

A Situated Archive of the Old Boys Network and its Discontents.

Part II – Discussion

Explorative Talk [#1](#) with Cornelia Sollfrank at ruruHaus, Kassel

Thursday, September 02, 2019, 5.00 pm

Manual for the Dying. Work in progress.

Participants: Saskia Mattern, Martin Groh, Fred Hansen, Erick Beltran,

www.documenta-archiv.de/en/aktuell/te...lia-sollfrank

First part: <https://soundcloud.com/artwarez/a-situated-archive-of-the-old-boys-network-and-its-discontents>

Frederikke Hansen ([00:00](#)):

I think we're 35, 37 people now. And just one practical remark on pass the word to Saskia and Martin in a minute, but there's cake up there. So, you know, feel free to, to get up and get some, get some cake. And, there's also a bar upstairs, but do stay with, with the talk over to you.

Saskia Mattern ([00:29](#)):

One organizational thing first: we wanted to do it very inclusive and we were very happy if you had questions that you would like to ask, but because of Corona you can't get a micro. So, please speak loud your question, and we will repeat it, so Cornelia can hear it. And, if you don't like to ask in English, we try to translate it as well.

Martin Groh ([00:58](#)):

Okay. Maybe I should start with telling the audience, why is the document archive here? What is our role in this project, and what have we to do with Cornelia Sollfrank and the OBN archive? At the moment we are negotiating with Cornelia Sollfrank about transferring the archive of the OBN to the document archive. And, we have worked together with her on this inventory she talked about, and parallel to this, we were asked some months ago by Frederikke and Erick and Resa from ruangrupa to join the project Manual for the Dying. And we thought, as an archive, it would be good to be in this project, maybe because we have another sight of this process of archiving... I'm a little bit hesitating to say we have a professional sight.

M.G. ([02:11](#)):

But, of course, we are archiving; we have in the document archive two artists estates, which are not similar to the OBN archive, because they are classical, traditional estates. One of Harry Kramer, an artist from documenta 3, most known for his installations, but also for the Nekropole, the artist Nekropole here in Kassel, for example, and many performances. Another estate we have is the estate of Hans Hillmann who was a drawer and comic drawer, very famous in Germany, at least. And now, we are negotiating with Cornelia, and there was there was a very important question from her side: what are the things that are underlying this process of overtaking an archive? We have assembled some questions we would like to ask you.

M.G. (03:20):

Maybe, we can by this answer your question. For us, also in the discussion, in the Manual for the Dying group, it was very important to ask, which consideration did you have in the active time of Old Boys Network to prepare, to preserve the material? Had you any considerations at all about the future of your archive, and how to deal with it? Because, with the manual, one of the aims of the manual, I think, is to give a manual, a “Handreichung” as we say in German, to artists, how to, to deal with their work and preparing it for the future during their life. And, of course, this also concerns, artist groups, and art collectives. So that is my first question to you.

Cornelia Sollfrank (04:24):

I'm not sure, if I completely remember everything, because it's a long time ago, but I'm not aware of anything, I have to say. A quite a funny thing that happened was in the process of the interviews that we are currently also doing as part of the archiving process to make it more inclusive, we also ask former members of the Old Boys Network – Malin [Kuht] developed a questionnaire and she conducts the interviews – And I had a conversation with a former member of OBN, and I had completely forgotten about that. And she said, don't you remember when we ended, when you stopped working in 2001, we had the idea to make a time capsule, to make a really big box and put everything, and also to write a statement of what we think where we will be and how things will be in 20 years time. [Laughs]

C.S. (05:20):

It's quite funny, because now it's exactly 20 years. Unfortunately, we did not do this time capsule. It would have been fun to do it, but no, I have to say we did not actively think [about the future]. I mentioned these documentary videos from the last conference. This was probably a very serious attempt to capture something, but also, as I said, it was never evaluated or transcribed or anything, but at least, it's there, and this was just sitting in this box and no one touched it until recently. Luckily, we still have the old OBN website, the OBN.org website that we also luckily built in plain HTML. So it's still functional. Of course, all the printed material is still there, but we never thought about a future. And I think it's also, you know, if you're young and excited and you think you're part of something really cool that is changing the world...

