

Rundbrief I

Lisa

EXIT



GROWING AND LEARNING
AT PACE

In the following few minutes I want to take you into the world of my thoughts starting at the landing in Cape Town followed by my next few months.

Hello everybody,

I've been here for just about two weeks. At first all the new surroundings were overwhelming but right now I feel like I arrived. My room feels like my home, work is getting somewhere and I'm meeting more new people.

It does feel like my life just shifted a few kilometers :)

But at the same time I am aware that there is so much new to explore and be part of. I do experience that I have to take care where I'm going and from which perspective I'm speaking. I'm a foreigner in a new continent, new country and new city.

My thoughts are often switching between all the positives and negatives surrounding me. That is what you have to be prepared for! I am overwhelmed by all the new and that's alright. With time I'm getting used to all of this and it becomes my home.

I have met so many beautiful souls at my work and around Capetown, I'm so glad to have the ability to be here. I sog in every positive and negative moment to learn and grow.



Let me tell you about my daily life.

I live in a shared house with 6 other people, 2 couples and 2 individuals. I get along with them pretty well, living together will cause compromises in time management and available space, but you will get around. While some people are more distant I really enjoyed guitar sessions with one of my housemates or going out with the others. We live in Observatory, also called Obz, a very lively student area of Cape Town with many opportunities to have fun. It is around a 15 min distance by bus to my work in Woodstock.

I work at NOAH -Neighbourhood Old Age Home, a healthy and thriving community guided by its elders. This is what our main vision is, providing a safe space for our base, our elders. NOAH provides Houses with little rent and food collected by donations. The elders can engage in the community centers and earn community hours by participating and working in shops or in the center. For example yoga, work at the cafe or shop, candle workshops, planning events & Co. By doing so they can reduce their rent, which is a great opportunity as a social pensioner.

I'm part of the sustainability group at NOAH. We come up with ideas to fundraise and I personally do the communication and marketing with the larger outside world, through social media. At the same time I do fliers for our Selling Seconds Clothing Shops which is made up from donations. I document our social enterprises, interview members and take photographs at events. I really enjoy having such an impact and being able to spread my ideas with so much independence and creativity. It was challenging in the beginning since I myself haven't used Facebook and TikTok in a long time. It was always my dream as a child to publish a YouTube video and now I finally did it. Photography and Cinematography are one of my passions, and being able to capture the beauty of our elders and their story is embracing this even more. I am also part of the Action Group organizing functions and supporting the community and I enjoy chatting with the members, whenever I can. I can not mention often enough how beautiful those souls are!



Jam in Obz



Selling Seconds in Woodstock

I hope you got a picture of what I'm doing but to be more specific I'll take you on a day with me.

A normal day in my life starts at around 6:30, or to be honest between 6:30 and 7:00 a clock. I wake up, make myself a coffee and most likely an avocado toast and get ready meanwhile the water boils and the toaster is on. Depending on the weather and my time management I eat my breakfast outside. Sometimes I'll have a chat with my roommates, but I must admit I enjoy the morning in peace the most.

At around 7:50 I will go on my way to the nearest bus station. As soon as I see a bus I stretch my hand in the air and wave the bus driver over so he can stop. While listening to music and watching out of the window, still anxious to miss my stop because there is no screen showing the stops, I scan for similar looking buildings. As soon as I see the KFC I will stand up and walk to the front, pressing the red stop button and leaving the bus at the next occasion. Right next to the FNB bank I cross the Main Road and walk right next to the supermarket down the street.

I see the white gate of one of the houses owned by NOAH, the Non-Profit-Organisation I work for. Greeting Phillip, Rustle, Small Phillip and Samba or whoever is around I walk through the Selling Seconds Shop to the Woodstock community center. After greeting everyone working in the shop, saying hello to Mellisa and whoever is working at the reception today, I go over to Bonnie and Natalie. She was the first person to introduce me to NOAH.

