

## Reviving Debate In Economics: Motivations and Methods of the International Student Movement

Yuan Yang, Co-founder, Rethinking Economics  
yuan@rethinkeconomics.org  
London, UK

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*"It is a grave situation when a citizen resigns their citizenship or lacks the means to participate. That citizen sinks further into apathy, anonymity, and depersonalisation. The result is that she comes to depend on public authority, and a state of civic sclerosis sets in."*

*"No politician can sit on a hot issue if you make it hot enough."*

- Saul Alinsky, 1971

*"He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion... Nor is it enough that he should hear the opinions of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them...he must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form."*

*"Both teachers and learners go to sleep at their post as soon as there is no enemy in the field."*

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 1859

In the past three years, students around the world have turned the heat of scrutiny onto our economics departments. Our call is strikingly uniform across our diverse cultures and languages: we want critical debate back in the economics curriculum. The contents of our call for pluralism are laid out in this INET conference's PEPS-Économie paper, as well as in our online international petition ([www.isipe.net](http://www.isipe.net)) and vision statement ([www.rethinkeconomics.org](http://www.rethinkeconomics.org)). Our call is for educators to teach a diversity of schools of thought, an awareness of history and current events, and a reflective methodology. I will not go further into the detail of that call, as it is laid out elsewhere.

If academic economics continues as usual, then critically minded young people who care about studying the actual economy will go into departments of political economy, political science, history, philosophy, sociology, development studies, geography, public policy, or anthropology. If young economists defect from academic economics, this deprives them of recognition as economists, and also deprives the economics profession of the most creative and independently-minded thinkers.

We will lose a generation of talent to the Prisoners' Dilemma that universities, higher education funding frameworks, and journal ranking boards have created for themselves. Instead, universities and officials should opt for cooperation and mutual dialogue with the growing international student movement.

In this paper, I shall firstly explain some motivations driving the international student movement, showcase the positive results of the movement, and outline the processes that might lead to curriculum change.

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## Why pluralism is good for students

Consider two basic approaches to education: paternalistic and liberal. “Paternalistic” means “in the form of a father- or parent-figure”. Pluralist education is liberal, not paternalist. Paternalistic education treats the student, who is seen as child-like, in a direct hierarchical relationship with the teacher, who is the adult. The teacher holds all the wisdom, and pours this wisdom into the skulls of the students. All the student has to do is open up their skull to the teacher’s influence. The teacher must be very careful to pour the correct material into the students’ skulls, rather than tainting the student with bad knowledge. A student is a container that can only take so much material, and only handle one source of pouring at a time. Thus, a prominent economics professor told me in my first year at Oxford that “it’s great to be interested in the philosophy of social science, but you should save that until you’ve finished studying your economics degree, because otherwise you’ll get confused about the economics.”

Paternalistic education might be appropriate for some ages and some topics, but it is not appropriate for university economics education. Economists teach highly political and scientifically contentious theories to adult students. Therefore, the majority of a student’s time should be spent in the liberal mode of education. “Liberal” means “to do with freedom”, and here I draw explicitly on John Stuart Mill’s conception of human nature embodied in Mill’s classical liberalism:

“Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.” (Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 3, 1859)

Liberal pedagogy treats the teacher as a guide, not (solely) as a depository of knowledge. The teacher comes to class holding the best questions, and the most appropriate ways of asking these questions. The student comes to class holding many questions, many of which will be internally inconsistent or vague in their wording and in their import; this

is to be expected of someone grasping some body of theories for the first time. The teacher, through questioning and constructive criticism, helps the student refine her own understanding and improve her questioning. The teacher helps a student sharpen a tool that the student possesses innately, but does not know how to use.

From a psychological point of view, encouraging students to engage each other and the teacher in debate can cause students to learn actively; this depends on the students having the voice, confidence, articulation and grasp of the subject needed to debate. From a societal point of view, encouraging participation in economic debate equips students to be citizens in a participative democracy where there is always a plurality of choices to be made over one's own economic choices or indeed the world economy.