C.S. (06:29):

... it's totally uncool to think about the future and documentation and all of that, because you live in the moment, and everything else is not cool. So, I think that was pretty much the spirit. And I would say from my experience with other artists, for many artists, this is exactly their spirit. And it's only very late, I mean, I'm now 61 years old, so I started not so long ago to realize that this state of mind that you're always excited about the new things that you're going to produce and completely forget about all the things that you already have done, that has changed a little bit when I started to say, okay, maybe change the perspective and look back and see what have you done and what is still there, what is preserved, and so on, what is accessible. And with that always comes this notion or this doubt, is it worth being archived?

C.S. (07:40):

You know, is it really important enough? That's one aspect, you know, the self-doubt, I think is important. Not realizing that what you do in this moment is really so valuable that it needs to be preserved. And another aspect is the aspect of resources, because it's one aspect to do something, and it's another aspect to

really preserve things, to take the time, to dedicate the time and the concentration to document everything carefully. And I think this is something that any artists can subscribe to, because it's not something you're rewarded for from the art system. You're only rewarded for new work every half a year, or every year, and nothing else counts. So, I think it needs a real change in thinking and also valuing your own work and having/ giving resources to it, as well.

M.G.:

Okay. Fred, do you have any questions? Or should we just continue?

S.M. (08:55):

You just said that you were the only one who kept material from OBN? Or are there other artists who thought of documentation and stuff?

C.S. (09:09):

That's something we are also trying to find out that the moment. We made a list of the participants, we contacted them and asked them for interviews. And it's also part of the interviews to pick an object or to pick something people want to talk about that tells a story, so to say. I'm sure that many of the Old Boys Network have some material, but I'm also sure that I'm the one who has the most comprehensive collection. So, of course, we also try in this process of collecting, bringing the material together to invite people, to also contribute their material. But we hesitated to send out this call because at the moment we don't very practically, we don't know yet where people should send it, because I definitely don't want to have it, here, in my studio. And, maybe if we made some progress with documenta archive, then we can ask people to send their stuff there. So, there will be other things as well.

M.G. (10:20):

Yeah. You're already said that the OBN archive is still a living archive in a way, the website is still working. And, in our first talks with you, in our first negotiations, you said that it would be very important that we keep this archive living. And, of course, we in the documenta archive always projects with our estates, and we are working with them, we are making exhibitions, we have researchers working on these estates and heritages. We are preserving them. We are treating them via our restaurateurs, but what ... Of course, we will discuss with you in the future, in the next months, weeks, what are your thoughts about how we could keep your archive living, and you asked us, what will your role be in that.

M.G. (11:36):

And, we also discussed in that, of course, we think when you are transfer the archive, the Old Boys Network archive to our archive a lot of the responsibility, in fact, the responsibility will pass on to us. For example, we, as a professional archive, ask you to give us the authority to evaluate. And that is always a question because that is a question of influence and power, who has the power to evaluate, and in the last consequence, it could, for example, mean that we – and that sounds terrible –, that we would destroy duplicates, for example. So, the process of cassation is not an everyday thing we do in the archive, but it's part of our work. So, how would you see your role in in the documenta archive concerning the Old Boys Network archive?

C.S. (12:47):

Okay. So, this is a few different things. At first, I don't think so much that the OBN archive is a living archive, at the moment. I think that is something we are trying to make. The website is still working, and I know that it's being used by people, it's being accessed, but a living archive is for me, something else; it's something when we were talking or when we were conceiving this archiving project, we were thinking about this notion of living, and we built into the application, a budget to commission artists that we can select to work with the archive, to make something new out of the archive. So, that is for me, a living archive is when the material is not just sitting there and accessible, more or less easily, but when there is an activity from the side of the archive, who is hosting, to constantly work with the material, to embed it, to connect it to new discourses, and so on. This is a question, first of all, of resources, I think. It needs to be a decision to dedicate some resources to that.

C.S. ([14:10](#)):

Then it's a possibility. For us, it was an interesting idea, as I mentioned earlier, because, you know, the Old Boys Network was, in a way, international, but there were many parts of the world that we could not involve at the time. Therefore, we were thinking it would be really nice to have resources to commission artists and also activists, artist/activists, from different parts of the world to look at this material, and see what is the relevance for them today, and then see what the outcomes are, discuss them, show them, et cetera. That is for me a living archive. So it's not just accessibility, but it's also an effort. And, and the work to deal with, to engage with the material. And what you said about the authority to evaluate, I was, I'm not completely sure, but maybe we can put this to the end. Regarding the role of document archive, different roles...

