

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS  
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF  
WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND SCHOLARSHIP**

**SITE: Germany**

**Transcript of Barbara Hoyer  
Interviewer: Sławomira Walczewska**

**Location: Grünheide (Mark), Germany**

**Date: February 2018**

**University of Michigan  
Institute for Research on Women and Gender  
1136 Lane Hall Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1290  
Tel: (734) 764-9537**

**E-mail: [um.gfp@umich.edu](mailto:um.gfp@umich.edu)**

**Website: <http://www.umich.edu/~glbfem>**

**© Regents of the University of Michigan, 2020**

**Barbara Hoyer** born 1955, MA in German Studies and Geography (Magistra thesis on lesbian literature in the 1970s). After her studies she worked in the women's bookstore Labrys in Berlin (1982-1989). From 1990-1998 was she part of the organisational team of BEGiNE -Treffpunkt und Kultur für Frauen e.V., responsible for event organisation, fundraising and accounting. Since 1975 she has been active in the women's and lesbian movement, first in various women's groups (including LAZ -Lesbian Action Centre Berlin - around 1980), then in the above-mentioned women's projects). Since 2004 she has been project manager of the BEGiNE.

**Sławomira Walczewska**, born 1960, feminist activist and philosopher (PhD). In 1999, Walczewska published *Ladies, Knights and Feminists: Feminist Discourse in Poland*, the first Polish book about the history of women's emancipation in Poland from a cultural perspective. That book was nominated, as one of 20 books, for the most prestigious book award in Poland at that time, NIKE, in 2000. She is author of ca. 50 articles about feminism and history of the women's movement. She was teaching history of philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (1985-1990), history of feminist ideas at the Warsaw University (1997), at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (2000) and the feminist critics of history at the Viadrina University in Frankfurt a/O (2019).

In 1991 she co-founded the eFKa- Women's Foundation, one of the first feminist organizations in post-socialist Poland. She edited the feminist magazine "Pełnym Głosem" (*In Full Voice*, 1993-1997) and was member of the editorial board of *Zadra*, the feminist quarterly (1999 - 2018). She is director of the Feminist Institute for Research and Education ( [www.efka.org.pl/fibe](http://www.efka.org.pl/fibe)).

**Sławomira Walczewska: Yes, there aren't that many questions... the only, really the most important question is, please, that you tell how it came to be that you came, suddenly or not suddenly, into contact with women's issues, with feminist issues in your life, that you got involved somehow with women's engagement... with women's issues... how did that come to be?**

Barbara Hoyer: So, with me, I... that it... I guess, the classic women's movement... the second women's movement. It was 1975. That book by Alice Schwarzer, *The Little Difference and Its Huge Consequences*, was released then, and I was... so, I was, I think, a real "chick."<sup>1</sup> And young. I studied, was rather left-oriented like everyone back then, but women's issues hadn't caught on with me yet, and they also hadn't at the university at that time.

And I always worked, that is, during breaks, because my parents weren't, you know, that rich. We were a family with many children, and I was the first generation that got *BAFöG*.<sup>2</sup> That is, I could study because there was *BAFöG*. But, of course, that wasn't enough, so I always worked during breaks, and, to do so, I often went back to my hometown, and I did various jobs in district government, including in the Department of Transportation. And there was a woman there who... already had short hair at that time, was absolutely peppy, somehow... and I liked her a lot, and she gave me that book, and I had something like a... I don't know... I knew then, just as I do today... so, back then, those... I don't know seventies fashion either... I had a bright green pair of pants, like this up to the hips, and then they got wide underneath, so almost like a skirt, and then those platform shoes with it. And I associate all that with this... I got that book and everything... When I read it, it was like a revelation.

And, suddenly, it was clear that, I believe... that I had to go further with it, and the whole world suddenly became clear, all my problems were clear, and then there was just no more waiting. From then on, I looked for women's issues, insofar as they were studied at that point, at the university, but it was very hard. Really hard, very hard. Und there were still no female professors or anything there. I couldn't even write my thesis with a female professor. There was one, and she was really conservative.

But, anyway, I was always active in those liberal groups, and I looked at a women's group there. That was the first at the time... one hardly dares to say it, but the KBW, the Communist Association of West Germany (*Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland*) ...

---

<sup>1</sup> The term used here doesn't have a precise equivalent in English but something like "chick" or "girlie" is perhaps best.

<sup>2</sup> Germany's *Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*, or Federal Education and Training Assistance Act, is a need-based financial support system for students.

and they had... the Women's Council (*Weiberrat*), it was called, I think, and they were the first women's group I was in. And I was there one, two years for sure, but it was clear somehow that that was too little for me. And, also, the way they handled women's issues there... it didn't suffice for me.

And, in *Little Difference*, that is, by Alice Schwarzer, even though she didn't identify herself as a lesbian, not for years, for decades, life as a lesbian woman was a real alternative, and a very woman-centered life was offered, simply as an alternative, and that was, I think, like it was... at the time... like it was for many young women, in that I suddenly remembered that I had really been in love with a female classmate as a child and had definitely stayed in love with her for ten years. So, and... that was nothing more than... how should I say... so, when I was going through puberty and I had dreams about girls. Then it was really clear to me, this couldn't be. So I really pushed it away as something that must not be. And I also think that I then lived my life very heterosexually, so that I didn't have to be aware of it.

And at that time, so, the middle of the seventies, there were also already a number of women's co-ops. I didn't live in one, but I visited some then, and then I fell in love there, too, and they were all active in the women's movement in different areas, and I found my first real relationship with a woman there. And then I realized that, for me... it isn't enough to be concerned with women's issues somehow or to approach the topic politically, but rather, as it was also known back then, "the personal is political."

And then I just wanted to lead a totally woman-centered life. And then I started on my way. And I still say this today, too, because lots of people say "a life without men? That just doesn't work at all." I became quite contrary as a young woman and thought, "well, we'll have to see about that!" and I still say today that it's an experiment for me. So, I do know men, and I have a lot to do with men again in the nature conservation movement now, but I've really had no male friends since the seventies. I live with women, I have woman friends, and what I find so exciting is that I don't have to debate role clichés with men. So I don't have to fight against clichés, stand up to men, but rather I can... how should I say... I... for when someone asked me "why are you in the women's movement," or in BEGiNE, like, "why do you do all of that with only women?" then I always say, "no matter what, when I am among women, I can be anything. And if I want to be a green frog, I can be that there and don't have to pay attention to whichever role guidelines. I only have to do that insofar as we are all naturally characterized by it. And when I live with women, it is clear that... this characterization that women are subject to... that I do have to do with it. But also only with *that*. And I can perceive women very differently as people, without constantly considering them in relation to men who are... yes, I suppose... how

should I put it... the measure of all things. *Der Mensch*. Like that: *der Mensch, der Mann*. Hm. So, at that time, it was immediately apparent to me. And the rest of my life was a path.

**SW: “Apparent.” That book sent you on the search for a path? What was the first step? What did you concretely... which groups did you meet, which projects did you find?**

BH: So, at first there was really not that much. I knew then that there were women’s bookstores, but I really moved more in liberal circles at the beginning, and then I... so, that was the first thing that I did. Of course, I wanted to write my thesis about a women’s topic. But I was still in my old groups and wanted, at the time, to write my thesis, my master’s thesis, about Christa Wolf<sup>3</sup> with a liberal professor who supported, so to speak, all the alternative movements, Gerhard Bauer,<sup>4</sup> who was also pretty well-known.

And, when I and a friend, a university friend with whom I was also in a work group, thought of Christa Wolf, and I had already done quite a lot of work about her, at some point my professor said “this Christa Wolf, she is so overdone; so many people have written about her. Find a different topic.”

And that was... I was not sad about it, because I knew for sure that I really wanted ... at the time it was... those topics in general. Those were the first literary things from the women’s movement. And which also addressed lesbian women. That was Verena Stefan: *Häutungen* (Shedding), that book. And it was clear to me, I wanted to write about it. At that time there was summer university, that women’s summer university with, so to speak, at the TU,<sup>5</sup> many seminars about women’s issues. Charlotte Wolff was invited there, for example, the psychoanalyst, the Jewish woman, who was also one of the first who wrote about lesbian women at all. And there I witnessed the first conflict that I witnessed in the women’s movement which was about how the *Urlesben* (“original lesbians”), that is, the ones who always, since they were very small, knew that they were lesbians, accused the *Bewegungslesben* (“movement lesbians”) of still not being real lesbians.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Christa Wolf was a German writer, novelist, and literary critic. She was one of the most famous writers to emerge from what was once East Germany (“Christa Wolf.” Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christa\\_Wolf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christa_Wolf))

<sup>4</sup> Prominent literary scholar and Germanist.

<sup>5</sup> TU is the acronym for “Technische Universität,” also known as the Berlin Institute of Technology. It is a premier research university with a total enrollment of about 34,000. (“Technical University of Berlin.” Wikipedia. Accessed July 5, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical\\_University\\_of\\_Berlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_University_of_Berlin))

<sup>6</sup> *Bewegungslesbe* refers to a similar concept as the English “political lesbian” but is distinct.

And that was, of course, as it always is in those contexts at universities, major drama. Then they leave the room and don't talk to each other, and so on.

