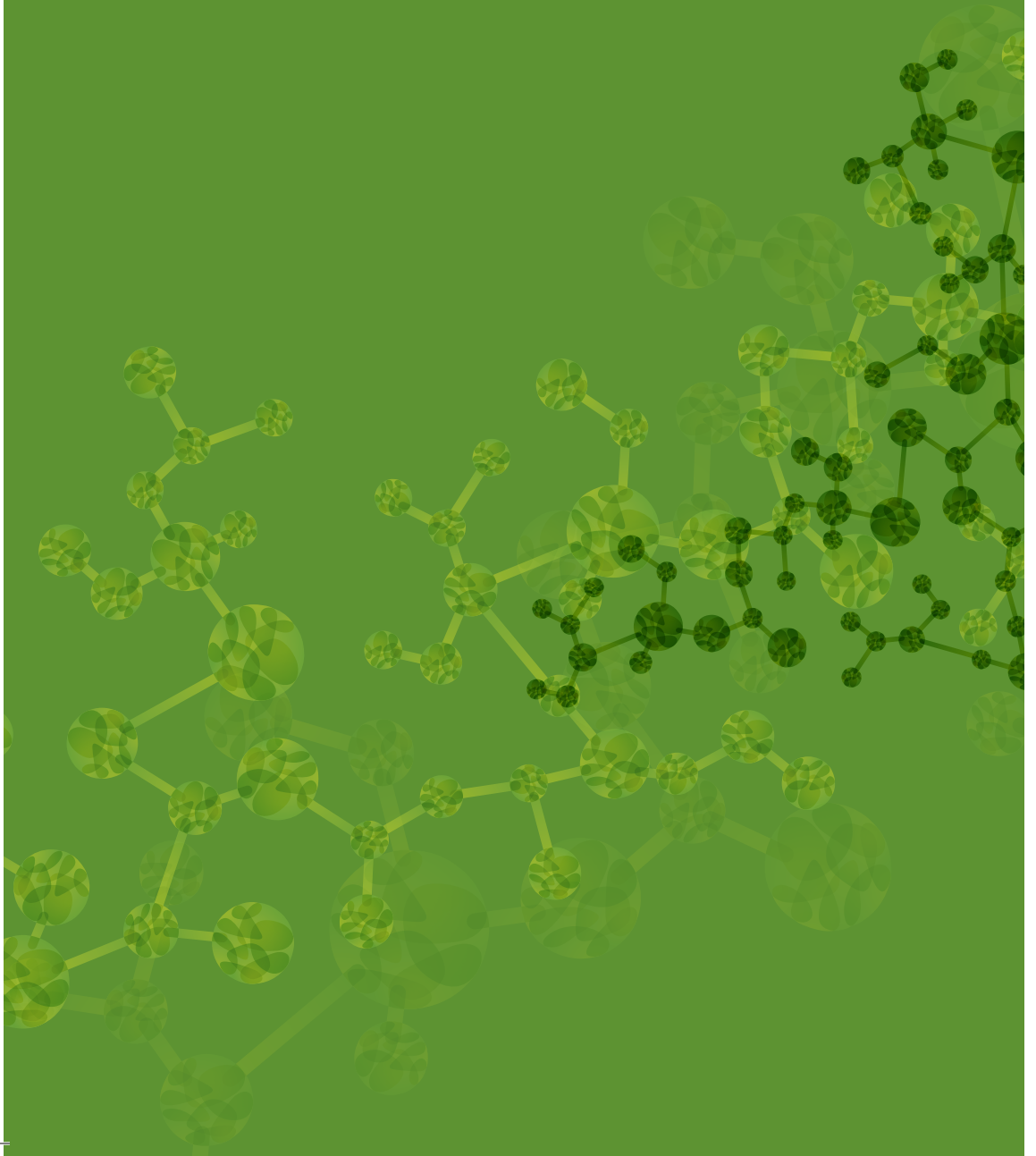# **REPORT** ON NATIONAL MEETING FOR TEMPORARILY EMPLOYED RESEARCHERS, **COPENHAGEN SEPTEMBER 2018**
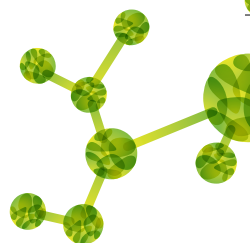
EDITED BY
Dan V. Hirslund,
Sarah R. Davies,
and Malene Monka

INTRODUCTION

Dan V. Hirslund, Chair TER Forum and Postdoc at the University of Copenhagen

On September 23, 2018, the first meeting for precarious academics was convened by the TER (Temporarily Employed Researchers) Forum under Dansk Magisterforening, one of the largest unions for academics in the higher education sector in Denmark. The aim of the meeting was to bring together researchers from across the country to discuss how to collectively organize against increasing precarity in academia. Drawing on international experiences in building a movement through the presentation of four examples from different European contexts, the seminar combined panel debates with focused workshops to experiment with, and begin formulating, alternatives to the cut-throat competition of neoliberal academia. This report documents presentations and workshop outputs from the seminar in the hope that it can become a resource for further mobilisation in Denmark and abroad.

