**Position Paper Autonomous Practices (2018 → 2022)**

WdKA’s Autonomous Practices are concerned with **critical self-organisation, rethinking autonomy** **and** practically **experimenting with autonomy**.

The notion of autonomy does not only exist in art, but autonomy also is a **philosophical, political, scientific and technological** concept. It concerns **social independence** and **systems** in the most general sense. [Footnote: **Outside the** Dutch and **Western European art context,** “**autonomy**” **is not necessarily linked to the arts, but** more closely identified with **critical theory** and political activism.]

For WdKA’s Autonomous Practices, “autonomy” is not an answer, but an open question. Studying Autonomous Practices at WdKA means, for students and teachers, to ask how autonomy can be understood & how and for whom it can be practiced and created. This is an open-ended, collective and **long-term critical research project**.

WdKA’ Autonomous Practices investigate **"autonomy" in relation to bottom-up practices that position themselves as interdependent, self-directed, and often without predefined goals** whose **methods of working** are constantly being **(re)invented and tested in practice:**

* **Autonomy can be practiced in any discipline** such as **cooking, critically driven non-institutional education, activism, technology, hacking** and any other self-organized **initiatives, including schools, restaurants, shops, venues, day-care centres, etc.** Working in such spaces outside the art system is an **essential component of autonomous practices, and not merely a side job or failed artistic career.**
* **Autonomous Practices are** taking place in  **informal**, often **underground settings**, involve **experimentation** and **new initiatives**, and are often run by and for people with **no access to the established system of cultural institutions** and **networks.**
* Autonomous Practices are based on **critical reflection** of what autonomy is and could be. They do **not mean hyper-individualism**, but are **based on cooperation and solidarity.**
* **Autonomy** is **embodied** in an **ecology** where **everything is connected: people, nature, materials, technologies.**
* **Autonomous Practices are open-ended and not necessarily focused on problem-solving.**

Central questions for WdKA’s Autonomous Practices are:

* **How can one develop an autonomous practice** and **sustainably operate on economic, social and ecological levels? How can autonomy be experienced as a way of experimenting with alternative economies and alternative models of living, working and being together?**
* How can **Autonomous Practices function locally as well as globally?**
* How can **autonomy be defined as being embedded, embodied, implicated?**
* How can an autonomous practice mean to **negotiate contradictions?**
* **Autonomous practices often depart from personal/intrinsic/group urgencies. How do they relate to larger urgencies outside this group, in the larger societal context? Which groups are seen and which are being overlooked in autonomous practices? –** This concerns **issues of privilege, neutrality, relations of power.**
* **How important is the "art" label for autonomous practices? Should we remove the "art" label/association from them** altogether**? How can we dissassociate 'autonomous practices' from fine art, particularly in the Netherlands, and shift them towards cultural production/cultural work** in general**?**
* **How do autonomous practices relate to activist** and social **practices?**

**WdKA's Autonomous Practices reflect on self-organised practices, not only in the educational content but also in the form of its curriculum. WdKA's Autonomous Practices education** therefore **increasingly takes place outside the school.** The challenge for **WdKA's Autonomous Practices** is to translate its **focus on research and experiment** and on **non-institutional self-directed initiatives** into **new curricula** that do justice to its subject and concerns.

**Points to discuss:**

* What is the **position of** the research project **Autonomy Lab** within Autonomous Practices? How does its work differ from the research done in the whole of WdKA’s Autonomous Practices? Or should “Autonomous Practices” be renamed “Autonomy Lab”?
* **How specific should this position paper be?** Is it over-specific? Would it suffice to simply say: WdKA’s Autonomous Practices critically research autonomy?
* Should we **list the different types of autonomy** that were identified in Autonomy Lab’s research, such as: bodily economy, technological autonomy, economic autonomy, political autonomy?
* Is it an issue that this position paper currently does **not reference class, gender, intersectionality** and their **current theories**?
* Which other **words and terminology are missing** in this position paper?
* **Which hidden (outspoken or implied) normativities exist in this position paper?**
* **How inclusive is the concept of collectivity in Autonomous Practices** and what does it exclude**? Could this become an overall research question in & for the Autonomous Practices curriculum?**
* **What are the - explicit and hidden - normativities of our curriculum, of autonomy, of collective practices? How can we identify them, reflect them, criticize them, deal with or even overcome them?**

We want *Food* to be a part of WdKA’s art and design curriculum.