

Propositions in Art Projects of Casco - Office for Art, Design and Theory



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## Summary

In 2016 I started working at Casco - Office for Art Design and Theory Design and Theory as an intern, and later as Community Coordinator. Casco defines itself as an open and public space for artistic research and experiments, focussed on the *commons* (as explained in the thesis). The projects, exhibitions, events and publications that are produced for, and in collaboration with Casco, deal with contemporary issues that play a part in a predominantly western society. Casco is internationally known for its artistic research on the commons. In this thesis I analyze two of Casco's art projects; *Site for Unlearning (Art Institute)* and *Parasite Lottery*. Both projects have questioned and critiqued the valuation of labor in the arts, and have made propositions to change this valuation of labor. In this research I determine whether Casco has taken these proposals at heart and has made changes to their organization, based on my experience working for Casco.

## Introduction

Casco - Office for Art Design and Theory Design and Theory defines itself as an open and public space for artistic research and experiments (Casco, about). Casco considers this artistic practice as engaging with the world in an investigative, imaginative and inventive way (Casco, about). The projects, exhibitions, events and publications that are produced for, and in collaboration with Casco, deal with contemporary issues that play a part in a predominantly western society. On the Casco website this “mission” is explained: “The aim of our work is to contribute to forming non-capitalist cultures and possibilities for life for which we believe art could play an essential role, not as an insular avant-garde but in alignment with other initiatives and social movements” (Casco, Mission). In recent years Casco started focussing on the *commons*, which is described as follows: “The commons, as we mean it here, refers to more than a common resource pool—it is rather a value system and general governing principle, a way of living and working, an alternative to capitalist modes wherein the mutual blindness of the private and the public lead to one dominating another” (Casco, Casco Art Institute). In 2016 I started an internship at Casco, during the time of *We are the Time Machines, Time and Tools for Commoning*. As a part of this exhibition the community was invited to engage with the exhibition’s theme and organize a public program, through which I became involved. The community led program had a focus on feminist and political activist subjects. Casco’s own public program focused more on the role of art and art organization in commoning - the shared use of cultural and natural resources. The subjects of reproductive and (in)visible labour, the questioning of structures that have become habits, and commoning are the primary focus in ongoing projects, publications and exhibitions. In October 2016 I became a permanent member of the team as an Assistant Coordinator and in February 2017 I became Community and Office Coordinator. During both the internship and as a member of the team I was involved with coordinating the public program, assisting the production of the exhibitions and the infrastructure of the office.

During my time at Casco I became interested in the way this institute intertwines art with feminism, activism, community and the underlying organization. I found that the mode of working at Casco is personal, and demands an interest in the theoretical

knowledge that forms the base of this organization. Feminism has a vital influence in both the exhibitions and the organization of Casco. Through different art projects feminist thoughts are implemented in the organizational structures and in the community of Casco, as will become clear in this thesis. I came to realize that working in an environment that is constructed on a feminist base can create a conscious and caring mode of working.

Although I am in favor of this mode of working, I was also confronted with the difficulties of attempting to create this feminist working environment amidst a capitalist and patriarchal society. During the one and a half years I was involved with Casco, I worked on several exhibitions and projects that addressed these contradictory realms. In these exhibitions and projects - for instance 'We Are the Time Machines', 'Parasite Lottery' and 'Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons' - Casco proposes ways in which art institutes - whether they are galleries, art collectives, museums or other forms of organizations - could maintain an activist mentality and work towards an anti-capitalist society (Casco, Mission). In the international art community Casco became well known for this mode of working, and sharing their ideas through Casco's exhibitions and publications. Casco makes these propositions by using their own *modus operandi* as a model for an anti-capitalist practice. This is for instance done by showing excerpts from team meetings (*Casco Art Institute*), showing e-mail correspondence between team members (*We Are the Time Machines*), and shearing their opinions about the art funding system in the Netherlands (*Parasite Lottery*). By exhibiting small parts of internal communication that represent Casco's organization, Casco creates a vision of how an anti-capitalist organization should be working. Because Casco proposes these initiatives, I want to research whether in reality Casco takes their own advice to heart. In this thesis I will pose the question: *How does Casco apply the propositions they give to other (art) institutions through their exhibitions and projects, to their own organization?*

