

Research document: Also class take-over!



A tale of a young researcher

Using also class as a method to research topics
they like

Content

Intro

Chapter 1 “social center”

- *starting the anarchist space*
- *also class social center guests*
- *continuation of the anarchist space*

Chapter 2 “on witchcraft”

- *witch residency plan*
- *also class witchcraft guests*
- *witch club*

How to continue?

Research question: How to use also class, an initiative of Reinaart Vanhoe to have classes coordinated by students for students, as a method to get knowledge on topics that Niek la Bak, a middle-class white Dutch non-binary female presenting 23-year-old, wants to learn more about?

Niek found out by organizing these classes.

In six weeks, there were six classes organized, for which six people were invited to come and speak: Jacco Weener, Kelinda Butterfligh, Emily from Poortgebouw, Natalia Sorzano, Claudia Schouten and Zoénie Liwen Deng.

Each class some attendees (or at least one) intensively took notes, the classes were recorded on either Zoom, Jitsi or the student radio station of the 2nd year fine arts students, they were also captured by Gina Borsje who drew the attendees of the classes.

The classes were organized in a classroom within the institution of the Willem de Kooning academy because of the COVID-19 pandemic in the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy of Rotterdam, NL anno 2020.

The content of this zine will be Niek la Bak's reasons to organize classes like this and what they got out of it, not the content of the classes themselves, although it will be discussed. This is because not all speakers granted permission to share the information they gave with the

grand public. If you want the information notes plus recording can be shared with you if you ask Niek personally, for example by contacting them through their Facebook page "Niek la Bak".

The content is divided into two chapters: chapter 1 "social center" and chapter 2 "on witchcraft". This is because the main topics Niek was interested in were making a social center and witchcraft.

Names of the people that visited the six classes:
Reinaart, Gina, Julian, Lisa, friend of Lisa, Aily, guy from the US, Judith, Xzy, Phillip, Zejneb, Amer, Bas, Steph.
Thank you all so much for participating and collaborating.

Chapter 1 “social center”

Niek was seriously thinking of making a social center somewhere in Rotterdam, because they had the possibility to do this with some fellow squatters and anarchists. They and their group of squatters also squatted a space for this purpose, but this space was not really a succes, partly because of corona and partly because of the classic "what is anarchism?"- discussion. After many useless discussions of what to do or not to do with this space, which was supposed to be an anarchist space but also a community center, a space for eetcafé but only political discussions were allowed and Niek wanted it to be an art space but nobody in the group saw how art could be political enough for the anarchist space. So Niek went looking for art spaces with anarchist values, to see how other people tackled similar issues.

For this research they invited Claudia, Jacco and Kelinda to come to talk at also class.

Jacco was the first guest of the also classes. He is running the art space that is also a neighborhood space "het O'tje" in Charlois. What Niek liked about the class with him was that the class really became a conversation. Everyone there would be very involved and ask Jacco questions, except Julian because he knows he tends to be too present in a class and tries to find a balanced way of being in a class now. Niek knew already the space Jacco runs was not really the kind of space that they wanted to make, but still it was interesting to invite Jacco because the purpose of the space would be kind of the same. This space with Jacco was rented from Vestia and this had a lot of influence on how the space was used. A lot of things were not allowed and in fact the corporation said that this space should be available for the neighborhood to use as well, but without the corporation saying they should do this they probably wouldn't have done it. Which is interesting to Niek, because they wondered why the corporation would ask the artists to make sure the neighborhood gets involved? The people from this neighborhood need social workers and daycare for their kids, not artists. Niek thought: maybe the people from Vestia make a weird jump with their minds; maybe they think that because artists come to a neighborhood, the neighborhood becomes better because the current population has some kind of positive

influence on the people there? And not because the artists make a new wave of rich people come and be interested in the area and then the houses get more expensive and demolished which causes the former population to disappear? Then Niek realized that maybe they thought this too unconsciously! They wanted to make this art space also a neighborhood center as well but why? Do they think they can make this neighborhood better by art space, like this corporation thinks? Niek wondered: isn't this thought just a consequence of totally misunderstanding the concept of gentrification? Niek thought about this documentary on squatting by their friend Melle1 where he shows an art space in a squatted space. Now they know about Melle he is politically "grey" and probably doesn't see how the situation of making a gallery space of a squat can be harmful, because this may cause the exact gentrification effect you are trying to fight, or in Niek's view, supposed to fight as a squatter.