The background for the seminar provides important clues to the politics of research and teaching in Denmark, traditionally admired for its strong social welfare protection and high-quality free education system. These institutional mechanisms are under increasing pressure and a short presentation of these changes might therefore be useful in order to remind ourselves that welfare provisions do not last without adequate political pressure, and that the long

hegemony of post-World War II social democracy has lost its power to define the parameters of social inclusion. Higher education in Denmark takes place through publicly-funded universities, of which University of Copenhagen is the largest (and oldest) with close to 40,000 students and 10,000 staff, half of whom are academics. The total number of research staff in Denmark is just above 30,000, an increase of 50% since 2008, most of whom are employed on temporary or fixed-term contracts. The 'adjunct-crisis' long known in the US and Australia has now reached Danish institutions as well, and it is estimated that more than 50% - and in some cases up to 70% - of academics are either PhDs, postdocs, non-tenured assistant professors or teaching fellows (in Denmark known as 'external lecturers').[1] In particular, the number of, first, PhDs and, later, postdocs, rose dramatically with the Danish government's investment in early career research funding from 2006 onwards, while there was only a minimal increase in faculty positions. Combined with a round of austerity policies that include a continuous 2% annual reduction of university funding (called 'grønthøster' or 'forage harvester'), this has created an acute crisis of unemployment among the growing cohorts of post-PhD, postdoc and post-postdoc researchers – an overproduction which, despite having slowed somewhat, still outpaces the rate of uptake at higher

education and research institutions.[2] This policy of precaritisation has led to surprisingly little protest, perhaps as a reflection of the discursive hegemony of Danish welfare society which admits to no policy of exclusion, as well as the painful knowledge of comparably even worse conditions in many neighboring countries (UK, Germany), at least in terms of living standards. But being precarious does not necessarily mean being poor, though this is also often one of its forms.[3] It points rather to systematized and overlapping forms of insecurity, which in addition to a reduced life wage affects identities, psychological well-being, work-leisure balance and in general turns people into over-compliant workaholics, who feel that they only have themselves to blame for their lack of success.[4]

It was in this context that a group of postdocs at the University of Copenhagen's Faculty of Humanities got together in late 2016 in order to formulate an open letter to management, asking for a coherent and collective policy towards addressing the stalled career paths of postdocs. This initiative then led to the September 2017 establishment of an 'AC-Club' – the grassroots union structure at Danish universities – to represent temporarily employed researchers, which in practice turned out to represent the majority of employees, since it included PhD students as well as teaching and research assistants with a doctoral degree. Meanwhile, similar initiatives have sprung up around the Danish academic landscape, in particular the Junior Researcher's Association

in Aarhus and the PhD Association Network of Denmark (PAND). Seeking to combine these forces, the TER Forum was established under the auspices of Dansk Magisterforening in June 2018, and was the most immediate precursor for the first national meeting for precarious academics in September, which this report documents. The struggle has just begun…

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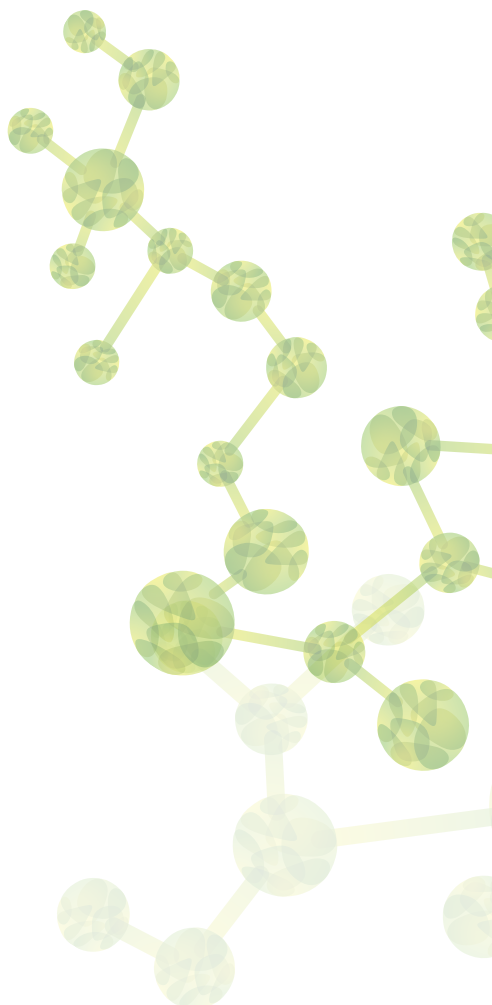
PRECARIOUS ACADEMIA IN THE UK

Catherine Oakley, Independent Scholar, UCU Anti-Casualisation Committee
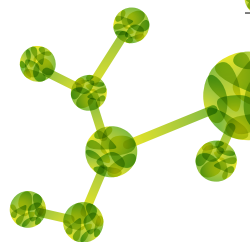
The current crisis of precarity in UK universities is unfolding in the economic context of the longest squeeze in wages for generations, and the continuing erosion of social welfare provisions. Casualisation here affects academic workers of all ages and at all levels, but doctoral and post-doctoral students bear a particularly heavy burden. In the UK, PhD researchers are classified as students. Those sponsored by the government-funded Research Councils receive stipends that put them below the official poverty threshold unless they have an additional source of income, and offer problematic access to paid sick leave and parental leave.[5] Post-PhD, the majority of scholars who remain in the sector do so as "Visiting Lecturers" or "Teaching Fellows", often for indefinite periods of time. These prestigious-sounding titles too often conceal the material difficulties generated by the terms of such employment, which force many to take up work at multiple institutions just to make ends meet. Over 51,000 teaching staff in the UK are employed on hourly-paid contracts, and at least 12,500 are on zero-hours contracts. Some universities are using hourly-paid staff for up to half of their teaching, and several have moved to outsource casual contracts to temp agencies. A report conducted in 2015 found that 1 in 5 staff on insecure contracts struggled to pay for food, whilst 1 in 3 had difficulty meeting their rent or mortgage payments.[6] Meanwhile, 68% of research staff are employed on temporary contracts. This group includes "serial postdocs" for whom successive temporary contracts are the norm.[7]

In February and March 2018, members of the University and College Union (UCU) at 64 universities took an unprecedented 14 days of industrial action in response to proposed changes to the sector's existing private pension scheme. An estimated 42,000 workers went on strike, and at more than a dozen universities, students occupied campus buildings in support of striking staff. The action went ahead despite new anti-trade union legislation pushed through by the right-wing Conservative government in 2016, which introduced arbitrary thresholds in industrial action ballots and restrictions on picketing.