I will be looking at two works that discuss labor in art organizations. The first will be 'Site for Unlearning (art institute)', which was on display during 'We are the Time Machines: Time and Tools for Commoning'. This work is a part of the ongoing project in collaboration with artist Annette Krauss. With this project Casco rethinks the function of the office and the exhibition space. According to the website, Casco works towards the

abolition of the kind of office in which the majority of the activity goes towards production and management. A space was created that researches the line between office and exhibition space. In this space collective study, reproductive labor, and co-management are encouraged, with a focus on incorporating the audience into the own practice (Casco, *We are the Time Machines*). The work that was visible during that exhibition consists of pads with posters that the visitors could tear off. According to the text on the pads “Site for Unlearning (Art Organization) is an ongoing, collaborative research project for unlearning specific art organizational habits, normative behaviors, and ways of thinking in light of the value of the commons”. These posters show 10 exercises for unlearning and give insight into what the Casco team, in collaboration with Krauss, have been practicing. The topics are: Meeting, Off-Balancing chairs, Assembly, Cleaning Together, Digital Cleaning, Reading Together, Rewriting Maintenance Manifesto, Care Manifesto, Mood Color, Property Relations, Time Diary, and Passion and Obstacle (Krauss).

In this thesis I analyze the text from the “cleaning together” exercise, because I consider cleaning a concrete example of feminist reproductive labour that is undervalued in most working environments. As shows on their mission statement (Casco, mission) there is a focus on feminist practices and reproductive labor as a part of their anti-capitalist practice in general. As an intern at Casco this was the exercise was the first practice that I was introduced to which utilizes feminism to question modes of working in art institutions. Therefore I conduct a text analysis of the exercise to research the way the cleaning routine is structured and how the staff feels about this.

The second work is one of the songs artist Wok the Rock made for the Parasite Lottery project. This project was a reaction to the Dutch funding system for the arts. The website states: “The conception of Parasite Lottery was prompted by growing concerns regarding funding practices in the art world, and more specifically the economic situation of arts in the Netherlands. Post-crisis austerity measures included particularly draconian budget cuts in the cultural sector, which were legitimized by the portrayal of artists as “parasites”” (Parasite Lottery, About). The idea was to merge the Indonesian lottery system *Arisan* with a lottery for art organizations, inspired by the Dutch *BankGiro Loterij*. The project consisted of four lottery draw events at Casco, SMBA, Das

Spectrum and Platform BK. Every organization paid for a lottery ticket with an amount of money that was determined by what they could afford, and during each event a different organization would win the €1000,00 prize money. This prize was called a “fee for deviation”, where the term deviation was reclaimed and interpreted as a positive and necessary way to tend to activities that are deviate from the productive work that *needs* to be done. The fee for deviation allowed organizations for instance to make time and space for acts of self-care, or for inspiration.

The project involved multiple elements. The lottery was drawn at four events held at each of the four participating organizations. During these events there were talks on the cultural funding policies in the Netherlands, and the effects on the artists and arts workers. Wok the Rock wrote four songs about the themes of the events. The songs were played by the Berlin based, Indonesian singer Frau, who performed them during the first event at Casco. The songs were released on vinyl, accompanied by four comics. I will analyze the song “We Are Parasites”, which discusses artists being labeled as “parasites” by Dutch right-wing politicians. The song argues that while these politicians ask for more quality, they actually demand more quantity and productivity.

The reason I will analyze this song is that I find these lyrics exemplary for the struggle that Casco and many other cultural institutions have to deal with. Most of these institutions, including Casco, exist because they are funded by the government and companies like Stichting Doen. Because of this funding they have to write funding applications, and, to a certain degree, they must meet a standard set by the organizations that grant the funding.

In the conclusion, I compare the two chapters, as both the works are based on the critique of valuation of labor in art organizations. The difference between the works is that the *Unlearning* work critiques the internal structure. It asks the team to reflect on and change the way they look at reproductive work, with its gendered and hierarchical character. In the *Parasite Lottery* song text, the critique is more external and criticizes the way art funding is structured. The project asks the Casco team and collaborating art organizations to reflect on, and change this structure, through the lottery system. I will determine whether Casco's own labor within the organization, towards an anti-capitalist society, is done according to their own advice.

## Theoretical Framework

Casco's practice focusses on the commons and commoning, according to their mission statement (Casco, mission statement). Because this mode of working is at the core of every project and exhibition, it is important to have an idea of this concept, before starting the analysis. *In Feminism and the Politics of the Common in an Era of Primitive Accumulation (2010)* Silvia Federici talks about the Commons, and makes clear that working towards a common and equal base of organization comes from a feminist perspective. Commoning is the shared use of cultural and natural resources. According to Federici, feminists refer to a standpoint shaped by the struggle against sexual discrimination and reproductive work, which can be seen as the basis for our society. She goes as far as saying: "[...]by which every model of social organization must be tested" (Federici, 139).

