

I0: Who talks about class?

Lucia:

My name is Lucia. I am 21 years old. I work for "Wir sind Klasse!" as a production assistant and study social and science communication in Berlin.

Karin Deckner:

Hello Lucia, I'm really glad that you found time to talk to us today for the research module "Access - Questions of Access". We know each other from the lecture in the Bachelor's programme, where we also talked a lot about class. And you told me in the course of this that you work for a podcast format called "We are Class!". Can you tell us briefly how this podcast came about and what it's about?

Lucia:

First of all, thank you for having me here today. This podcast came about because the inventor, Yvonne Griesel, came across the problem, but not the phenomenon, that people are often ashamed and insecure in rooms and wondered why. And that's how we got in touch and came up with the idea that it was simply because all these people had a class background and had parents who were not academics. And she wanted to clear that up because she thinks that if you talk, then the fear goes away and then you are no longer ashamed if you simply say where you come from and that you don't know things and that it's not bad at all that you don't know them, because you can still learn them. And another reason is that non-academics speak very little anyway. They appear very little in public and rarely get a chance to speak. And when they do, they only ever talk about their profession and are asked about it, about work grievances, and never about social issues and issues that they are somehow confronted with and affected by. And the podcast is simply to give them space to talk about it. And we talk about different topics. We talk about death, about heritage, about access, about music - many different things.

Karin Deckner:

Wow, thanks for the introduction. That sounds like a project that I am also totally interested in, and the research module is also very interested. We have been looking very closely at how accessibility can be created during the semester. And by accessibility we also mean visibility, especially in these class discourses. Could you say something about the title? It's called "We are class!"

Lucia:

Exactly. The title was created shortly before the project came into the world. Actually, at the beginning we wanted parents to talk to their children and have a conversation about problems and attitudes and education. But we realized that this is much too personal. That's why we took "We are class!" because everyone in the team has a class connection, most of them. And we wanted to say that "We are class!", we are doing this project and we are just like you out there who hear this and feel addressed by it.

Karin Deckner:

I actually find that particularly beautiful about the title, which is why I also asked again why they chose the "we". Another question: When you have these conversations, the topic of class is discussed rather critically. Do you work directly with this concept of class or is it something that resonates in the background?

Lucia:

Also wir haben bis jetzt sehr wenig theoretischen Bezug – eigentlich gar nicht. Es wird nicht wirklich in den Folgen groß etwas erklärt oder thematisiert. Wie sie meinten, schwingt das eher im Hintergrund mit. In einer Folge, da ging es um Informationen, da merkt man das schon eher, dass man die Verbindung zur Klasse sehr stark schlagen kann.

Karin Deckner:

The discussions about class are also often characterised by another access format or access obstacle, namely language. And I also find it exciting that academic discourse about class often excludes those who are concerned with class issues or provides a language system that is perhaps not accessible to non-academics - again, in inverted commas - and that is probably also interesting in a podcast format when talking about class, how class affiliations are formulated or perceived. Have you already had experience with this?

Lucia:

We often have experiences with this in the team because we use terms differently. So we say things like academic or non-academic to describe people. At the same time, we also use terms like "just normal people" and academics or students, and I find "normal people" somehow exciting as a term for non-academics, because non-academics exude a norm that doesn't exist at all, because only a very small part of society has an academic degree at all, and at the same time non-academics say that it's not the norm at all that we are and should be academics. And you also notice that with the term workers or working class. In this workshop, we also asked the question of whether people see themselves as workers or as belonging to the working class and the class struggle. And then most of them said: No, because they don't see their job as a job of someone who is part of the working class. And I found that totally exciting. This self-attribution.

Karin Deckner:

Yes, that's totally exciting, and it's another interesting moment when I, as an academic, which is what I call myself right now, try to classify it theoretically again, instead of just actually listening to what is being said. But that one or that I am just trying to say again in my head: Yes, the theory also describes it in a similar way, which in a way is also very encroaching, because then one is already shifting the class discussion into an academic, theoretical context, which again actually prevents access or prescribes a classification that was normatively established from a higher or more studied class. That is a totally exciting point. Another question that I think is exciting when you talk about these access modalities and about class is that there are certainly these successful stories of educational climbers, people who have made a - I like to put the word in inverted commas, you have to think of it now in audio - class change. Do you have a certain selection or do you focus on that because you talk especially to those who have moved up, or you said earlier that you actually want to represent a broad spectrum. How do you go about it? How do you select the participants for your podcast?

Lucia:

Just as we want to reflect the composition of society in our podcast, we also thought about what our ratio of academics who have moved up should be to non-academics. And we decided on a fifty-fifty ratio. So we invite just as many up-and-comers, as they are so nicely called, as non-academics, who will appear in the course of the podcast.

Karin Deckner:

Another question about the participants - so far I think it's mainly two participants that I've heard - was there any reflection on this format and the possibility of being given a stage or a discussion room after the talk? Was there any feedback on how the participants in the podcast perceived it?

Lucia:

I think I have to go back a bit, because in preparation for the project we did a small workshop where we invited different people and worked out topics with them that are particularly important to them and that will be addressed in the podcast. This also means that the people who have talked to us so far have been involved in this project from the very beginning. They knew from the beginning what the project was and what the goal was and were also concretely involved in the elaboration and were accordingly already aware that there was such a stage for them.

Karin Deckner:

If you were to create such a scenario with "We are great!" in 2025, where do you want to be or what do you want to have realised with the project by then? Do you have a vision for this in your team?

Lucia:

Oh, that's a big question, because it may well be that the podcast hasn't been around that long. We don't have that long of a promotion that we can work on it for that long, unfortunately. But I think it's important to us that people feel picked up by it and that we can simply, in the best case, break down stereotypes and give people the feeling that they are not alone with their feelings. Because class is so tainted with shame and you notice that people are talking about it a lot, especially in the last year, and that's also very good. But I think that the core of the project is to let people speak and to somehow pick up the listeners and simply convey to them that this or theirs is a platform for them to classify their feelings.

Karin Deckner:

What I also find incredibly charming about "We are class" is the logo. Because when we think about classes - and it's always easy to think about this - you sort people into classes, you classify them, you put people into class drawers and in their logo you see a hand reaching out of drawers. Can you briefly describe that again or tell us something about the logo, how it might be connected to the podcast in terms of content?

Lucia:

The logo actually describes the concept of our podcast quite well, because we like to be put in this drawer, open it and say: "Take a look, it actually looks different from what you always imagine and how people like to talk about it. And that's why I think the logo is very successful."