In this context, the 2018 university pension strikes were a visible milestone for trade unions in the UK, which have been in severe decline since Margaret Thatcher's crusade to break the unions in the 1980s. They also marked a watershed moment in the campaign for secure work. Considerable numbers of temporary staff participated in industrial action to defend a pension they weren't even eligible for. For them, casualisation is a priority issue. The union's national Anti-Casualisation Committee has worked to raise the profile of the problem for

over a decade, but discourse around insecure work in the sector has been amplified considerably since the pension strikes. Casualisation was incorporated into UCU's 2018 national pay claim explicitly this year. However, the recent ballot for industrial action on this did not meet the 50% turnout threshold legally required under the terms of the 2016 Trade Union Act. The work of analysis around the outcome of this ballot and what it means for the wider campaign against precarity has now begun. The anti-union law likely played a significant role, but there are a range of other factors at play too. For example, although staff on casual contracts make up a majority of the academic workforce, they represent a minority of union members. There is therefore a pressing need for existing precarious members to recruit their casual colleagues to the union in order to ensure better representation within its structures. This is easier said than done: many casualised workers are fearful of joining the union, attending meetings, or becoming more active. Better resources and support from UCU central are needed if the anti-casualisation campaign to grow.

It is therefore unsurprising that campaign initiatives on precarity during the pension strikes and in the months since has come from the grassroots. On picket lines, in classrooms, in faculty meetings, and on social media, the UK academic precariat has begun to find a voice. Grassroots groups have organised at Durham, Kent, SOAS, Newcastle, Leeds, Exeter, Royal Holloway, Warwick, Birkbeck, Queen Mary, Liverpool, and

in Wales. A new generation of mostly younger activists are taking inspiration from the successes of other precariously-employed groups who have demanded basic workers' rights both within and beyond the sector. These include university cleaners at the London School of Economics (LSE) and Kings College London (KCL) represented by the Independent Worker's Union of Great Britain (IWGB)[8], and retail and hospitality workers who recently staged a coordinated strike against their corporate employers.[9]

In the last few months, precarious university teaching staff have successfully demanded and negotiated better terms of employment at Durham University, University of Exeter, and Sheffield University.[10] A new collective energy is being generated in online spaces, and at events designed to unite activists and facilitate shared strategies for organising. Twitter has proven a particularly useful digital platform for "citizen research" into university governance, creative critique and real-time information sharing. The site is also playing a key role in promoting solidarity and awareness around conditions of precarious employment and their material and psychological consequences.[11]

In May 2018, post-doctoral researchers on temporary contracts organised an event sponsored by the British Sociological Association (BSA) titled: "Between the discourse of 'resilience' and death by committee: reclaiming collective spaces for academic resistance". This workshop sought to "radically imagine what academics can creatively, practically or

ordinarily do together to enact collective and intersectional resistance, revitalise collegial governance mechanisms, and effect structural changes from the ground up".[12] The output of the day was "The Precariosaurus": a publicly-accessible collaboratively-produced zine that presents imaginative strategies for confronting dominant discourses on academic employability, precarity, and the marketisation of education.[13] In addition, several UCU branches organised workshops in the summer months as part of the union's "Anti-Casualisation Roadshow", designed to build membership and energy among precarious workers at local level.[14]

The work of consciousness-raising, organising and action is gathering momentum. It needs to: many of us here in the UK have serious concerns that Brexit will lead to a bonfire of workers' rights, with right-wing politicians targeting regulations such as the Working Time Directive for disposal.[15] Going forward, we will need to find ways to ensure that the new energy originating in grassroots groups intersects with union activities and helps to inform and transform the agendas of the union both locally and nationally.

We have hope. In a system that incentivises competition and operates through pervasive fears of career "failure" and unemployment, precarious workers across the country are gradually mobilising to harness the power of unified action.

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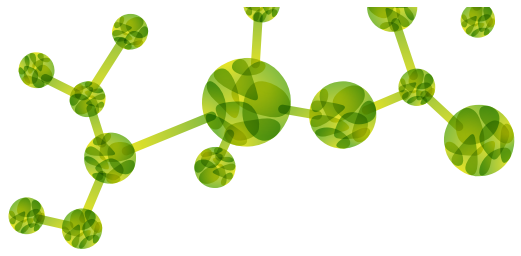
THE FRACTIONALS FOR FAIR PLAY CAMPAIGN

Carrie Benjamin, Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, University of Warwick & former SOAS UCU representative (2016-2018)

The Fractionals for Fair Play campaign (FFFP) was formed at SOAS, University of London in January 2014 to fight for fair treatment and improved contractual conditions for fractional (part-time or fixed-term) teaching staff. The campaign included both PhD student teachers and teaching-only staff to build solidarity and fight collectively. When FFFP began, most fractionals were not paid for office hours, lecture attendance, mandatory teacher training, attendance at department meetings, or for marking essays. As part of the campaign, FFFP conducted two independent workload surveys, held teach-ins discussing precarity in higher education, raised fractional issues at department meetings and staff-student forums, and discussed working conditions openly with students.