Reproductivity, as mentioned by Federici, will be the focus in the first chapter. In her article *The Reproduction of Labor Power in the Global Economy and the Unfinished Feminist Revolution (2008)* Federici elaborates on the concept of reproduction as a feminist practice. Federici writes about the Marxist ideas that criticize capitalism, but failed to acknowledge the importance of domestic labor, which was mostly unpaid and done by women. According to *Sociology of Work: An Encyclopedia*, reproductive work is the unpaid and invisible activities in the home, also described as "maintaining daily life and reproducing the next generation of workers". Feminist scholars argue that this work should be recognized as labor that is critical to continue a functioning society (Smith, *Sociology of Work*). Federici goes further in saying that reproductive work is not the free reproduction of ourselves. Directly or indirectly it is waged, but subject to the conditions imposed by the capitalist organization (Federici, 99) It is not a free activity, although it is often seen that way, or regarded as labor that is lower on the social scale. This is something that bell hooks also writes about in *Feminism is for Everybody*, especially in the chapter about Feminist Class Struggle. hooks writes that during the first wave feminist movement, there was a great issue of class separation between women. While well-educated white women were on the verge of creating a more equal access to power as men, women from lower classes were neglected in this movement, as all focus was on these privileged women. Their claim was that that they should have the



same rights to work as men, while in that time a great majority of women did work, but this work was low-paid and below their educational skills. This type of work - mostly reproductive labor - was generally frowned upon and the elite groups preferred to stay at home rather than do this work, making the fight for equal rights to work a class struggle. Only privileged women would have the capacity to fight for work that would allow them to be self-sufficient (hooks, 38). As privileged women obtained better jobs, the reproductive work at home was taken over by working class women, and black women/women of color, as mentioned before. This made them feel left behind in the feminist fight, and the growing assumption that feminism was only for the white privileged women they were working for (hooks, 42). Hooks cites Rita Mae Brown when saying that class is much more than Marxist definition of relation to the means of production, also mentioned by Federici. Class involved behavior, basic assumptions, how one is taught to behave, expectancy of yourself and others, concept of future, how you understand problems and solve them (hooks, 39). This concept of class is also important when we look at the valuation of this reproductive work in an economic framework, as I will discuss in the chapter about the *Cleaning Together* exercise. The “basic assumptions”, how we perceive problems, and how we solve them are themes that return throughout this thesis. I will ask questions of how problems (reproductive labor and capitalist productivity in the arts) are perceived through the two artworks, and the labor that is done to solve these problems. Connecting to the feminist history of reproductive labor, I cite Nicola Yeates in her work *A Global Political Economy of Care*, in which she connects this history of class struggle to a contemporary situation; one in which the transnational outsourcing of care is turning into a worldwide business model. Women from the poorer parts of the world travel to the richer parts of the world in order to earn money to pay for their families at home, repeating the class-struggle around reproductive work on a global scale. To have a notion of this class, race and gender struggle is important while discussing the importance of reproductive labor as a feminist practice, like it is done in the *Unlearning* project.

Continuing with this concept of care I will shed light on the other side, in which care is used as a solution to the problem of the request for more capitalist productivity in the arts, as discussed in the *We Are Parasites* text. According to the Parasite Lottery

website the budget cuts have created a situation in which artists lack the funds that are necessary to produce new art, or to continue the conditions of their own existence (Parasite Lottery, about). In his text *The New Geography of Work. Power to the Precarious* Andrew Ross refers to the incorporation of care in the arts while he points to the precarious position of labor in art. He argues that the artists, in response to autonomy, have a high level of self-exploitation. In the second chapter I will argue this is also the case at Casco, where artists and art workers are expected and agree to work be overprotective, work more hours than they should according to their contract, or agree to join a project, although they don't actually have time or money to do so. Ross sees a change in the role that governments take in this process, as artists are increasingly pushed into welfare systems, like workers in low-end services (OnCurating, 09). There is a clear connection to the before mentioned class struggle, because through this system artists and art-workers are forced to rely on care that is provided by the state, instead of being well paid for their labor. Similar to lower-class women taking up less-paid reproductive labor, in order to provide for their family, artists are forced to over-produce, or take on side jobs to be able to continue their art. Ross praises a 'self-organizing precariat', which according to him is a grassroots movement in which care and labor is divided amongst differently educated people (OnCurating, 11), which reminds me of the proposition made in the *Parasites* text. I will analyze whether this proposition actually works when it is initiated by an institution like Casco.

## Method

At Casco artists engage in artistic research on the commons. Through exhibitions and art projects propositions are made for how art organizations could pursue a policy that implements the outcomes of this research to the commons. In this thesis I take a closer look at two examples of projects that are a result of artistic research, in which propositions are given to effect change within an art institution. Through my own research I determine whether Casco applies these propositions to their own organization. Both the projects that I research have text-based elements in which these propositions are presented. I make an analysis of the these texts and the context they are presented in, and distill the critique that is made of the current situation and the changes that are proposed. With this information I analyze whether Casco's organization uphold's their own advice, given through these propositions. In doing so I draw from my own experience as a member of Casco's team.