C.S. ([15:13](#)):

For me, it's very important that the material is as accessible as possible. And that also has to do, ... when we talk about an archive, what I show to you, is all the things, the material manifestations. But my idea, when I thought about the archive, was always, to have a digital archive. We have no idea yet how this is going to look like, how it should look like, so that it makes really sense, that it's not more locked up into some proprietary systems, but that it's really, that it remains open, technically open, but also legally open. And this is probably one of the most difficult points we have to discuss and negotiate, because I know from many public archives that they are very limited in terms of what they can provide in terms of open licenses and all of that, and the technology they can use.

C.S. ([16:12](#)):

And this, again, has to do with accessibility, with the living character of an archive. It must be an archive that people from Africa are able to access if they can actually access the internet. And not only to people who have the resources to travel to the Kassel and go into the archive. So yeah, that would be a requirement: technical and legal openness. And of course, an interest in initiating people and discourses around the archive. And then I have this question to you, what you mean with the authority to evaluate, because I'm not entirely sure what you meant with "evaluating."

S.M. ([17:01](#)):

I think, Martin wanted to say, the normal way is that things go to the archive, and there is the archivist, like me, who tries to understand all the stuff and then put some value to this stuff. Maybe, we don't need receipts, or maybe the receipts could be very interesting. The archivist is trying to think what kind of questions can be asked to the material, which material is worth being preserved. That was, what he meant.

C.S. (17:36):

Yeah. But wouldn't it make sense if we do that together in a way, that we talk about things, because I have a lot of information that you will probably take you a long time to find out, not because I want to take away the authority from you, but also to help and to engage in a dialogue.

S.M. (17:58):

Yeah, of course, it is always a dialogical thing. But in my history, I always made the experience that people are even more strict than the archivist. There are a lot of people who say, oh, it's not worth keeping this, I will throw it away, so you don't have to deal with it. And we say, oh, no, no, no, it's very interesting. Please keep it, we'll take care of it. Yeah. We are not a strict ones often; that's very interesting.

C.S. (18:26):

Ja, ja, I can imagine. I know that as well. I often say, yeah, I often tend to throw away things as not relevant... I understand. Thank you.

S.M. (18:36):

I have a question: when you talked about dealing with the materials, you mentioned that you wish artists would create new stuff. And, that was the point where you took your focus on. Is dealing with the materials, for you, also the scientific dealing, like art historians, because you said there were a lot of misunderstandings of cyberfeminism and your work. And, is this the same level of dealing with material for you?

C.S. (19:12):

This is a very delicate question. Okay, where to start? I think this has to be seen in this context that my experience with the Old Boys Network was that it was never perceived as an artistic practice, and aesthetic practice – to build this network. What was perceived by art historians was individual works and people that presented stuff within the network, but there was hardly anyone that was able to understand that this infrastructure, and basically it was a sort of infrastructure that we built, that this infrastructure building this infrastructure is also a form of aesthetic praxis. That's why I put such an emphasis on the “Organizational Aesthetics,” because I always felt very misunderstood and also *not* understood and *not* seen and neglected by traditional art historians, and that is an experience that has been going on, you know, throughout my 25 years of artistic practice, because I always tended to make this kind of works that are outside the classical framework of an individual author and an original piece of art.

C.S. (20:34):

So, if you escape this framework, you fall through the criteria of classical art historians. And there may be a few art historians that are able to open up their thinking and try to grasp this praxis. But this is not very popular in art historical thinking, in the Western tradition, I have to say, which has been very predominant, of course. So, I have, say, a learned skepticism towards art history and art historians. I am still open, if anyone wants to talk to me, I am still alive, but I doubt that with the usual tools that they have at hand, how art historians think and how they are trained in the Western tradition, that they are really able to grasp this practice and to make sense of it. And this, you know, this is just an empirical finding. I always would have loved if it would not have been the case.

