

# ANTI THESE #4

SEPTEMBER 2015

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## EDITORIAL

It has now been more than half a year that we saw the consequences of disillusion students organising themselves. The Bungehuis and Maagdenhuis occupations, done by a group of staff and students under the name of De Nieuwe Universiteit, shook awake the governing organs of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and change was demanded. With the new academic year about to begin, this fourth edition of *Antithese* offers new students a glimpse into the world of student activism. It aims to introduce key concepts with which we have fought for months now and tries to elucidate them where possible. We then aim to explore how we should set about achieving our demands and reflecting upon what kind of tactics we and other movements are using to empower ourselves.

We invite you to scour through this zine and conceptualise your own thoughts on the university, the education system, and politics in general. It also explains the relation and importance of squatting to student activism. You can find a guide to these spaces in the centre-fold map of Amsterdam's social squats and centres. In addition to this, we are presenting articles discussing the need for and meaning of democratisation in the university as well as an explanation (taken from the Québec student movement) of the right to free education.

## WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE UVA?

At the beginning of last academic year, many of us had no experience or interest in student activism. However, when the Spinhuis (former and unused anthropology and sociology faculty) was squatted in September 2014 and offered a vast array of activities it so happened that more and more students felt invited to join the struggle. Sometimes this meant just occasionally showing up to lectures or events and sometimes it meant participating in meetings to try and figure out how we could – collectively – make the university (and society) a better place. In November 2014 a similar sentiment to the dissatisfaction that caused the Spinhuis also culminated in the formation of the Humanities Rally action group which began organising demonstrations on a regular basis against the severe and absurd budget cuts to the humanities faculty. From this followed that the mentioned occupations which introduced the concept of direct action to even more people and brought us together in a radical criticism of neoliberal management. During our time in the Maagdenhuis the teachers and staff of the UvA organised themselves into ReThink UvA and together we tried to

find ways out of this neoliberal mess. We fought for direct democracy, decentralization and a full decolonization of the university, and we still are. We wanted to redistribute the power from the top to the bottom, and this is still to be done. We wanted that real-estate speculation with regards to university buildings to halt, but it hasn't. We wanted to stop the corporatisation of the university itself, yet Bungehuis is still sold to SOHO Hotel. Most of all we thought that we could be heard and listened to, but our criticisms and ideas were simply tolerated for public spectacle.

In the end, the UvA's board of directors tried to pacify us with empty gestures such as having a student representative present at board meetings, installing committees which we believe won't have any managerial power in the end, and, finally, pressuring Louise Gunning into resigning. But none of these superficial measures are enough. We will not be satisfied with empty gestures, we must enact real, structural change in order to have a truly democratic university – which means that the fight cannot remain confined to the ivory tower of the academy. Let's take it to the street.

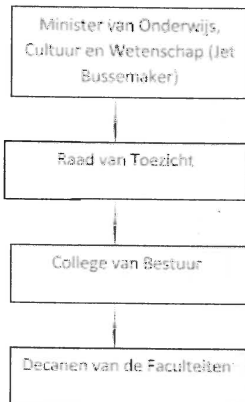
| Antithese |



## DEMOCRATISERING: EEN LOZE KREET?

Na de bezetting van het Bungehuis en de daaropvolgende bevrijding van het Maagdenhuis heeft vrijwel iedereen het over de noodzaak tot nieuwe democratisering van het hoger onderwijs. Vooraf aan de Maagdenhuisbezetting van '69 noemde de toenmalige UvA rector-magnificus Belifante democratisering nog een 'loze kreet' van zich vervelende studenten. En inderdaad, is democratie ook niet vaak de loze kreet waar iedereen voor is en waar je moeilijk tegen kan zijn? In de Tweede Kamer lijkt er nu zelfs wel een meerderheid te zijn voor nieuwe democratisering, alleen beperken vele politieke partijen zich hierbij tot het versterken van de bestaande medezeggenschap door middel van bijvoorbeeld het verhogen van bestuursbeurzen, wat nu precies iets is waar wij eerder tegen zijn dan voor. Ook de medezeggenschap zelf is nu ineens voor meer democratie, wat neer komt op het versterken van de bestaande medezeggenschap en andere onzin zoals een student-lid in het CvB plaatsen.

### HUIDIG STELSEL: BENOEMING BESTUURDERS VAN BOVEN NAAR BENEDEN



Wat ons betreft gaat het bij democratisering juist niet om een beetje meer inspraak, adviesrecht, hogere beurzen en trainingen voor een competentere studenten-raad. Het gaat juist om een verandering van de bestaande machtsstructuren, met een verschuiving van zeggenschap naar een lager niveau; richting de werkvloer, naar de studenten en staf. Met van onder-op verkozen bestuurders; van afdelingsniveau naar facultair-niveau naar centraal-niveau, krijg je decanen en rectors die ook daadwerkelijk de academische gemeenschap vertegenwoordigen in plaats van Den Haag en daarboven Brussel (en daarmee het bedrijfsleven). En wanneer dit het geval is wordt het veel moeilijker om top-down afbraak beleid naar beneden door te voeren, omdat decanen en rectoren die daadwerkelijk de academische gemeenschap vertegenwoordigen (al is het maar om hun eigen positie te verdedigen) zich dan actief zullen verzetten, terwijl ze nu het alleen maar helpen 'uitleggen' en de beleidsmaatregelen van boven verdedigen.

“het [gaat] bij democratisering juist niet om een beetje meer inspraak, maar juist om een verandering van de bestaande machtsstructuren.”