Because I will analyze the text, the form and the context, I will conduct a discourse analysis, as described in the text by Rosalind Gill. Gill describes four key features of a discourse analysis, which I find fitting to my research question: A discourse analysis should take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledges; The ways in which we understand the world are historically and culturally specific, and relative; Knowledge is constructed, determined by social processes; A commitment to exploring the ways that knowledges - the social construction of people, phenomena or problems - are linked to practices (Gill 173). Gill argues that in discourse analysis different questions should be asked, related to the above mentions elements (or themes). Then a text should coded and read skeptically, by which is meant that the own assumptions should be interrogated. The text it should be read with the constant questions: 'Why am I reading this this way?', 'What features of the text produce this reading?', 'How is it organized to make it persuasive?' (Gill 178). Inspired by the themes mentioned by Gill, I came up with questions that I use as guide in my analysis. In the following chapters I will answer what kind of information is given in this work, by who and how it is presented. Then I answer what the current situation according to the text is, and what the critique on that situation is. When that situation is established I will research what labor and action for change is proposed, and by who this labor should be done.

Ultimately I will determine whether Casco has taken these proposals at heart and has done the labor that is needed to accomplish the requested change of the current situation.

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## SITE FOR UNLEARNING

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### 3. Cleaning Together

#### Unlearning Exercise

We clean our office together every Monday morning after the team meeting. We divide the tasks, put on music (sometimes), and set the time for around 30 minutes. It's important to begin cleaning together and feel we are collectively responsible.

#### What to Unlearn

Undervaluing reproductive labor; hierarchies and unequal division in domestic labor in terms of who does what; and making reproductive labor the last priority and not finding any satisfaction in it.



#### Transcription

6 October 2015  
Annette, Binna, Björn, Ester,  
Jason, Lara, Sazne, Suzanne,  
Ying, Yolande

YI  
So, we have cleaned  
collectively a few times,  
because we would like  
to unlearn undervaluing  
reproductive labor. Through  
collective cleaning, do we  
try to revalue it? How has  
it worked?

E  
It hasn't. I already value  
cleaning a lot, so it didn't  
change anything for me.

SU  
Well, for me I think I value  
that we did it collectively.  
It was a team effort.

L  
It depends. Okay, as an  
intern, I clean when you do  
the important stuff. That's  
when this labor starts to make  
no sense to me. I think it's  
a really powerful thing to do  
this together.

YI  
That points to the collective  
aspect of it, which is crucial  
to revaluing it. I agree that  
maybe, individually, I feel  
the same about cleaning as a  
job, or cleaning in general.  
But doing it collectively does  
something to the implications  
of the work of cleaning within  
an institution.

YO  
Yeah, I also think we are  
forgetting that. We're trying  
to think about the things  
that we internalize, because  
even if I value cleaning as an  
activity, I still make it a  
last priority.

(art organization)

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Image 1: Site for Unlearning, Exercise 3. Cleaning Together (2015)

## Chapter 1: Site for Unlearning (Art Institute)

In this chapter I will analyze the poster *Site for Unlearning: 3. Cleaning Together*, which is shown on the previous page. This poster was a part of the *We Are the Time Machines: Time and Tools for Commoning* exhibition, curated by Casco's director Binna Choi (Choi). I find this exercise a concrete example of valuing reproductive work, which is as stated before, a very important part of Casco's anti-capitalist practice and is considered as a part of the commoning practice.

The work consists of a *tear pad*, a pad of A3 posters that the visitors can tear off and take with them. The pads were on the walls of the second room of the exhibition, which was named: *Office for Unlearning Business/Busyness*. The posters - like the entrance to the exhibition space - are for free. This work is a part of the ongoing research project *Site for Unlearning (Art Organization)*, which is a collaboration between artist Annette Krauss and Casco. Krauss and the Casco team research how to unlearn *busyness* as an irrevocable part of creating a business. According to her website, Krauss' work is about the intersection of art, politics and everyday life. In her work Krauss looks at how our bodies are shaped by informal knowledge and normalization processes, how we use objects, how we engage socially and how all this influences the way we act in the world (Site for Unlearning, about). The website of this project explains that Krauss searches for a way to rethink the notion of the office and exhibition space. Spaces like the art institute tend to focus on management and production. In this project Krauss reconfigures the Casco office to use the space to actively and collectively study, do reproductive labor and co-management, by which Krauss both addresses and incorporates the public (Casco website, site for unlearning). Therefore of the room blurs the line between an office and an exhibition space. Besides the tear pads there is also a long table with additional information, cards, pencils, a communal laptop which is attached to a printer/copy machine that is placed in the room. Visitors can use these devices to collect and share information on the commons. With the time that passed, the office/exhibition room gradually grew as a kind of bulletin board full of information on the commons and related topics - in between the tear pads.