And then I sought out a book, an author, who by the way had also read there, Marlene Stenten,<sup>7</sup> who was also an *Urlesbe*. She wrote various books about gays, about lesbians, and it was... to this day is often... the case with lesbians who don't define themselves through the movement, define themselves through the women's movement... they really latch on more to the gays. So, I took a book, *Puppe Else* ("*Doll Else*"), and I discussed and analyzed it in my thesis and put it in context, so to speak. And he accepted that paper, too.

And I found that very exciting, because he just supported all kinds of movements. And then there was another stroke of bad luck. That professor got a research semester, granted permission to go to the USA, and then asked me to come to him and said, very foolishly, "I won't be here not here for a year now. This year you will write your thesis," and I wanted to take the state examination for a teaching profession, and he said, "You won't get this topic through at the state examination office. Now you have to find a new subject again. Or you can get your Master's." So, basically, an internal thesis at the university that doesn't have to be... so, it's not a state examination and is not assessed again by the academic state examination office.

So I really went into a really intense tailspin and had to decide within a weekend. And that was really hard, because I somehow knew that if I did my master's degree then, then a career path would be closed, so to speak, which would have been quite secure even if I did not appreciate it. But I could always have gotten into that field. I had already done all my sitting in on classes at the school and thought, well, I actually don't want to be a teacher, and then decided to do the master's. But I was, honestly... I got pretty sick then. But, in the end, I was... if my life had gone totally differently, I wouldn't have made that decision, it was good and right.

And then I ended my studies, and then I didn't do other things much, because... Earlier, studies were, should I say, much freer than today. And you didn't have to take very many credits and such. It was rather, as I called it, a school of life. Lots of philosophizing, lots of discussion, and about political questions and such, too. I found it really terrific, and there was also a great freedom in it. But you still had to do exams, anyway, and you did really have study for the exams.

---

<sup>7</sup> Marlene Stenten was a freelance writer in Berlin and authored several novels and stories heavily influenced by her own experiences as a lesbian. In 1973, she won a literature prize from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. She authored several known texts such as *Puppe Else* and *Baby*. She died on May 2, 2019. ("Marlene Stenten." Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlene\\_Stenten](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlene_Stenten))

So I really worked hard for two years and had to earn money on the side, so I didn't do that much. And then it was clear to me that after my studies I would like to go into the book trade, into the liberal book trade. And I didn't even look around very much, I think. Then I heard, because I was actually already so involved in women's circles, the women's bookstore Labrys was hiring. And then I thought, "This is the greatest luck of your life. I mean, just doesn't exist." And then I went there, and it was a collective... it actually just disbanded. And Heidi, my, I'd say, one of my spiritual mothers, she saw this very young girl there. I was under 30, and she said, "Well, that's what everyone always says, that they want to get involved here somehow, but let's take a look first," and, one way or another, she thought, "well, let's see." And of course it was all precarious. I earned my money back then in the pub, by waitressing, and during the day I was in the bookstore, and you really didn't earn very much money there. Heidi also earned very little money. She was full-time. I was part-time, and I really had a second education there.

A whole store full of literature by women and about women, about all subjects, historical subjects, political subjects, social topics, everything. Mothers, daughters, every possible thing, professional subjects, literature without end, none of which I knew. In the long years at university I had gotten to know none of it, and Heidi was an especially... a very intelligent, very well-read woman. And those were really magnificent years for me, yeah.

And yeah, then, shortly after I got there, everyone else took their leave from the store, and then Heidi and I were alone there. And yes, then we ran the store together for seven years, and sales were actually rather on the decline. And Heidi also had a very stringent style. She was a bit of an educated bourgeois. And crime novels? No, that wasn't allowed, even if they were written by women. So that's... the clientele were really university women, or... in any case, there wasn't much of a broad audience.

And, because of that, there were fewer and fewer possibilities for me to earn money there, and then I... then I turned... was already in my mid-thirties. I still wasn't... well, I was registered for social security at the pub then. We had demanded that that there; we all, the women who were employed there, joined the NGG,<sup>8</sup> the trade union, and insisted that our jobs be subject to social security contributions. But I had sort of set myself an age limit of 35, at which point I should take a look around. And I had just noticed, in the women's projects, that you could get ABM<sup>9</sup> jobs there and that you'd be paid through those ABM jobs... paid with social insurance. And that once you'd had the job for two

---

<sup>8</sup> *Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten* (Food, Beverages, and Catering Union).

<sup>9</sup> *Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahme*. Literally, "Job Creation Measure." This system, in place until 2012, helped unemployed workers find new positions and payed out unemployment benefits.

years, you could get into that social system. So you didn't have absolutely nothing anymore, but, rather, you could get a bit further with unemployment benefits and such.

And, well yeah, then I said, "I'm going into normal book sales," and I found a position there as a substitute. So I was supposed to substitute for the owner because she got pregnant. And then I realized that that sort of normal environment wasn't for me, although there was also... I used to maintain a large women's corner when I worked in the book trade and I lured many women there, so to speak.

But that was somehow not it, and then I spread the word back in my circles that I wanted a change. And then they said, that is, a person who is still my board member, Edith, who already worked at BEGiNE in the association, and said "yes, someone is quitting here, we are hiring, especially in the field of literature. But we can't pay anything, but there is..." I don't know... "a working group of autonomous women's projects," which already existed at that time. They were starting a new initiative. It was a continuing education initiative for women working in women's projects. So it was a very broad spectrum. All the things needed there... accounting, moderation, I don't know, presentation, association law, grant law, you need all those things there. And you had to work those out for yourself, so to speak.

Then, for a year, there were regular meetings there with women who had more experience and everyone who was interested in the whole project, who were interested in that sort of position, even had to send the future job holder or applicant there. And we then worked out our concept ourselves, so we looked closely at what...

**[End part 1 of 6]**

**[Start part 2 of 6]**

**SW: We were last at the beginning of the nineties.**

BH: Right. So that was really a very exciting time in which I had just started at BEGiNE and did that advanced training. That was in '90, '91, and what we also learned then was how to found a company, because one should learn for life and not just for projects. And because I already had so much to do with female authors and also with women from the GDR, and because I actually witnessed that whole drama in the GDR, so to speak. First, all the structures were dismantled. I don't want to say annihilated, that sounds like it was... Everything was dismantled. And the people... and I found it really bad. The women coped better with it than the men, from what I've heard. But it's... one was a stranger in one's own country. So you learned... Everything changed. You were at home, but everything had changed.

That was a very difficult time for the women, though, and, I don't know, they were all educated, that is, had written doctoral dissertations, finished their studies. And other education, too. I heard a lot of stories like that, but, in our case, it was mostly female students, and I noticed that their doctoral theses... Well, earlier, you had to publish them. I don't know if that's still the case today. They had to be published for you to be allowed to do a defense. And, at the time, I had dealings with a woman who had written about Gertrud Kolmar.<sup>10</sup>

And we also held an exhibition about that, and, in her lectures, she repeatedly reworked her dissertation, you know, but used it as a foundation. And at the time she also tried to publish her dissertation in the publishing houses that were then still around, and she didn't succeed. And, yeah, I do understand why: because there were simply very different approaches to research in the West and in the East. And in the West, there were... in fact, there is certainly still, a concept of genius today that is completely detached from all social and societal contexts. And it's all about... I don't know, a person producing something brilliant from herself. There was really no such thing as that in the GDR,<sup>11</sup> and those were often sociological studies, that is, studies that integrated research with society, that did not see people without the society in which they functioned.

And, for women, that is really especially important. So, anyway, I noticed it in several places and talked about it with my former partner. And what at that time... and we thought, you had to give them a... we had to actually offer them the possibility to publish those works then. And that's when it started, that you could print short runs, so to speak, without really printing. It wasn't digital printing yet. At first, you still made copies. But, in the meantime, there were printing companies that copied short runs, so to speak. And then we just did that as a concept. It wasn't that expensive. We did have to share the costs with the authors and... but at least they were able to prove publication and continue on, so to speak. And that succeeded several times. Then we also noticed that there were a few subjects that were simply not accepted by publishers. Among other things, there was a... Well, by then our publishing house was at least known in women's circles. And at that time Anette von Zitzewitz and Christina Schmidt,<sup>12</sup> who had a different name at the time, I think, but Christina Schmidt... did interviews with GDR lesbians, so to speak, to document the entire history of lesbian women since the existence of the GDR, since the 1950s, you

---

<sup>10</sup> Gertrud Käthe Chodziesner, known by the literary pseudonym Gertrud Kolmar, was a German lyric poet and writer. She was born in Berlin and died in Auschwitz after her arrest and deportation as a Jew. Little else is known about her life. ("Gertrud Käthe Chodziensner." Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gertrud\\_Kolmar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gertrud_Kolmar))

<sup>11</sup> GDR is the acronym for the German Democratic Republic, also known as East Germany. The state existed from 1949 to 1990 during the Cold War. ("GDR." Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East\\_Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Germany))

<sup>12</sup> Now Christina Karstädt, an author of lesbian literature.

could say, to document that history. They interviewed both older and younger women and collected a whole lot of documentary material.

They made a film out of it and also wanted to document it in paper form, but they couldn't find a publisher because the subject of lesbians is... the women's publishing houses have to be able to sell things, and that sort of historical text doesn't really sell. And lesbians are such a small target group, and so on. So we took up that topic at that time too. That was in the mid-nineties.