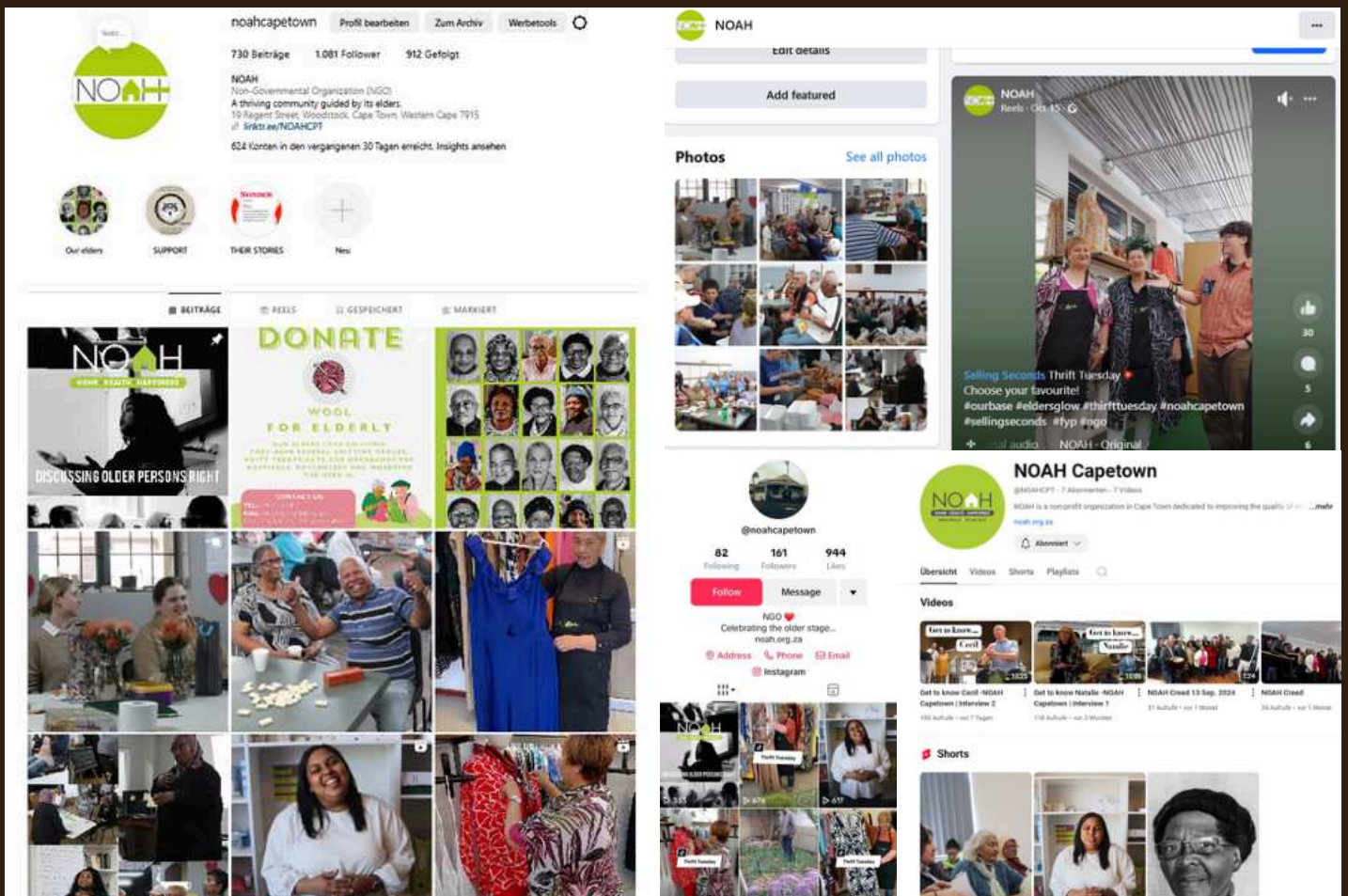
Many people I mentioned work and live at NOAH, which is one of their main spirits. Creating a thriving community guided by its elders. The members can design the community lifestyle by planning events and others in the Action Group. A group of the most joyful people I know who adopted me soon enough and invited me to watch rugby. NOAH members are living independently and are hold on to participate in the community but don't have to. If it is sewing for sold laundry bags, working in the second hand shop or cafe, cleaning and recycling candles or cooking. Noah members keep up the lively and peaceful spirit of NOAH.



The beauty of everyday life

I walk upstairs to the office and put down all my stuff and open my laptop. Most of the time I start by checking our social media platforms and look at how the posts from the day before performed. I'm in charge of the Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok channels. I try to be always up to date with all of our community centers and post about what's going on. Today was for example the International Day of Older People, which is pretty relevant since we work with social pensioners over the age of 60. We started a YouTube campaign and advertised on all of our channels. Being active and frequent is very important and Social Media is very relevant for fundraising. We are always working on increasing our reach and to tell the stories of the elders.

Working at NOAH is a blessing, I am able to learn everyday and grow. After a month working there we had a workshop about personal growth and how to integrate this in your work life. A very fortunate opportunity to be in. Another event was a First Trauma Responder Workshop led by our social worker, also very interesting. In general just talking about challenges and opportunities at NOAH and finding solutions together is very progressing for myself and I can imagine also the company. With working in a Non-Profit-Organisation it is an ongoing mission to keep the company on board and active, because all of what we do is for the greater good for our elders. The environment at NOAH is filled with warmth and joy. I felt welcomed from the first day. Everybody has so much passion going into NOAH.