Through these publicity efforts, FFFP was able to reach a broad base of supportive students and staff members, who were quick to mobilise when fractional staff took unauthorised strike action by refusing to mark essays without remuneration in April 2014 and again in April 2017. During the 2017 action, students sent emails to senior managers in support of striking fractionals, and every department in SOAS wrote a statement condemning the treatment of fractional staff, demanding that the school remunerate us for marking, and refusing to mark their fractionals' essays. That last point was crucial, as without the support of permanent staff the strike would have collapsed. It was also important for fractional staff themselves to meet continuously and go through the arguments with each other in order to ensure that the marking boycott was solid enough to pull off collectively. A critical mass was vital, and the action ended in victory.

Today, as a result of over three years of mobilisation and action by FFFP, fractional staff at SOAS are now paid for training, essay marking, administration, and have access to designated research funds from the institution. There is a persistent belief that precarious teaching contracts are a rite of passage that all academics must endure. Part of FFFP's success came through persistent engagement and challenging these narratives, and by building solidarity networks with staff and students in the institution.

THE PORTUGUESE S&T SYSTEM: A GROWTH BASED ON SEVERE PRECARITY

Ana Ferreira Núcleo de Bolseiros, Investigadores e Gestores de Ciência,
NOVA FCSH, Lisboa, Portugal

Since the beginning of the 21st century, and with the exception of the recent period of socio-economic crisis in Portugal (more specifically, between 2011 and 2015), the Portuguese science and technology system has witnessed a consistent growth.[16] However, this growth was based on the work of many PhD and post-doctoral fellows (currently, with tens of thousands of ongoing fellowships with approximately 10,000 funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, the Portuguese funding agency for science, technology and innovation), few researchers with fixed-term positions (around 500) and even less with permanent positions.[17]

In 2016, and after many years and struggles against the extremely precarious working conditions in science, the current Portuguese social democratic government, supported by the radical left and the communist party, tried to address the lack of social protection and labour rights associated with the fellowship model. For this purpose, a program of scientific employment (fixed term positions for PhD holders) and a programme of regularization of precarious workers in public administrations (permanent positions), both financed with extra funds by the state, started to be implemented. In total, the government aimed at employing 5,000 scientific workers (including researchers, technicians, teaching staff and science managers) by 2019, the year of general elections. This is however a very limited goal, both in terms of numbers (every year there are almost 4,000 new PhDs in Portugal[18]), and of scientific profiles (the first programme targets PhD holders and relies on precarious contracts, and the second, is mostly being applied to administrative positions). Still, as of today, the government was only able to establish 128 contracts, less than 3% of their final goal.[19] The reasons for these are many-fold. Probably the most important one, surprisingly, comes from our own academic and scientific organizations, with the deans of major universities being strongly against the application of both these programmes. Hidden behind a 'veil of disruption of university autonomy', the university powers felt that the employment of a considerable number of scientific workers could threaten long-time hierarchies. This is the case since these 'new scientific workers', in addition to developing their regular scientific activities, will be able to participate in the decision-making of their organizations, a role from which they were totally excluded as fellowship holders.

For some years, scientific workers' movements have been strongly mobi-

lized to end scientific precarity and can count some important victories. The establishment of these governmental programmes partly results from these continuous mobilizations. Also, the subsequent introduction of critical legislative alterations in these programmes, broadening the scientific profiles covered by these programmes, reflected the actions of trade unions, scientific workers' organizations and grassroots movements. Finally, the conflict against the deans, while not being over, is at the moment one year away from elections, pending towards the movements of scientific workers. It is our conviction that these movements should continue to mobilize all academic and scientific workers, irrespective of academic titles or specific activities, with an agenda for change that reaches out to all who daily teach, research, manage and/or communicate in academic and scientific institutions and contribute to the growth of their organizations and of the S&T system. This agenda should also reach out to society, since it is at the university system that a high proportion of young adults is studying. It is also within these organizations that science, with its long contribution to better life conditions for all and more democratic societies, has been developing. Thus, it is our understanding that scientific and academic organizations must stop exploiting their workers and move towards more democratic governance. This is not a problem strictly confined within the university system. It is a societal model that is at stake.
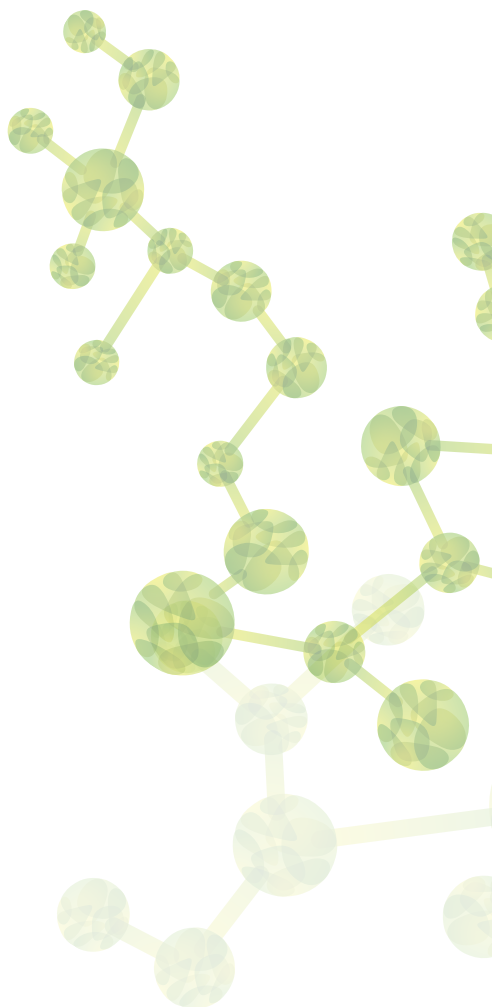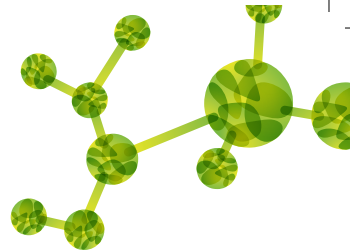
ITALIAN ACADEMIA: PRECARITY IN A SHRINKING SYSTEM