Natuurlijk zou deze democratisering nog steeds alle nadelen van representatieve democratie met zich meenemen, maar alsnog zou er een daadwerkelijke verschuiving van macht zijn met meer autonomie voor de academie als resultaat. Het buitenspel zetten van de Raad van Toezicht (bestaande uit bankiers en corporate consultants) in het benoemen van een nieuwe College van Bestuur alleen al zou een grote overwinning zijn. Deze vorm van democratisering is daarnaast op korte termijn haalbaar zijn en kan het vertrouwen genieten van de academische gemeenschap. Dus nee, democratisering is *geen* loze kreet. Laten we er samen voor zorgen dat het volgende College van Bestuur van onderop verkozen wordt.

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### WHAT DOES FREE EDUCATION MEAN?

Free education means that the full cost is contributed by the state. This policy therefore requires a major reinvestment in education from the state in question, which have often used tuition fee increases in order to reduce their participation. Not only for universities but also for educations teaching a profession (in the Netherlands: HBO and MBO educations).

**FREE EDUCATION NOW**  
**DEMO // LONDON // NOV 19**  
[freeeducationdemo.com](http://freeeducationdemo.com)

A call for protest by the student activists involved in the series of occupation last spring in London. **BE THERE!**

# ARGUMENTS FOR A UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

“Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education<sup>1</sup>.”

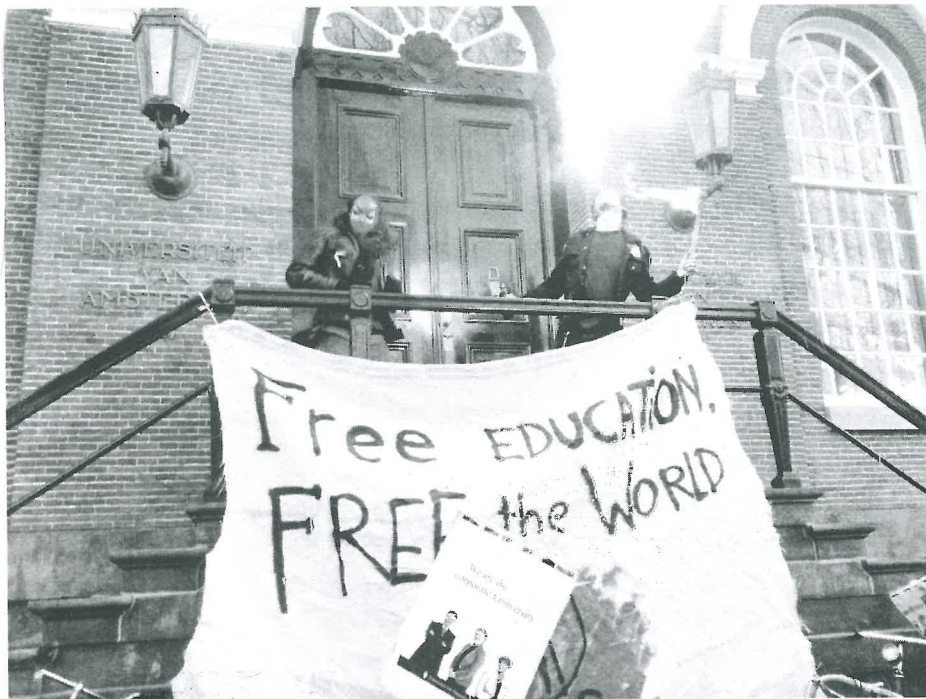
Education is the basis of a society: it allows the transmission of knowledge and culture, and it teaches critical thinking. Increasingly, this fundamental right has become a commodity that students can buy and income has become a major factor deciding the scope of studies or their continuation. Those who can afford it are spoiled for choice while others are being forced to forgo some options to enter the labour market as soon as possible. A long university education is supposed to result in a prestigious degree, yet often this degree does not guarantee a job, especially not a job that would pay off the debts that have become necessary.

## IT'S A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

Above all, free education is necessary in respect to the right to education. Everyone should have access to higher education, regardless of their social origin. Tuition fees are forcing students from less affluent families to work harder in order to finance their education. The difficulty to combine work and study tends to interfere with academic success. As a result, students coming from poorer backgrounds are often penalized academically, while the privileged ones (mainly from white middle-class background) have the opportunity to put all their energies on studying. They will then be in a better position to gain grants based on academic results and to apply for post-graduate opportunities.

Free education would therefore:

- Increase post-secondary attendance of young people from less affluent families and increasing the overall participation of young people to university;
- Increase the chances of economically disadvantaged people to succeed in post-secondary education;
- Restore the balance between people of all origins, as international students



## FIGHT THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY BY RESTORING THE UNIVERSITY'S MISSION

To us the university is meant to learn its students to be critical, to think for themselves and to question the status quo. To become 'competente rebellen' so to say, and emancipate themselves. This is necessary to make progress possible in any way, not only economically but also culturally. In the neoliberal system, this goal of the university has been (partially) lost. Now, the programs perceived as lucrative tends to receive more funds and students are encouraged to participate in those programs. Thereby reducing the popularity of fundamental research, humanities and art programs and creating another argument to reduce funding those programs which eventually leads to a stagnation in progress. We won't be able to react to cultural changes, to invent new techniques, if there are no more people who can think beyond the immediate creation of things.

In the neoliberal market of education, tuition fees constitute a disciplinary integration of young citizens into market logic. By presenting education as a personal investment and asking young people to take up debt in order to increase the value of their labor power on the market, the students are forced to do a cost-benefit calculation in the choice for their programs. For the next semester the change is already noticeable, application-numbers for studies that are deemed to have a higher economic reward after graduation are relatively higher than in previous years.

For students, this vision of education creates a significant debt problem. Entering the labor market indebted in the tens of thousands of euros is an important incentive to work. Instead of prioritizing an interesting job or working fewer hours, young graduates are required to maximize their income, in order to pay off their student debt. Free education is a guarantee against the implementation of this neoliberal model of the knowledge economy. Governments need to realise that precisely because of education's status as a fundamental right it is their duty to provide its citizens with uniform access to it. But just as much do we - the citizens, the students - need to realize that we can take this right, we can enforce our governments and universities to listen to us and to step out of our way towards a better education system.