C.S. ([21:37](#)):

And even with our book *Aesthetics of the Commons*, we wanted to make a statement that this sort of practices, you know, that they should be considered as aesthetic practice. And we try to collect theory positions and build them together to make a really strong statement. It was extremely hard to find theoreticians that were interested and willing to engage in this experiment. It's still not very popular because it still doesn't give you a career as an art historian, if you work in this field. You're much better off, if you look for a successful artist in the art market and focus your work on that. So it's a very delicate issue, it's still a kind of a niche thing, and it often comes with this notion of, it's not really art...

C.S. ([22:33](#)):

... It's not really good art, and all these [resentments and biases] that are very powerful in the art world, still. I always try to engage in the art world, mainly also to use the resources of the art world, and to use the power of the artworld, to make things visible and to communicate things to a larger audience, but I've also made a lot of unpleasant experiences. So, I know the limits of the tools that people have and their interests. Well, to answer your question: I do not primarily think of art historians engaging with the material, before that, I would like to see other scientists, like sociologists, people like Judy Wajcman, or philosophers, you know, like Olga Goriunova, and people like that of whom I know they have a deep understanding of the field of technology, of networking, of political implications of self-organization; people like these from different disciplines, however, would look at the material and work with it. I would be totally thrilled to see what they are able to find and pick out. So, no, not only artists.

S.M.:

Thank you.

E.B. ([23:49](#)):

Cornelia, you mentioned two things that, for me, are really appealing. By one side, you said that, the internet is an organism, but by other, you also mentioned that technology is not neutral. So, these things refer to the things that you were saying now, but, I wonder how do you do to, let's say, tell or understand who is telling the story, and where is the point when the discourse is told by forces that maybe you are incarnating, but suddenly you realize that are not coming from you.

C.S. ([24:34](#)):

Yeah. I, I'm not sure if I understand exactly what you mean, but I think one thing that became very clear in the last 20 years was that we were completely naive in the way that we approached technology in the nineties. We were really thinking of digital technology, digital network technology as empowering, empowering tools, so to say. And that was also the very strong belief system in the hacker world, basically the people that built the internet, the protocols underlying the internet that are still free. There is a very strong scene that is fighting to keep the basic elements of the infrastructure free, which they still are. On the other hand, we have now social media, we have all this platform capitalism, we have the very large search engines and software companies and all these dynamics and how they are operating worldwide, globally, how they are much more powerful than national governments, and all of that.

C.S. ([25:46](#)):

I think that's what we find ourselves in is this paradox, because I still, if I think about, would I prefer the internet not to exist so that I don't have all the advantages or the, that I don't have all the disadvantages because, you know, I think it's becoming more and more visible, how much, also how the world, how politics, how economy have changed with the internet, with the network. And it looks very bad at the moment. So, we find ourselves in this paradoxical situation that we could inhabit a technology, which is to a large degree out of our control, not completely, but to a large degree. And, I think, I'm still in a place where I say, we still have to deal with it, we cannot give up on it, you know, especially because it's so powerful, and Germany is a country where there is this extremely, powerful and aggressive internet activism that regularly sues the government, that is fighting laws, legal protection and so on.

C.S. ([27:04](#)):

I mean it's one of the most advanced countries in disrespect, and I think it's part of all political awareness and emancipation processes to understand the power of technology and to also emancipate ourselves in the sense of finding an attitude towards and make making political claims around it. So, I mean, there's enough reason to be depressed about it, and I'm regularly depressed about it, and sometimes I just hate it, but I still think we cannot just give it up. Especially because we cannot rely in this respect so much on politics at the moment, because politics in the classical sense of governments, et cetera, because they themselves either don't understand what's going on, or they are partly corrupt, or whatever. So, we have a huge gap and also huge necessity of people engaging in this field. Is this any answer to your question?

E.B. ([28:03](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. But, at the same time, I also see a little bit of the dangers of, let's say most narratives, let's say, self-preparation narrative, and therefore it's really easy to get lost in the mirage of the reproduction of this narrative. And, and there is a moment that you will not know that you are repeating that narrative.

C.S. ([28:32](#)):

Can you please say what narrative...

E.B. ([28:35](#)):

A general narrative, let's say historical political, social narrative related to these things. In the end, it's like, how to make effective a certain kind of dissidence.