Mauro Roncarelli, Ph.D., precarious researcher in astrophysics at the Univ. of Bologna, and member of the Network of Precarious Teachers and Researchers of the Univ. of Bologna

The Italian academic system has changed dramatically in the last decade. Severe funding cuts and the University reform (Gelmini law, 2010) caused a loss of 25% of permanent positions in public universities, going from 63,000 in 2008 down to 47,500 in 2018. This was obtained by blocking hiring to replace retiring professors, or by replacing them partially with precarious researchers and teachers. The Italian academia is therefore a special case in the international framework, where the general problems of precarious academic jobs are occurring in a significantly shrinking environment, possibly worsening them. The recently introduced research evaluation system is also causing the cuts to bite more deeply in universities that are already facing problems: this is worsening the historical north-vs-south economic gap, widening it at the higher education level.

In Italy most of the research is done through fellowships ("assegno di ricerca"; more than 14,000 are employed in such positions today) that are not considered proper jobs according to Italian law, and have very limited rights. In addition, a large fraction of standard teaching duties is nowadays sustained through teaching contracts ("Docenti a contratto"), the number of which rose to more than 26,000 over the last years. While contract teachers are actually doing the same work as the full professors, they are very badly paid. Recent research has showed that their average salary is about 7 euros per working hour, thus forcing many of them to look for additional jobs outside academia.[20]

Several grassroots movements now exist in Italian universities and public research institutes, together with self-organised national associations, most of them born around 2010 during the protest against the Gelmini law. The struggle to get media attention and to become a nationwide movement is hampered by the relatively low and fragmented participation of precarious workers. Unions also face problems in dealing with the academic precariat, mainly because of the complexity of the problem itself compared to the relatively low numbers of people involved in the issue. In addition, unions are not legally entitled to represent most of the academic precarious workers due to their atypical contracts. Despite this, recently the unions and the other movements obtained some important victories. For example, in 2017 they managed to obtain a form of unemployment benefit for both precarious researchers and PhD students. The main goal however remains to convince the Italian governments to hire 20,000 new permanent positions to bring Italian academic positions back to the pre-austerity levels.

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LAB REPORT: COMMUNITY BUILDING AROUND THE TER AGENDA
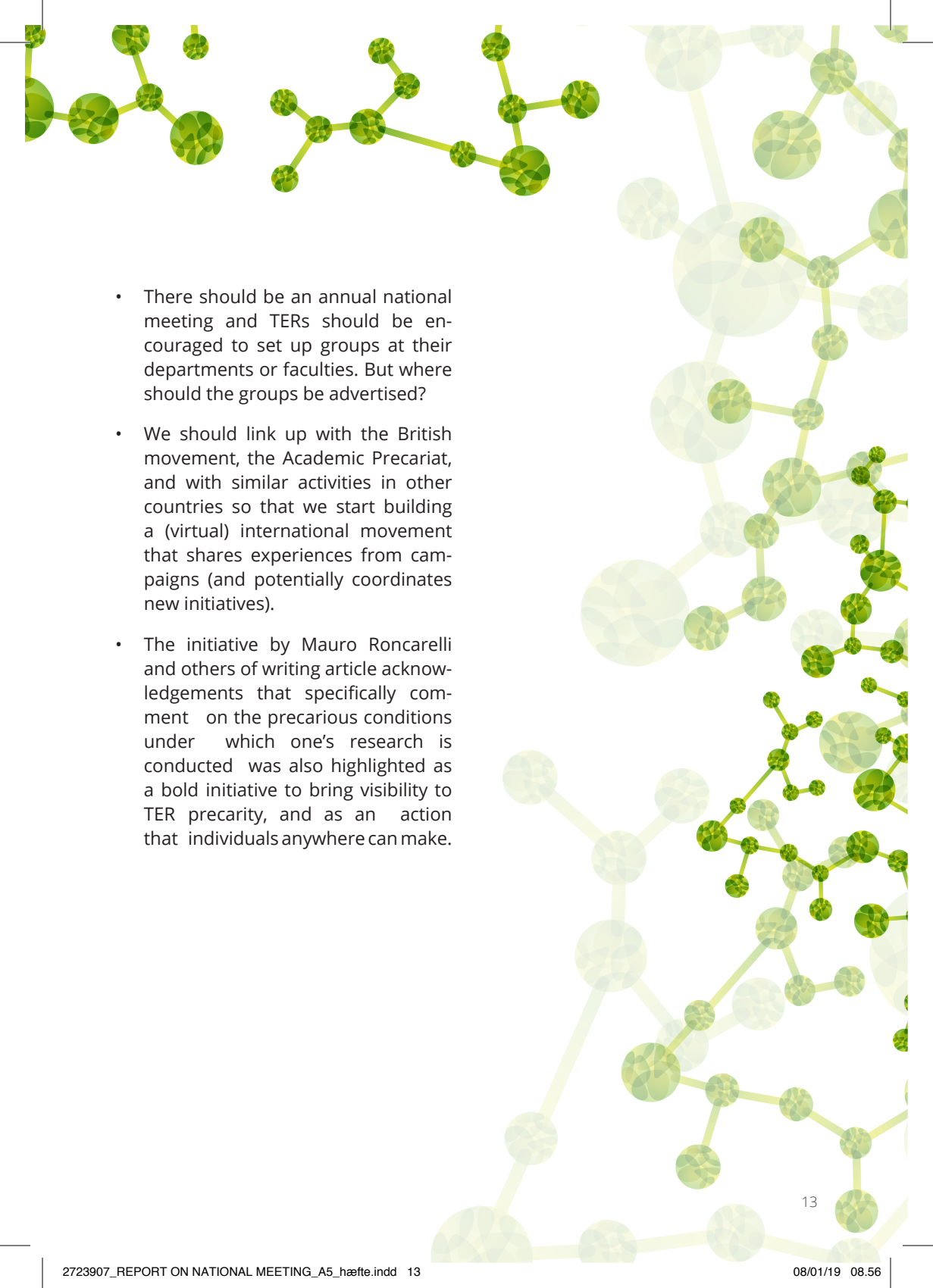
Marie Kolling, University of Southern Denmark
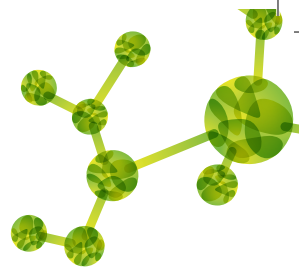
This workshop explored the potential for building a community in Denmark around the issues of precarity in academia. The aim of the workshop was to envision and discuss what we would like such a network (or movement) to be and how we can do it. The workshop was organized in two sessions. In the first session, the participants introduced themselves and shared their previous experiences with building a community around a particular cause. Then, they were asked to brainstorm what kind of initiatives they would like to see. In the second session they were asked to develop one or two of the initiatives and prepare an action plan for how to carry it out.