*Adapted from ASSE's website :  
[www.tuitionfree.ca](http://www.tuitionfree.ca)*

<sup>1</sup> UN, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 13c. (Ratified by The Netherlands)

# THE POLITICS OF AUTONOMOUS SPACES

It has been claimed before that the 4-month long existence of the squatted former common room of the Spinhuis has been essential to renewal of the student movement in Amsterdam. Indeed, a sizeable part of the people that made up De Nieuwe Universiteit (DNU) at the onset of the Bungehuis occupation were part of the Spinhuis Collectief and have been politicized through this previous experience. And similarly, without the existence of the occupied Bungehuis as a meeting-place and an introduction to activism, there would never have been a liberated Maagdenhuis. After the experience of the Bungehuis and the Maagdenhuis, the need for more permanent places than occupations was felt not only at the UvA, but also on other campuses, resulting so far in Café Terecht in Nijmegen and the Verrekijker at the VU University. Then what is it that gives having autonomous spaces so much potential?

We first have to realize that we, in our daily lives as in our universities, are consuming and producing as individuals. Even though many of us want something more out of the university, as mere individuals we feel powerless towards management. We might rationalize our powerlessness by pointing out that we can vote, be it for the student council or the national parliament, or that if we really care we can get involved in these official structures ourselves. We can say that protesting is old-fashioned and that it is not the 60-70s anymore or that the situation is not "bad" enough in the Netherlands to really get angry. We can pretend that we can make a difference through what and how we consume. But deep-down we know that we won't make much of a difference with these individual decisions. To really make a difference we have to act collectively. And the main problem then is that we are atomized, our frustrations are kept personal, our problems individualized. We might get some ideas through passively consuming media and we might have some friends with whom we can talk politics. But we lack the social circles and spaces to gather around our necessity to revolt, to join or even organize the next demonstration or to be part of a direct action's collective.

Rather than remaining passive individuals, we have to come together collectively and become active subjects in charge of our own destiny, to not merely analyze but actively attempt to exert influence on the world around us and find ways of doing so. This is where autonomous spaces, especially when they are accessible and welcoming towards newcomers, become massively important as a meeting-place so people can break through their individualized existence and share knowledge, ideas, and skills.

For many people, coming together in the Bungehuis and Maagdenhuis was an eye-opener, a life-changing experience. When people joined the general assemblies they found out that they didn't just have to follow some groups or a leader, but that they themselves could have an active say in where things would go. Many people felt empowered through that experience of becoming active political subjects, often for the first time in their life. It showed that hundreds of people from UvA's academic community (and abroad) reacted positively to our call for change, but just didn't know where to go to.

**"Rather than remaining passive individuals, we have to come together collectively and become active subjects in charge of our own destiny."**

Then let's attempt to put into words what an autonomous space is and what gives this space the potential to create new forms of relations. In our daily lives, most of our social relations are determined by money. Most of our time and creative energy is spent working and as we have to pay for our food and pay the rent at the end of the month, we don't have much of a choice. In our 'free' time we tend to come together in spaces where social relations are still determined by money. Places where there is a clear producer/consumer dichotomy. We consume a cup of coffee, a bottle of beer and listen to a band playing music, while someone else is producing all these things for us and earning money with it, someone that probably wouldn't have been there to do these things if it weren't for the wage earned. In autonomous spaces however the producer/consumer dichotomy is broken down, because there is no commercial interest (or need), we are able to decommodify our social relations<sup>1</sup>.

A self-organized autonomous space is what we make of it collectively. No longer is there workers selling you beer or playing music, because it earns them money, but because they want to do so, out of generosity. If the people of the Spinhuis Collectief wouldn't feel like making a toastie for you, they'd often tell you to do it yourself. It's not only that autonomous spaces are more affordable, it is the whole self-organizing atmosphere that is different. Autonomous spaces tend to be a lot less professional and more chaotic, but it is this chaos that breeds creativity—and activates people.

Likewise, in autonomous spaces at university, it is the hierarchy between teachers and students that breaks down. When Rancière was speaking in the appropriated Maagdenhuis he fittingly spoke of the importance of appropriating new spaces and reconfiguring them as political. Through appropriation the Maagdenhuis itself had become a different place, "because it has been stripped of its former function and become an autonomous space, removed from the previous order"<sup>2</sup>. Through the political struggle and by having their own appropriated and reconfigured space, students and staff found new ways of being together and related to each other on a more equal footing. Similarly, with the passing of the former common room (the only student-run space of the UvA outside the catering company's monopoly) and the move to Roeterseiland, Anthropology students felt the need to appropriate space on the 5th floor to break the hierarchy between them and the teachers.

Finally, claiming autonomous space is reclaiming that what ought to be ours anyway. Because whose university is it? It is students and staff that make the university, not overpaid managers or external CEOs and bankers named on the Executive and Supervisory boards. Creating autonomous spaces is taking matters in our own hands and to reclaim that what has been taken away by private and commercial interest. Also important is the pre-figurative politics aspect of it, as by creating these spaces we can embody that what we want to see and set an examples to inspire others. By the way we organize ourselves we can show how our universities could be more democratically organized, that learning could be more collaborative and less hierarchical, how we don't need big catering companies as all the cafeteria and canteens could be volunteer-run non-commercially, and how a university could be much more open and reach out to other groups in society.

<sup>1</sup> To put it in Marxist terms, in an autonomous space we are no longer subject to the law of value.