C.S. ([28:50](#)):

I think that has always been part of cyberfeminism, and now, technofeminism, to also contribute to create not maybe a complete narrative, but also contribute to stories and, kind of, also create narratives around that. It's not like that there is one narrative and it's just there, and some anonymous power is creating this narrative, but we are all engaging in this narrative. And for me, the most important finding of the last years really was to understand this paradoxical situation in which we are, that we have to use Zoom, for example, and it's not only related to communication Technology, it's everything, you know, we are in the completely paradoxical situation. We know about what's happening to climate change and we still travel, we still use cars, we still heat our houses, we still use fossil powers. And so we are in an extremely paradoxical situation, in any respect, in our societies.

C.S. ([29:55](#)):

And it's important that we don't go crazy of that because it's hard to stand because to really find a position where you stand on the ground, and you say, okay, we do it. But we have to change things. How can we change things, not giving up? How can we ... What are our tools that we can use, for example, creating narratives and not just creating narratives and what are the tools, but also what tools can we create and how can we support each other? And I think this is what I mentioned briefly in relation to this term of care, that for me now, technology in the 21st century, and also digital technology is closely connected to a totally material and materialist discourse. It's not this immateriality anymore, which was the narrative of the, of the nineties.

C.S. ([30:50](#)):

So, we know now that digital gadgets are produced under labor conditions, the exploitation of the earth, with rare earths that we need to build mobile phones; all the huge issues of digital trash and so on and so forth. So, we are in the middle ... Technology is just part of this huge mess and paradox that we are inhabiting. And for me, techno feminism is a way to kind of connect to others, to find ways to stay sane, to make me try to do meaningful things within this very difficult situation.

Are you still there?

S.M. ([31:35](#)):

Yes, there's a question from the audience and she gets a mic, or I can just ask the first question and then maybe she will, continue. The main question is how do you get the personal archive of yours into an operable one, because you stored it at your house, on your computer, and it's very individual. And, you talked about all the others from OBN; yeah, the interoperability.

C.S. ([32:12](#)):

I know what you mean. Yeah, that is an interesting question because I'm not an archivist, I'm learning a lot. For me, it was interesting to get this kind of mirror of, how I was doing things and storing things and all my cosmetics boxes that are full of DV tapes and all of that. And now I'm talking to you, to the people of the archive, and we are talking, and we're creating a spreadsheet. I always hated spreadsheets, but now I kind of only recently understood the power of spreadsheets, really did. And it was like, wow, when you make a proper spreadsheet, you can do anything with it. But, of course, the most difficult question is how you sort the material, also in terms of categories. You need to sort the material in a meaningful way,

C.S. ([33:13](#)):

so that it is findable and searchable, and that are, probably, the most important questions related to archiving. And, of course, traditional archives, I would say, have their standard parameters that we also use. But of course, we're also thinking about what else can we use that makes the material accessible in a different way. And in terms of organizing the material that we've created with OBN, we are thinking at the moment, or we almost decided to categorize it the events, along the international conferences, the workshops, the talks, the networking events, our participation in other events, because these real-life meetings, were kind of the structuring moments of the Old Boys Network. It would have never existed without these. So, it was always this two-part division between what form of organization can the internet provide and how can this feed into real-life meetings – and the other way around.

C.S. ([34:30](#)):

Yeah, but as I'm not an archivist, sometimes I feel like a complete idiot because I don't know all the standards of how things are properly archived, but I'm open to learn and to discuss. And, I think that's very interesting if professional archivists look at the material because they have kind of a different way of seeing things and sorting. And that is very interesting for me. I can still decide if I follow or not, but, it also helps me to see my own material in a different way. And I think in the end, any archive you look at, you know, it's never perfect. It's always based on compromises and decisions. I was very tense about that and thought, oh, we have to do it differently, but at the moment, I'm totally relaxed. And I think, we just go into the process. And we'll see, and we make decisions and we'll come to some form of conclusion and it will be okay. It will never be perfect...

F.H. (35:33):

You were mentioning that you've been thinking, of course, of your own position in archiving and the legitimacy of it, and that you have two helpers. And I'm wondering if you have been thinking or just pondering whether to supplement the bilateral contact you have with former OBN members, with a more transpersonal one. Like a lot of what you did was based on creating an assembly situation to discuss maybe also to call forth what you said about archiving, the social relations that made up the network, more than just the classical academia. So yeah, my question is if you've been considering also a transpersonal dialogue and discussion.

