

Twelve Road Blocks – A Look behind the Curtain of *Weizenbaum. Rebel at Work.*

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ABSTRACT

Our paper reveals the production history of the documentary film “*Weizenbaum. Rebel at Work.*”, our personal film portrait of Prof. Joseph Weizenbaum, legendary computer pioneer and technology critic. We disclose numerous obstacles and the tremendous difficulties we had to overcome and will explain how our model of *slow-budget-filmmaking* evolved during the 2-year project and how the film finally became a success.

It leads towards a blueprint construction plan for digital cinema filmmaking aside public funding and public television, a truly independent new form of independent digital cinema that does not rely on subsidized eco-systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2005, we started to work on a documentary film on computer pioneers, the *Grandfather Nerds*. Very soon, we met M.I.T. legend and charismatic storyteller Joseph Weizenbaum who became the main character of our feature-length documentary film “*Weizenbaum. Rebel at Work.*”

Without funding, without any support of a production company, we yet started shooting in October 2005 in Berlin. During the project, we faced – what we called the twelve road blocks – but ultimately the film was completed, shipped on DVD, premiered on TV, was presented on various festivals and proved highly successful on a film tour through entire Germany in cinemas and universities.

We decided to reveal the complete production history in order to share the experience with filmmakers, artists or any creative individual. We wanted to reveal all the obstacles, pitfalls, setbacks and threats, even though it will make us look stupid, perhaps. In the middle of a paradigm shift from traditional film towards digital film, our film had a very tough time to get finished and an even harder time to get presented.

Ultimately, we were able to work around some of the roadblocks and sometimes we found out that we should better take another road anyway. The roadblocks, the insurmountable obstacles, shaped the aesthetics and language of the film; we used the Internet as a complementary resource, we contributed a lot of content and turned our film website into a project site attracting an interested and highly supportive community. This is to encourage

others to invent new ways of independent documentary film production and to shape the digital cinema yet to come.

2. ROADBLOCKS

The metaphor of a massive rock that blocks the small road we are driving on is tempting. On the left hand side precipitous rock formation, on the right hand side the cliff line with inaccessible coast line below, a tiny road in the middle, twisting and single-lane, almost no traffic signs at all. To talk in terms of *roadblocks* covers the feelings of desperation and hopelessness we experienced during the film project. In rare cases, we climbed around the block, most often we decided to take another road. Only once we were able to remove the block and then, sometimes, it might have been the case we figured out that there was no roadblock at all and that we have fantasized the obstacles ourselves.

2.1 Road Block 1 – Get Funded

To make a long story short: We did not get any public film funding in Vienna. We really hoped to get financial support since our first film was presented on various international film festivals, but it did succeed with private money only, without the support and experience of a well-known production company. Consequently, being not backed by a notable production company was considered being a total beginner. We decided to make a U-turn and took the risk to start shooting without backing, with nothing more than private savings and an e-mail invitation from Joseph Weizenbaum, to meet him in Berlin in his private apartment near Alexanderplatz.

2.2 Road Block 2 – November Shooting

The useless battle for public funding in Vienna did cost a couple of months since we did not get any answer to our application and waited and waited. This also affected our working morale, of course. When we actually started shooting it was already October in Berlin and soon we faced more and more challenging light conditions in November, in particular in Joseph Weizenbaum’s apartment that turned out to be the prevalent location. To work at different locations was not often possible since 84-year-old Weizenbaum suffered from pain in his leg and this affected our shooting from day one. The weather in Berlin is usually bad, but don’t ask for November’s weather conditions.

2.3 Road Block 3 – US Locations

Joseph Weizenbaum was born in Berlin in 1923 and immigrated into the US in 1936. For more than a decade now he lives in Berlin again, close to where he was raised back then. For almost 60 years he lived in the US. Of course, we decided to shoot in the US, we would take the ship from Bremerhaven to New York, the same route across the Atlantic he and his family had taken in January 1936. Of course, we would then visit Cambridge, Massachusetts, the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the M.I.T., and then across the road Harvard University. Of course, we expected Joseph meet old friends and colleagues in front of the camera and witness the final shout-out of Marvin Minsky, the pope of Artificial Intelligence and Joe Weizenbaum, his most famous and eloquent opponent. Showdown at the M.I.T. – great cinema. Well, our private funding neither allowed us to fly over nor take the ship to the US, we desperately needed financial support and we still had hope.

2.4 Road Block 4 – Find TV Co-Production

Very soon after we went to Berlin to start shooting we also started to contact German public television in order to acquire potential co-production partners. We actually got in contact with almost all of the German so-called “öffentlich-rechtlichen” TV channels, such as ZDF, arte, 3sat, WDR, NDR, BR, SWR, rbb and others. To raise their attention was really difficult and a challenge of its own. Therefore, we prepared an informative film website, in English and German, that presented the main story and idea, some film stills, lots of sample clips and a trailer of the film. Then we sent an e-mail to the commissioning editor with a link to the film website, a couple of days later we did a cold call, referring to the e-mail and the site. Again, nobody knew us, we were not backed by a well-known production company and it turned out to be a major mistake that we had started shooting already.

