

gebrueder**beetz**
FILMPRODUKTION

THE FORUM

A documentary thriller
by Marcus Vetter



RISE AND SHINE
CINEMA

OPENING FILM AT
62nd INTERNATIONAL
DOCUMENTARY FILM
FESTIVAL LEIPZIG

INTERNATIONAL
PREMIERE AT IDFA
NOVEMBER 24th
2019

GERMAN CINEMA
RELEASE NOVEMBER
6th 2019

PRESS RELEASE

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“What makes this film so strong is that it shakes us in our black-and-white thinking.”

ARD (First German TV program)

“Together with the sequence of Bolsonaro, the scenes from the Arafat-Peres meetings are the second reason that make THE FORUM a documentary piece worth seeing.”

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

“Vetter creates a cinematic microcosm that plays like a cross between Andrew Rossi’s THE FIRST MONDAY IN MAY and Jesse Moss’s Netflix series THE FAMILY.”

The Filmmakers Magazine

”

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gebrueder beetz filmproduktion

IN CO-PRODUCTION

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Filmproduktion, Film-
perspektive, SWR, BR,
HR, SRF SRG SSR, VPRO

IN ASSOCIATION

With Arte, SVT, VRT,
NRK, DR, Channel 8, TV3,
Against Gravity, Motto
Pictures, EBU

SUPPORTED FROM

MFG Baden-Württemberg, Medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg, Bundesamt für Kultur
(BAK), Zürcher Filmstiftung, Creative Europe
– MEDIA Programme of the European Union

TECH FACTS

FORMAT

16:9 (1:1,85)

FILM LENGTH

Cinema: 115 minutes
International TV: 90 minutes
Short TV: 52 minutes

CINEMA RUN

06th November 2019

SOUND

5.1 Digital

COUNTRIES OF PROD.

Germany,
Switzerland

VERSIONS

OmdtU & OmengU and
Omdt/engU (alternating)

YEAR OF PRODUCTION

2019

GENRE

Documentary



> This movement is powerful because it shows leaders who hold economic and political power that they are failing their children. It is time for those with influence and power, including yourself, to respond to that call. <

Letter from Greta Thunberg to Klaus Schwab, founder of the WEF

ABOUT THE FILM

SHORT PITCH

For the first time in the 50-year history of the World Economic Forum, an independent film team was able to shoot behind closed doors. As the world stands at a crossroads, they document the most powerful people on the planet making decisions that will affect us all.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In times of rampant populism and growing mistrust of the elite, director Marcus Vetter accompanies the 81-year-old founder of the controversial World Economic Forum over a period of two years, as he works to achieve his mission: improve the state of the world.

When Klaus Schwab writes a letter to climate activist Greta Thunberg after her appearance at the WEF 2019, a dialogue begins between the generations that gives hope.

Can Klaus Schwab's vision bear fruit and can the WEF contribute to solving global problems? Or is it just another part of the problem and does it ultimately serve the interests of the global elite alone?

PRESS TEXT

In times of rampant populism and growing mistrust of the elite, director Marcus Vetter accompanies the 81-year-old founder of the controversial World Economic Forum over a period of two years, as he works to achieve his mission: improve the state of the world.

Since 1971, Schwab has been bringing together leaders from international business, politics, science and civil society in the small Swiss mountain village of Davos - firmly convinced that the world's problems can only be solved through dialogue.

The film accompanies Klaus Schwab over the course of two years, while the world seems to be falling apart: Climate crisis, Brexit, Yellow vest protests on France's roads, the burning Amazon Rainforest and the trade war between the USA and China...

But not only are a new squad of populist leaders such as Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro challenging the establishment—a new generation of rebellious youth, led by climate activist Greta Thunberg, are forcing their way into the public eye.