C.S. (36:23):

Yeah, of course we did. And it's also a question of practicality and what is possible? It became obvious at one point that it would be an option, if I would initiate it somehow, because someone has to take initiative to organize whatever form of interaction. And I decided I don't want to do that, again, because that's what I did for five years. So what is practical? What can be realized within the archiving project is to have interviews, dialogues about the different questions, to tell different stories about OBN. And we decided that I'm not doing these interviews. So, someone else [Malin Kuht] is doing the interviews. And I think it's quite nice because it's already graspable that something else is kind of emerging, which is totally independent from me, which I really like. The other idea is, because next year is our 25th anniversary in Kassel, and hopefully the archive will be available in some form, because there has also been created a huge platform called Cyberfeminism Index [cyberfeminismindex.com] or catalog of cyberfeminism by an American researcher [Mindy Seu] recently, which is much more comprehensive than just OBN.

C.S. (37:44):

And she was also suggesting that we could probably do something together. So, I think, I like the idea to have something like a launching event or something, because that would be doable, but to have a constant process of like a transversal discursive constellation around the archiving process, I think it's a nice idea, but it's not realistic. And this is also a question of resources, of not just time and money, but also, I mean, who would do it, who would organize it? And for me, it was clear that I don't want to do that. You could do it. [Laughs] If anyone takes initiative, I'm totally happy with it.

S.M. (38:34):

I have a very personal question to you: when you are in this process of archiving your work, which took place a long time ago, I mean 25 years ago. Do you sometimes sit there and doubt the material, doubt that the material is enough or that it doesn't preserve all your thoughts on cyberfeminism? Yeah, do you

always believe in your archive or do you sometimes like think we should have started earlier or do it in a different way?

C.S. ([39:12](#)):

No. I totally doubt the archive, at the same time, also because I had the space, it was no problem to keep it, you know. I was always, and it was not just in relation to Old Boys Network, but all the net culture of the nineties, it never was big in the art world. And I knew it was super relevant. I just know that it was super relevant and I thought the world will understand at one point. So, we just wait a little bit, and do something else. In the meantime, I feel that the world understands and we do have the material.

I doubted the material when we started this archive, I thought, probably it's not enough for a proper archive. And then when we started to unbox all the material and sorted it, I thought, oh my God, it's so much material. It's so much stuff.

C.S. ([40:04](#)):

I think you can never estimate in a kind of neutral way, also because it's not just material. It's all very emotional material. You know, it was my *life* for five years. I invested everything I had in this network. And it was not paid work, and it was some recognition, but it was not like, wow, you did great stuff and now you're rewarded or acknowledged or anything. So, it was for me a very intense time and I put a lot of heart in it. So, personally for me, it's super relevant. I always had the feeling that we intuitively did the right thing, but we could not always explain it very well, what we were doing and why we were doing what we were doing.

C.S. ([40:55](#)):

So, I was always kind of existing with this idea that one day I want to understand better what we have done, and what it was. I mean, this is really an ongoing feeling I have, and that always brings me back to the material. It always brought me back, I mean, I let it rest after we stopped in 2001, because it was not nice how the network ended. On the contrary, it was very traumatic – like a lot of collaborations end in very bad ways and people are hurt and feel misunderstood and everything. So, I just let it sit there and I did something else, but, for me, it was clear, it was important. It is important, and I will go back and access it some, at some point. And it was only 10 years later, that I revisited the material, the first time, again and looked at it under a very specific question, research question, and I could go through and say, ah, I found a lot of interesting insights with this research.

C.S. ([41:57](#)):

And then, with this new interest in technofeminism, cyberfeminism, xenofeminism, all that gender related techno theories, and the renewed interest in cyberfeminism, I got all these invitations again, to go to panels and talk and discuss with the next generation of people; and seeing that they don't know anything about our work, that they completely misunderstood it, most of it, I thought, oh my God, we really have to make it available and accessible to them because they are really interested and they deserve that they can know better. So that was a motivation. So, it's both it's a motivation from like a social relevance that I see at the moment, political relevance even, but also for me, a personal relevance. And I always doubt what I have and what is the relevance of it. But that is why I'm interested a lot in dialogues with very different people, because that is a way, for me, to better understand what this stuff is and what it was, what we were doing.