<sup>2</sup> From Renske van Bronswijk's summary of the Rancière Q&A:  
<http://rethinkuva.org/blog/2015/03/25/the-maagdenhuis-as-an-elsewhere-space/>

# THE STORY OF THE SPINHUIS, A STUDENT SQUAT RUN BY AND FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

The original Spinhuis Collective was a combination of people from Kritische Studenten Amsterdam and ONS Kritisch Alternatief who met at street corners, at Joe's Garage or wherever we could make some space for ourselves. We had few resources, yet our dreams were big. Little did we know, within less than six months we would launch something so special that laid the foundations for the De Nieuwe Universiteit movement and changed the landscape of the University of Amsterdam.

In July 2014, the University of Amsterdam had emptied this historic building to facilitate its future sale, and transferred the Anthropology and Sociology department to the rather stale-looking Roeterseiland Complex. The common room had until then been the only space still run by students at the UvA and had no replacement in the new building. The message from UvA management was clear and set the stage for the squat action which had been planned over the summer holidays.

The Spinhuis common room was taken over by a group of about fifty people on Sunday September 7th 2014. From the very first night, it was opened up to the public from 11 AM until the collective decided to close for the night. We were keen on holding events every single night of the week and this desire to be open was probably our greatest strength. What made the Spinhuis so successful and vital to the birth of de Nieuwe Universiteit movement is two things: it allowed the growth of a sense of community and was an introduction to direct action, and even activism in general, for many members of that community.

The Spinhuis was conceived of as a "common living room" just like it had been before moving. Cheap services were provided to students who could otherwise not afford the cost of life in Amsterdam. While the catering company Eurest, who was attributed a monopoly on food sales at the UvA, sold small toasties for 3,50 euros, the Spinhuis was a seventh of that price. One day, we humorously made that fact apparent on a poster that showed a turd sandwich for 3,50. The trail of posters led from the UvA catering sites all the way to the Spinhuis. Ridiculing the absurdity of

corporate interests in public universities was a very appealing way to draw attention to the issues facing the UvA.

The Spinhuis experience also showed that the university could be a place for community forged on fun informal interactions. We hosted great cultural and political events that would pack the place on a nightly basis. The very first night, with nothing on the agenda, we randomly held an Origami Jungle workshop despite not having a clue how to make origami. Surprisingly, like most of our events, it was a great success. Many students and former students came great lengths by becoming more confident and sharing their passions with others in what was a fun and stimulating environment.

These kinds of events eased people into the idea of autonomous spaces and anti-corporate politics. In fact, the Spinhuis became a hub for student activism at the UvA. Humanities Rally was busy making banners and hosting events there, while De Nieuwe Universiteit (originally a group against the merger of the Beta Faculties at the VU and UvA) held its first meetings there. The seeds were being planted for rise of the Maagdenhuis activists: you could notice people curiously reading zines and flyers about brand new topics and others becoming politically aware for the very first time, by joining in on protests or discussion groups.

**"it allowed the growth of a sense of community and was an introduction to direct action."**

The Spinhuis Collective itself was a profound experience in human interaction. For many of us, activism became the core focus of our lives for the first time. Our anthem was the song from the Lego Movie "Everything is awesome when you're part of team!" We spent days and nights together, debating, sometimes even arguing, organising and learning to love each other. The community sentiment was such a powerful one that a lot of us had deeply craved, especially me as a foreigner in a rather hostile capital city. We had become the "community of learners", that ideal of the Universitas which was lost in the privatisation of universities.

Indeed, the Spinhuis was one big learning process that had consequences on our perception of life. It was a key catalyst for the widespread protests that the UvA would see in 2015. The consequence of our actions were also seen outside of Amsterdam. Looking back on the Spinhuis experience has shown us that it is possible to create and share life-changing experiences, that together we are able to fight the system and have a say in our own destinies. Getting people involved in autonomous spaces is the first step towards the establishment of a new generation of activists committed to social change at the systemic level.

## DE VERREKIJKER

De Verrekijker is an autonomous student space on the VU Campus. On May 19, De Nieuwe Universiteit VU reclaimed an empty space on the campus square, intending to make this space grow into a place for discussion. Being a home for critical thinking, a university should have a space where the purpose of the university itself can be debated, where knowledge can be shared for knowledge's sake, where students, teachers and staff can come together and discuss what research and education is about. De Verrekijker aims to be a safe space, a fun space, and a space for the New University and its goals. In the first weeks, people have been working day and night to make De Verrekijker look like a real café. It now hosts a bar, a lounge corner and a proper space for lectures.

We want to offer an alternative to all the commercial venues, such as the Basket, Doppio and the Spar, popping up on the campus. Therefore we serve coffee, tea, other drinks and tosti's for low prices on a donation basis. During the day anyone is welcome to come study, have a coffee, read a book or have a conversation. Most evenings there is a programme with lectures, debates, workshops, movie nights, and musical and cultural events. Additionally, the space is open for anyone who wants to organize activities here. De Verrekijker is run entirely by volunteers. We are organized in an open collective and have weekly meetings. If you are interested in helping out, send an email or drop by!

<http://deverrekijker.org/>

# HET SPIØHUIS

# AUTONOMOUS SPACES IN AMSTERDAM

**1 ADM**  
 Hornweg 6, [www.adm.amsterdam](http://www.adm.amsterdam)  
 Largest free-haven in the Netherlands. Squatted for over 17 years in the middle of Westpoort. Regular voku's, music-nights and other events. A couple of times a year they organize and host a massive festival.

**2 AAN LAGER WAL**  
 Nieuwendammerdijk, Amst.-Noord  
 Recently squatted in April 2015. Mostly residential, but with a freeshop and public events from time to time.

**3 FILMHUIS CAVIA**  
 Van Hallstraat 52-1, [www.filmhuiscavia.nl](http://www.filmhuiscavia.nl)  
 Amsterdam's smallest and cutest cinema. Squatted in the 80s and run not-for-profit by volunteers since then. Regular screenings on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

**4 ZAAL 100**  
 De wittenstraat 100, [www.zaal100.nl](http://www.zaal100.nl)  
 Squatted in the 80s and since then a cultural space that hosts all sorts of obscure cultural acts.