The participants were divided in groups of three with 6-7 people in each group. They were eager to share their experiences and discuss the current challenges around the increased precarity in academia. Challenges around mobilization were also discussed, such as how to organize across universities, disciplines, types of employment and not least being in an employment category that no one likes to identify with. Similarly, there was concern about being considered a troublemaker by university management, and even permanent staff, and thereby jeopardizing one's possibilities of a renewed contract or permanent position.

Among the opportunities that were identified were: 1) to engage people in the beginning of their academic careers, 2) to make explicit to the unions and universities the consequences of precarity, e.g. on the quality of research, work/life balance, brain drain from the sector, 3) to gather data to document that employment conditions are worsening both in terms of securing permanent contracts and what it requires to achieve them. Gathering data could be a powerful tool when addressing the unions, management and to debunk the notion among many permanent senior staff that employment in academia has always been difficult and that the situation now is no different.

- A future initiative for the working group (and friends) would be to gather data to document that things have gotten worse and possibly conduct a survey among TERs. (Temporarily Employed Researchers)

- TERs should seek inclusion in structures of representation at universities (staff rep., boards, committees)

It was discussed that the initiatives should be at local level as well as national and even international. There is a need to feel that engaging makes a difference, and by becoming a national movement within an international movement the potential impact will be greater.

- There should be an annual national meeting and TERs should be encouraged to set up groups at their departments or faculties. But where should the groups be advertised?

- We should link up with the British movement, the Academic Precariat, and with similar activities in other countries so that we start building a (virtual) international movement that shares experiences from campaigns (and potentially coordinates new initiatives).

- The initiative by Mauro Roncarelli and others of writing article acknowledgements that specifically comment on the precarious conditions under which one's research is conducted was also highlighted as a bold initiative to bring visibility to TER precarity, and as an action that individuals anywhere can make.

LAB REPORT: TELLING OUR STORIES: BUILDING AN ARCHIVE OF TER EXPERIENCES

Sarah R. Davies, University of Copenhagen
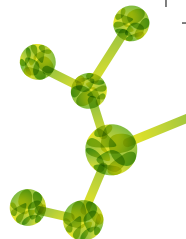
A key challenge for those in insecure and temporary academic employment is a sense of isolation. Often, the impression is that we are the only ones struggling or without a secure career trajectory: it can be unclear what is the norm, and what we should expect from working in the university. Similarly, public and media debate about academia rarely recognises the extent to which precarity has come to dominate the post-doctoral experience.

This lab sought to address these challenges by discussing how TER stories can be made public. A series of structured activities allowed us to share our own histories and experiences; identify key (shared) challenges and highlights; and suggest possible ways these could be illustrated and put into the public domain.

Brainstorming challenges and highlights resulted in three key clusters of themes:

A **lack of support,** for instance:
• A pressure to publish or gain funds, without institutional support

• No career support

• A lack of institutional responsibility for TERs

• Never knowing (or being told) whether you have done enough

• Not feeling part of the local academic community.

A **lack of transparency,** for instance:
• Differences in how TERs are treated between institutions and departments

• Lack of openness in acknowledging that there are not enough academic jobs

• Lack of transparency in recruitment procedures

• Institutions gaming the system – for instance through using multiple job titles for TERs.

The **inability to settle,** for instance:
• Feeling like you can't move forward

• Getting jobs at the last minute and therefore living with constant uncertainty

• The inability to settle down either financially or geographically

• Not having a clear career path.