F.H.:

Thank you.

M.G. ([43:05](#)):

Are there more questions from the audience? No. Maybe there are more questions from you, Cornelia?

C.S. ([43:13](#)):

Maybe Eric, because you have been thinking a lot about the Manual for the Dying. Spontaneously, when you saw this OBN work, what was your association with the manual? What do you see? Where does it connect? In what you see in the manual?

E.B. ([43:32](#)):

There was one idea – while there are many issues and many zones, let's say, that we are interested in – and one of the zones that we thought about is like how to understand a, let's say, an articulation or a case or a circumstance in where something gets activated. I was thinking of a very specific circumstance with, by example, entropy and energy, and how energy is perceived. And, in the end, entropy can be understood as, for example, chaos. But at the same time, it can also be understood as an opportunity to another form and to an endless possibility of forms. So, thinking in that way, then information could be seen as incarnation of a possible new organization, or a new possible form. So, the question is, if you have like these forms, how to make, let's say, a good metamorphosis from one side to the other, and to keep the same, let's say, strength and to keep the same sources and the same tension, although you are changing the body or form of figure and of context, as well.

E.B. ([44:57](#)):

So, it's very important, how can you make these new possibilities for the energy? And, and it's something that I believe that's where the archive is in the sense of reactivating in a different context. But, let's say, the stories, the points of contact that you have with other circumstances. So, in that sense, we found that this could also be part of this question about how to create and to pass on energy.

C.S. ([45:32](#)):

Yeah, sounds great.

F.H. ([45:34](#)):

I know, it's a big question to end with, but what kind of manual would you need?

C.S. ([45:39](#)):

I don't know. I can't really say, but for me, this process of being in a dialogue with different people, at the moment, is the most helpful thing. And I have problems to think in these terms of a manual, at all. Maybe if we are further into the process and look back and see, okay, we made these different steps, and what helped, well, then...

F.H. ([46:03](#)):

Well, the spreadsheet was one thing you mentioned...

C.S. (46:05):

Yes, the spreadsheet was a crazy thing for me. It was like a revelation I have to say. It's a different way of thinking, but there is so much power in putting information together in a certain way. That doesn't mean that it has to be the only way, but it's a very powerful way. I think for me, the most important aspect is probably – because after the end of the OBN and I kept the material and I had the feeling I put so much energy, for example, even the domain name, OBN.org, I registered it, and I pay for it, every year. So, I have and take certain responsibilities, and it made me often feel a little bit alone with all of that. I thought, oh, there was this great energy – talking about energy – it triggered so much.

C.S. (47:02):

It also was, I think, inspirational for so many people. It made a lot of difference in many people's lives, you know, what we did together. And then it's kind of dying down and some things are left over. And, for me, it was very important – and this is also something I forgot to say at the beginning, I wanted to thank all the people that put the event together today. And in particular, the dedicated people of the documenta archive, which I'm very much looking forward to engage much more with in an exchange, but also the people in the archive group, our archive group, which is independent from documenta archive, in particular, professor Nora Sternfeld, who initiated the archive project. And I'm so very grateful that she initiated the project and that she found some resources so that we could start working on it.

C.S. (48:03):

It was a sort of a healing, already for me after having invested so much energy in this collaborative effort and then see it dying down and feeling kind of depressed or alone, saying, oh, you know, what's left from it? And then feeling the new energy coming, the new interest from the next generation, and the initiative by someone else that demonstrates interest and makes an effort to give, to provide resources, to kind of activate the whole thing and go back into this process, you know, to create, to transform again, create energy, transform energy, and all of that. So, what I wanted to say is not just thank you to all these people and also Malin [Kuht] and Julia [Stolba] for their interest in collaborating with me. But I think in terms of a manual, I think it's extremely important that you're not doing it alone, that you find collaborators.