Marcus Vetter is one of the best-known and most renowned German documentary film directors. He has received numerous awards with films such as THE HEART OF JENIN and THE TUNNEL - including the German Film Prize and several Grimme Prizes. With THE FORUM he achieved a special coup: for the first time in the fifty-year history of the World Economic Forum, an independent film team was able to shoot behind the scenes of the massive event. In the best HOUSE OF CARDS manner, we are behind closed doors and see how diplomacy functions when the most powerful people in the world are amongst themselves.



We are there when populist leaders like Trump and Bolsonaro exchange ideas with business leaders in bilateral talks, when diplomatic conflicts take place in the cozy corridors of the congress center in Davos or when CEOs of the world's largest corporations are schooled in topics such as Artificial Intelligence or Blockchain.

At the same time, we accompany Klaus Schwab's leading employees as they go out on location, for example, in an attempt to stop the deforestation of the rainforest through sustainable palm oil projects in Indonesia, or in Rwanda, where drones are being tested to deliver blood reserves to hospitals.

Jennifer Morgan, Executive Director of Greenpeace International and an open critic of the World Economic Forum, uses the exclusive meeting to alert politicians and business leaders to the need for climate protection.

When Klaus Schwab writes a personal letter to Greta Thunberg, who is over 60 years younger than he, a dialogue begins between the generations that ignites hope.

Can Klaus Schwab's vision bear fruit and can the WEF contribute to solving global problems? Or is it just another part of the problem and does it ultimately serve the interests of the global elite alone?

THE FORUM will celebrate its world premiere at the 62nd International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film on 28th October 2019 and will be shown in German cinemas only a few days later. The International Premiere will take place on 24th November as a gala event in front of 1,800 spectators at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), the largest documentary film festival in the world.

THE FORUM is a production by gebueder beetz filmproduktion in co-production with Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion, Filmperspektive, SWR, BR, HR, SRF SRG SSR, VPRO. In association with Arte, SVT, VRT, NRK, DR, Channel 8, TV3, Against Gravity, Motto Pictures, EBU. Supported by MFG Baden-Württemberg, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Federal Office of Culture (BAK), Switzerland, Zurich Film Foundation, Creative Europe - MEDIA Programme of the European Union

Rise and Shine Cinema is bringing the film to cinemas as a special event on 6th November 2019. The film will then be shown in selected cinemas.

On 7th or 14th January at 20:15 the first TV broadcast on ARTE will take place, on 20th January at 22:30 the film will be shown on the first program on ARD, parallel to this the film will be shown on television in more than 10 European countries. The international TV event is coordinated and supported by the EBU (European Broadcasting Union).

Between 21st January 2020 and 24th January 2020, the 50th edition of the Annual Meeting of the WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM will take place in Davos. The annual motto of the anniversary edition is "Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World".

HERE IS THE LINK TO THE PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT:

[READ MORE](#)



THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

BACKGROUND

Klaus Schwab founded the European Management Symposium in 1971 to help European entrepreneurs assert themselves against their American colleagues. In the context of the 1973 oil crisis and the Arab-Israeli wars, Schwab quickly opened up the symposium to politicians and global participants. From the outset, the conference's leitmotif has been the „multi-stakeholder concept“, which envisages confronting companies not only with their economic but also with their social responsibility by taking into account a wide variety of stakeholders such as employees, society, etc. in corporate decision-making processes.

Within just a few years, the event grew into one of the most important international platforms for the exchange of ideas between business and politics. Since around the turn of the millennium, civil society has been represented in Davos by international non-governmental organizations, trade unionists and representatives of world religions.

Every year in January, basic strategies and solutions for improving the state of the world are to be found in Davos („Committed to improving the state of the world“). The noble goal: peace and prosperity for all – through globalization and free trade – is expressed in an effort to achieve sustainable and responsible economic activity. The means of choice is dialogue, in concrete terms: Renouncing threats, gaining knowledge and searching for better solutions.