We then worked in groups to try and imagine ways that these issues could be made public (for instance through sharing a case study story, collectively writing an 'ideal type' text, recording someone speaking about their experiences,
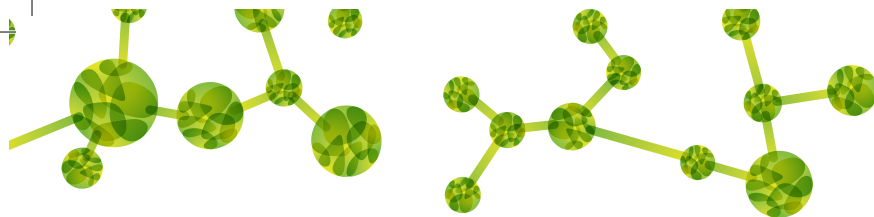
or using pictures and images). We came up with a number of ideas:

- Finding some way of describing the 'shadow work' of academia – the time spent applying for jobs, writing proposals, or doing other forms of unpaid labour.

- A video of 'musical chairs' as an illustration of TER employment dynamics, where TERs dance around from position to position while the number of those positions gradually decreases.

- An ideal type story that demonstrates the realities of TER life – for instance, living and working in different cities; feeling you can't commit properly to your family; not feeling well integrated in your department.

- Writing brief, individual responses to key words such as 'uncertainty', 'resilience', or 'excellence'.

Any of these could be taken forward in productive ways to further raise the profile of TER experiences in the academy today.

In closing, here is one example of written responses, from three participants, to the word **'uncertainty'**.

I find it hard not to be able to secure my family while at the same time thinking I have chosen this myself.
Uncertainty is a tension in my belly. I know that things will probably be fine, and that I will once again (probably) get more funding in the nick of time. But I am also always amazed at the physical effects that living without knowing my long-term plans has on me.

Walking a tightrope. Wandering down an unknown path with a blindfold on. Not knowing what's coming next. Never being able to plan long-term. How can we make an impact with our work if we are starting from a position of weakness – so often being uncertain of our working conditions and our future? Our ontological insecurity/uncertainty affects our ability to produce good work.

LAB REPORT: TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC SPACE?

Martin Ledstrup, University of Southern Denmark

This lab invited participants to imagine how precarious researchers can build an alternative space for Danish higher education. Researchers across Europe are currently experimenting with new ways of re-inscribing democratic participation and academic freedom into higher education.[21] UK-based initiatives like 'The Really Open University', the 'Ragged Universities' and 'The IF Project' are examples of 'free universities', involving researchers who teach outside traditional academia. At the cooperative Mondragon in Northern Spain, each faculty is flatly governed and nested in a wider university cooperative, with employees acting as partners who invest some of their income in the university, in effect giving each employee a voice in budgetary decision-making. In an attempt to facilitate a federation of universities that challenge top down rule, the Social Science Centre at Lincoln University too is currently designing a cooperative model for pedagogy, business, and constitutional rules. Taken together, all these initiatives partake in an idiom of collaboration, creativity, freedom and enthusiasm that contrasts with contemporary university life.

The lab session was structured in two parts. First, participants should reflect about what they associate with the contemporary university institution. Second, then, they should try – with creativity and imagination – to construct a thought experiment about an alternative academic space. Overall, most participants seemed to agree that an alternative university would be internally more egalitarian, externally freer, and academically more creative. Second, many found it important to make sure that the alternative is something more than an updated version of already existent opportunities, such as Folkeuniversitetet ('Peoples University'), a very affordable and popular avenue for continuing education within the established Danish university. Third, while the Mondragon University seems appealing in the way it is governed, one Spanish researcher remarked that it is also a private university that is utterly dependent on cooperate priorities. This raised an important question: to which extent does an 'alternative' academic space equal a 'privatized' academic space? Overall, it was perhaps both a bit disappointing and a highly important finding that the alternative is difficult to think about. One participant remarked that while he found the whole exercise a bit too unrealistic, he also importantly started to reflect about this very intuition. He found it troubling, indeed, that the established university institution seems so automatized into the way we imagine higher education.

AFTERWORD

Camilla Gregersen, Chairperson Dansk Magisterforening
- the Danish Association of Masters and PhDs
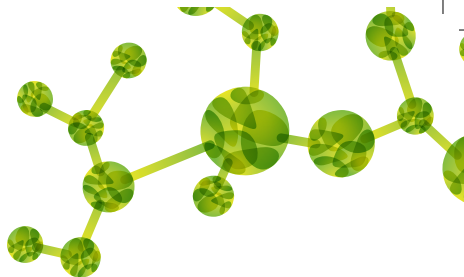
In recent years, working conditions in Denmark have become less secure within those sectors that have seen fiscal cuts and unstable economic conditions. As highlighted by researchers from the UK, Portugal, Italy and Denmark in this important report, the challenges of precarious working conditions are particularly great within the higher education and research sector. This is also the case in Denmark, even though we're still better off than many European countries. In particular, the increase of temporary employees changes our understanding of the university as a workplace and institution.

As a union, we know that a large proportion of fixed-term employment is involuntary and that the contracts make it difficult to plan research, career and one's private life, including housing and family, due to the risk of losing the job and income. Temporary employees often have weaker negotiating positions and will be less likely to use their academic freedom and freedom of speech, as mentioned by Marie Kolling, University of Southern Denmark. Moreover, these fixed-term contracts often cause a loss of knowledge on the societal level, when researchers are forced to move on, as the establishment of research groups and broader research environments takes a longer time.

These conditions are unacceptable. The purpose of DM is to ensure proper working conditions for all our members and we base our work on the values of knowledge, solidarity, cooperation and engagement. So, how will DM improve the situation regarding precarious working conditions?