The poster consists of four different kinds of texts. The top of the poster shows the title of the project, then the number and title of the exercise. Underneath the

exercise title the exercise is explained: "*Unlearning Exercise*

*We clean our office together every Monday morning after the team meeting. We divide the tasks, put on music (sometimes), and set the time for around 30 minutes. It's important to begin cleaning together and feel we are collectively responsible*". Underneath the exercise is the *What to Unlearn* text. This text goes more into detail about what the goal of the exercise is, and the reason for it. Tilted sideways a transcription of a conversation about the personal experiences of the exercise is visible. The team members share what they found important in this exercise, what did or did not appeal to them and whether it had changed their behavior or thoughts about cleaning together. Only their names are stated, their job isn't. Only Lara mentions that she's an intern, because this is important to share her experience of the hierarchy in the labor that is done. What is interesting about this exercise is that it is not really an assignment, but more a sharing of experiences and an example by Casco that the audience could learn from. On the other hand, by sharing the posters so freely and easily, there seems to be an expectation that the visitors will take the posters with them and incorporate the knowledge that is shared into their own practice. Because each poster contains a different subject it's possible to choose the matters that speak to the visitors most. The aim of the project is to create awareness of busyness in art organizations by creating an office-like space in the exhibition. As a part of unlearning these 'busy' patterns visitors can take the posters and follow the example of Casco. Amongst the general public these visitors are people who are interested in rethinking institutions and are willing to take on labor in order to change structures that people in businesses are used to. For this particular poster the aim is to create awareness about the reproductive labor in their own personal or professional environment. The aim is that some of them will take matters into their own hands and follow Casco's example by starting a collective cleaning routine, without hierarchy, accompanied by music.

On the information poster is explained where the themes of the exercises come from and how it is related to feminism: "This sense of busyness stems from our habit of undervaluing certain reproductive tasks such as (digital) cleaning, cooking, and hosting, as well as non-public administrative work, maintenance work, organizational tasks, and relations" (Unlearning, 4). With the exercises the *Unlearning* project tries to provide

other organizations - and art organizations in particular - with propositions of how they could incorporate a similar working method in their organization, in order to value reproductive work. This is necessary because there is still a habit of outsourcing and undervaluing reproductive work in many offices. As Silvia Federici argues in her article *The Reproduction of Labor Power in the Global Economy* feminists in the 60's and 70's showed that this domestic labor was the center of the capitalist economy, yet remained unpaid. Federici explains that feminists established 'reproductive work' as involving a broad range labor, broader than just the consumption of commodities. Bodies had to be cared for, food had to be prepared, clothes and houses had to be washed and cleaned. According to Federici the feminists recognized the importance of this reproductive and women's labor in the capitalist working environment, and thereby started rethinking the history and fundamental categories of capitalist development and class struggle. In this rethinking, the notion grew that capitalism is not necessarily identifiable with waged, contractual work and that therefore there is a connection between the devaluation of reproductive work and women's social positions (Federici, 96). This class struggle is an important value in this exercise and can be translated to the non-hierarchical element in the outcome of the cleaning exercise. No matter one's role in the organization, the whole team joins the cleaning session together. On this specific poster the unlearning exercise is: "Undervaluing reproductive labor; hierarchies and unequal division in domestic labor in terms of who does what; and making reproductive labor the last priority and not finding any satisfaction in it" (Image 1). It becomes clear that there is disagreement with the way reproductive labor is valued in Casco's organization at the start of this project, which is positioned as a case study to implicate other organizations. Apparently, up to the start of this exercise the cleaning has been divided by rules of hierarchy, which means cleaning is not of equal priority (and less enjoyed) as other tasks and is often done - which is argued in the *transcription* part of the poster by Lara - by the person who has the least "important" tasks. This creates a binary of people who's time is valued as *important* and are therefore excused to do these tasks, and people who's time is considered less valuable and therefore take on the reproductive tasks.

With the exercise Krauss tries to let the team unlearn this undervaluing of reproductive labor. The exercise proposes to clean together after every Monday's team



meeting. The tasks that are divided are: vacuuming, mopping, cleaning the toilet, the kitchen, surfaces of the office, doing the laundry, bringing away glass/plastic. By starting these tasks together, accompanied by music, the exercise reframes this reproductive labor as a communal effort, done and enjoyed by all - no matter the hierarchy of the team. Each week the tasks are done by different people, so the less attractive tasks are not always done by the same person. By working together on these cleaning tasks and incorporating them into every week's schedule, no matter the busyness in the office, the team learns to value the labor that is necessary to be able to work. Valuing the reproductive work can be seen as a feminist practice, as reproductive work is mostly seen as women's work.