We did events about that over and over and got to know many women. Then we also brought the East Germans together with the West Germans through that history, because of course there were also films from the West that dealt with the history of lesbians in the West. And we still had that publishing house... until 2005, we continued it. And then there were, well, we went along with the switch to digital printing, and from then on it wasn't interesting anymore because one could already publish about those topics on the Net. You no longer had to print them. And then we said, "okay, we don't want to have a publishing house just to have a publishing house." We did one last book about lesbians in the cinema and then said that's it. Especially since my partner and I had already separated and lived in completely different places.

But that was really a very eventful time and also very interesting. So, really, we had lots of topics then. For example, the same woman who worked on Gertrud Kolmar. She was really a real academic, a researcher, yes, she... I've always admired that. She can bury herself in something like that. And I can't do that, you know? I'm impatient and I'm already on to the next thing, and she found texts by a woman called Til Brugman.

And Til Brugman, well, she found them somewhere in the archives. They were lying around. And they are real expressionist lyrics, totally weird, but really funny. And it turned out that Til Brugman was Hannah Höch's<sup>13</sup> partner for ten years and they lived together, and I don't know when they separated. Then Til Brugman went back to Holland, and in the resistance there also... also hid Jews. So she was a really great woman, and we published the book. Very lovingly designed with hand-bound copies and things like that. And those are, so to speak, two highlights, that Til Brugman [book], which we published, and the documentary about lesbians. And we still have those books. And we keep them because we think that at some point more women will be interested in these topics than are today. But no one knows Til Brugman today. We did few events at BEGiNE and even

---

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Höch was a German Dada artist, born in 1889. Her work is best known in context of the Weimer period, during which she was one of the creators of the photomontage, and themes include androgyny, political discourse, and changes in gender roles. Höch died May 31, 1978. ("Hannah Höch." Wikipedia. Accessed July 21, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah\\_Höch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah_Höch))

wanted to make some plays out of it and things, but she is too unknown. Nothing came of it. Unfortunately, even though she was such a great woman.

**SW: You were at BEGiNE and did the publishing at the same time?**

BH: Right, exactly. But it was a good combination. So they were... they were two places for women to go, you know? Well, I always met women at BEGiNE, including young students who were working on some kind of subject and wanted to present their research to us. If I found it interesting, I asked them if they would like to publish their master's theses and therefore have the opportunity... so we had it all in one place. They could go somewhere and spread their topics and so on. And, yes, that's how we did it, and they really complemented each other very well. And, well, I was young. I was always working. So, I quite enjoyed it. Yes, it was nice.

**SW: The press became... so, you continued with BEGiNE and looked for something new in the private sphere, somehow with living, with social security?**

BH: Yes, so, I'd say the first relationship I had, we were together for about 15 years... BegiNE didn't... contributed to the fact that the relationship could not last. Well, it was like that... in the bookstore there were Heidi and Christine,<sup>14</sup> they got along really well, and we sat around in the pub a lot, and there were discussions about current affairs and about books and a lot about politics and so on, but also just in general. And Labrys was the so-called... so to speak, the liberal bookstore, the liberal women's bookstore, while Lilith was the radical feminist bookstore, so to speak.

And that was somehow more compatible with my life back then. Christine, the bookstore, and me. And when I went to BEGiNE, it was really... that became my life. And I didn't really notice, I guess. And I didn't really realize that I couldn't integrate Christine so well. She often complained that I was rude because I didn't include her enough.

And, whatever... I'd say, I mean, I don't believe in astrology at all, but Christine is a Cancer and she's very domestic, and I'm... definitely not a Cancer. And she always wanted me to leave the house in the morning, so to speak, and come back in the evening, and then we'd eat together, and then we'd read books, and then we'd do something else. And I did that for two years at that bookstore and felt like a lioness in a cage. I can't do that.

And then I had just started at BEGiNE, and that was the free space I needed. And also with contacts and everything. And Christine just realized, so to speak, the life she wanted. But

---

<sup>14</sup> Spelling uncertain.

that really didn't happen anymore. I was away in the evening, I was away on weekends, I was... well, nothing was working anymore.

The only good thing was that we had a rule at BEGiNE that we had to take four weeks' holiday at a time every year, and then we bought a VW bus, which was renovated, and then we went on holiday four weeks a year. So to France, to Poland, to the Czech Republic, here, you know? The GDR was new, too. You couldn't live anywhere except a bus and, well, we did various other things, and it was very exciting. It was a lot of fun, and at that time we... we also had dogs, which I still like to live with dogs and such.

But that was just not enough. And, in order to somehow create balance and somehow do something together with Christine, we went riding at some point. Here in the area, because we wanted... When I moved to Berlin and it was still a divided city, I always wished, oh, if only it were possible, then I would live in the area surrounding Berlin and would work in Berlin, like I do today. And we already started to look there, and we went riding there. So I that did for five years, it was great fun, too. And then we said we would also go somewhere else to learn to ride, and then we didn't do it together anymore. And now I always say, "my girlfriend ran off with my riding teacher."

Yes, it was then that they are still together today, so for over 20 years, and I think she has the domestic life now that she always wanted. But I didn't find that as funny as today. I was really devastated back then. I really thought this was the woman I'd grow old with. And, in my opinion, we had a lot in common on an intellectual level. And what I'm telling you now, that she actually had completely different needs in life, I didn't notice that at all.

Well, I'd say... BEGiNE and the work there and the women there, they helped me through everything, so to speak. And, there, I also had Manu, she'd lived in the house for a long time. Well, BEGiNE is this whole building, and there live... well, it's a Berlin apartment building with a front building and two side wings. It was occupied in 1981. It was a total ruin rebuilt by women, and Manu was already there then. And she helped to build and renovate the house when she was a very young girl, and she was also there when BEGiNE was founded. By Gerdien Jonker<sup>15</sup> back then.

And there were always these... well, of course you had to create a structure. From the beginning, the house had... that was the concept, too, living and working in the house, not that the same women lived and worked there, but that there were workplaces and housing for women. And it was that way from the beginning, that the supervised girls' living community was in the house. In fact, I think it was the first one. Then there was...

---

<sup>15</sup> Name uncertain.

so, BEGiNE was already planned... *Pelze*,<sup>16</sup> this rather avant-garde women's culture... art-culture project next door in the shop where *Frauen Unterwegs*<sup>17</sup> is today, was *Pelze*, such that we presented BEGiNE... two women's culture projects to the outside world, so to speak, towards the street. And all this in such a red-light milieu.<sup>18</sup> At that time, everything was still full of brothels.

And that's why BEGiNE was also intended as a shelter for prostitutes at the time. And that was really accepted. So they came to drink coffee, they came to the birthday party, they came... yes. And *Hydra*<sup>19</sup> was still in our house at that time. So, *Hydra* also formed in our house and later moved away. Yes, and Manu was with us from the very beginning, and we had a house plenum once a month, I think. All of us, all the people who lived there and all the people who worked there had to participate. There was this meeting at the back of the BEGiNE event room, and well, how long did we hold it? Until eight... well, it was at least 15 years, it was structured that way. But it was very exhausting. That is, to hold a monthly plenum there, and BEGiNE was still part of that whole association. So one part was BEGiNE for culture, which was supported by the Senate. One part was the BEGiNE pub, which was the economic business. And then that rental housing project. Was there anything else? And the girls' living community. So, those four legs, the whole house was built on them, so to speak.

And, yeah, it wasn't easy with so many different women and, you know, that women who lived there ultimately wanted to have a say in what happened in the projects, especially at BEGiNE or in the girls' living community, and we didn't find that funny, because of course someone who was living there really couldn't judge those things, right?

And then... we were in the mid-nineties and it was then that, you know, through that merger, that Berlin had become Greater Berlin, and the women in the East had their projects there, too. There was Paula Panke, and EWA, and FRIEDA, and Matilde, and, what else, all those projects that were in the boroughs and that really mainly served to set up ABM measures so that the poor women, who had all become unemployed, could somehow get back to work. Because after a few years it was clear that it was mainly the women, well, in any case the women as well, who were losing their jobs.

---

<sup>16</sup> Pelze MultiMedia ("Furs Multimedia") is located in a former fur shop in a house occupied by lesbians, initially functioned primarily as a meeting place for female artists.

<sup>17</sup> A women's travel agency, "Women on the Go."

<sup>18</sup> The Red-Light District in Germany, as in other countries, refers to an area with a high concentration of prostitution and sex-orientation businesses. In most cases, these districts are particularly associated with female street prostitution, though there are spaces for male prostitution and gay venues. ("Red-Light Districts." Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-light\\_district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-light_district))

<sup>19</sup> Hydra e.V. is a self-help and advocacy organization for prostitutes.

And then the government started saving money. And I mean, I think the women's budget in the Berlin Senate was 0.06 percent, or even 0.006, something very small like that. And it had to be divided then between all the women's projects in the whole city. There was no increase at first. And, all kinds of protest actions, we didn't exactly have resounding success. And then, in the West, the projects were just wiped out. It happened very, very quickly and BEGiNE was on the list too. So, 1996, that was our tenth anniversary. It was clear that the money would be cut off, completely. And then it was like that, so, there was...

**[End part 2 of 6]**

**[Start part 3 of 6]**

BH: ...a huge outcry in the women's movement. And, fortunately, we also had friends in politics who participated strongly. But only half could be saved.

So Tamara's job was halved, the subsidies were halved, all the operating costs were halved, and, with us, they took the standpoint that, "you have the pub, you can earn some more in the private sector." And we did not think about that at all at the time. And we were Edith, Tamara, and I. I already told you that the three of us were the organizers there, and, actually, another person from the pub, Ulla.