NOAH's various facilities

Continuing the day I will join and document daily activities for example the candle making workshops or knitting groups. What I love the most is that no day will be the same, even if activities might repeat themselves. I always write about different topics because I will not post the exact same thing twice. Indeed this can be challenging too, but it is most definitely worth it. During the day I might be in a meeting or visit the other centers in Athlone or Khayelitsha but most of the time I'm in Woodstock (suburbs in Capetown).

Last week was the first time I went to Khayelitsha, a more rural area and a township. I was blessed with so many kind people greeting me and letting me participate in their routines. The challenge was not speaking the same language since Xhosa is the main language in Khayelitsha. Afrikaans crosses my daily life more often and it was difficult too but since there are similarities to German and Dutch it is easier for me to adapt and understand parts. With Xhosa, I am listening to a language with sounds I never heard before. I felt kind of bad not being able to communicate and others translating for me, because of me being in a foreign country I feel like it's a part of appreciation to adapt and for example learn new languages. I did try, but I might mention learning languages is not a gift given to me. Anyway I will continue learning!

Back to Khayelitsha, similar to our other centers they have a clinic and second hand shop. One speciality is their kitchen, where they cook daily for over 20 center members. Often with donations, collected in collaboration with nearby supermarkets. In opposition to Woodstock the center members don't live in NOAH houses but mostly with their families in surrounding areas. The same as in the Athlone center, which is the newest! On the property of Caritas Capetown the Athlone center creates a social meeting point for our elders. The centers differ quite a lot from each other and it is very fascinating to visit each of them.



Event in Woodstock



Workshop in Khayelitsha



Workshop in Athlone

coming to an end..

Continuing my routine, at around 4pm sooner or later I will fetch all my stuff and continue the way home. Now it's all up to me. Most of the time I will cook, rest and get some household work done until the day is soon finished already. On Thursday I will go from work straight to Clifton Beach to play volleyball with my housemate Jared, his family and friends. I started playing Cricket with my colleague Candice every Wednesday and Friday. Sometimes I visit the city center in the evening and go to art exhibitions. Whatever I'm up to I will end up in my bed and the next day is following.

Overall I'm pretty happy here and I appreciate every not so spectacular day. I'm grateful for my great colleagues, my kind roommates, all the other people I meet on the way and for the situation I'm allowed to be in.

In the following I want to share a quote with you. I was recommended this book ("Small Country" by Gaël Faye) by a friend of mine and it describes the afterhours so beautiful.

"NOTHING IS SWEETER THAN THE MOMENT

when the sun sinks behind the ridge of mountains.

*Dusk brings with it the cool evening and warm colours that deepen
with every minute.*

This is the hour that marks a change in rhythm.

*People head home from work at a leisurely pace, the night watchmen
come on duty and neighbours sit out in front of their gates.*

There is silence before the toads and crickets start up.

*Often, it's the perfect time for a game of football, for sitting with a
friend on the low wall above the gutter, for gluing your ear to the
radio or for visiting a neighbour.*

*With the tedium of the afternoon finally ebbing away, it would be in
that interval, in those slow-moving minutes, that ..."*

Enough practise let's talk about theory

When I arrived here in Capetown I didn't know what to expect. But I was surprised with all the kindness welcoming me just like a old friend. I was also confronted with a lot of homeless people and shelters in a few areas of the city, you cannot overlook them. While the shelters in the city centre and surrounding are housing maybe hundreds of people, so named townships in more rural areas house millions of people living in shelters out of all kinds of materials. For example Khayelitsha has around 1.5 Million citizen. A crazy number compared to my hometown with 400.000 citizen.

I talked with a lot of people about the political and environmental situation. With members at work, colleagues, roomates and even uber drivers. As I noticed people are way more open to talk about more than small talk. I've had good talks from the start on and I am so keen on learning more about my new home.

At first I was more reserved and scared, because many people warned me and told me "be safe", but I soon noticed I will not get to the point where I want to be if I let myself be intruded by the fear of something happening at any second. I went on walks but checked with the people surrounding me if it was safe. I hiked together with an experienced friend. I went swimming in the ocean but when it was calm. I did go out in the evening but rarely alone. I traveled but took an Uber.

You may have to compromise but this is not an excuse to stay home and people telling you to be safe, care for you and I'm very grateful for them.

I want to live freely so I had to create my space.

And living freely is not an opportunity many South Africans have due to poverty, unemployment, colonial structures etc. .

Meanwhile I have the freedom to choose to do so...

So I learned to live with what makes me feel good. I soon realized I'm not really comfortable being served in various situations. For example, somebody packing my groceries at the supermarket and all over with the systematic problems of how many black or colored people work in service and how many white people work in manager positions or offices. To show my independence and kind of flee the structure of previous times I tried to avoid being served. I used to check out cashiers at the supermarket, soon went over to using buses, helped prepare food rather than getting food prepared and showed my deep gratitude whenever I couldn't help. Of course this will not change anything, but I'm trying to explain how I coped with the occasionally uncomfortable situation I found myself in.