The Casco team has incorporated this exercise in their own weekly schedule. The exhibition opened in 2015, but this project started in 2014. When I left Casco in 2017 we would still clean together on most Monday, so Casco reached the goal that was set by this exercise. I did notice that on busy moments, for instance right before the opening of exhibitions or projects, we would be less strict about cleaning. There would, however, always be conversations about this, in which we recognized our busyness and lack of ability to clean. As can be seen in the *transcription* section, the element that appears most valuable for the team is that it is a group effort. Some team members already saw cleaning as a valuable task, that should not be underestimated, but the fact that they did it as a group faced the issue of hierarchy. As the intern Lara points out; interns were usually the ones who would clean when the other team members were too busy with the "important stuff". As team member Yolande points out in the *transcription* part: the team came to realize that this exercise is about internalizing the value of the labour as an organization. Even if they would value the work, they would still prioritize it last, as Lara points out. By making it a team effort, it becomes a shared priority - no matter the busyness. As an intern myself I at first did not understand why we would give our precious time to cleaning. That was where the power of this work lies: in busy times we would always have discussions about the time we had for cleaning and about how high the priority for cleaning was. Therefore, I find this project successful: This project has caused a structural change in the organization. Through these conversations and the labor, we learned that reproductive work is a necessity in a productive working

environment, and learned to value the work that needs to be done in order to create a productive working space. As a result the team still cleans together on most Mondays.

## Chapter 2: Parasite Lottery



Image 2: Parasite Lottery: 'We are Parasites' (2016)

In May 2016 Casco started the project *Parasite Lottery*, initiated by Indonesian artist Wok the Rock, who worked at Casco as artist in residence in 2016. On his website he is described as: "Wok the Rock is an artist interested in experimenting with collective space, interdisciplinary works, and interventions into contemporary culture by using curatorial aesthetics as a speculative platform for his artistic practice." (Wok the Rock,

about). As stated in the introduction chapter, this project was started as a response to the Dutch funding system for the arts. The project entailed a series of lottery drawing events for four art organizations; Casco, Das Spectrum, Platform BK and SMBA, and a music album containing four songs and comics. The music album consisted of two 7" vinyl records, in a "centerfold" cardboard sleeve. The records contain four songs written by Wok the Rock and sung by Indonesian singer Frau (Leilani Hermiasih), each accompanied by a comic, drawn by Wok the Rock. The vinyl records and comics are sold at Casco for €25,00, but the songs and comics are also a free download on the Parasite Lottery website. The songs were sung by Frau during the opening event at Casco and the comics were distributed during each lottery event. The events were for free and the audience of these events were the members of all the institutions, the community of the institutions and people who are interested in the subject of art funding policies. In reality, the members of the other institutions were less involved with the project than was hoped for. They would not always show up to the events organized by the other institutions and the events at SMBA and Platform BK focused less on the Parasite Lottery and more on their own activities. In conversation with members from Das Spectrum it turned out that they were very busy with their own work and projects, and were therefore hesitant to spend their precious time on a project that was not their own. The project was created with a focus on care and creating awareness of the precarious situation of artists and art workers, after the culture cuts in 2011, so their reaction to the project was in fact a prime example of the project's necessity. One of the reasons that artists were struggling with their time and money was that Halbe Zijlstra, then Dutch State Secretary of Culture, implemented 200 million euro's savings on the culture budget, per year until 2013 (Bockma, De Volkskrant). In 2016 the effects of these cuts were still visible, according to artists collaborating to the Parasite Lottery project, for instance because artists were receiving less subsidies and many art institutions had to shut down, as SMBA and Das Spectrum (both part of the project) later did.

In this chapter I analyze the last song called *We Are Parasites* (image 2). This text is a protest song in which the Dutch situation on art funding is sketched. First I will elaborate more on what the advice is that draws from the *We Are Parasites* text and

connect it to the concept of care as described by Federici and hooks. Then I will analyze whether Casco achieved implementing this advice, based on my experience as an intern and coordinator. Being a “parasite” refers to the way some right-wing politicians - in the song text referred to as “they” - described artists and art workers (in the song referred to as “us”), as explained in the information next to the song text (picture 2). It describes how in 2011 Halbe Zijlstra explained his vision for the Dutch policy on culture, in which he asks for more than quality. In the song it is argued that by asking for more than quality, he is actually just asking for more quantity and productivity. According to the information accompanying the song, an art policy based on care would be better. I will analyze how this song text shows the current situation, asks for change and proposes how to establish this change by analyzing each paragraph and answering the questions I posed in the Method chapter.