**5 VRANKRIJK**  
 Spuistraat 216, [www.vrankrijk.org](http://www.vrankrijk.org)  
 Perhaps the most well-known of queer squats in Amsterdam, Vrankrijk is host to concerts, benefit nights, and the people's kitchen twice weekly (wed. & fri.). It has been squatted 30-odd years ago and has since then been legalised.

**6 BAJESDORP**  
 H.J.E. Wenckebachweg, [www.bajesdorp.nl](http://www.bajesdorp.nl)  
 A small village of small houses that used to host the employees of the Bijlmer Bajes that is next door. Also hosts De Muiterij, a freshly squatted social center.

**7 VONDELBUNKER**  
 Vondelpark 8a, [www.vondelbunker.nl](http://www.vondelbunker.nl)  
 Hidden in a nuclear-shelter from 1947 and in use by the Schijnheilig collective since 2011. All events for free. Hosts the Kontra:Bar and Studentenkraakspreekuur (SKSU) every Thursday evening.

**8 OT301**  
 Overtom 301, [www.ot301.nl](http://www.ot301.nl)  
 Squatted in 1999 and legalized in the years afterwards, programs music, art, dance, theatre, film, workshops, vegan food and other experimental events.

**9 DE BINNENPRET**  
 Amstelveenseweg 134, [www.binnenpret.org](http://www.binnenpret.org)  
 A complex of houses and buildings that are host to MKZ, Bollox and OCCII.

**- MKZ**  
[www.radar.squat.net/en/node/4932](http://www.radar.squat.net/en/node/4932)  
 Vegan restaurant that is part of the Binnenpret complex, always open on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evening (call for reservations!).

**- OCCII**  
[www.occii.org](http://www.occii.org)  
 Music-venue that is part of the Binnenpret-complex, probably has the best underground-music live-program of Amsterdam.

**- BOLLOX**  
[www.radar.squat.net/en/amsterdam/bollox](http://www.radar.squat.net/en/amsterdam/bollox)  
 Infocafé that is open every day from 14:00 to 19:00 and hosts the anarchist-library on Saturday.

**10 DE VERREKIJKER**  
 VU University Campus, [www.deverrekijker.org](http://www.deverrekijker.org)  
 Squatted by De Nieuwe Universiteit VU in May, now run by an open collective to have space for discussion on the VU campus. Most evenings there is a programme with lectures, debates, workshops, movie nights, and musical and cultural events.

**11 MOLLI CHAOOT**  
 Van Ostadestraat 55, [www.molli.squat.net](http://www.molli.squat.net)  
 Squat-bar in de Pijp since 1979.

**15 NIEUWLAND**  
 Pieter Nieuwlandstraat 93, [www.nieuwland.cc/en](http://www.nieuwland.cc/en)  
 Nieuwland is solidary and self-built space for living and working, and a non-commercial, volunteer-run social-political community centre in Dapperbuurt, Amsterdam Oost.

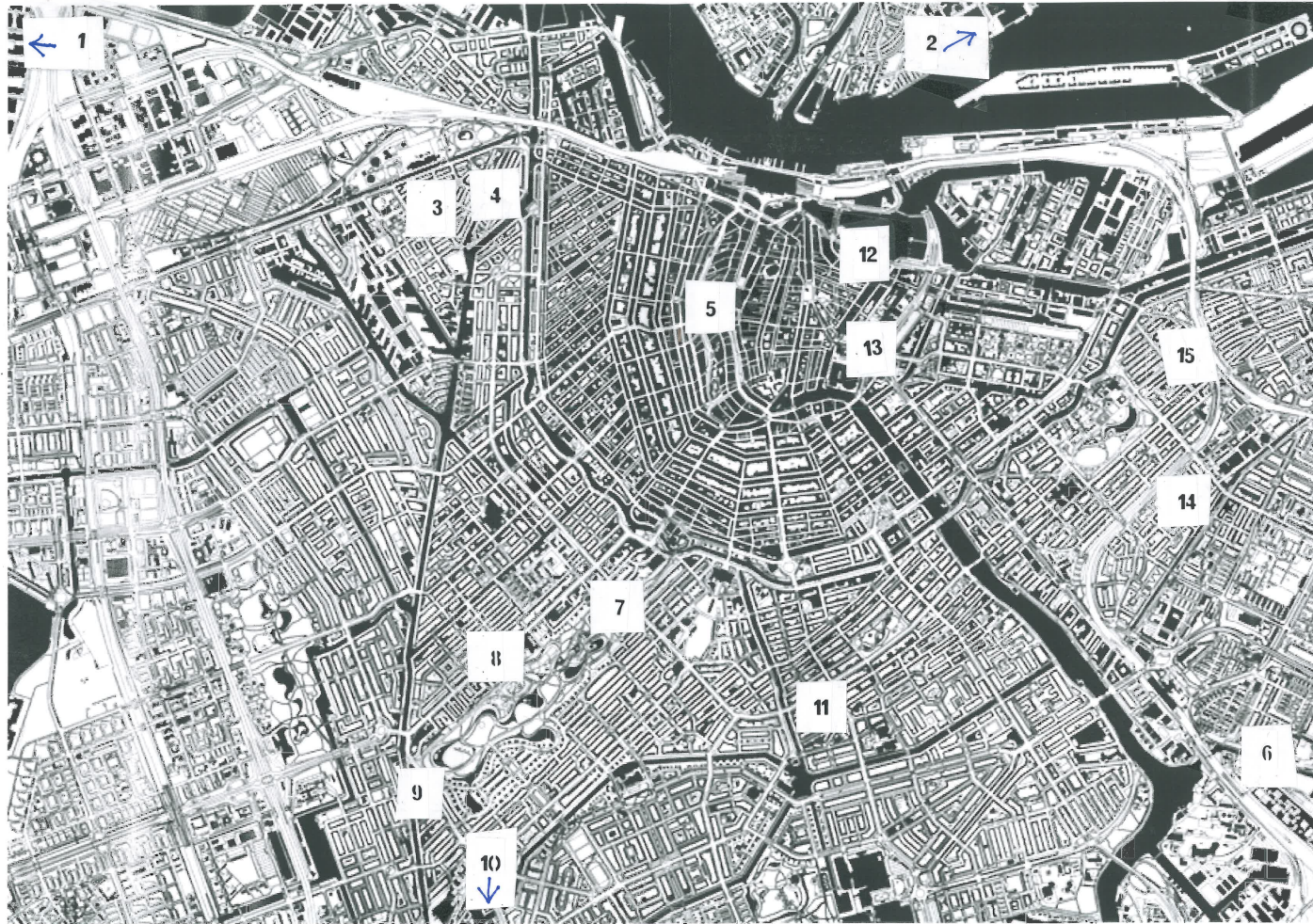
**14 JOES GARAGE**  
 Pretoriusstraat 43, [www.joesgarage.nl](http://www.joesgarage.nl)  
 Joe's Garage is a squatted social center in the Transvaal neighbourhood. Hosts various events like movie-nights, presentations and workshops. Every Monday and Thursday there's a people's kitchen. Freeshop on Saturday afternoon, and Tuesday evenings the squatting assistance hour (KSU).