So, this whole thing, it was a total shock, because we didn't know, could this go on? If so, how can it go on? In any case, it wouldn't go on like that. And it was really dumb, Tamara was so offended. She quit her job right away. She was the one who said, "all my work isn't recognized, not even by the Senate." That was the important thing for her, that the Senate Administration did not recognize her work, I guess, and that really blew us away. I, I mean, I forgave her for that, but not at the time, and someone had to cover that job very quickly, and that someone was me, and that was, I think, a full-time job after six months. I can't remember, or it was part-time. I have no idea anymore. And then we sat down together and thought, we have to change the concept somehow, we can't do this. So, it was clear: we couldn't go on like that with half the money. It just wasn't possible.

And then, because it had become clear that BEGiNE had, regarding the Senate support, so to speak, borne the brunt for whole house... So, the rent was very cheap. That did not pay at all. But BEGiNE really paid so much rent that it supported an incredible amount of the house.

And then we decided, with the cutback and with the disaster that came to the project, that all the subprojects had to become autonomous, so all of them founded their own associations: BEGiNE, Culture, girls' living community, what was that called, I think the

Association for the Development of New Quality of Life for Girls. The whole association was called *Verein neuer Lebensqualitäten für Frauen* (Association for New Quality of Life for Women). They were all under that. Then there was our BEGiNE.

And we really had to run the pub privately then. And, for that, we had to develop a concept, and I was absolutely unhappy with that concept.

Well, actually, we all decided back then. We were... Edith and I... and Edith and I were left. We decided, actually, that the whole old team had to quit. You can't bring something old into something that's brand new, it doesn't work. And then they developed this new concept. They rented the pub out to two women who really wanted it, who invested a lot and turned it into a restaurant. Then there was a big cooperation contract with Culture, so that Culture had the opportunity to hold an event there once a month, I think. And yes, that was it.

I really stopped then. I had that job for exactly one year. And then the concept was finally ready, and the pub was handed over, my job was handed over. Exactly, it was like that, that we had to do the work in advance, that's when I got to know Manu better. The woman I was with for the next ten years. And she was transferred. So, a single woman, to the union in southern Germany. She could choose where she wanted to go. And then I said: "You know, Manu, there's nothing for me here anymore. BEGiNE is... we have to surrender now. I don't have a BEGiNE anymore. I don't really have a home anymore."

So, we still had the bus, and hit the road and looked around, and everyone always thought that was really great, somehow, Barbara, that you're going with. And I thought, "Pff, it doesn't matter where I go!" Yeah, so I was at a total loss. I mean, when you're really into something and you've really enjoyed doing it, and it goes away, then there's nothing at all. And, actually, I was glad that there was something new then.

And then we went on holiday in the Black Forest and had to find a place, a place where she could set up her office somewhere in southern Germany, and then we went there. And then I just said I wanted to move to the country. And that was kind of great too. I was there with my dog. So Manu drove to the apartment with two cats and two mice. But there was no room for anything else, and somebody had to lock the doors and remove the last things. And then we... and I took the night train to Offenburg<sup>20</sup> and from there I walked to the village where we lived. And then I was totally happy. Well, I also knew the way

---

<sup>20</sup> Offenburg is a city located in the state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany. It has about 60,000 inhabitants and is therefore, the largest city and the administrative capital of the Ortenaukreis. ("Offenburg." Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offenburg>)

through the forest over the mountains, really. And if you stand up there or down there, the village is there, and those were my village and vineyards and things now. Everything was great.

Well, and then we... but I knew that... well, you can't do without women, can you? Not at all. And then we went to Offenburg for the first time, I think two days later, for shopping and strolling around in the old town, in the city center. And then I stopped in front of a bookstore, and it had all these women's books on display? It couldn't be, that that was in there. And then there was a note about the women's café. When its next meeting was. I think we arrived there in August, and in September the women's café took place, and then three weeks later we were at the women's café and got to know all the women who were active there. And in the bookstore, I... it was a team of women, and we let them know that I was looking for a job.

And it wasn't long before I started there. And that was a total hub. On the one hand, there was the women's café, which we immediately... we piggybacked on its organization. And then... and the bookstore. It was full of women, full of active women there. And back then they were still really active in southern Germany, because they were a kind of ten years behind. Compared to Berlin, they were ten years behind. And there was a women's week in Offenburg. You could work with the Commissioner for Women's Affairs there. As soon as you opened your mouth, the newspaper came and printed it. It was just really great, yeah. And then we noticed that there were a lot of lesbians there, and we had to create a place for them. We said, "Oh, we won't just do the women's café, we're also doing a lesbian café now," and then we stirred up a hornet's nest because it was, I don't know, how it was.

For us it was completely strange that there were women who are lesbians in our society who didn't say so. And that they, so to speak, when they had the feeling that they were going through a place that is alternative, yeah, like our women's space. That was called "KiK." It took place often. A *Kultur in der Kaserne* (Culture in the Barracks), that kind of thing. And we had our women's café there with a small bar, and we could also have events or even dance or whatever, if they felt that if went to the café, they'd be outed. So, for us it was really sort of... that led to... that we really... how shall I say this... we weren't greeted anymore?

So, it was important that we had nothing to do with them. So, as lesbians. There were of course many others, and also women, Christa from the bookstore, who is not lesbian. But who's totally open-minded and such. It was no problem, but it wasn't easy for the lesbian women there themselves.

That was definitely also a momentous experience, because we somehow had the feeling, "oh, it's not as easy here as it looks there. Well, maybe because it's in the countryside, we

couldn't tell the difference, maybe because it's southern Germany... very conservative people there," but we were somehow... it made a difference to us.

That really made us feel that you can have casual contact, so to speak, even when you organize a women's week and women's health and such, it's still... it's important, but I think women and lesbians belong together. And I mean, as a lesbian, I'm committed to women, freedoms, and women's issues, because I know that it's also good for us lesbians. But it's actually the other way around too. So, I mean, abortion laws affect lesbians too, because we can get into that situation too. By, you know, being pregnant, even if you didn't want to be... could also have been violent or something. And you don't want it. I don't think there are many women's issues that don't affect me as a lesbian, whether at work, in health or elsewhere. But heterosexual women, on the other hand, often don't see it that way. And society doesn't see it that way, anyway. So, at least for me, they belong together.

And if I'm not allowed to be present as a lesbian there, that is, without being punished, and I might even be bullied or something, well, that's no quality of life for me. Yeah, and we were often told by the women there that everyone knew that they are lesbians. So one didn't need to talk about it. These two gay friends we came there through agreed with it, too. And when you said it, there was drama. And they were all against you saying it. It was a really weird experience there. Well, and then Manu was transferred again, and then she went to Düsseldorf.<sup>21</sup> But I stayed in the village.

I also had work in the bookstore, and so I simply had to stay there, and I had also taken on additional work for the Offenburg... what do you call it... *Frauenstadtbuch* (women's town book). I participated in that. We were, you could say, an address book with all the projects in the whole district where women could find points of contact. Women's breakfast, violence... I don't know, any groups that might be interesting for women. And I produced that together with the Commissioner for Women's Affairs. I had learned how to deal with those kinds of programs, typesetting programs, and I took over that area.

So I stayed there, and Manu was already back in Düsseldorf. And then there was this union merger, that is, the HBV,<sup>22</sup> ÖTV,<sup>23</sup> Postal Union, I think, and IG Medien<sup>24</sup> into Ver.di<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Düsseldorf is a city in western Germany known for its fashion industry and art scene. The Rhine River divides the city in two: the Altstadt (Old Town) on the eastern side and modern commercial areas to the west of the river. ("Düsseldorf." Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%BCsseldorf>)

<sup>22</sup> Trade, Banking and Insurance Union (*Gewerkschaft Handel, Banken und Versicherungen*).

<sup>23</sup> Public Services, Transport and Traffic Union (*Gewerkschaft Öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr*).

<sup>24</sup> Media Union.

<sup>25</sup> Ver.di is a German trade union based in Berlin. It was established in 2001 after a five-union merger. Ver.di is a member of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), and with over two million members, it is the

today. And there was a two-year process of finding a location. So, where should the office be? I was asked by... I can't remember. In any case, after endless back and forth, the location fell to Berlin. And it was clear that we'd be going back to Berlin. Manu was totally happy. It was not yet clear when, but we broke down our tents in Offenburg then and went to a small apartment in Solingen for a year.

And it was kind of... I was glad to get away from that kind of province. Because then I suddenly realized... no, not suddenly, because of all the things that happened there. I didn't like those close quarters. I just couldn't live well there. So the return to Berlin from there after five years was okay.

And then, because the union was progressive and I had already stuck behind Manu several times as a partner, I followed her. They said that qualified partners of union employees would be given preference for jobs in developing Ver.di in Berlin. Temporarily, but we were preferred. Well, my qualification was, I think, quite good. They were looking for an administrative employee in the field of art and culture in the administration, assigned to a secretary, a political secretary, with whom nobody could get along.

And that's where they assigned me. Yeah, and it was pretty interesting, too. So I did really stand in the bathroom and cry like others had before me. But for me it was... I think... I never despised that woman. She was my age then and I thought, it can't be this way. At some point she has to realize that I'm not doing anything against her or stabbing her in the back or anything. And I wanted to help her. And I still... well, she was the only woman in the Association of German Writers and in this translators' association there, the VBÜ I think it was called. She was also connected to P.E.N.<sup>26</sup> and such. She supervised those, and then, of course, there were also various secretaries for the stage, for visual arts, and so on. There were also various other things and people there.