The first paragraph starts with “a plot to destruct us” by the before mentioned right-winged politicians. The song accuses them of calling “us” parasites, and therefore calls for action: “let them see”. As if “we” want to show them how parasitical we can be, by organizing ourselves and demonstrating against this accusation. “We stand with three instead of four legs, so let’s see” is the last sentence of the verse. This means that although we are outnumbered, we will stand strong and we try to counteract the decisions of the government, or come up with alternatives for paying the arts.

The second paragraph questions whether these politicians have ever harmed a *parasite* directly, by a policy they have made. I think the intention here is to let the audience think about how much physical and mental harm politics can do to a person. The third phrase is the first time the word parasite is being reclaimed in this song. It shows that the *parasites* are willing to fight back, by turning being a parasite in their favor. The paragraph states that if they ask for more than quality they forget that this will affect them too - since artists are parasites that feed from the ones they live on. In this paragraph is shown that asking the artist for more productivity can be harmful, not only for the artist, but for the whole society.

The third paragraph confronts politicians with their actions. It asks to stop behaving as they think is right for the artists, but start unlearning their quest for fitting artist into their capitalist idea of productivity. They should rather start to “mind our

mindlessness”, by creating a system based on care, so that artists are able to focus on the art, instead of on surviving.

In the fourth paragraph is argued that artists are not able to focus on producing their work, when they have to focus on being able to make a living. Artists and art workers are forced to join forces and rethink how they as artists can survive, which does not allow them to just do their work as artists. It causes uncertainty. Although the whole song is a critique on the current situation of the politics of art funding, this verse can be seen as the most tangible critique: by asking for more than quality, namely a commodity that generates income, it undermines the value of art and the artists, which causes these artists and art workers to feel that they cannot perform their jobs.

The fifth paragraph is in my opinion the most crucial for this research, as it gives a direct proposal for policy change. The first sentence describes that because the ones giving ‘support’ - which has become the organizational jargon to refer to institutional funding for the arts - define what is art and what not, also a certain amount of care should be granted. In the second sentence it is suggested that care should be a fundamental right, but to many “parasites” it is not. Until care is a certainty, we should not “wait and see”, which can be read as a call for action. In the next line this call for action is explained: if they ask for more than quality, which is asking for the “parasites” to produce a commodity, the artists will not agree, but “give them a monstrosity”. In the last line it becomes completely clear that what the proposition of the song is: art should be based on care. I will elaborate further on this concept of care in the arts in this chapter.

“We are parasites, join our paradise” are the last lines, where the public is invited to join the artists in action, in this so-called paradise.

To summarize: in this text the artist gives a call for action, in response to the call for “more than quality” by the government. The artist criticizes the need to make art into an economic commodity, that needs to generate money. In the song it is proposed to let “art’s vows” be based on care. In this song, and the broader Parasite Lottery project, Wok the Rock and Casco show that there is a need for a different system of funding the arts. In the current system artists and institutions need to write detailed applications and reports of the work they have made and sold, the collaboration they’ve made and the

publicity they've gotten. These reports they are judged by a panel of experts who work for the funding bodies, on whether their work reaches a certain level. Also at Casco each year a report is written in which each project, exhibition and publication is reported. For instance, in order to be subsidized by the municipality of Utrecht an annual report must be written about the previous year. In these reports, as stated before, each project, exhibition, and collaboration is described. These applications and reports determine whether - and how much - subsidy is granted to artists and institutions. In 2016, for instance, this resulted in a subsidy cut for the next period, that was rationalized by the following (amongst other arguments): "Casco could define it's role better; now it sits between a presentation institution and a platform for enthusiastic world improvers [...]" (Cultuurnota 2017-2020, 35)

In the Parasite Lottery project the four art institutions won €1000,00. In return each organization hosted an event, during which there was expected to be food, speeches, entertainment and a new lottery draw. The prize money needed to be spent on deviation, which meant it had to be spent on projects that were based on care for the artists. The money had to be used to relieve them of stress, caused by this urge to produce in order to generate money. In the previous section I analyzed the song, and determined what actions should be taken and what labor should be done to protest the government's capitalist view on artistic productivity. I will now answer the this question; whether Casco holds to their own advice?

Casco initiates projects that question the way that organizations are structured and what role care has in that structure. Casco itself is also a subsidized space, that is only subsidized when certain standards are met. What I noticed in my time at Casco is that the amount and quality of the projects and exhibitions remained the same, in order to meet the standards that were agreed upon in the applications, while Casco's team gradually shrunk during the time I was a member. The pressure of producing stayed at a high level, but the team got smaller. Experienced people resigned and some of their places were taken by former interns and other junior staff members, who didn't have their predecessors' experience. I recognized and experienced that team members were stressed and felt that the work was too much. This reminds me of the outsourcing of labor, because the work that had to be done did no seem to be valued enough to hire a