### Why pluralism is good for research

From an academic point of view, encouraging students to collide schools of thought together trains critical students to be prepared for fruitful and creative research. Our current economic paradigm is in crisis; take, for example, the “macroeconomics wars” between “saltwater” and “freshwater” economists (roughly speaking, New Keynesian and Real Business Cycle economists). Nobel prize-winners are accusing each other of making “sophomore mistakes”. (See Paul Krugman and Brad DeLong: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/06/magazine/06Economic-t.html?pagewanted=all> and <http://delong.typepad.com/sdj/2009/09/a-magnificent-seven.html>)

The whole economic paradigm is in crisis, including both microeconomics and macroeconomics; and this is because it has not done the job of satisfactory social science, that is, to explain society. This crisis has been fermented by the not only the Global Financial Crisis, but also crises of inequality and the environment. Both philosophically and empirically speaking, the roots of microeconomics are highly suspect, for their lack of corroboration to evidence as well as the lack of questioning and understanding of their ethical foundations. It has never been explained to students (or to the academic establishment) if, or why, neoclassical economics has explanatory power. Can false assumptions explain phenomena in a satisfying way? Why do some microeconomic theories seem to explain (e.g. the Hotelling model of spatial competition) in some situations, but not in others? Why do some theories lack little evidence at all (Cournot/Bertrand oligopoly)? We are not, in Kuhnian terms, in a period of “normal science”.

In this state of intellectual crisis, we need to actively explore different paradigms. This process of internal debate will enrich economics in the long run.

Thomas Kuhn, the philosopher of science, noted that in the great scientific revolutions of physics and chemistry, choice of theory is always underdetermined by evidence, and no deterministic algorithm for theory choice is possible before the choice is made, and the new scientific paradigm is developed (Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 1962).

Kuhn argues that even if a deterministic algorithm for theory choice were possible, “a behaviour mechanism fundamental to scientific advance would cease to function. What the tradition sees as eliminable imperfections in its rules of choice I take to be in part *responses to the essential nature of science.*” (Kuhn, *Objectivity, Value Judgement, and Theory Choice*, from *The Essential Tension*, 1977) That essential nature is one of creativity in the face of uncertainty, in which risks must be taken with theory-adoption or rejection.

It could well be that a research scientist jumps onto the bandwagon of a newly fledged, but ultimately fruitless paradigm. But immature paradigms would never develop beyond that unless there were scientists willing to devote research effort to fully articulating, developing the consequences of, gathering data for, and arguing on behalf of them. Kuhn mentions as an aside that most crucial experiments – experiments to show how one theory succeeds at prediction in a certain area when another fails to – are developed after a paradigm acquires a devoted base, rather than as a piece of evidence to lure those scientists there in the first place. Given the uncertainty implicit in taking on theories, it seems to be the best thing for the development of science as a whole for different factions to choose different paradigms during times of paradigm crisis, so that there can be real debate between the factions. If there were a deterministic theory-choice algorithm, then this would not be possible, and all scientists would jump ship at the same time, all taking on the same risky project. Since nobody can know at the beginning of a paradigm crisis which paradigm will eventually emerge, and there is no algorithm that could tell us so, then the most rational thing to do would be for the scientific community to diversify their risks.

We can often learn greater things by bringing a forgotten thinker of the past, such as Minsky, to bear on current events, as opposed to trying to dig an already deep hole deeper (developing the world's millionth Real Business Cycle model). Here, the economics profession would do well to consider the phenomenon of diminishing marginal returns.

## Why pluralism is good for democracy

Rethinking Economics seeks not only to improve the learning experience for students, or the quality of academic research, but also to challenge the way economic power is wielded in society and the nature of public debate. In the UK and around the world, the “state of civic sclerosis” that Alinsky describes is setting in. This can be seen on several levels:

1. Lack of youth engagement with the apparatus of state politics
2. Lack of understanding of economic terminology
3. Lack of critical debate surrounding economic policy
4. Lack of self-ownership of economic debate, and deference to experts

The first problem, lack of youth engagement with state politics, is apparent to all. The UK House of Commons Select Committee on Political and Constitutional Reform writes that:

“The evidence is unambiguous that young people are less likely to be registered to vote and also less likely to participate at elections than older people. It is estimated that only 44% of people aged 18-24 voted in the 2010 general election, compared with 75% of people aged over 55. The Electoral Commission's report on the 2011 Electoral Register also notes that young people are much less likely to be registered to vote, stating: “The lowest percentage of completeness is recorded by the 17-18 and 19-24 age groups (55% and 56% complete respectively).” (from <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmpolcon/232/23207.htm>)

Although many reasons exist for the lack of youth participation, one predominant view is that voting is meaningless, as all political parties have converged on one view of



economic policy. Monotheoreticism within the academy is reflected in a lack of diverse policy offerings outside the academy.