From the very beginning, the WEF has had a decisive influence on the history of globalization: institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) emerged from the Davos meeting, as well

as economic policy concepts such as the German-German Monetary Union. China, India, South Africa – today's key players in the world economy – took their first steps on the world stage in Davos; peace talks between hostile states were also repeatedly promoted in Davos. In 1997, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat walked hand in hand to the Davos Congress Center. Mark Zuckerberg, who many thought at the time was a harmless computer nerd, was invited by Klaus Schwab to Davos in 2008. In addition to the on going missions to save the earth from the climate catastrophe and to reduce growing social inequality, the greatest attention is currently paid to the ethical design of a set of technological rules for the „Fourth Industrial Revolution“ – proclaimed by Schwab – before man loses control of machines.

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

The WEF is financed as a foundation by 1000 member companies, which pay an annual membership fee of 215,000 – 430,000 euros. The Board of Directors, which determines the program, is „guarded“ by a 25-member Board of Trustees, whose members are recruited from various groups according to the multi-stakeholder principle: Top entrepreneurs, CEOs of international business organizations and NGOs, politicians or members of royal houses are represented in the Council.

This prominence and diversity of participants and members is second to none. Despite various imitator summits such as the Clinton Global Initiative, the St. Petersburg Economic Forum or the Munich Security Conference, the World Economic Forum is and remains the world's most high-ranking and prominent private initiative.

In the meantime, the Forum has over 700 employees in five locations around the world, most of them at its headquarters in Cologny, a suburb of Geneva.

As a think tank, it produces several annual reports on climate change, gender equality, terrorism and competitiveness. Numerous programs and smaller regular summits worldwide are the main activities of the Forum's staff, including the Young Global Leaders programs – a summit forum of the young elite from 90 nations selected according to WEF criteria.

THE DAVOS ANNUAL MEETING

Every year in January, about 3000 high-ranking guests from politics, business, science and religion come together in Davos for four days: a ticket costs €15,000, provided you are a member of the Forum and invited. Participation in the annual meeting is not possible without an invitation. Heads of state, government and scientists do not pay admission, nor do reporting journalists.

The ski resort Davos with its location at 1560m altitude is the highest city in Europe – and because of its remoteness is, according to Schwab, the perfect „global village“. But the price for exclusivity and remoteness is high: security precautions have been dramatically tightened since the 1970s. The risk of a terrorist attack on the WEF was already high in the 1970s, especially from left-wing groups such as the RAF. That is why the WEF has been guarded by a host of police officers and soldiers since 1978. Above the Davos valley there is an absolute no-fly zone. Every year, 5000 members of the Swiss Army are on duty, also to cope with

the enormous mass of snow. The cost of security in Davos: CHF 9 million (around €7.7 million) each year, of which the WEF pays two million, the rest is paid by the Confederation, the canton and the municipality of Davos.

CRITICISM

The World Economic Forum is regarded as controversial: it has been criticized for years for propagating free trade and radical neoliberal reforms, thus promoting globalization with its negative excesses. Another point of criticism: in the exclusive 'Get-Togethers', global corporations assert their interests to overburdened politicians and use the Davos meeting as a cover for their lobbying work. The lack of independence from the interests of the world's strongest business representatives, who form the backbone of the WEF, is often the subject of criticism.

Davos has repeatedly been the scene of demonstrations, protesting against the meeting of "fat cats in the snow", as rock singer Bono put it. In January 2000, 1000 demonstrators marched through Davos and smashed the shop window of the local McDonald's. During the 2012 meeting, 45 activists from the Occupy movement set up an igloo camp in Davos under the motto „Occupy WEF“. Security measures around Davos keep demonstrators away from the Alpine holiday resort, and most of the demonstrations now take place in Zurich or Bern. After a period of relative calm in recent years, the 2018 demonstration was again fierce, partly due to the presence of Donald Trump.