But, I mean, there I felt... it was kind of a school of hard knocks, really also being active in the administration. Lots of contact with the writers... [explains that the word "writers" should be written in German such that it is gender neutral]. But, in the end, doing only administrative work was really a trial by fire. And, also, in that... well, the union had a hierarchy, yes, unbelievable. Right, when I was still there, I actually took the trouble to draw out the pyramid for myself. Well, not of the politically elected bodies. They were always equitably filled, they are politically elected, right? But that administration, where no one voted anymore, but where people were just appointed. There were 90 percent men and 10 percent women in the upper echelons, and then there was no middle

---

second-largest German trade union after IG Metall. ("Ver.di." Wikipedia. Accessed July 7, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ver.di>)

<sup>26</sup> Poets, Essayists, Novelists – an international association of writers.

management. There was no such thing, only the administrative staff who did the typing and kept the lists and so on. And that was the other way around, 90 percent women, 10 percent men.

And, of course, I was always like Rumpelstiltskin there, you know? So, I don't know. I was just really worked up about that. And did I fight the man for it and such, and then the hours. I was there from nine in the morning to five at night. I was just unhappy because it was always the same and always that... I thought it was terrible. And when the job ended, after two years, I barely made it through. I thought, "no, I have to do something else. I can't stand this" and was half sick again.

And then I somehow said, "I want my old BEGiNE back," and I can be unemployed for a while and do something there and offer groups and so on. In any case, not something like this anymore. I can't do that. Well, and then I told BEGi... Well, Edith was still on the board, they also somewhat knew what was going on. Marion Schmidt, who is now on the board, she had the job and said, "You're right on cue. I just want to dance again. I don't want to do this anymore." And then we... we somehow agreed on how to handle it, and then I started there again. And there I was back with my old dear BEGiNE.

That was dra-ma, though. Really very dramatic. BEGiNE was actually already finished. Could we take a short break?

**[End part 3 of 6]**

**[Start part 4 of 6]**

BH: So now about the chronology... it was such that the house was really probably occupied in 1981, built for five years in order to make the house habitable and to arrange the project-rooms, and then BEGiNE opened in 1986. I came to it in 1990 and then stayed in that first... so, I was there for seven years, from 1990 to '97, and 1996 was that cutback. So that first big... the first big change that had to take place there, that is, structurally. At the time, it was really the case that we were still in the heyday of the women's movement. BEGiNE was running well, really well. So it was full every day and business was going really well, as well.

For that reason, we also thought that one could really... how to put this... Earlier, the buzzword was always "professionalization." It meant to change it such that women could live off of it. And that change then was that the association was founded for BEGiNE, that the pub was privatized, so, really, rented out, to two women that then changed it into a restaurant. That was all done in, I think, 1998. I was already gone then. So, in 1998, '97, I think, I left. Or '98. So I don't know exactly anymore, but one of those two years. Then I

was gone from Berlin for five years and worked at Ver.di for two years, and then I came back. That was 2004. And 2004 was the year when the women who ran the women's bar, so that privatization, they finally closed up shop in 2004. And there was real fighting about that. So we were only allowed to use the front room only in accordance with our cooperation agreement, and that was once a month for an event. Otherwise it was closed, and we had everything else that took place in the back event room. There were courses and groups and film lectures, discussions and so on. That was all in the back room.

And, sadly, it was also true that the whole thing was really... Well, it didn't end up in court, but we had to get lawyers involved to get the space back, you know. And when I came, as I mentioned, wasn't convinced by the concept. The whole thing only worked for about a year, I think, and from then on it became... the rest of the years, it was just totally difficult, because the bar had completely different interests than the association, which was supported... which was non-profit. And then I said, I'll come back, I'll do it, I'll take the position. I will do that with BEGiNE, but only under the condition that we go back to the roots, that we work very closely together, you know, with the pub and the association, that we see that we develop something that is in our common interest and develop it further.

And, because Manu was so attached to BEGiNE too, she... she took over both the license and the ownership of the pub. And I was employed by the association, the BEGiNE Association. And on the board, we had Edith, who had been there for, I don't know, 20 years, and Marion, who moved from a position to the board, and the woman who was in that position before that, Gerhild Vollherbst.<sup>27</sup> Those are the women, and I was employed in the association. And it was already the case that nobody went to BEGiNE anymore. Because that was closed, it was no longer a place that the women visited. There was simply nothing going on, I'd say. And then I really started again from the ground up. I remembered what the women used to make BEGiNE and tried to pick up where they left off.

In Offenburg, in a bookstore, we'd had a literature circle where women got together and talked once a month about a book that we had read before, and I started a group like that right away. Then I remembered that... in a game-group... I could also... play *Doppelkopf*.<sup>28</sup> I brought it (BEGiNE) to life. That is, first of all, tried to get women in there again and do a few things which would make them come back other than events, shows, concerts, that kind of thing. Of course, we continued all that. And then I simply approached the female

---

<sup>27</sup> Gerhild Vollherbst is a member of BEGiNE and now works as a coach for teams, managers and individuals to support them through workshops that focus on defining and achieving goals ("Home." Gerhild Vollherbst. Accessed July 22, 2020. <https://gerhild-vollherbst.de/home.html>)

<sup>28</sup> A German card game for four players.

artists we used to work with in the past, said we're back, we're doing something here again. And they said, oh yes, then we'll come, then I don't know. Kim Justice,<sup>29</sup> Caspar and Bianca<sup>30</sup>, I don't know, Birgitta Altermann,<sup>31</sup> and Lilly Walden,<sup>32</sup> lots of those sorts.

Older artists also rediscovered the space for themselves, and we were able to start something with them again. But there was also quite a backlog of renovations. That is, it had become a very dark room. And, right away in the first year, we really had to thank... I really have to thank Birgit, and I have unfortunately forgotten her last name. She is a woman who... They really wanted to do a lesbian film festival at BEGiNE, but we couldn't use the room. And then, in the back room downstairs, the office and the association's room, and in the courtyard, we let that lesbian film festival take place. It was a huge... it was totally great, and she said something like, "We can do that. We can do that. We'll make something out of BEGiNE again" and said, "okay, I'll help you all for half a year." And she did great events. It was a lot of work. So we set up lounges in the back room, with flokatis and mattresses on the floor and, and... a bit Turkish, yeah. So always in line with the events, she also has a few good contacts with Turkish cabaret artists and such. And she also ran the pub. At that time, among the dance courses that took place there, which we still do today, we had... they offer Argentinian tango. We always offered a tango bar in the evening. So the teacher put on some music, or Marion did... I don't know what that evening was called! There was salsa and standard dancing in the front room. Tuesday was tango, and Thursday was another dance evening.

So that's how we started, and then right away, in the summer of 2005, I think, we were able to get back into the rooms. Then we renovated all of BEGiNE. Pretty much as it looks today. And I was really happy that we had those red-orange tones there, because everyone had always said, "ugh, a train station hall. It's so cold here," and things like that, and you can really only change that with colors. Since we've had those colors there, very few of us have ever said it's cold and uncomfortable anymore. It's just the color that does it. And Beate, who is still at BEGiNE today, was at BEGiNE in the nineties. I had won her too, and she was... she lived nearby, and she was active in neighborhood management. And as is often the case, at the end of the year, there was money again, and then we could apply for new furniture. So we arranged for chairs for the guests. And we said, yeah,

---

<sup>29</sup> Name uncertain.

<sup>30</sup> Caspar and Bianca are a two-member comedic musical group that is currently inactive. ("Caspar & Bianca: Kerle wie wir." Youtube. Accessed July 8, 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnHAWxVca\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnHAWxVca_g))

<sup>31</sup> Birgitta Altermann is a pianist and musician who was born in 1946. She has extensive experience in the worlds of music and theatre and has been awarded the German Cabaret Award. ("Birgitta Altermann." Wilde Mischung: Theater and Entertainment. Accessed July 8, 2020. <http://www.wilde-mischung.de/vita1.htm>)

<sup>32</sup> Lilly Walden is an actress and author born in 1953. She met Birgitta Altermann in 1983 and they developed their upbeat variety show "Wild Mixture" together ("About Us." A Wild Mix of Theater and Entertainment. Accessed July 21, 2020. <http://www.wilde-mischung.de/vita2.htm>)

which chairs do you all find attractive? And a [female] carpenter built the tables, the table tops, which are still there, and she did a great job, such that we changed the character of BEGiNE a little bit. And the counters or, for that matter, the whole design, still does that today. It's always... it has changed, somehow, and we still think about "how can we make it better?"

And that started back then, it was truly very run-down. Really awful, there was nobody left, and we just thought, we can do this. And a lot of people said, "oh, great, that's there again, we'll come back." And... so that we could really say that it was a very lively place. It was that way after maybe five years, six years. Before that, it wasn't easy. We felt we had to do a lot. We still have to fight against the fact that people said, "oh, BEGiNE is closed." Even years later they said, "oh, BEGiNE is open? But it's closed!" And it didn't matter that we had a website or anything else. You just couldn't help it, and nobody says that anymore. So it's really clear, so many people come to one-off events that some can't get in. And that is just great.