**The second problem, lack of understanding of economic terminology,** is crucial. In a neoliberal society, elections are won or lost by parties who claim they have the economy in good hands. In a technocratic democracy, the ability to persuade voters to vote for a given party depends on the ability to amass discursive power; that is, the ability to set the agenda for discussion, to set certain words as the focus for debate, and to supply a certain frame.

A frame, in the sense used by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, and the NGO Common Cause (valuesandframes.org), supplies not only descriptive content but also normative or value-based content. All communication contains a frame. Thus when politicians say “GDP has risen under our government”, they implicitly convey not only the descriptive statement that some economic metric, called “GDP”, has increased; they also convey the implication of causality, that *we* caused GDP to go up; and finally, they convey the value-judgment that GDP is an important factor to pay attention to, or perhaps *the* most important thing, since otherwise why mention something irrelevant in a political speech?

Yet the majority of citizens in a mature democracy are unable to contest and understand the array of economic terms used in everyday debate. The Post-Crash Economics Society at Manchester commissioned a YouGov national poll of a representative sample of 1,500 adults in March 2015. They found that 61% of respondents were unable to choose the correct definition of GDP from a selection of 4 choices:

**Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of total value of all.....**  
*[This question was answered by 1493 respondents]*

Final goods and services produced in an economy over a period of time	39
Capital goods produced within an economy over a period of time	22
Retail goods produced within an economy over a period of time	7
Worker income produced within an economy over a period of time	6
Don't know	25

25% outrightly said they did not know, and the remaining 36% chose options that actually carry dangerous import if the respondent misinterprets economic statements. For example, worker income in many developed economies is not rising as quickly as GDP, particularly if “worker” is defined in the layperson’s sense of a blue-collar or white-collar worker.

Economics is for everyone, not just for university students studying economics. The lack of understanding of the real economy is apparent outside as well as inside our classrooms. Therefore the international student movement has taken on the task of creating more accessible methods of accessing economics education.

**The third problem, lack of critical debate surrounding economic policy,** stems largely from the lack of understanding of economic terminology. The problem manifests itself in national debate in the UK, for instance, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, describes the national economy as analogous to a household economy. Such an analogy could be challenged, as it contains hidden assumptions; and yet we have been prone to a form of “economist capture”, as the analogies of one economic

policy-maker gain traction simply because it is generally accepted that one can only question political pronouncements, not economic ones; and that economic pronouncements are apolitical.

**The fourth and final problem, lack of self-ownership of economic debate, and deference to experts,** illustrates all the previous factors. Students and the public are taught to believe that economics is a descriptive science, like physics; you would not argue with the weather presenter on TV, so you should not argue with economists. Of course, every policy is advanced to achieve a certain end, and that end is itself ethically meaningful.

Economists are seen as “people unlike us”. In Rethinking Economics’ UK-based schools project, we go to secondary schools and universities to give participatory and challenging economics workshops. As part of these workshops, we have asked participants (16-25 year olds) to draw what they think an economist does. The resulting portraits are revealing: economists are male, bespectacled, wear business suits and top hats, and love money.



Why is it so important that economists, as well as economics, are demystified? Because being labelled as an expert is a source of political power. Economists are taken seriously in public debate, on an unequal footing compared to other social scientists. Economists have fetishised formalism, but policymaking organisations fetishise economists. As one undergraduate put it, “I want to do some good in the world, but in order to do so I have to sign up for 5 more years of constrained optimisation problems”. It is likely that economics PhDs, masters’ programmes and undergraduates do not train economists for wielding the often unchecked power that they do wield.