Kelinda was invited by Niek because she said she wants to make her art space a social space, help kids in the neighborhood she has her space in and she's starting to work together with some artists that are activists as well. She came and her presentation

in the class was really problematic in many ways, according to Niek, for example because she thought the COVID-19 pandemic was a fake pandemic and she allowed a sexist individual to organize a sexist dinner in her space. The format of the class was also class "conversations" but with her it was really a presentation, because she was telling her life story after the question what her art space is about, which is very interesting because it made clear that her art space was a very personal space to her. Niek thought: "hey, this also explains why she reacts so attacked when it comes to critique on her space. The vibe in the lesson was bad... but this is a risk you take when you invite people that you don't really know and are normally not working in academic spaces. Kelinda's view on homeless people was interesting: they experience the world as it really is. This doesn't guarantee an understanding of this world though..."

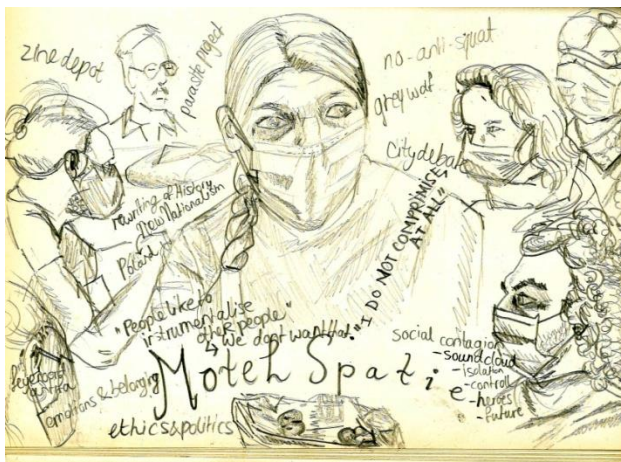
Then Claudia's talk was really inspiring because of her just-do-it mentality. Claudia's art space Motel Spatie is the most famous art space that is represented in the six lectures and also comes the closest to the kind of space Niek wants to make. Niek was very nervous before this class and got a lot of energy and

inspiration out of it, but not much practical information because the philosophy of Claudia seemed to them that everybody should do what they do in their own way. What was notable was that Claudia called Niek and Lisa out for gossiping, which she finds problematic. With the recent business with Juliaan Andeweg², gossip is seen as a valuable tool to prevent harm and as most of the visitors of also class also attended this lecture by Silva Federici recently where she explains gossiping was stigmatized as a tool to prevent women from coming together and making each other safer during the witchhunts, so the also class visitors didn't like so much that Claudia had this strong opinion against gossiping.

Meanwhile there are some things organized at the social space of Niek and their friends, for example eetcafé at Pijnackerplein every sunday. Niek made a flyer for this event. Also every saturday there are film screenings on the topic of Anarchism. Also right now Niek and four others are starting up an anarchist library section in the space. They have a printer, books and many people that want a lot of knowledge, mostly on anarchist theory and feminism.



