



VISIONS DU RÉEL 2020

Daniel Hoesl and Julia Niemann • Co-directors of *Davos***“Dialogue between the public and the world leaders doesn’t happen”**

by VLADAN PETKOVIC

19/05/2020 - We chatted to Austrian filmmakers Daniel Hoesl and Julia Niemann about their latest documentary, *Davos*, which looks at the everyday life of people living in the prominent titular Swiss town



Julia Niemann and Daniel Hoesl at the World Economic Forum

We talked to Austrian filmmakers **Daniel Hoesl** and **Julia Niemann**, whose latest documentary, [*Davos*](#) [+], which had its world premiere at the online edition of this year's [Visions du Réel](#), looks at the everyday reality of people living in the titular Swiss town that famously hosts the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Cineuropa: How did you decide to make this film?

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metaphor for all of us and contrast it with the talks that were going on at the WEF.

Most people have never thought of Davos in any other context than that of the WEF.

DH: When people use the term “Davos”, they think of the WEF, which is located in Geneva. Only the annual meeting takes place in Davos; it's only four days per year, but it creates the image “the Davos section menu place of luxury where world leaders meet. And it's the same paradox with globalisation, c; us regular people. When I look at my life, if the impact of capitalism and globalisation were only affecting me four days a year, all the other things would be more important, and I guess they wouldn't concern me. And this is the paradox of the WEF. There is a forum, but it's an economic forum; it's not about life or society or improving the world. The forum is like Christmas for believers, in much the same way that capitalism is a religion.

How do people live in Davos? There is a family of farmers in the film who are struggling financially. How do they look upon the WEF?

DH: This family had to give up their farm because of the price of milk – which is a result of globalisation. Their farm is 500 years old, but it doesn't pay off to have a farm any more.

JN: The thing is, most people in Davos profit from it. They rent out their shops and apartments for four days and earn enough money to get them through the whole year. That's why they want the WEF to take place at Davos. But of course, some may think differently in ideological terms.

DH: Like some of the anarchist punks that we were shooting with – they actually work for the WEF during the preparations and during the forum, which they hate, but they have to do it. It reveals so much about our contemporary dilemma. I am not putting myself above that; we just wanted to depict what we see, and what we see is that our society is very contradictory.

How much access did you have to the WEF?

JN: It was very difficult to get access. The WEF is used to press, and they get their ten-minute rotation slots, shoot what they can get, and leave. And we wanted to shoot behind the scenes and spend some time there. But we also just had ten-minute slots. We had to negotiate every day for access.

DH: They treated us like any other TV team. In the second year, for the 2019 WEF, after we had shot there already in 2018, there was no personal contact with them any more. We were only in touch with their media team. The WEF is only one aspect of our film, and we didn't want to give it priority. And having restricted access, in the end, is also what the deal is in regard to capitalism and its leaders in general. We get some information from the media, but the message that comes out is controlled.

Do you think the WEF is honest in its message that it wants to make the world a better place and that it is important to strike up a dialogue?

DH: When we talk about dialogue, and that's a crucial point in our film, the actual dialogue between the public and the world leaders doesn't happen. A dialogue restricted only to the elite is not enough. At least that's what I think.

JN: To me, the elite can never have really good intentions, because their main intention is to stay in the elite. They don't want things to change. That's what you can feel in these talks at the forum.

Do you think the current COVID-19 crisis can bring about some sort of change in society? Can the WEF contribute to that?

DH: The crisis has shown people that maybe their working life is not as crucial as they had been led to believe. Of course, it depends on the country. Many countries were hit hard by the 2008 recession, and that's because our society is built on the economy. If you consider other forms of distribution of wealth, the situation could be totally different. But the WEF places the economy at the centre of the dialogue about our society and claims there is no alternative. I would tend to disagree.

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