sufficient amount of people to do the work properly. In a way Casco was asking for more than quality as well; the team members were asked to do the work of more experienced people, but got paid less. While Casco is striving towards a non-capitalist society, the reality is that we do live in a capitalist society, where care is based on money. On many occasions the team is asked to work more than the hours that is in their contracts. Like mentioned in the song; the work is very much based on productivity, especially during the build-up and break-down of exhibitions. In this case I conclude that Casco, as an institution that generates work, works in a capitalist mode that they are fighting against; in exchange for money, Casco asks for a high amount of productivity, and - as mentioned by Andrew Ross - this self-exploitation is considered the price of autonomy, or in Casco's case the opportunity to work in the arts. Coming back to the collaborations that are a fundamental part of the modus operandi of Casco, which is shown by extensive lists in funding applications, also here it is shown that Casco falls short in taking their own advice to heart. As mentioned before; the artists and art workers that were asked to collaborate in the Parasite Lottery project were reluctant to collaborate, because that meant having to put time and labor into the project. While they promised the institutions prize money, actually this was money that they partially had invested in the project itself. Although the price for the "ticket" to enter the lottery was lower for the smaller institutions, still they had to pay for the events they organized themselves. In a way you could say that by organizing this project Casco again asked for a large dedication and low-waged labor in exchange for the mere opportunity to work on this project. While they are openly invited to "join the paradise" in the Parasite song, this caused even more labor according to the structure "we" are fighting against. Therefore in this case Casco does not take up its own advice.



## Conclusion

By analyzing *Unlearning* and *Parasite Lottery* it becomes clear that there are feminist modes of working, based on reproductive work and care, intertwined in these projects. Both these projects started from the idea that a structure that is malfunctioning needs to be altered. Both projects show that Casco was functioning according these structures, and asked the Casco team to be involved in changing these structures. The difference is that in the *Unlearning* project the structure is internal, namely the value of reproductive labor within the organization. In the section of the project analyzed above, the team members clean together every Monday to unlearn the habit of outsourcing this kind of work, and to recognize the way hierarchy and gender are intertwined in reproductive labor, and learn to see this as a communal effort. In the *Parasite Lottery* the critique is external; it concerns the way art is subsidized by the government, and its request for a more capitalist mode of working: more than quality. In this project it is argued that that means asking for more productivity, which undermines the processes that allow artists to think and create. In the *Parasite Lottery* the community consists mainly of people who are more or less in the same position, namely negatively affected by subsidy cuts by the government. Because Casco has an international mode of working, with world-wide collaborations, and Casco's exhibitions and publications are well-known throughout the international art community. Therefore I find it important to acknowledge Casco's important role in anti-capitalist activist work and thought.

In *Site for Unlearning* Krauss asks the team members to unlearn the way they think about reproductive labor that needs to be done in an organization and the hierarchy that seems to be intertwined with these reproductive tasks. I found the *Unlearning* project successful, because through unlearning that reproductive work is commonly outsourced and placed lower in a social scale, I started noticing the importance and necessity of this work. Although it was sometimes inconvenient, through conversations it taught me the feminist history of this work and made me revalue the importance and social connotation of this work.

In the project by Wok the Rock, in the song "We are Parasites" that I have analyzed, a similar critique as in *Unlearning's* critique on the undervaluing of reproductive labor is posed, but is focused more on the external structure of the

distribution of cultural funding. I have analyzed the way this project is giving critique on this structure, and gives proposals to change that system. I have determined whether Casco, as an institution that pays artists and arts workers, has implemented this advice into their own *modus operandi*. This is relevant because this reflects on the culture of artistic self-exploitation that is a problem in our capitalist society. In contrast to the *Unlearning* project, I found the *We Are the Parasites* project less successful, because it fails to effect big changes to a capitalist system distributing money, in return for labor. Although Casco is a non-profit organization that is funded by the government and private cultural funding organizations, the wage they could distribute was not high. In exchange for the prospect of working in its organization, or on the *Parasite Lottery* project, Casco demands high commitment and high productivity. This is exactly what the Parasite Lottery is fighting against.

Both projects have questioned and critiqued the valuation of labor in the arts. The reason that the *Unlearning* project was successful is that in this project the team is confronted with their personal opinions about reproductive labor, and asked to challenge those opinions, by actually making time for reproductive labor in their full schedules. In the *Parasite Lottery* project the team is asked to put in labor to create this project that critiques a system that affects the Casco team and collaborating artists and art workers. In contrast to the *Unlearning* project the team does not get the chance to make the proposed changes, because in this case the changes should come from the institution that asks them to do the labor in return for payment - in this case Casco. The project fails to affect big changes in said institution. Therefore, if this project would be continued in the future, I would suggest to re-evaluate this project and research how this project can be executed with the proposed care for its collaborators.

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