These four problems: lack of engagement, understanding, debate and self-ownership together lead to a lack of critical contestation of economic policy, and as a result, a lack of participative democracy.

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## Successes of the international student movement

Below I shall list a small sample of reports of curriculum changes that have happened during the course of the last year. They are notable for the multiple ways in which change has occurred. One story is of student-led curriculum change resulting from popular student pressure (Boğaziçi University); the second is of departmental-led curriculum change resulting from the wider student movement (University of Greenwich); and the third is of an economics department coming to the discussion table after students conducted an alumni survey of graduates (University of Cambridge).

### 1. A new pluralist course at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey

*By Anil Askin and Serkant Adiguzel at the Boğaziçi Political Economy Society (BPES), a member group of Rethinking Economics (www.ekop.org)*

In April 2013, BPES wrote a petition to be shared with economics students (<http://ekop.org/critique-of-curriculum-in-economics/>). Since BPES did not have any chance to spread the news through internal email, they figured out another way: social media. Each class of economics students has a separate group on Facebook. In May 2013, BPES started joining those groups and shared the petition. This had two effects. Posting the petition created an opportunity to discuss some points with students at different phases in their study of economics. In other words, BPES had this great chance to witness various demands, concerns and criticisms, which indeed let BPES make concrete points afterwards. Second, BPES found social media an effective way to make contact with fellow students: social media was the right place to announce when and where BPES were going to meet on campus. BPES learned a lot from this form of campaigning, from those who did not intentionally and explicitly formulate their ideas around “pluralism”, “heterodoxy” or any well-defined concept in opposition to the mainstream economics. Discussing these ideas revealed a common and huge discontent with regard to economics teaching in general.

At the end of May 2013, BPES were ready to hand in hard copies of documents to the department. BPES also sent documents via email to all professors individually, right before the departmental meeting in June, which was closed to students. Then the process had begun. For one year, the department had tried to develop a different curriculum: even mainstream economists at Boğaziçi University were not happy with the way things were going. Although it was hard to say that students’ demands and the department’s projection were completely parallel to each other, the discontent was common.

The most important change towards pluralism in the undergraduate curriculum came with the new compulsory course called “Evolution of Economics and Economics”, which indeed was proposed in the petition: all the second year students now must take this course. Although the syllabus of the course is not prepared yet, BPES can say that students will be aware that what they learn is not the only way and there are other schools of thoughts in economics.

The new curriculum offers more selective courses ranging from feminist or institutional economics to Marxian economics. There were some restrictive electives before, mainly aiming to teach neoclassical theory at an advanced level such as advanced macroeconomics or advanced microeconomics. Students had to take these “restrictive elective” courses and they had no chance to take another course in lieu of these courses. Now, these courses are part of the elective course pool showing that the hierarchy between courses such as “gender and the economy” - which has been an elective course - and, say, advanced macroeconomics - which was a restrictive elective - has now vanished. The new pool consists of many courses from which students are free to choose. Hence, students have the chance to shape their interests and to be exposed to different schools.

(Full article: <http://rethinkingeconomics.blogspot.co.uk/2014/11/curriculum-reform-at-bogazici.html>)

## **2. An overhaul of the economics undergraduate curriculum at Greenwich University, London, UK**

*Written by Sara Gorgoni, University of Greenwich, Department of International Business and Economics, Programme Leader*

In redesigning our economics programmes we – the economics programmes team - have decided to:

- Address socially relevant economic questions in all core economic courses by adopting a historical and pluralistic perspective right from the start and throughout the programme.
- Add two new compulsory courses -Economic History in the first year and History of Economic Thought in the second year, and an optional course Political Economy of International Development and Finance in the third year.
- Integrate the concept of environmental and social sustainability -- in the teaching of economics in all courses, as well as provide specific courses such as Environmental Economics and Environmental Regulation and Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Eliminate from the curriculum those topics that tend to be taught by default just because they appear on standard economics textbooks rather than because they are recognised as truly useful in understanding how economies really work.