1976



2001



2018



**> Talking and let
people talk is ab-
solutely necessary
for cohesion in our
world. <**

**Prof. Klaus Schwab,
founder WEF**



PROTAGONISTS



**PROF. KLAUS
SCHWAB**

... born 1938 in Ravensburg, is the founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. After studying and obtaining his doctorate in mechanical engineering, he also obtained his doctorate in economics and social sciences and received a Master of Public Administration from the Harvard Business School in 1966/67, where he met Henry Kissinger, who later became US Secretary of State, and the famous economist John Kenneth Galbraith. Even then, he was concerned about social inequality around the world. Influenced by Ludwig Erhard's social market economy - he was a friend of the Schwab family - Schwab dreamt of responsible ethics in business.

After several years in industry, including time on the board of the Swiss company Escher Wyss and the Mechanical Engineering Industry Association, he founded the first European Management Symposium in Davos in 1971 at the age of 33, which later became the World Economic Forum. The concept of multi-stakeholder theory has played a decisive role in the vision of an international platform for the world's decision-makers. Almost fifty years later, Schwab is, by choice, no longer president, but still Managing Chairman of the global private initiative and he shapes the agenda of the foundation. A central turning point in the film is the letter that Klaus Schwab writes to climate activist Greta Thunberg after the Davos Annual Meeting in 2019. He invites her to the 2020 Forum and proposes to demand concessions by the elites on climate change.



**JENNIFER
MORGAN**

... is an American environmental activist with a focus on climate policy. Since 2016, she headed the environmental organization Greenpeace International. She is a self-proclaimed critic of the World Economic Forum. According to Morgan, the many important rounds of discussions and talks in which the most powerful people in Davos participate are not followed by sufficient measures to stop climate change. This growing impatience accompanies her forthcoming trip to Davos in 2019. Yet she cannot deny the potential of the meeting - to be able to face business leaders, confront them and seek direct interaction with them.



**MURAT
SÖNMEZ**

... is a senior board member of the WEF and chairman of the San Francisco-based Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The software engineer and product manager from Turkey is dedicated to the ethical use of new technologies in business and society and supervises research programs, especially in the fields of artificial intelligence, cryptocurrencies and drone research. In close cooperation with the headquarters in San Francisco, sister institutions have been opened in Japan, China, India, Israel, Norway, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.



**DOMINIC
WAUGHRAY**

Dominic is an extended board member of the World Economic Forum and responsible for all environmental and sustainability initiatives of the Forum. His current focus is on oceans and climate change. The mission of the economist and environmental scientist is to reach binding agreements with major corporations on sustainable management. In the film, we accompany Dominic Waughray to Indonesia, where he leads a Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) project. Since 2015, the TFA has been working with the government, farmers' and environmental associations in Indonesia to reduce the deforestation of the rainforest through sustainable palm oil production.



**GRETA
THUNBERG**

The climate activist will make her second major international appearance at WEF 2019 after the UN Climate Change Conference in Katowice at the end of 2018. Although she is not an official guest of the Forum, she does camp with climate scientists in the mountains not far from the congress center. After their much-acclaimed press conference („At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories, but their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag and on climate change, we have to acknowledge that we have failed... The main solution, however, is so simple that even a small child can understand it: We have to stop the emissions of greenhouse gasses... I want to act as though our house is on fire, because it is.“) she meets young people at Fridays For Future demonstration in Davos. In her correspondence with Klaus Schwab, she makes it unmistakably clear where and with whom she sees responsibility for the climate crisis and calls on Schwab to finally take concrete action.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



THE DIRECTOR

Director Marcus Vetter has been awarded the most prestigious German film prizes. He received the German Film Award for *THE HEART OF JENIN*, has won several Grimme Awards and received the German Television Award for *THE TUNNEL*. Vetter had already addressed the financial market and global economy, with films such as *THE FORECASTER* in 2015.

INTERVIEW WITH MARCUS VETTER

How did this film come about, how did you get such unprecedented access?