**13 FORT VAN SJAKOO (BOEKHANDEL)**  
 Jodenbreestraat 24, [www.sjadoo.nl](http://www.sjadoo.nl)  
 Collectively volunteer-run bookshop since 1977, specialized in libertarian and radical ideas. Open from Monday to Sunday.

**12 DE OVERVAL**  
 Prinsendrikkade 138/139, [www.radar.squat.net/en/amsterdam/de-overval](http://www.radar.squat.net/en/amsterdam/de-overval)  
 Co-operative space that offers DIY workshops, free-shop, and a punk bar every Thursday. De Overval is under threat of eviction as at the end of August they have a court-case which they fear they will lose. Show your support by coming by and helping out.

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**RADAR SQUAT NET**  
 One of the best ways to stay-up-to-date with all the events in the underground of Amsterdam is to use Radar website. Radar is a non-commercial online agenda that is used by most social-spaces in Amsterdam and other cities in Europe. If you want to publicize the events of your social-space, it is a good idea to make a Radar account, so you can add your events there. This way, you and others become less dependent on Facebook!

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 Alternatively, pick up the monthly Amsterdam Alternative newspaper at one of Amsterdam's social-spaces, which also includes a monthly agenda of cultural events.  
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# REPERTOIRE OF DIRECT ACTIONS

After decades of neoliberal colonization, academia is now entering a new phase where what was feared not so long ago now appears as a salient reality: the austerity measures (budget cuts) are causing great damage to non-“efficient” programs (e.g. humanities or art) while the increase of private funding privileges departments that are economically profitable (e.g. marketing, new technologies or pharmaceuticals), the executive boards are filled with non-elected representatives of the economic elite who manage universities like businesses offering services to a group of consumers, the loan system forces students to think about money before passion in the choice of their studies, teachers see their permanent positions being replaced by precarious flex-contracts while their contestation is silenced by the top-down governance, the internationalization of universities is forcing local community to apply international standards which are the neoliberal ones... This is the new reality of the academic world at the age of the so-called “knowledge economy”. This is the great capitalist mess our generation has to face in order to survive.

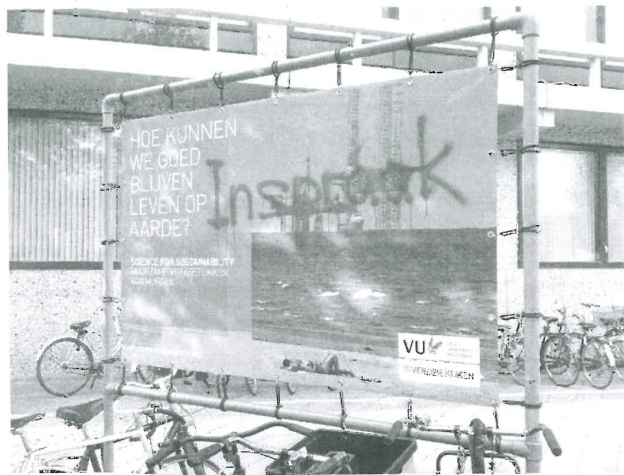
We entered university thinking we found a place to emancipate ourselves, to participate in a stimulating community of researchers and to develop our critical thinking. We actually evolved in a highly individualistic environment where we are in constant competition against our fellow colleagues in order to get grants and positions. If you are not from a privileged background and want to pursue an academic career, you better be an asocial workaholic. Do you want to do your research in critical theory? Go ahead, but good luck to get any funding.

For many of us, the disillusion was violent. Now these two words are constantly resonating in our minds:

## NO FUTURE.

But hope does exist. And up to now, hope is taking the shape of a multitude of student movements emerging around the world in the last five years to reclaim academia and direct democracy. Hope is coming from those critical students who organize themselves to mobilize their colleagues and to shake the suffocating *statu-quo* by the use a repertoire of direct actions inspired by recent social struggles (from the Anti-globalization protests to Occupy Wall Street). Disrupting the so-called “knowledge economy” and offering alternative to dominant discourses, these student struggles are now moving the protests from the streets to the universities that are under neoliberal siege.

The following list of direct actions aims to inform about the tactics that are generally used here and abroad. Each of them is used to reach different goals: to raise awareness, to express counter-discourses, to create communities, to seek for more supports or to confront the economic and political elites.