We apply a multi-level strategy to combat precarious working conditions at universities. At the structural and collective level, DM focuses on legislation and collective agreements. DM continuously pushes to secure stable funding for higher education and research, since this is the root cause of precarious working conditions. Thus, DM has lobbied heavily on this and, fortunately, has had an important influence on the new grant system of Danish higher education. To be clear, we still have a very long way to go. Furthermore, at the time of writing in 2018, DM is running a public campaign against the annual 2% cuts, the so-called 're-prioritization contribution' ('forage harvester' mentioned by Dan Hirslund in this report), which makes it much harder to employ researchers on permanent contracts. We're getting broad-based support from students, education leaders and industry.

In 2018, Denmark came close to a large labor conflict with employers in the public sector. By standing together and mobilizing our members in the workplace,

we managed to secure a new collective agreement covering our members in the public sector. In connection with these negotiations, DM demanded better protection of 'atypical' employees at the university. Among other things, DM has negotiated for an improvement in pension provisions for PhD fellows and improved maternity leave for postdocs. I feel proud to say that DM successfully won these rights for our members. DM also demanded collective agreement rights for teaching fellows ('external lecturers') within higher education. We managed to get an agreement to include this big group of hourly-paid staff under a collective agreement during the next three years. This is a major breakthrough, since DM has been working on it for decades, even though it's only the beginning of the work to get improvements for the teaching fellows. DM will continue to work on improvement for temporarily employed researchers.

On the individual level, DM ensures compliance with collective agreements and labor market legislation and makes sure that members receive good advice for their specific situation. Finally, DM is investing in organizing, since we are aware that we need to leverage our influence and generate collective power through members and local grassroots. In this way, we can get real changes done locally and nationally. Thus, we are happy to support the TER Forum behind this report and the PhD students' umbrella organization in Denmark, PAND. Powered by our members, we will continue to improve conditions for them.
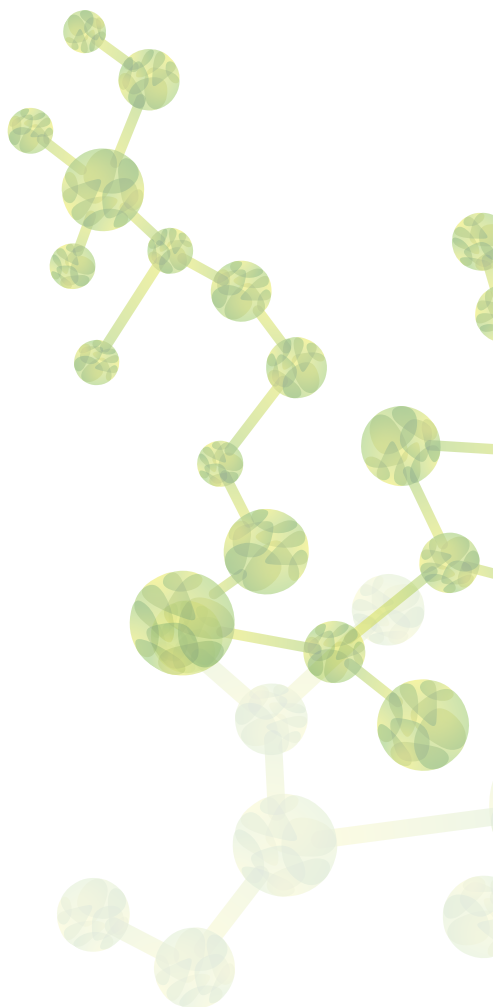
NOTES

[1] Aggregating these figures is accompanied by some measure of uncertainty because of fluctuation over time in employment categories, and the many different categories of institutions where researchers are employed. The stated figures are from statistikbanken.dk and its figures for what they term 'Research and Development Staff in public sectors' (FoU-personale i den offentlige sektor). [2] While different universities and disciplines and indeed departments experience these challenges in varying ways, the general sense of a crisis throughout academia was strong enough for one of the most prestigious Danish private research funds to release a report termed 'The Postdoc Challenge' in 2015, where they documented a 90% increase in postdocs since 2006. https://dg.dk/filer/Publikationer/The-Post-doc-Challenge.pdf. In spring 2018, The Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy commissioned a report, which showed that the incubation period from finishing a PhD degree to securing stable employment had prolonged significantly in the past 10 years – with an average of around 6 years – and that researchers were leaving academia in search of other employment possibilities as a result. https://ufm.dk/forskning-og-innovation/rad-og-udvalg/danmarks-for-sknings-og-innovationspolitiske-rad/aktuelt/dfir-briefs/filer/dfir-brief-13-det-er-ikke-kont-docx.pdf. [3] See, for instance, the revealing anonymous story of an adjunct on a teaching-only contract who confessed to have to dumpster dive for food in supermarket containers to make up for his meagre university salary in 2016 ('Eliten på nedereste etage'. Forskerforum nr. 305-306: 26-27). This is another side of Danish welfare policy, which is rarely publicised from a country whose current major 'soft power' export item is the idea of 'hygge' (Jeppe Linnet, 'Kan hygge rebrande Danmark?' Kommunikationsforum.dk, 1st Dec 2016). [4] The literature support for these multiplier effects of precarity are overwhelming, starting from Guy Standing's important 2011 book 'The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class' (Bloomsbury Academic), but receiving additional support from long-term observations of precarious livelihoods in contexts of endemic poverty (c.g. Jan Breman 'Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy', 1996) and more recent explorations of life in academia (Vita 'Academic Precarity as Hierarchical Dependence in the Max Plank Society.' HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 6, no. 1 (2016): 95–119.). 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