This was done by Christian Beetz, the producer of the film. Five years ago, he met Klaus Schwab for the first time for a conversation and suggested that we make a film about him and his institution. Until then, the World Economic Forum, headquartered in Geneva, had never allowed a documentary film team on its premises. Prof. Schwab agreed – but on the condition that the film should not only portray him, but the World Economic Forum (WEF) as a whole. But many years passed. The subject was so complex that it was not easy to find the right approach. At the beginning of 2017, Christian Beetz approached me to see if I could imagine making such a film because I had already worked on similarly complex topics, for example for *THE COURT* on the International Criminal Court in The Hague or *THE FORECASTER*, a film about the world's sovereign debt. I promised a research meeting and met Klaus Schwab, probably the most influential

and connected man in the world, but whom nobody really knows. At first, I was sceptical: What exactly does the WEF do, what do “those up there” get up to behind closed doors and are there concrete results or just a lot of talk? I was curious to hear what vision drove him 50 years ago when it all began. I met a very interesting person, full of passion and for his age he looked young and agile. In 1971, as a young man, he had an idea: “What if you talked to the world's most powerful managers about ethics, could you steer the world in a better direction?” He adopted the multi-stakeholder model from business, which says that a company must commit itself not only to its shareholders, but also to its employees, the environment and civil society. I could see how he was still convinced of this idea half a century later. He had dedicated his life to it.

I wondered at what point his idea had failed. Or maybe it didn't fail at all and it's just prejudices that make us so critical of this controversial elite meeting in Davos? Then why don't we feel anything of a change in the world for the better? Would Klaus Schwab admit that his vision has fallen by the wayside? At a time when the elite are being voted out of office by the electorate, by the people, when confidence in the system is being lost, I thought: it is the right topic at the right moment. The film could be a “sign of the times”, with a man at the center who dedicated his life to the question of whether one can change something as an individual and inspire others to do the same, namely the powerful people of this world. Yes, I thought this topic was worth a feature-length documentary film.

The documentary is an intimate look behind the scenes of this elite organization. Some basic rules must have been agreed upon. What could you negotiate, and what was strictly forbidden for your camera?

I told Prof. Schwab in my first interview that I am a director who makes his films for the cinema; that I make an unwritten contract with the audience for

my films; that such a film is only exciting for the audience when they can look behind the scenes, so I have to be there with the camera and the microphone when he meets with heads of state and government, politicians, and ministers, and that we have to feel and understand what it's all about when he talks to them. I don't think he understood what I meant back then, maybe he thought we were a film team producing a TV documentary with reporter commentary. So I asked him to watch three of my films: THE HEART OF JENIN, MY FATHER THE TURK and my last film KILLING FOR LOVE. He should get an idea of what we mean when we talk about documentaries for the cinema. The great thing was that a short time later he and his wife Hilde had watched all three films and we met again afterwards. That was one of the main reasons why I later agreed to make this film: Klaus Schwab, who is such a busy person, took the time to understand where I come from. I could clearly see that he was not a superficial person and that he made his decisions consciously. So I decided to pursue the film project even though I wasn't completely convinced yet. We did the first two weekend interviews, as we were to call them later, and I travelled to Davos with a small camera and my sound engineer Melanie Westphal in January 2018. We were allowed to shoot almost everywhere, we felt the trust that was placed in us. I was there when Klaus Schwab welcomed Donald Trump, Emmanuel Macron and Theresa May, but in the bilateral meetings between Klaus Schwab and the heads of state I was asked to leave after a few minutes and I could only catch the initial chat about the weather. So after Davos, I decided to write an e-mail to Prof. Schwab in which I told him my concerns: that it would be difficult for me to continue like this. I got an answer immediately, only 30 minutes later, he understood my concerns, apologized and explained that in such bilateral talks he also had to respect the confidentiality of his interlocutor, but that in the future he would do his best to ask the other side to respect the presence of a camera.

A short time later we accompanied him to Hanoi for the ASEAN Conference, a Davos-like event of the WEF in Asia. This time we were almost always allowed to stay with the camera during the whole conversation. One of these meetings was with Myanmar's de facto head of government, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been criticized

for the expulsion of the Rohingyas, a Muslim minority in Myanmar. This was anything but a conversation about the weather.