And the *Lesbische Auslese*,<sup>33</sup> for example, which has been going on for a long time now... they were looking for a place and then said, "oh yes, this is great, we'll do it at BEGiNE now." And that was pretty much right at the beginning after we really got going again in 2005. So many came, we had to send women home. So, we can't get 150 in there. It just doesn't work. So those sorts of things, they were our hope, and, somehow, we just thought, sure, we'll just keep trying, keep trying to find new types of events, looking for groups to meet here. And that's how it happened. Little by little, they just came, and now it's a lively place again.

So that was just great. And, even now, I've had the feeling for two or three years that there are more women again who are looking for spaces like this. Because, in the meantime, women have said, "oh, we don't need women's space anymore." And we also had those discussions in the team again and again. I was always convinced that we women need space, not necessarily as shelter, but as a space for freedom.

So, what I explained earlier is that you don't have to stand up to men, that you can develop your own forms of communication or simply live and develop the ones that women have. That you simply don't have a cramp, but rather a space where everything is possible, where much is possible. And then there were women who really knew to appreciate that. And, strangely enough, we have a guiding principle for which we also receive funding from the Senate Administration which is to support young female artists.

---

<sup>33</sup> The name of this event series is a play on words: "Lesbische" means lesbian, and "Auslese" means "selection" or "screening," but is based on the word for "to read." The events feature four lesbian-related books presented and are critiqued back-to-back.

In other words, we were actually looking specifically for young female artists who could perform with us and present themselves here. And now there are only women on stage and only women in the audience. That is very special. And there were always people, even when they were only either alone on stage or by chance all women on stage, there were people who said, “What? We can’t invite our [male] friends, and no men in the audience? That’s all stupid.” And then when we say sure, but it’s just like that. It’s your choice. If you don’t like it, then unfortunately you can’t perform. Most people did it anyway. And, afterwards, they said it was totally different. There is a really great audience at BEGiNE, and it’s a totally different atmosphere, and it’s really great.

And then the young women reintroduced the term “safe space,” which I... because I really thought, “oh funny, then it must be that...” I mean, today we have the Me Too campaign. So, there must be reasons why a space like this, also for artists who don’t even notice it at first, makes a positive difference. Of course, this has also encouraged us to keep it that way. The other thing that encouraged us was that I had, of course, very quickly... that I was the only one, right? There was only one job that paid 25 hours, right, and in the beginning, it was 70 hours of work in one week, and then it slowly became less. I couldn’t work without help. So, we always offered jobs through job creation measures (*Arbeitsmarkt-Maßnahmen*).<sup>34</sup> And we also worked together with various organizations, such as Goldnetz,<sup>35</sup> for example, which used to do job creation measures for women. That is no longer the case today, but some places still do it.

So we worked together with them, so there was always one person through *Bürgerarbeit*<sup>36</sup> or ABM<sup>37</sup> or MAE<sup>38</sup> for a while. And from them... and we also offered internships, from which people stayed. Many stayed. They’re still there today. For, I don’t know, from 2005 to today is 13 years, 14 years. So some of them are still there and work voluntarily with us and, without that, it wouldn’t have worked, and it wouldn’t work

---

<sup>34</sup> *Arbeitsmarkt-Maßnahmen* are labor market policy measures that influence supply and demand in the labor market. Classically, there is a distinction between active and passive labor market practices. Active labor market policies aim to reintegrate the unemployed, and passive labor market policies focus on alleviating the economic consequences of unemployment through wage replacement benefits such as unemployment, work, and bankruptcy benefits. (“Arbeitsmarktpolitik.” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Accessed July 9, 2020. <https://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/lexikon-der-wirtschaft/18678/arbeitsmarktpolitik>)

<sup>35</sup> Goldnetz is a professional training and coaching company based out of Berlin, Germany. (“Goldnetz.” LinkedIn. Accessed July 9, 2020. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/goldnetz-ggmbh/about/>)

<sup>36</sup> Refers to government programs that subsidize work for the long-term unemployed in contexts that serve the public interest.

<sup>37</sup> See Footnote 8.

<sup>38</sup> Measures for Activation and Occupational Integration (*Maßnahmen zur Aktivierung und beruflichen Eingliederung*) is another program that aims to integrate Germany’s unemployed population back into the workforce.

today. And that's when I noticed that the clientele has changed completely because of, you could really say, *Hartz IV*,<sup>39</sup> that's what I said the other day. So while we used to have a lot of female academics up until the nineties, who simply wanted to do something different and not necessarily a career in a normal company, but who set up their own things, also in women's contexts, and offered something for women. And the women who came then, they were a completely different clientele, some of them unskilled, some of them sick, mentally ill or physically ill. And then it developed in the BEGiNE in such a way that a lot of mentally ill women worked with us... so you can really say ill women. And some of them were, I guess, always more or less 13 women who were active in the pub and in the club one way or another, that was about half of them. Well, sometimes I was a bit overtaxed, because I didn't have any training to be able to handle that, sure, but I think we did a good job.

And then I also changed my view. And I heard again and again that BEGiNE was a... well, a shelter for these women who would usually go to Café Wildwasser. Café Seidenfaden less, because the alcohol addiction problem is stronger there. And, of course, BEGiNE is not quite right as an alcohol-serving pub, but especially at Wildwasser... so, women affected by violence, abused women, they saw BEGiNE very much as a shelter. And that also had to do with the fact that we were one of the few places that was open at night. And, quite often, it is the women who need someplace at night, who often cannot be alone. And that has remained so to this day. I think that is another very important aspect, that is, apart from the women who spend their free time with us, who take part in courses, who are active in groups, who are not poor, so we don't really have women from different countries with us, culturally speaking, but rather from other European countries or tourists from America, New Zealand, from these countries.

But, socially speaking, we have the full range here. From Hartz IV recipients to millionaires. And I really think it's great that they take classes together. I still think it's great, yeah.

**SW: And what happened with you at that time? When BEGiNE had a second life with your activity, that was 2005, 2007?**

BH: Yes, exactly. In 2004, I re-joined and, no, it was really... I still did the publishing house until 2005, still did a book, and noticed that I really wasn't pulling it off. So, before I left, we were three people in charge of organization at BEGiNE and one for the pub. Yeah. It was four women, and then I had to do everything. And that was really very hard for me at first because I really didn't want to be a boss like that, that is, who is individually responsible. I always wanted to work on a team, and because... I don't know... it's just

---

<sup>39</sup> A 2002 reform to the German labor market which restructured the system for unemployment benefits.

more vibrant and varied. And also for the shop. So a little stupid, not just for me, but, anyway, in the beginning it was...

**[End part 4 of 6]**

**[Begin part 5 of 6]**

BH: No, it's that way to this day. It's just the only position, you know? And I had to really arduously find my way in that role, and I had to find a compromise. So, try to build structures that, if not exactly like a collective... you can't manage when everything is different from payment or from the previous structure. You can't manage all of a sudden like that. But I always say, more egalitarian. There should at least be a low level hierarchy. And the concept that I learned at BEGiNE in that first phase... I found it fantastic, and I am still trying to do that today, although on a more focused level, because everybody can really only take on small assignments, to demonstrate that every woman gets a certain area of responsibility. Then she has that, and she is responsible for it, and she also gets to make the decisions there.

And she doesn't have to come to me about every little thing and say... so, we discuss everything, and many people come to me and discuss things with me initially before we discuss them in the team. But it is also the case that everyone has freedom in her own area and can try things out. And that is always described very positively by those who participate in it.

However, there are also assignments. For instance, sending mail. Yeah, so we print the program and then the program has to be bagged and brought to the post office and such. And there's a woman who does that. She has done it since the beginning, until today. And she does it at home while she watches TV or whatever and says, "I want to keep doing this, I want to help you all!" And, yeah, that's just fantastic, right?

Or another way she can enjoy herself is by making posters. We plaster everything at our place with posters so that as much as possible stays hanging and one can find out what sorts of events are running. So she also makes those posters. It takes forever, but she likes doing it. So that's an example. Or Beate, who... she had a subsidized position for three years, and I worked very much in a partnership, and well, with her. And that has remained, that she still does the concerts. And what she says... I always think, yeah, there

are obligations and there are free choices. So, the concerts are really fun, and then she also does the reports for GEMA.<sup>40</sup> That's no fun, you know? Things like that.

Or that she even helps me with putting together the program. When I'm done with it, she looks it over, changes things in the text because she's a journalist, and strikes things out or makes it a little peppier or whatever. So, that sort of thing. And all works because we have worked together for so long and no one has said "ugh, BEGiNE doesn't interest me anymore, do something different." Yeah, it has run well from the beginning. It's really great. I am always super thrilled, even though there are of course also difficulties in the team sometimes.

But, I think, what's really important... and that is, I think, in each... in every area of my life... when you have a goal, so, we all have the goal of maintaining BEGiNE and making BEGiNE into a great place, and that stands above any little, personal things. So everyone pulls herself together and says "but we want..." and then we talk to each other again. Or when it also sort of... you can't solve everything well in a team meeting. You can try, but it doesn't work. We're all just people, kind of. And we all have baggage and have been insulted, you know? And someone else doesn't notice, and people get hurt, and that sort of thing. There's all of that there, too. But everyone, and I do it too, I try to hear then, when I can do it again, "what did she really mean? Aha, we aren't speaking to each other enough. Okay, then we just have to put in more effort now."