It also became clear that our biggest mistake was to make a documentary on a computer scientist. Nobody liked that idea. One of the commissioning editors compared our project with another film that portrayed a television pioneer and it had to do with glass tubes used in old-fashioned TVs and nobody watched the film and that would most likely happen to the Weizenbaum-film, for sure and by the way, he asked: Who is Joseph Weizenbaum, anyway?

A commissioning editor at arte admitted that even though he had never heard of Weizenbaum the story of his emigration and his contributions to the early days in computer science might fit well into a documentary, but, on the other side, it would have been better if Weizenbaum was French, since the French have 2/3 of voting rights and the Germans only 1/3 and that they surely won't like the idea of an US-American computer pioneer, a French one would probably do.

One TV channel answered more than a year after our film premiered with one of those standard *no-thank-you-don't-call-us-we-won't-call-you-back* templates and the funny thing was that it rejected a project title that we never ever had applied for.

Yet another one said that given the topic of the Jewish family background, emigration and that sort of things it was impossible to consider our film neither for co-production nor for acquisition because his channel had most recently acquired a bunch of first-class WWII documentaries from BBC, perhaps a dozen films or even more, undoubtedly high quality, and that he had more than enough of this “color” already.

Well, we decided to make yet another U-turn and for god's sake to continue work even if we could not get financial support from TV and therefore had to accept that we were definitively not shooting in the US. In fact, we didn't shoot a single frame in the US, period.

2.5 Road Block 5 – In Front of the Bookshelf

We don't like documentaries about famous people where every 30 seconds another witness jumps in front of the camera to swear that he or she is incredibly smart, a wonderful father, mother, an inventor, lovely husband, ingenious chess – and unbeatable tennis player, that he has won the Pulitzer Prize, is a marvelous cook and composer, talks 13 languages and of course, on top, he is a nice guy.

At the end of our first 7-week shooting in Berlin we discovered that we had hours of wonderful discussions on tape but we had also many, many hours on tape with Joe Weizenbaum sitting in front of his bookshelf, telling stories and sometimes very long stories. We had about 30 hours of footage and it became clear that we had little to none movement, only few excursions and mainly one setup: Joe Weizenbaum, wearing a yellow sweater, sitting in front of his bookshelf. We don't like documentaries where the main protagonist is interviewed in front of his bookshelf and talks and talks and talks...we were already in big trouble, aesthetically, and even an experienced dramatic adviser would have sighed.

2.6 Road Block 6 – The Competitor

In the middle of another phase best characterized as desperate, when it was so difficult to stay tuned, we got a phone call and a young man from Munich, who also had started a film project on Joseph Weizenbaum asked lots of questions and claimed that he knew Weizenbaum way longer than we did and that he had already support from German television channel Bavarian TV. It turned out that he was awarded with the famous Grimme award, had received the Gert Ruge grant on his Weizenbaum project and that he was a highly successful documentary film maker with deep pockets. We felt even more desperate.

2.7 Road Block 7 – Running out of Money

After many months of work our private resources finally had melted away. We had been very conservative about spending any money besides the absolutely necessary. We even had taken our hard drives that stored our first documentary film, we erased the first film and used the empty space for the new project, later we also slashed the back-up drive and our private film collection. But now it was the first time where we really had to decide whether to give up or ... what?

We decided that both of us would take a bank loan in order to be able to complete the film the one or other way. It was a time when we found a lot of footage on the Internet, namely from the Prelinger collection and the Internet Archive. At a first glance, the found footage had little to nothing to do with the Weizenbaum material, but we liked the 50s and 60s cinemascope film colors, the music from archival advertisement and American propaganda films and started to download and convert a respectable collection. Within a couple of weeks we did convert hundreds of films, royalty free, all downloaded under a Creative Commons license. And then we had luck, for the first time, perhaps: Having asked via e-mail, Joe Weizenbaum's ex-wife, Ruth Weizenbaum, who still lives in New England, sent over a photo collection of more than 200 originals, family photographs that spanned a time

frame of almost a hundred years. And so we got involved with scanning all those originals and then combining them with archival footage and it made us forget our aesthetic crisis.