Klaus Schwab kept his word and the trust between us began to grow. From this moment on the film began to make more and more sense to me. I had the chance to observe this man in his art of diplomacy. After the trip I signed the directing contract with Gebrueder Beetz.

Your film THE FORECASTER also dealt with a strong protagonist in the world of business. What attracts you to such topics?

I think we are at an important point in history. The elite are losing people's trust. The spirit of populism is out of the bottle. And somehow it doesn't seem to want to go back in. Inequality has reached a point where there is no turning back. The elite, the establishment, have been voted out, people like Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump appear and are elected. But this film doesn't make it easy for the viewer. We are confronted with our own prejudices. The elite you meet in the movie sometimes aren't as evil as we think. We meet good and bad people there. At some point the film asks the question: „Isn't there perhaps a middle ground where we approach each other rather than distance ourselves from each other?“ Klaus Schwab reaches out his hand to Greta Thunberg at the end of the film. She had travelled to Davos and represented a part of the youth there.

She says what everyone sees, but nobody dares to say: that the emperor does not wear any clothes at all.

He admits that we are bequeathing to the youth a great burden of debt that the states of this world have accumulated. And it is precisely in this environment that Klaus Schwab tries to build a bridge to the youth and unite forces instead of blaming each other.

How do you turn an 'unfilmic' topic into a big documentary film? There are very few interviews in your film...

Keep the camera team small, no more than three people! For THE FORUM I even did most of the sound myself. This way I could approach Bolsonaro, for example, in a very intimate moment and ask him if I

could record conversations with him with my boom. He agreed. And so we were able to shoot a hilarious scene in which former US Vice President and now climate activist Al Gore approaches Bolsonaro and addresses him about the burning Amazon. You only get such scenes if you don't appear as a big television team. That's the beauty of the documentary film, the authenticity that we try again and again to create...

We try to get as many real scenes as possible, yet you shouldn't underestimate the power of a static interview. I made a film about a cinema in Palestine (CINEMA JENIN – THE STORY OF A DREAM) without shooting a single interview. I wouldn't do that again today. I love interviews. You can use them in many different ways. But yes, you can't use them too often. It's better to trust the documentary scenes in the film.

There are some scenes in the film that you won't forget – from Jair Bolsonaro, confronted by Al Gore, to Greta Thunberg, who fearlessly challenges the elite. However, I was surprised that you personally criticized Mr Schwab so strongly in an interview

about his relationship with Monsanto. Where and how do you, as a documentary filmmaker, draw the line between strict cinema Vérité and the actual confrontation with your characters?

That's a very good question. I had to do it so that the audience would see that I have the same concerns as them, but perhaps draw different conclusions. I have to make sure that the film is never perceived as a commercial. In this interview we all made ourselves vulnerable. I stutter, the camera trembles and Prof. Schwab searches for words. This situation shows him as a human being. It's a scene that has very different functions. It helps the viewer know that he is not alone with his concerns. And it shows Klaus Schwab in a vulnerable moment... From this moment on, the film takes time to get to know some of the projects of the World Economic Forum. It shows WEF employees like Dominic Waughray and Murat Sönmez trying to change the world. We get to know people who actually belong to the elite and who are currently being voted out of office all over the world. The film asks this question: Do we really want to allow that? Shouldn't we take a second look? The film offers this second glance.



PRODUCER'S NOTE



THE PRODUCER

Christian Beetz and his gebrueder beetz filmproduktion have produced more than 200 high-quality documentaries for the international market, including mainly 90-minute documentaries and a large number of international co-productions. His productions have received numerous awards and have been shown at almost all international A-festivals. Some of his most important productions include: THE CLEANERSs (premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2018), THE LAND OF THE ENLIGHTENED (Best Cinematography Sundance Film Festival 2016), BLOOD IN THE MOBILE (Cinema for Peace Award 2011), THE WAGNER FILESr (International Emmy Award 2014), OPEN HEART (Oscar Nomination 2013) or the investigative documentary thriller FALCIANI'S SWISS LEAKS (nominated for the German Television Award 2015).

PRODUCER'S NOTE

It is now five years since I received my first approval for a personal interview with Prof. Klaus Schwab. It was to take place in his office overlooking Lake Geneva. In the preliminary talk with his communications boss I tried to explain that we make documentaries - not news, not reports, not contributions - but films. To illustrate this, I put a pile of DVDs of award-winning documentaries, which could be seen all over the world, on the table and tried to explain that we were more interested in deep drilling with our films and that we let the people in them speak to the end without classifying them right away with commentary. The viewer and the protagonist have an equal relationship. The viewer should be able to form his own opinion, that was my premise.

I had in mind a documentary film for an international audience, as large as possible that was to have its premiere at a major film festival. I would like to show Davos in a way that no one has ever seen before.

After my long and detailed application speech, which I personally found pretty convincing, I was told coldly and clearly that the press and communications department was against an independent film. And besides, this film had just been made: "Grand Hotel Budapest" by Wes Anderson - a joke that left me completely irritated and which I only understood years later (the original location in the film is the Hotel Schatzalp above Davos).

Carrying this uncertainty with me, I then went to the appointment, supplied with the warning that Mr. Schwab would make the final decision himself within the meeting and that this conversation will most likely be finished after five minutes, since Mr. Schwab was an "extremely busy man".

However, the conversation went very differently in his office, which was paneled with cherry wood, and I was surprised by how well Mr. Schwab was prepared. He knew about my previous films and came very openly into the conversation, asking me why I wanted to make a film about the World Economic Forum. I explained that I was interested in how an institution that is so widely criticized continues to be so successful and have such an influence over world affairs. I, too, could consider such a meeting of the elites in Davos to be very undemocratic, as everything happens behind closed doors and out of sight. Therefore, the public and I myself would be interested to know what is really happening behind closed doors and told him that he could rely on me as a serious journalist. If he gave me an independent look behind the scenes, I would deal with it fairly and openly. At that time, I approached the topic very naively and confused the Davos Annual Meeting with the institution of the World Economic Forum. In retrospect, I think he noticed that. After a conversation of over an hour, he answered my initial question: If it were really a film about the World Economic Forum and not a

portrait of him, he would agree. At that time, I didn't understand what he meant...

He then invited me to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos and I was provided with an enormous amount of official World Economic Forum brochures, reports and books. This was the beginning of a very long journey that had its ups and its downs.

When I was in Davos for the first time, the big demonstrations outside the congress area were officially stopped. I met with the American political activists THE YES MEN, who dressed the whole resistance in mourning clothes and acted as funeral directors, burying it in an action with a coffin and a eulogy. It was the time when NGOs were increasingly being officially invited to participate in the Davos meeting; the time when NGOs like Oxfam, who had carried out the resistance outside the WEF for years, were now allowed to officially use the WEF as a platform for their agenda-setting.

There was a highly emotional discussion amongst the NGOs about whether this was not in fact the wrong approach, whether it was not "Greenwashing", but when success was seen, the mood changed more and more. Oxfam had managed, with the help of the WEF, to turn the official report on the unequal distribution of wealth in the world into global news and thus politicize the topic.

This irritation about the benefits and the frustrations, the pros and cons, of using such an institution as the World Economic Forum for the NGOs' own purposes became the starting point for the film. Why did the organization of the World Economic Forum focus on such a critical report, when it is exactly these criticized super-rich and the whole elite that meet there? Is all this perhaps just a clever propaganda strategy to silence the loud, critical voices outside the Forum?

Pursuing this question would take five years. Again and again there were big relapses, closed doors everywhere I turned. That inspired further research. Every year I went to Davos and other WEF events with a camera team, but we kept butting up against closed doors, CEOs only gave us three-minute interviews and it was almost impossible to talk to Klaus Schwab about the business of his company.