Figuur 1 class with Jacco



Figuur 2 class with Claudia

Footnotes

¹ Melle van Rens. "Cineac Extra - 21 feb 2013: Terug naar kraken in Rotterdam" *YouTube*, uploaded by CineacTVRotterdam, 18 feb 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBCZrsBvsAE>

² Zie bijvoorbeeld dit artikel voor het verhaal: NOS.nl, cultuur en media. "Kunstenaar beticht van seksueel misbruik meerdere vrouwen" <https://nos.nl/artikel/2354595-kunstenaar-beticht-van-seksueel-misbruik-meerdere-vrouwen.html>, 31 okt 2020

³ Visible in the sudden appearance and popularity of instagram pages like @calloutdutchartinstitutes and @art.goss

Chapter 2 “on witchcraft”

Niek their research on witchcraft began with a zine^[1] on an interview by Silvia Federici’s book *Caliban and the Witch*^[2]. They wanted to organize a residency for a witch in the neighborhood of Coolhaven but this was not possible according to their teacher, Niek Verschoor.

Proposal witch residency

The witch is a woman who knows the city of Rotterdam very well. She has been on the streets for over two years, because she was bullied out of her house, the people in her neighborhood didn’t like her and they would bully her by, for example, knocking on her window for a long time. She has been a witch for a while, but because all her stuff was taken away from her (for unclear reasons) she cannot access her crystals and herbs anymore.

With this residency we can give her an opportunity to rebuild her strengths as a witch and human being. In the process where she rebuilds her strength, we may be able to establish a collaboration where we work together to work with witchcraft in the neighborhood, a neighborhood where the spirits are being tormented by the process of gentrification.

Witchcraft was abolished in the 1500s because the feudal system in Europe was collapsing and it needed to be replaced by something in order to keep the people in

power in power, this replacement was capitalism. But in order for the capitalist system to seem like a valid option, one thing was in the way. This was witchcraft. Women all over Europe were creating solidarity, feeding and healing people with witchcraft. The people of Europe needed to abolish witchcraft to remain obedient to the powerful. So the powerful created witch hunts. Also new levels of sexism were invented and put in the laws.

Because of this history of witchcraft, it is an inherently anticapitalistic practice. Gentrification is a consequence of capitalism, keeping the rich in the places with the most resources. If we put a witch in a place tortured by capitalism, she might be able to do something with this crazy place. What this exactly will be is the research question of my project, which I will use this residency for...

I didn't formulate the exact research question yet but I think it will be something like

"is it possible to, in a way, "reclaim" a neighborhood taken away by capitalism using witchcraft, which is inherently anti-capitalist?"

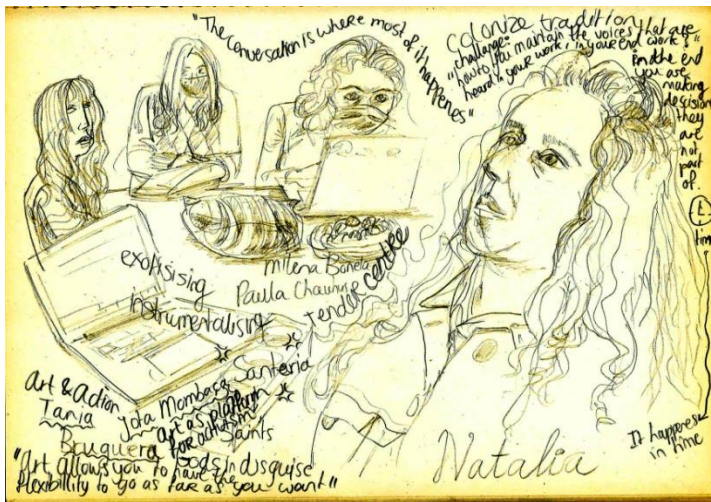
This project is also a piece of my project on how to survive in the city without any resources. This woman has a lot of valuable experience concerning this topic. I like to research the "edges of society" which connects to this subject as well.

Niek dropped out of the public and private minor and went to Hacking. Meanwhile they were also reading Silvia Federici's beyond the periphery of the skin^[3], in my friend Zeynep's anarcho-feminist book club. The club also watched a lecture of the KABK course "wxtchcraft" where Silvia Federici is a guest and talks about her books. When she mentioned she didn't think it was necessarily a good idea for young people to re-enact witches or use witchcraft in their art practices Niek had to rethink their proposal for the witch residency, where they also claim witchcraft is inherently anti-capitalist.

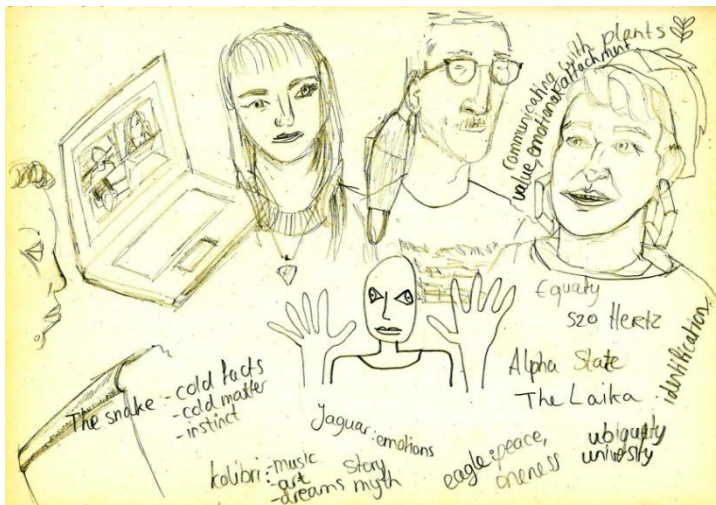
Now Niek decided to use also class as a medium to explore the topic of witchcraft further, which they first wanted to do with the witch residency. But since they are also a beginner in even thinking about this topic (as Silvia Federici's lecture confronted them with) they decided it is better for them to literally sit in the place of a student and listen to others communicating their message instead of doing the communicating of a message myself. On the topics of witchcraft Niek invited Emily (who is not into witchcraft but into spirituality in general) and Natalia (who is not a witch herself but used witchcraft in her art practice in the past, but now not anymore, which interested Niek a lot because they felt like they could see themselves doing that in the future, maybe they wanted to learn from her choices by listening to her story).

For Natalia the witch doctor was as common as the normal doctor. Unlike in the Western world, in Colombia it is just as common to have a witch checking up on you as well as a doctor. Which is crazy and super cool to Niek.

What interested Niek about Emily is that she claimed that she fought capitalism now from another level than she used to, which was the spiritual level. This was what Niek wanted to do with the witch residency. So excited about this they tried to figure out what she exactly was doing. Unfortunately for Niek, they didn't really get what they wanted from this meeting with her. She mostly claimed the activists nowadays could not possibly reach their goals because they were "on another level" than the level the world needed to change, but she did not show some ways to even reach this level the world needed to change. According to a theory Emily follows there are four spiritual levels where humans can be on, the four insights by Alberto Villoldo⁴. In this book he describes the four different perspectives of snake, jaguar, hummingbird and eagle. Activism happens on the level of the jaguar, according to Emily, while it should happen on the level of the eagle, because such big issues are addressed. But how? Niek did not get an answer, but they did get a nice conversation and lots of resources that might be able to provide the answer later.



Figur 3 class with Natalia



Figur 4 class with Emily

Meanwhile, to further research the topic of witchcraft Niek made the whatsapp group "full moon" somewhere in October. The people in the group have been planning to go and do a witch ritual but for two moons this didn't work. Now the third one worked out, four of them came together to do a small meditative ritual. Niek wrote down some of the main points they talked about after this meeting and they made a document where links can be found... The next full moon another member of the group is going to organize the getting together.

Full Moon archives

This document is an archive of useful resources mentioned in conversations within a group of people who have the common goal to perform a witch ritual under the full moon. The group is now also used for collecting information about witchcraft. This document of archives is a messy collective rough draft.

<https://b-ok.cc> has shitload of free books a lot of witch books

Moon spells: how to use the phases of the moon to get what you want is a nice book pdf for free on <https://b-ok.cc>

<https://linktr.ee/wtxchcraftkabk>

KABK witchcraft course archives

The world's largest occult library has a public online archive: <https://boingboing.net/2019/08/21/gnostic-gnowledge.html>

Lisa: "i also found this. wasnt sure whether i should share because not very wxtchy , and very white, but might be interesting
<https://museumofwitchcraftandmagic.co.uk> they have an 'online' education' tool with a shitty search engine, but once you figure it out you can find some pretty interesting things. if you select 'Richel' you can do more visual research"

https://www.metropolism.com/nl/features/39530_reflections_22_heks_kunst

<https://film-makerscoop.com/catalogue/maya-deren-witchs-cradle-the>

<https://www.ubu.com/film/deren.html>

Also Reinaart (teacher from WDKA) sent all these links

Lisa:

- <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/wat-vertellen-de-niet-mensen>
- "The elementary forms of religious life"

this is a whole book- i only read chapter 7 'origins of these beliefs' p. 207

- “Alexander Giesen Mast- Social Performance”

and i found this book, which provides a more contemporary approach to the sociology of rituals- chapter 11 'Performing the sacred: a Durkheimian

perspective on the performative turn

in the social sciences' will probably be more approachable than durkheim himself □ also FULL of fancy academic words

Conversation topics after the first full moon ritual, november 30, met Gina, Anne, Iris en Lisa. We deden 't maanritueel voor een groep tijdens volle maan uit *"Moon spells: How to use the phases of the moon to get what you want"*

Stappen naar op de maan zitten te groot

kleinere stappen zodat t bereikbaarder is

de grond voelde als de maan en de druppels (regen buiten) waren fijn

ritueel met objecten en handelingen chill

hekserij meer tastbaar, objecten zijn net zo chill als de geestelijke dingen

new materialism=filosofische stroming die zegt dat objecten ook een wil/een ziel? hebben wordt ook gezien als een soort post down to earth practice

schaaltje met stukje papier wat je verbrandt waar je een papiertje met tekst die je wil verbranden is ook leuk

cacao ritueel volgende x?

als je het zelf maakt heeft het andere waarde

the sacred and the mundane Durkheim

als je engaged in situaties die anders zijn dan je dagelijks leven, kan het iets in je losmaken. Als iedereen het gelooft krijg je een group feeling.

op een repetitieve manier lichaam schudden op muziek

netflix docu Mushi/Musho (idk how the name is written)

jezelf kunnen healen door op bepaalde plekken te slaan
:P

exposure therapie waardoor je de angsten aangaat.

Vrouwen gingen zich verzamelen in groepjes omdat ze toch niet erkend worden door de medische wereld
gingen ze zelf medicatie maken.

Footnotes

[1] *Women, witchhunts and the Reproduction of the Capitalist World; a conversation with Silvia Federici*, Ill will Editions, 2012

[2] Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the witch*. Autonomedia, 2012

[3] Federici, Silvia. *Beyond the periphery of the skin: rethinking, remaking, reclaiming the body in contemporary capitalism*. PM Press, 2020

[4] Villoldo, Alberto. *The four insights wisdom, power, and grace of the earthkeepers*. Hay House, 2006.

How to continue?

Niek was talking about how to continue the research project into the second half of their school year with a friend, this friend said maybe there is more of a post-work that can work into a sort of feedback into the subsequent events— or generally a dialogue also between this event-planning/event-happening/post-event— which is what could make it 'research'— or an externalising of complex data/or event-happenings, into 'information' which becomes 'systematic' and 'useful' (not in a rational sense, but in a sense of putting-to-use).

Right now Niek is thinking of ways to do this including this anarchist library thing. Which is kind of a place to exchange zines (knowledge) and exchanging zines like this broadens our networks which again broadens our knowledge. Using for example this zine, you are holding right now, to connect and create the next artwork of Niek indirectly.

Niek also wants to go deeper into post-working, like they did with this also-class zine, but also with their artwork “eviction play”, a zine and play they made last year. Experiences are valuable if you learn from them, they want to learn a lot about their experiences by writing about and working with them. Making zines could be the beginning of a method.