In particular, the rationale for the introduction of Economic History and History of Economic Thought courses is that students should be made aware of what has happened in the sphere of economics, more or less in the order that it happened. This will help them place the economic ideas and theories they come across in all courses into an historical context, to form their own opinion by reading the original texts, e.g. by Smith, Ricardo, Marx, Schumpeter, and Keynes, and hopefully develop an understanding of economics as the result of a dynamic social process including controversy, conflict, and social change.

However, we do not isolate the development of a pluralistic perspective to only a few courses, but rather integrate it in all our courses by approaching real world problems from the perspective of different theories, both old and contemporary, comparing, contrasting, or at times synthesising them. This should help the students to develop a critical perspective towards current economic theories and evolving economic events, and develop an understanding about the limitations of theories and models (for

example, what happens out of equilibrium), and think more widely about the historical, institutional and political context of economic behaviour and policies. The work of a diverse body of research active lecturers informs our teaching.

Our understanding of pluralism does not only include different schools of thought and disciplines, but also methodologies. Our new programmes encourage going beyond Quantitative Methods. We encourage the use of case studies, qualitative research methods, as well as a multitude of different quantitative methods including but not limited to econometrics. E.g. we pride ourselves for having the biggest research centre in Social Network Analysis (SNA) in Europe, and I, among others, use the approach and methodology of SNA in teaching economics.

The ability to think critically also requires the ability to analyse empirical evidence, and this is why we have restructured our Quantitative Methods courses to strengthen students' ability to identify, access and use relevant data sources to analyse current economic problems and form an independent opinion in the public debate, and to be critical about the way data is supplied and used. Finally, we care about developing the ability of our students to communicate economic ideas clearly and in a non-technical fashion to a wide variety of audiences, because economics should not be a cryptic language accessible only to an elite group of economists, but rather belong to the society.

All in all we have tried to contribute towards a better teaching, learning and use of economics, and we hope to see more of this in the future, around the country and the world.

(Full article: <http://rethinkingeconomics.blogspot.co.uk/2014/12/university-of-greenwich-revises-its.html>)

### **3. Review of the economics curriculum at University of Cambridge, UK**

The Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism, a member group of Rethinking Economics, is engaging with the faculty in their review of the economics undergraduate syllabus; the review is in part due to the recent and ongoing debate in academic circles and the media about reforming the teaching of economics, sparked by the activities of students. In particular, the Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism presented the department with an survey of current and recent economics students. The key findings from the survey are:

“Students embark on economics degrees inspired and eager to understand the world better (62% studied economics to make the world a better place; 71% in order to increase their understanding of current affairs). But, they are ultimately disappointed with their courses (85% wanted to learn more about economic reality; 81% wanted to learn more about theories of economic and financial crisis; 74% wanted to learn more about the political and social impacts of economics; 60% felt their verbal communication skills had not improved).

As well as a greater focus on the real world, and skills for careers, students felt things would be improved by having more interdisciplinarity (over 62% wanted to have the opportunity to take an elective in the politics department).”

(<http://www.cambridgepluralism.org/curriculum-reform.html>)

## Academic reforms necessary for pluralism

We need to rethink the academy as a whole, not simply the curriculum. We cannot have long-lasting change without integrated system change.

### 1. Resources for teaching, as well as for research

Universities in the UK are funded by the government for their research ranking, rather than for their teaching. The ratio of teachers to students in universities has rocketed in the past 30 years, from 9 students per teacher in the 1970s, to over 20 students per teacher in the 2000s (Association of University Teachers, October 2005). The tutorial system of Oxford and Cambridge, where students are given two hours' one-on-one or two-on-one contact time each week to discuss a topic, is not feasible given these resource constraints. However, more imaginative participatory discussion formats are possible. One such example is the "proctoring" system at Leeds University Department of Philosophy, in which second-year students are paired with first-year students. The senior student is given training in asking the junior student questions that lead the junior student through the topic of study in advance of a philosophy seminar. This builds confidence and argumentation skills. More creative methods of participative learning could be developed, if educators were incentivised to do so.

Post-Crash Economics Society Manchester has written extensively on the state of economics education, particularly on the nature of student assessment at the University of Manchester. Manchester introduced multiple choice assessment because of a change of departmental rules, meaning that every course convenor or examiner had to mark their own papers, replacing the previous system of sharing the burden among all departmental staff.