*Graffiti on VU University's advertisement (2015)*

## GRAFFITI

The aesthetic has an impact on the user of a space. By the appropriation of the walls, the user is participating in the constitution of its surrounding and freeing themselves from imposed aesthetic norms. From painted murals to political slogans, the walls become the living archives of the daily experience, revealing the common spaces as a zone of interaction and participation.



*Red square painted in front of Utrecht University (2015)*

## RED SQUARE EVERYWHERE

As a symbol of the international student movement, the red square is being spread in very diverse locations. Most of the time, it is painted on universities campuses or shared as stickers to put on monuments, statues, signs and walls.

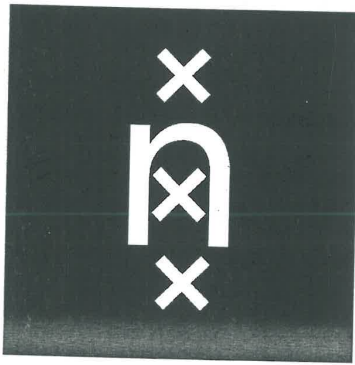


## HOAX

A hoax is a lie granted as a truth because of its convincing elements. It can be done by miming the public identity of an institution, a corporation or a public figure and pretending something that could put them in a bad position, revealing their non-compliance in a conflict.

## MIC-CHECK

The "mic-check" tactic refers to a way to hold speeches in a crowd without any microphone. The Occupy Wall Street movement has popularized this practice. Someone will shout "mic-check!", and this will be repeated by everyone. Then the person starts her/his speech and the whole crowd will repeat sentences by sentences in order to make sure everyone can hear. It appears to be an excellent tactic in order to hijack public presentation of your favorite board member or politician.



Logo of UvA and VU universities reappropriated by De Nieuwe University (2014)

## CULTURE JAMMING

Culture jamming is a tactic that subverts logos and advertisements with creative interventions. For instance, it can be done by subverting billboards that are polluting public spaces and disfiguring landscapes. With their large-scale advertisements, billboards are placed in strategic area in order to reach a broad audience. It becomes a perfect canvas for activists who want to play with the consumerist culture and diffuse a counter-discourse.



Rhythms of Resistance performing samba in a protest



Paint bombing of the Ministry of Education of Quebec (2012)

## VANDALISM

Vandalism is usually described as a form of violence that implies aggression by people. This is a great argument made out to justify police brutality and delegitimize a protest. In the context of a social struggle, vandalism consists in the deterioration or destruction of material goods, targeted because of their symbolic attributes. It is the attack of a property representing the oppressor, like a private company's monopoly on a campus.



## TACTICAL FRIVOLITY

Tactical frivolity is an expression that describes any kind a creative, playful and absurd means used in social movements (since the anti-globalization protests of the late nineties) to fool the authorities and lift up the moral of protesters. The samba bands, clown armies and street parties are great examples where frivolity becomes a tactic to destabilize the police.





Picket line blocking access to a college (2015)

### PICKETLINES

The picketline is a traditional action done in the context of a strike. It consists of a blockade of all the entrances of a building from very early in the morning. The picketline makes sure no ones will attend their lecture halls or their workplace, since the strike had been democratically voted. Two types of picketline exist: the ones that still let people entering the building, and the hard ones blocking everyone from entering it.



Black bloc

### PROTEST BLOCS

To make themselves visible as a group and raise specific issues inside a traditional protest, people are forming "blocs" by using recognizable elements. Since the nineties, two kinds of bloc are getting more attention; the pink bloc – raising issues concerning queer politics and using tactical frivolity – and the black bloc – recognizable by the homogenous black clothing that protect identity, and the use of direct actions in the protest itself.



Queer Bloc

### HACKING

Bringing the struggle on the technological domain, hacking is an operation done by people who manage to trespass the security of a web server to collect secret information. The privileged information can then be leaked to the public or be used as a threat. Hackers sometime call for "communication zap", a large-scale connection on web servers to shutdown a specific website.



Flash mob in front of a commercial center in Montreal (2012)

### FLASH-MOBS

The flash-mobs are collective performances done in public spaces by a large group of people. Even if they are well prepared, the surprise they provoke makes them look like spontaneous gathering. The flash-mobs have been popularized in the social media, principally because of their viral sharing.

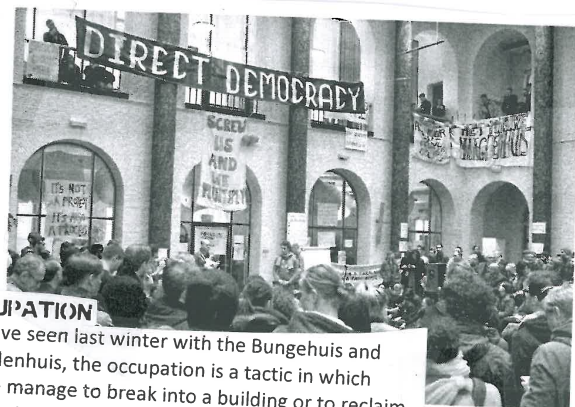


### BANNER DROP

A banner drop is the installation of large sheet on which slogans or political messages are written. The most efficient banner drops are the one that appears in the most unexpected places, like high-level secured buildings or bridges, and where the banner can be seen by a large amount of people.

### PROJECTION

Armed with powerful beamers, many protesters are projecting images, video or slogans on buildings. These projections can be interpreted as the technological adaptation of the banner drop.