All interview requests to CEOs were forwarded to the communications departments and cancelled from there. I was also confronted with many cancellations at the financial level of such a complex project. I was particularly surprised by the emotionality with which the public law senator refused to cooperate. Many journalists and editors have a very strong opinion of the World Economic Forum - a pure business meeting of the elites, a neo-liberal organization that makes itself the reception hall of the powerful. Klaus Schwab only plays the role of a hotel concierge, and it is also impossible to make a film about this institution. I was even personally attacked with the notion that the idea of a neutral, independent view of the organization was already right-wing propaganda. I was surprised at the emotional reaction to the topic and simply to the suggestion of making a film about the World Economic Forum. I have been developing and producing critical documentary films for almost 20 years, such as the Yes Men, on Royal Dutch Shell, on international tax evasion and the Swiss-Leaks (FALCIANI'S TAX BOMB) or, most recently, the award-winning film THE CLEANERS, which takes a very critical look at social networks such as Facebook and Google. And yet I was accused of being biased and warned that it would take years before a broadcaster would join.

Additionally, the search for a director turned out to be extremely difficult. All the directors I asked to travel with me to the heart of the World Economic Forum had already reached their destination before they set off. They were very renowned colleagues, but they all had a very strong, very critical opinion about the organization without knowing the slightest thing about it. In general, the World Economic Forum is only associated with the Davos Annual Meeting, where Bono from U2 and a few Hollywood people could watch from the sidelines and the financial and political elite meet in the background to do business. No one knows its headquarters are in Geneva and that it has over 750 employees, that there are other WEF hubs around the world, such as the "Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution" in San Francisco, run by Murat Sönmez. Or that the World Economic Forum organizes concrete projects in the background - between representatives of states, NGOs and business, such as Dominic Waughray's ocean project, which brings states, NGOs and satellite operators together to bring transparency to illegal fishing or capping of waste

oil with the satellite images acquired free of charge. In this way, solutions are sought together. And at the heart of all this is the 81-year-old founder and boss Klaus Schwab with his philosophy that the world can only be changed with the economy and not by turning against it.

With the addition of Marcus Vetter as director, the project really took off. He too needed to be convinced and, at least initially, he needed to approach the issue with real openness. But when he decided to join me on the journey to the heart of the WEF, the wheels started to turn. He met Klaus Schwab on equal terms and asked him to watch his films before the real conversations began. Suddenly doors that had been closed, opened up, which gave us wings. It was always important to me not to lose the sense of perspective in relation to this journey. Jennifer Morgen, head of Greenpeace International and an open critic of Davos, has a central role to play in this film, which was and continues to be enormously important because she expresses concern and criticism of the WEF.

Producing THE FORUM has always been a balancing act, marked by many defeats, propelled by willpower and the conviction that it pays to take a closer look – even through the eyes of those considered opponents. Because the truth is complex and only a close look can do it justice.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Together with his brother, Reinhardt Beetz, Christian Beetz is managing director of gebrueder beetz filmproduktion with branches in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne and Lüneburg. Since its founding in 2000, gebrueder beetz filmproduktion has produced over 200 high-quality TV and cinema documentaries for the international market and, according to the industry leader „Realscreen“, is one of the 100 most important independent production companies worldwide. Its films are regularly screened at the major international A-festivals and have received many prestigious awards – including the Grimme Prize, the Cinema for Peace Award, the Prix Europa, the German Film Prize, the Hot Docs Filmmakers Award, the British Independent Award and the Special Jury Award of the IDFA. In 2013 the co-production OPEN HEART was nominated for the Academy Award and in 2014 the cultural documentary WAGNERWAHN received a nomination for the International Emmy Award. The cinema production THE LAND OF THE ENLIGHTENED received the Special Jury Award for Best Cinematography at the Sundance Film Festival 2016. Most recently, the cinema documentaries THE CLEANERS (Sundance 2018), LAMPENFIEBER (Berlinale 2019) and GAZA (Sundance 2019) celebrated their world premieres at major A-festivals. THE CLEANERS was awarded the Grimme Prize, the Prix Europa and was nominated for Emmy 2019.