This change was supposedly done in order to encourage efficiency so that people would mark quickly and then focus on research. However, those convening large core courses were tasked with marking over 600 scripts. Lecturers believed their only option was to introduce multiple choice examinations.

In the long run, this makes teaching, learning and assessment highly inefficient, as students lose the ability to reason critically, to argue verbally, and start seeing the study of the economy as a series of black-and-white truths and falsehoods.

(Full report available at <http://www.post-crasheconomics.com/economics-education-and-unlearning/>)

### 2. Aligning incentives to be pluralistic throughout the academic career ladder

There is a diagnosis of economics education that has been voiced by some professors: that the problem lies solely with undergraduate economics degrees; postgraduate degrees are much better, and the research profession as a whole is healthy and thriving.

That is not a consistent picture. Students are incentivised to take particular courses depending on their marketability; if a student is not committed to becoming an academic economist, they will know that the postgraduate opportunities depend on taking courses in Mathematical Methods (i.e. constrained optimisation problems and



linear algebra), rather than History of Economic Thought, even if such a course is available at all.

Research economics cannot continue as business as usual. It is important to align incentives for original, pluralistic, and non-neoclassically-oriented research all along the academic progression ladder.

The alternative to creating a consistently pluralist academic career ladder is stark. The alternative is for young people who want to study the economy to exit the academic career ladder.

## **What next for the student movement? Student-led processes towards curriculum change**

*“Change comes from power, and power comes from organisation.” – Saul Alinsky*

The strategy of Rethinking Economics so far has been to build a diverse and inclusive movement that can stretch beyond and between the ivory towers of separate universities.

Students are natural networkers. Through building a network of connected organisers situated in local groups who are able to mobilise at the national and international level, we start to build power in the student movement. Organising something across the Rethinking Economics network can be as simple as organising a lecture on economic history outside of class hours, as well-researched as organising a national-level survey (such as the Post-Crash Economics Society YouGov poll), as ambitious as organising a campaign to change the national regulations concerning economics education (the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement Campaign), or as far-reaching as writing an international open letter stating the demands of 60 student groups across 40 countries (the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics letter, launched May 2014).

Rethinking Economics is organised as a hub-and-spoke network, inspired by previous student movements who have found this method the most consensual and flexible mode of organisation for those detached by time and distance from one another. Our “hub” is made up of “spokespeople” from local groups that are affiliated to the Rethinking Economics network, plus some free-floating organisers that might not yet have started a local group, but want to contribute to the international network. We make decisions as a network. Our staff, who are mostly working part-time while studying economics, are funded by multiple sources.

Defining our internal culture is important: we have thrived on horizontality (non-hierarchy), consensuality, inclusivity, and creative incubation of each others’ projects. Defining our demands requires more extensive work, and several Rethinking Economics organisers are currently working with Robert Skidelsky’s Curriculum Committee to develop a new undergraduate syllabus that encompasses Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, History and Philosophy of Economics, and Unsettled Questions in Economics.

We have been given a great deal of voice by the UK-national and international press, which kicked off in October 2013 with The Guardian’s coverage of the Post-Crash Economics Society at Manchester’s student petition for a course on financial crises, and was reinvigorated in May 2014 with extensive international coverage of the ISIFE.net open letter by Claire Jones at the Financial Times, Die Zeit, and many other sources.

Ingrid Reiser's documentary of the student movement, OIKONOMOS, touched a chord with many economics students, who have mentioned it to me since. Paul Krugman's New York Times column, "How To Get It Wrong", sparked debate in the US, and was inspired by Krugman's panel debate at the Rethinking Economics New York conference in September 2014. Aditya Chakraborty and Eve Streeeter's BBC Radio 4 documentary, "Teaching Economics After the Crash" continued the debate in the UK. The Economist followed up with an article on "Keynes' New Heirs". The media have found the international student movement an exciting and invigorating topic, that keeps online commenters and readers coming back for more; we strive to continue the coverage.

Saul Alinsky stated that power comes from two sources: organised money, or organised people. With the help of very little organised money, Rethinking Economics strives to organise people.