2.8 Road Block 8 – Find a Sponsor

After a couple of months of editing it became clear that aside from the archival footage we needed fresh material and we had to shoot again in Berlin. In order to finance the trip we tried to get a sponsor for the film. Joe Weizenbaum had worked on the first bank computer in the world and the Bank of America project ERMA had become famous, therefore we contacted Bank of America. And again, to be able to present our project we completed the English film website and we also did some work on the German site as well. During the common work in Berlin, Joseph had taken some pictures of us with his wonderful all mechanical LEICA-camera and so we asked LEICA to sponsor the film. And so on. We even made expensive phone calls to somebody at Glenfiddich in Scotland only to find out we had a really hard time to understand these people. We've contacted 6 to 8 companies and all we got was a piece of shareware from a US software developer and a meeting in Berlin, but no money involved. At least, we found an affordable lift to Berlin again, it was during the summer of 2006, and we managed to stay again for almost 7 weeks. We had to change the apartment a couple of times, but we stayed at friends, mainly. We did an interview with Ruth Weizenbaum, who was visiting her daughter, Naomi, and came back with a couple of hours of new footage, this time with the light of the summer. We did not find a sponsor.

2.9 Road Block 9 – Narrative Structure

After almost 14 weeks of shooting, mainly in Berlin, we came back to Vienna with about 35 hours of footage. We had visited guest lectures with Joseph at Potsdam and Jena and had captured entire lectures on tape. In Jena the organizers reported more than 2.000 viewers. We always planned for a feature-length film that also might be presented in cinemas. But now, we had to structure and thoroughly select the material. Therefore, we made a transliteration of the entire narrative, more than 200 pages! Since Joseph's own narrative, his memories and his stories outlined the story of his life, we concentrated on the text. Joseph Weizenbaum is a storyteller, but then, some of the stories had to be shortened and we mixed his narrative with archival material, used the photo archive extensively and designed a dramatic structure that reflected our perhaps limited material. When we thought we had the first 88-minute version finished we got in real trouble with Joe for the first time. He was the first to see our documentary film, he also had seen a very early rough cut of the film while he was visiting us in Vienna. But now, for the first time, he disliked lots of details, the length of the film, the extensive use of archival material and many other things. We had a very difficult time, all three of us, but we stayed in contact via Skype and discussed possible solutions, rearrangements and above all, how the film could be shortened and be more precise. We think, the final version of 79 minutes is a wonderful result and the very best we probably could achieve. In September, the final DVD was burned and immediately shipped to festivals and the first interested supporters that had contacted us via the website. It was a matter of days that we created an ever-growing distribution list of interested supporters and information scientists, mainly from German universities. We also designed our first newsletter and called it "*message in a bottle*" since we thought that we had lived like

being cast away for years and had been so isolated. The responses were quite promising!

2.10 Road Block 10 – Distribution Lock-Up

From the Berlinale website we downloaded a document with production companies and distributors. We put them into our distribution list and sent out the good news that our film was finally finished and that we were looking for distribution for the German cinema market. Five different distributors answered very soon, some wanted to resell the DVD and all of them wanted to see our DVD and they also visited our film website that had continuously grown. It now had a download area, a small collection of feedback we got on the film, a small web shop to order the DVD and a link list of weblogs and websites that referenced our site. Our domain ilmarefilm.org attracted more and more visitors and we achieved better page ranks at Google every month. The distribution list of computer scientists grew to a couple of thousands, today we have about 10.000 individual e-mail addresses but we have to admit: A lot of work, a lot of online browsing and a lot of typing.

The problems with the distributors who had answered and requested the DVD were that they were only moderately interested and all of them pointed us to public resources to get the cinema premiere of our film subsidized, a common practice in Germany and Austria. Later, this became a precondition of a contract that also said that we would not any longer be allowed to sell our DVD directly but that the distributor would get an exclusive right to do so. We had steadily growing online sales that brought in about EUR 23 for each individual DVD ordered and now we were offered a contract that would get us nothing for the first 1000 DVDs and about EUR 1,20 for the next DVDs sold via distribution. That was embarrassing.

2.11 Road Block 11 – Subsidized Cinema

Since our experience with Austrian film funding institutions was rather sad, we concentrated on Berlin and got in contact with a Berlin institution that helps to subsidize films in particular for cinema release. It all sound very well and within an hour we got an expertise and consulting on companies that had shown interest in our project and received an oral first guess that we had pretty good chances to get a small fund and that the Weizenbaum film really deserves to be presented in cinemas. And this time, the man knew Weizenbaum! We were so delighted and so proud! But there was still one thing yet to decide: Which distributor? Without a well-known distributor we couldn't get any funding to present the film at the cinema. It was suggested that we signed a contract with the distributor that had offered us EUR 1,20 per DVD. It was not the first time that we thought we'd been captured in a one-way street and tons of roadblocks in front of us. We decided to try to get the film into cinemas without support and without the distributor and therefore we intensified the work on our distribution list and the newsletter. To get our digital documentary film on classical 35 mm tape was too expensive, thus, it was clear that the film could not be shown in most cinemas but we had yet another idea.

2.12 Road Block 12 - Digital Monopoly

We contacted the leading German / