

Based on the collection of artists' books assembled by Bernhard Cella at the //Salon für Kunstbuch// under the umbrella term NO-ISBN and the compilation of data about related actors, the follow-up project //behind NO-ISBN// raises questions about the structure, self-definition and motivations prevalent in the community. In contrast to other genres, actors from varying backgrounds, ranging from fine arts over media theory and philosophy to areas situated within an institutionalized art scene, like cultural management, gather around the relatively young medium of the artists' book. Approximating an operational theory of art in the sense of Arthur Danto, we understand the artists' book and the related discourse as resulting from the community's activities, and its continuous definition, validation and reproduction of the medium. Therefore, research on the community represents an essential contribution to understanding the development and significance of artists' books in contemporary art.

Drawing upon theories from cultural studies, motivational research and social network analysis, the project's aim is to develop a detailed snap-shot from the community's inner perspective. Following the tradition of Bruno Latour's concept of networks, we deliberately assume a pro-relativist stance. Instead of attempting the construction of an overarching explanation, this approach targets a non-hierarchical mapping of the plurality of self-assertions and -definitions of actors. In addition to a compilation and analysis of the factors leading to the actors' devotion to books as an artistic medium, identifying structural moments in the publishing practice and establishing connections to topics of cultural studies, such as construction of artistic identities, materiality, and post-medial interdisciplinarity are central objectives. During the empirical part, actors connected to all registered publications will be questioned on their experiences and attitudes through interviews and an online survey. The analysis of collected data with methods of statistics and network analysis will allow to identify patterns and to answer fundamental questions derived from theory, and will finally be condensed into an image of the community represented by the NO-ISBN collection.

The project's course is accompanied by artistic interventions that reintroduce aspects of gained research materials into the artistic discourse. During the publication of the study as an interactive archive-online-platform on the topic of artists' books and society, the facets of a dynamic artistic community will be negotiated and visualized. A three day happening similar to a fair held in cooperation with 21er Haus in Vienna in which representatives of all areas of the study will participate through discussion and activity concludes the project. Thus, it follows a chain of artistic interventions realized by Cella during the last 15 years. [Jahrbuch Kunst](#), [1 m2 Kunst](#), [Let the Artist sign your book](#), [Salon für Kunstbuch](#), [NO-ISBN](#), [Looking at Signatures](#), [does text inspire me?](#), [collecting books](#), [How to disappear](#)