C.S. (49:04):

That's the first thing, to think about who can you collaborate with, because that is essential. So, I'm always looking around, trying to expand and find new formats, be it in commissioning works or engaging in dialogues and exchange. That is for me also to keep the energy and to pass it on and, probably, into new and different articulations. But, what is essential is this communication and interaction with other people, and then, regarding the manual, then it becomes very pragmatic immediately. You know, it's a question of resources, how much time can you dedicate to something? If you want to dedicate time and focus, then you need resources. And as I said earlier, it's not this sort of project that the art world is willing to give resources to.

F.H. (50:00):

So, do you think it's because it was the first Cyberfeminist International was situated within the context of documenta x that it is now ending – I mean, you're still negotiating, also here in this room – but that it will end in an archive. Imagine that it had launched somewhere else...

C.S. ([50:25](#)):

First of all, I don't like to think of the OBN archive ending a document archive. But it made sense in a way, Nora was teaching at the Kunsthochschule in Kassel, in the department for documentary studies and they were looking back and different aspects of documenta. They were engaging with Hybrid Workspace. They found cyberfeminism and the Old Boys Network and all of that. And it was this coincidence that she was in Kassel, and there were students who were very interested, and then they found out this happened actually here in Kassel, how exciting, let's do something about. It was a kind of a nice coincidence that generated some energy to make something going.

C.S. ([51:15](#)):

But, of course, it could have been anywhere, I mean, not anywhere, but there's, of course, other places like the feminism archive in London, for example. Of course, it needs a home, it needs someone hosting the archive and taking responsibility. That's very important. But for me, it's more important to think of the archive as something that is available. That is basically everywhere, can be everywhere, where people want it to be and need it.

F.H.s

Of course, thank you so much.

C.S.:

Of course, technofeminists, cyberfeminists, we were socialized with power-critical thinking. And of course, I mean, thinking about documenta and power, you can create some stories around that. It's still thought to be the most prestigious exhibition for contemporary art, creating a lot of power, simply having a lot of power. documenta has this power, that's clear; associated is the document archive, which is also living in this aura of the documenta.

C.S. ([52:32](#)):

Of course, this can be seen problematic, at the same time, my strategy was always to be inside and outside, to have one foot in the institutional world, in the system, in the infrastructures, also where the resources are, and still keep a sort of independence; thinking from outside and see how this can go together well. And I think in particular, when it comes to notions of taking care of things, Annet Dekker, for example, a Dutch theoretician, she developed this notion of "networks of care," where she develops the idea of collaboration between people within institutions and often experts are outside institutions, experts in a special field, when it comes to technology, for example. So, that institutions work together with people outside and they put their resources and their skills together to take care of something.

C.S. ([53:32](#)):

Of course, there's a skepticism around that. On the other hand, it's always an opportunity, but that already started in 1997 when we were invited to documenta. We said, well, what does it mean if we put ourselves in the context of this exhibition, do we sell out? And especially because Hybrid Workspace was not very well equipped. So, we had that one side, yeah, it's very prestigious, but we hardly get any funding for the first Cyberfeminist International – you have this paradoxical situation again. And then we said, okay, there is something we want to use documenta for. We know why we are going there. We use it as a platform to communicate something. That's why we are going. Even if the conditions are not very good. So, we did it. I think you just have to reflect and where you are and what kind of compromises you have

to make – and you can make. And there's sometimes a point where you say, okay, I cannot make *this* compromise. So, you stop collaborating, but I don't have that feeling at the moment. On the contrary, I think, it can be very enriching for both sides, for the documenta archive and our archive group, to collaborate.

M.G.:

I have no more questions, now. Maybe we should close the talk, if you want to say something.

F.H. ([54:50](#)):

No, I just want to thank Christoph for the technique and for creating the connection. I'm very, very happy that we could have the talk. And when you come to Kassel, we should maybe keep talking. It would be interesting for our working group. We're transcribing this talk and we'll try to make a little scene for our own purposes first and foremost. Yeah. So that's the next tiny little step, but thank you so much for coming and thank you Cornelia.

C.S. ([55:19](#)):

I'm very honored to be here and I'm a big fan of dialogue, so let's just keep exchanging and thanks again, everyone for the event and making it possible at such short notice. Have a nice evening and also to the people in the space. Of course, I couldn't see.

F.H. ([55:40](#)):

Thank you all for listening and all the staff from documenta archive for the documentations