Reflection over time

It's been over a month now. My circles are growing wider, my walks are getting longer and complexer. Which is actually a great reference on how circles grow. In the beginning I walked the same streets up and down, eventually taking a wrong turn and panicing immediately. After a few months I know in which parts I can walk freely and in which parts I should walk faster or walk around. I can get a feeling of when it is too risky and walk an extra mile.

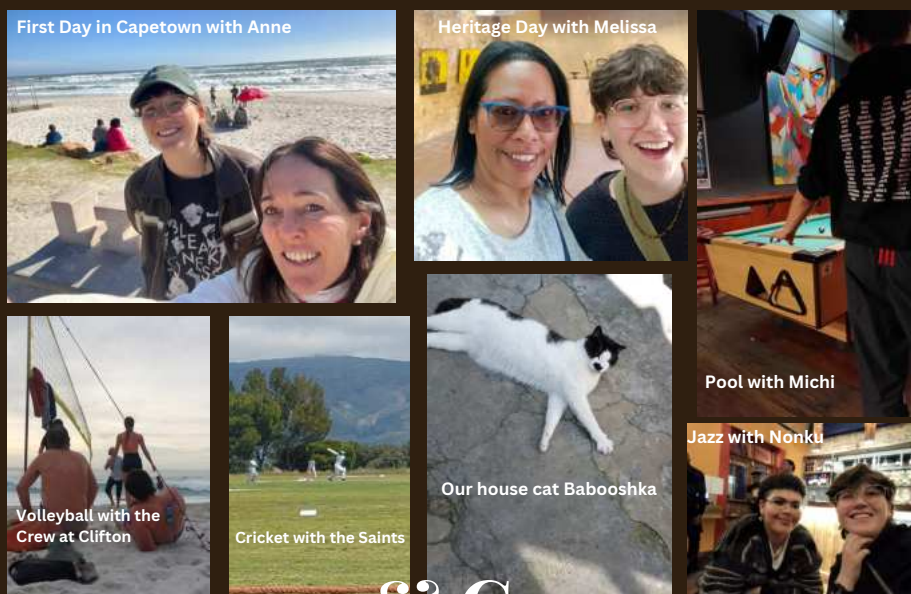
Even if I might not feel like it, my social circles are getting bigger, getting to know people more intensely. The English language itself is getting more complicated, I'm starting to get tired of it. I would much rather write this in German and be able to say exactly what I want to say, but I don't. All of this is the challenge I wanted, I might actually face it.

So I will have to accept talking around a word instead of finding just one. I have to accept, all of this is not growing at the pace I would love it to be. And I have to expect that I can not build what I built in many years in one month...

I have to be kind to myself and to learn not to set expectations utopically high.

After nearly 3 months I can say I'm very glad I built a good suport system and keep myself busy. I am looking forwards to actually seeing more of the country and of capetown, since I feel like I meet more people than places ^^

My Social Circle



& Co.

I don't want to talk for much longer but I invite you
(I guess mostly my German audience) to read a poem I wrote about my beginning here.

In kaltes Wasser springen

*Tanz in meinen Zimmer,
genieße Zeit mit mir,
wünschte das wäre für immer,
aber lebe im jetzt und hier.*

*Lebe im Moment,
in dem meine Finger brennen,
will rennen, will fliegen, will sehen,
was hinter den Bergen vor mir liegt.*

*Bin in einer anderen Welt,
weil mich nichts mehr hält.*

*Will von hier nach dort,
teleportier mich am liebsten an den nächsten Ort,
den die Welt für mich bereithält.*

*Verschmelz' mit den Sinnen,
schau, zu welchen Seen sie mich hinbringen.*

*Von den Klippen schau ich aufs Wasser hinunter,
bin gut gelaunt, bin munter.*

Stille Wasser sind tief, meinen sie alle.

*Ich spring in den Ozean und es fühlt sich an wie eine Falle.
Stille durchbrechen, sprechen von was mich Leben abhält.*

*Versinkt unter Wasser,
kurz bevor ich am Wasserspiegel dran war.*

*Nur noch Meeresrauschen,
wo sind die Quallen, die neben mir tauchten.
Wo sind alle hin, wo ist der Trubel, wo ist der Sinn.*

Bin nurnoch ich hier?

Schwimm und schwimm und schwimm.

Küste so weit weg, wo gehör ich hin?

Schwimm und schwimm und schwimm.

Wo bin ich gestrandet?

Wer gehört das Land, auf dem ich bin?

Betrübt, verwirrt, kein klarer Kopf.

Nur noch kaltes Wasser das herab tropft.

Und weil es sich so schön anbietet, schaut doch mal auf dem "NOAH Capetown" YouTube Channel vorbei, dort sprechen ein paar von den Leuten, die ich erwähnt habe, für sich selbst :)

Peace out!