Then I put in more effort and try to approach her again. And it can be that I still don't like her very much at all, sure, because of the injury. But we start off again on that professional level, and we meet there. And you can build up a little trust that way, at least. It might not be like before, but you are on a level again where work can run well and, I don't know why, but we have managed up to this point. [Knocks on the table.] Knock on wood!

Yeah, and I also think that, Manu and I, at that time when we did BEGiNE together, we broke up. So that was a time... she got sick. She had, I think, one or two hospital stays, worked, I guess, a lot at her job and not much at BEGiNE and, we have different capacities that can bring in women, always take them in. And, of course, everything isn't nice after that sort of breakup, but BEGiNE was simply more important.

And that's what we all came to terms with in the end. So even if there are sometimes... sometimes unpleasant scenes. That's clear. I mean, at BEGiNE it's like that anyway, they find each other there, and separate again there. That's just the way it is. And then maybe it's also because we're not all 20 anymore. There are very few 20-year-olds here. So you

---

<sup>40</sup> Society for Musical Performing and Mechanical Reproduction Rights (*Gesellschaft für musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte*) is a German organization for collecting and performance rights.

have a little bit of life experience and you know that it's possible, that will change again, and then we'll find a way again. But of course it happens. They had a relationship, and the woman who works there stays there, of course. The guests stay away for two years or so at first. So it happens.

But that's a phenomenon... that we always manage to stumble over those hurdles somehow. I don't know how much that gets through to the outside, but it's that way for me. It's become apparent over the years. For me, the work is the most important. And also my relationship that I have, so aside from romantic relationships, they are determined by work. So Christa at the bookstore in Offenburg, too. I'm still in touch with her. So not a lot, but, I mean, we put the whole thing together and brought the store out of a few crises, and that's just more important to me in the end than anything else.

And BEGiNE... the work there itself carried me through many crises, too. I also mean the breakup with Manu. That was really not so easy. At the time, my mother died, my father died. I used to go home to visit my father in West Germany every four weeks to help take care of him. So pretty much every free weekend that I had, I was there. But BEGiNE supported me. In the end, that was where I got my energy, even though I worked a lot there.

That was simply what supported me throughout my life, in a certain way. And the content of my life was... when I... so, when I retire now at some point, then I will really say that BEGiNE was the most important part of my life. So, other things too, but BEGiNE is what came most from within me, somehow. The most energy, the most enjoyment of life, and also the most hardship. But everything, somehow.

And I mean, sure, I am also the one who has supported that for the longest. But I am no... I am someone who supports things well, but who doesn't start something like that very well. And the person who started it, Redin Jonker, who had a vision too, of creating a sort of women's Café Einstein, so culture and coffee, and who also had good relationships which made it so that everything went relatively easily with support and such, didn't want to do it anymore after three and a half years, and the team also didn't. That was already the case. They all fought then, you know? And sometimes I think that the power that you need at the beginning can maybe transform into something that simply supports or holds together, or something. Maybe they're just two different abilities. I don't really know.

And then I came, and I brought my competencies with me with the continuing education, just to try, and then tons of women were there that wanted to do it too. So they all wanted to work well there and create a good place that was fun and that would be good. And lots of ideas came from that that flowed in from women. It was really great. And at the beginning we had no computer. Tamara always just wrote on a typewriter, and then at

some point we got the first small computer. Luckily, I had already learned how they worked in the eighties, you know? Thanks to my girlfriend at the time, who absolutely insisted, “this is the now thing now. We have to learn it.”

And then it still didn’t have any graphic interface, no Word or anything. Everything had to be entered manually. And we had one like that at BEGiNE too. And then someone came and said, we need another computer. We must, and then we can do our program... and then we can do such and such, and so on. And then we made changes and such, which then... we tried to do it then, and it really made our work easier. Everyone was always open to something new. And it’s still that way today. So, of course, the website now and such, what else, and we are also on social media now and such. Every individual person doesn’t have to do that, but there is always someone who does it, and that contributes something, and it is great as long as it is fun. Super.

And that is probably, I guess, the secret of all well-running businesses. I’d say that you always first promote what comes from the circle of those who want to participate, that you use the abilities that everyone brings with them in a positive way and so don’t shut yourself off. I also know that from groups that are kind of closed systems that initially say “nope, we don’t want that” or something. And then we had all the new things come. So I always give the example... then came the queer movement. Or, I mean, what was discussed that was new? You don’t have to adopt everything, but you do at least have to listen to it at first. And I think... I don’t dare to say it nowadays. This one woman, this was in the nineties... we had the first cross-dressing workshops. So BEGiNE was, I think, the first place that had something like that at all then. Or S&M parties. There were those at BEGiNE, too. I mean, some people weren’t there, myself included. But there was a woman, and she could do that in our space. And then put together the room like that, and then they had their party there, and that was okay like that.

And, so, that subject matter just kept going further. So, then I was... I had just left at that time, when the queer movement got big, and I was against “queer” from the beginning. I am a feminist and had already seen the difference at the time, and also had the fear that it would make women invisible. And I didn’t want to have my issues taken away, because they’re a different community and, I think, they should exist. But the question is always, “is every place appropriate for every community?” And even when I was away, they didn’t do it like that.

There were stronger associations with gays, and that was sort of the thrust of it. But as soon as that woman was gone, and Marion<sup>41</sup> was there, she was very woman-centered, it changed again. And when I came then, that was kind of the heyday. Then we had the thing

---

<sup>41</sup> The Global Feminisms Project also has an interview with Marion Schmidt on the German Interviews site.

with the transitions, so, you know, the transgender people got stronger too. And we also had women at BEGiNE who changed into men. That was also... so, we have always supported that, until it doesn't work anymore because they just look so male that it just isn't good for BEGiNE anymore. And we always talked about that with the team.

We really looked at that sort of thing from all angles and then came to the conclusion that that kind of women's space is important, that we could be a women's space and... so, I always say it with my words now: We just have a specific target group, and the target group is women and lesbians, and they are not transgender. And when transgender people come, then I send them to the *Sonntags-Club*.<sup>42</sup> They'll get further there. But, for a while, there were also more transwomen with us, because there weren't just more people who went woman to man, but also more who went man to woman. But they didn't really feel comfortable with us either, so, because that just wasn't the subject matter that was offered there for people who conformed like that. And now we still have one, two transwomen who come, have been coming for... I know them from the LAZ<sup>43</sup> days in the seventies, who have always identified themselves quite differently with the women's movement than transgender people today do, who really have a different worldview. And I still find that somehow okay but not so fitting for BEGiNE. And we didn't want to take part in that change. We haven't to this day, although individual women with us don't have such a clear stance. But BEGiNE does.

**SW: And those ten years when you... it wasn't... more, 15 years, you wanted to say something more about them, how you... You were engaged with BEGiNE and with this new situation with Manu and then your living here and there, too... is that something you'd like to talk about?**

BH: Sure. Regarding BEGiNE, I was definitely overextended at times. So it really challenged me personally. That is, not just psychologically but also physically. And, I mean, in 2005 we really got going again at BEGiNE with opening hours, with a real pub, with events as much as possible, so that we could get as many women as possible in, and in 2006 my mother died. Relatively suddenly, I guess.

That is a whole other story that I... I'll just tell it now. Maybe we don't need to put it in, but this is the way it was. So, if I have a role model for dying, it's my mother. And the woman who is dying right now, Renate. My mother became really ill, didn't tell anyone, forbade the doctor to talk to the family, and on the weekends when I came, she stopped taking

---

<sup>42</sup> Sonntags-Club is an an event, information, and counseling center for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, and intersex individuals, as well as for all friends and interested parties. ("sonntags-club." Sonntags Club. Accessed July 9, 2020. <https://www.sonntags-club.de/>)

<sup>43</sup> Lesbian Action Center (*Lesbisches Aktionszentrum*)

certain pills. She had atrial fibrillation. She had those serious cardiac arrhythmias that lead to death. And she knew that she had esophageal cancer. We only learned all of this after her death.

And then she stopped taking those pills and died within three days. And I had had many conversations with my other about dying and such before that, and she had said "I won't become dependent on care." But she was already well aware that she... that that would somehow end it...

**[End part 5 of 6]**

**[Begin part 6 of 6]**

BH: ...before it became degrading for her.

And, because that came so suddenly for us, it was really something of a shock, because we also... My mother was also sort of a... she was, I suppose, the strong one, you know? She held the family together, she did everything. And, for me, it eventually led to a sort of small breakdown. So, I didn't have any close contacts or anything, but I did have good contact with my mother. I traveled with her, too, and... so we really understood one another very well and... that I lead this woman-centered life... that has to do with my mother, too. It also has to do with my father, but she simply made a wrong decision in her life. She got married and had kids, and she always let us know about that. She said, "don't get married and don't have kids and stay independent." And my father always moved around with me and said "women are just much more beautiful than men. Just look, she is way more beautiful than men." So you know, then at some point I was a lesbian and had to tell them, and they sat at the table and made bilateral accusations of whose genes it probably was.

But yeah, so that wasn't super close, but it wasn't bad either, yeah, and... as if the death deprived me of some strength, I can't say it any other way. I became ill again then, was then treated by a non-medical practitioner for three years. She fixed me up super well. It was really great, and I got to know how those homeopathic remedies work. I didn't have the time to do any therapy or anything like that, well, and also just didn't have a mind to do it. But the way those remedies work and quietly bring about changes that you eventually sense, that was really great. And it was always like that. She also offered events then. For me it was always a few hours of rest, where I was completely in another world.