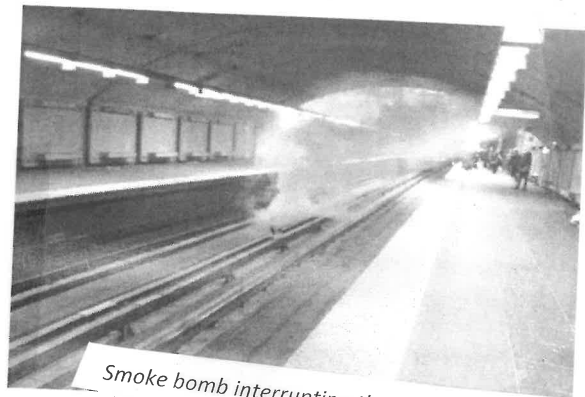


### OCCUPATION

As we've seen last winter with the Bungehuis and Maagdenhuis, the occupation is a tactic in which people manage to break into a building or to reclaim a space. When long-lasting, it results in the implementation of a temporary community withdrawn from the outside world and surviving on donations. Some occupations are open to the public while others are closed and reinforced by barricades, depending on the level of confrontation decided by the group.



*Barricade erected by Spanish students (2015)*



*Smoke bomb interrupting the public transport during the student strike in Montreal (2012)*

### **BLOCKADE**

A blockade usually aims to interrupt the flow of merchandise, workers or profitable resources. Harbors, highways, bridges, airports, train stations, railways, mines, factories, retailers, construction sites, ministry, trade center or headquarters of private corporations are targeted to stop the production and provoke an economic disruption. It generally consists of a group of people blocking an access, helped with barricading material. Not so popular in the "public opinion", these blockades are nonetheless an excellent means of pressure because they directly affect the economic system.



*Student blocking the Nation Bank of Canada's headquarters (2012)*

## \*\*\*\*\* CURRENT STUDENT STRUGGLES \*\*\*\*\*

### **NEW ORLEANS**

A small but vocal group of student borrowers crashed a parade of financial-aid administrators on July 20<sup>th</sup>, demanding free college for all. Roughly three dozen borrowers and activists confronted the aid administrators toward the end of the parade route, shouting, "Go to college, get in debt!" and "Student debt IS a crisis!" (a response to a debate earlier in the day in which conference attendees voted in favor of the side arguing student debt was not a crisis). Wearing red squares, the students wove among the crowd, handing out fans urging administrators to advocate for tuition-free college and tossing fake \$35,000 bills into the air.

### **SYDNEY**

At Sydney University massive restructuring measures were announced in July. The plans are a move towards the 'Melbourne Model', a model in which students have less options for undergrad, and are forced into a more expensive post-grad education to get an actual qualification. Also, hundreds of staff members will be lost. Therefore, student activists have organized a protest (August 19th) calling upon all students in New South Wales against course cuts, job losses and deregulation.

### **GAUTENG (SOUTH AFRICA)**

Students at the Ekurhuleni West College's Kempton Park campus took to the streets on August 3<sup>rd</sup> after receiving letters from the college saying their financial aid funds had been depleted. On Sunday afternoon, students received SMS messages informing them the campus would be closed indefinitely. On Monday morning, the students chanted outside the school's entrance saying: "No money, no school." Streets were cordoned off by police as the student continued to protest. Police eventually fired rubber bullets and teargas at the students to disperse them. This was the second protest in two weeks. Students also blockaded the entrance of the college earlier.

### **SRI LANKA**

On August 11<sup>th</sup> more than 2000 students rallied to the protest organized by Inter Universities Students' Federation. They demanded free education for all and the closing of private universities.

### **INDIA**

At Pondicherry University students have been protesting since the end of July. They want the Vice Chancellor to be removed from office because she showed false credentials, violates human rights and created an administrative chaos. On the fifth day, cops violently tried to break up the protest. On August 7<sup>th</sup> students started an indefinite hunger strike and over the course of six days at least nine of them were hospitalized because health care on campus was lacking. On August 13<sup>th</sup> the secretary of the Ministry of Human Resource Development asked the Vice Chancellor to go on leave pending an investigation into the charges made by students.

### **MALAYSIA**

On August 14<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Youth and Student Democratic Movement released a press statement calling upon human rights bodies to speak out against the unreasonable punishment of two students from the representative student council and against the political involvement in the university. The duo are suspended for two semesters and received a warning for inviting a controversial political figure to speak at their university last May.

# \* HOW TO GET INVOLVED \*



## DE NIEUWE UNIVERSITEIT

*De Nieuwe Universiteit* (DNU) is the action-group that initiated the occupations of the Bungehuis and Maagdenhuis. Join a public general assemblies or one of the many working groups!

[nieuwuni@gmail.com](mailto:nieuwuni@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/NewUni/timeline](http://www.facebook.com/NewUni/timeline)

[www.nieuwuni.nl](http://www.nieuwuni.nl)

## UNIVERSITY OF COLOR

*The University of Color* is another action-group emerging from the student protest at the UvA. It aims to raise issues related to institutional forms of oppression, starting with a call to decolonize universities.

[universityofcolour@gmail.com](mailto:universityofcolour@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/universityofcolour](http://www.facebook.com/universityofcolour)

[www.universityofcolour.com](http://www.universityofcolour.com)

UoC

## RETHINK UVA

Formed right after the Maagdenhuis take-over in February 2015, *Rethink UvA* is an action-group consisting of PhD candidates, staff members and professors from the UvA.

[info@rethinkuva.org](mailto:info@rethinkuva.org)

<http://rethinkuva.org>

## HUMANITIES RALLY

*Humanities Rally* consists of a group of critical students from the humanities faculty who decided to organize themselves after the announcement of budget cuts at autumn 2014. Join their meeting on Mondays .

[humanitiesrally@gmail.com](mailto:humanitiesrally@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/Humanitiesrally](http://www.facebook.com/Humanitiesrally)

[www.humanitiesrally.com](http://www.humanitiesrally.com)



## [ ANTITHESE ]

Emerging from the student struggle of the last winter, *Antithese* is a platform to share ideas and experiences in order to build a sustainable movement against the neoliberalisation of universities, here and abroad.

[antithese.zine@gmail.com](mailto:antithese.zine@gmail.com)

[www.antithese.noblogs.org](http://www.antithese.noblogs.org)