And in the wake of my mother's death, Manu broke up. A few months later. She was so ill that she couldn't stay with me anymore. And that wasn't so bad because I knew Manu was ill. And it took me a lot to be with her and to be strong. She was in a kind of depression. I

thought at some point I'd be okay. It was also a bit of relief; it was one less task, because she also used to go into sort of, well, into a sort of... against you... love suddenly becomes hate, and then it was also clear that... then comes the separation and spatial separation, and you have nothing more to do with each other and so on.

And only when she really ended up in the clinic again a year and half later and I took care of her dog and brought him to her every week, at that time, so that she could see her dog did we get a bit closer again. But it definitely took five years of our only having to do with each other at that BEGiNE level. And at that time I was also so debilitated, I'd say, that she couldn't move out of the house we lived in, which cost about as much as I earned, yeah. I was paralyzed a bit. So I had absolutely no idea. I absolutely didn't want to go back to Berlin. I knew I'd wither away there and that didn't work. But I couldn't maintain the house by myself either. And that's when the landlord approached me. He said, "okay, we'll just do such and such amount for a year," so that I'd at least I have something to eat.

And then I looked for a roommate and then I found one, and we lived there together for about a year, and then I realized that a shared apartment just didn't work for me, not even in that house, and that didn't work at all. And because I simply didn't... how shall I put it... I think it has never, to this day, been easy for me to set the kinds of natural boundaries that most people have. A certain aura around oneself that... or when one really just to be with oneself. When I'm with someone, I'm already very involved, and, even if I don't know the woman well, I still somehow am. And that's pretty exhausting in the end.

And, because I can't change that very easily, the only possibility for me is basically to have a place that belongs only to me, which I occupy, where I can do what I want and have no one I have to look at. How are they doing? What can I do? How can we be together and blah and whatever. And that's when I got really sick. That was in 2009, when I had been at BEGiNE for five years, so five years with a full program, at least six days of work, yes, and even sometimes two weeks of working straight through. And then I got shingles, and then it was, bam. Now you have to lie down. Rest.

The alternative practitioner got me out of it wonderfully, too, but first you're just lying there and thinking, well, what what's she saying now? And it was clear then I had to change my living situation. It couldn't go on, and those money worries mustn't go on, and they couldn't.

So I started looking for a new place to live. And then I looked in Erkner<sup>44</sup> for the first time. And I would have found something there immediately, but it was always like, "yeah, okay,

---

<sup>44</sup> Erkner is a town on the south-eastern edge of Berlin. ("Erkner." Wikipedia. Accessed July 9, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erkner>)

I'll do it, but it's not that great," and then I had a friend—an acquaintance—in Kremmen<sup>45</sup>... and then I had an acquaintance here. And then I found this cottage here that was for sale. It was quite nice, it's there in the back. But there were no fences, and I had a dog, so no fences separating it from the other yards, and it was too far away from the water for my boats. I couldn't have gotten there at all on my own. And then I wandered around here. And then I found this house, and then I looked here, and I thought, "yes, something like that, something like that. That could work. You could live there."

And well, then I visited this friend of mine here in Hangelsberg<sup>46</sup> and thought about where I could move and where there were apartments, and found a small house, too. And then this woman came along who was associated with the person who lived in this apartment before and who said, "hey, just apply there. The apartment's been empty for a year."

And then I got the address and did that, and then I went to the neighbors, a neighbor was the facility manager and knew that it wouldn't all be simple because... but I get along well here with most of them, even though the whole village is divided, so to speak, I have managed to do it quite well here in the immediate area, but also only with a certain distance. So no one uses the informal "you" and there's no... but you stay on a certain neighborly level, and that's how it all somehow works. Well, I got the apartment and then, once I was here, I immediately realized that it was totally good. It is simply the place where I could, even, die, because there's a cemetery-forest in Hangelsberg. I have also already... I've already looked at all that. I thought "yes, yes, this is really exactly the place where you want to be."

I had also already gotten to know it because I paddle, and, from Erkner, you can even... I store my boat in the boathouse at the Dämeritzsee,<sup>47</sup> and you can do a paddle tour there. So I in five days, a strong guy in three days, can paddle across the Dämeritzsee, through the Gosener Graben—that's a nature reserve—then over a lake and then into this Oder-Spree canal. Then you hit the Spree here, and then you paddle down here. And I used to spend the night here, under a tree over there. And because I knew how beautiful it was, I often came here to walk the dogs.

---

<sup>45</sup> Kremmen is a town in the district of Oberhavel, in Brandenburg, Germany. It is known for its castle Ziethen. ("Kremmen." Wikipedia. Accessed July 9, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kremmen>)

<sup>46</sup> Hangelsberg is a municipality in the Oder-Spree district in Brandenburg, Germany. ("Hangelsberg Station." Wikipedia. Accessed July 9, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hangelsberg\\_station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hangelsberg_station))

<sup>47</sup> The Dämeritzsee is a lake located in Brandenburg and Berlin, Germany. It resides at an elevation of 32 meters and its surface area is 93.5 hectares. This beautiful lake is a prominent attraction for tourists and nature-lovers. ("Dämeritzsee." Wikipedia. Accessed July 9, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A4meritzsee>)

And yes, I obviously already knew the place and really always found it very beautiful and then it was sort of like a dream, you know? That one would be able find an apartment there that is also so inexpensive. The house looked like crap, but that didn't bother me at all. And also the staircase... everything was very *ostig*,<sup>48</sup> we *Wessis*<sup>49</sup> would say. But that was exactly what I thought was nice.

Or here, everyone talks about the sand path that leads here. And, ugh, and the crap in the apartment! Sure, yeah, crap in the apartment, but the sandy ground! And there the sparrows can take a sand bath and bathe in the puddles and the swallows can also find, I don't know, something to build their nests, and that is just absolutely beautiful. What I found beautiful, I found here again, and I hope that everything will stay poor enough that it will stay that way for a while. Otherwise I'll have to move on again somehow, I guess. And, I mean, it was a change, of course. Everything was a little more difficult from here. It was also clear that I had to buy a car, because I can't really shop here either. I had to organize everything differently, because I'm really in the village now. In Erkner you could reach everything on foot. But it was worth it to me somehow, and I get the sense that it really is a great quality of life compared to the city.

But, of course, I have all the connections with women there. I still have fulfilling work and I don't know exactly what it would be like if I was only here. But my need for real solitude is really significant, and I'm here every day for an hour in the morning, and, also, I don't know, Christmas I was paddling, fell into the water.

Yeah, I was, that... those simple things... those are happiness for me. They are is really happiness on a whole different level. Anywhere where I live, I have a tree. That's my (female) friend. I go there, fuel up with energy. And it's been like this for a long time. So, at least since I've been in Erkner, and I already had that... I mean, in the Black Forest, I was still learning there. So I did grow up close to nature, but then there were 23 years in Berlin where I kind of slowly stumbled back into it. That was a process of learning, too, you know, walking around alone in the woods, I mean, walking around in the woods alone at night, with all the townsfolk saying, "what are you doing there, anyway?" What did they think was going to happen? I mean, do you think someone waits behind a tree for days because a woman might walk by? Or learning those sounds again, what is that, really? No, I mean, if you are in the forest at night, you hear every mouse or bird call or something, that's it, you have to learn everything again. But that is also really nice. And this feeling that, apart from that Moloch, city and culture, there's also a completely different life, which is just as real, that most people don't even know anymore.

---

<sup>48</sup> A slang, often pejorative term meaning "typical of East Germany."

<sup>49</sup> A Slang word for West Germans.

I think that's just part of it, or part of me. I don't want to know. And we all go back there. I can imagine that too. Going back there more at the end of my life than the other way. But I don't know what it'll be like then. Yeah, I mean, that's another thing I'm worried about. If I really don't have to be at BEGiNE so much anymore, that is, maybe I could hand it over and get more freedom in that other direction, will I do something different at 66? Everyone says, "You are much too old for that. And what do you want now?" And then you move into an apartment that's age-appropriate and has an elevator and handrails and stuff. And I think yes, I mean, of course, I can move again, and I'm sure I can find a field of work again anywhere. You've learned this, you would do it there again. But it's also okay if you don't live so safely, but rather somehow differently, but still being able to really enjoy it. That's also nice. Well, I'm not there yet, I still have time, but it's definitely in my head as well. So, if I stay healthy and do a little bit of work, I'll be able to do something physical.

That is, unless some disease really knocks me out or something. And, at BEGiNE, I really just look after it a bit. So the others are all far enough now that they can do a lot of things themselves. The pub makes own events, too. Parties are going well, so if there's enough money coming in, enough women come in, who then take up other offers. I'm no longer needed everywhere there. Sabrina, for example, or even the pub itself, does the party part. I've really handed that off, and there are a few other areas that I also don't have to handle at all anymore. And for some of the things that I could perhaps continue to do, where I could continue to support BEGiNE, I don't have to go there. So I can do the bookkeeping here and could, I guess, simply leave certain tasks to others now. My head's not there yet, but I would like to hand it over. I would not like it to end with me. That's really true.

And if you do it for too long and don't give others enough space, then you... you don't get a good handoff. So you have to think about that. I'm doing that too. I've already got some ideas, if one can change things like that. Yeah.

**SW: Do you want to share ideas, or [do it] in the business first?**

BH: We can make it public anyway, right?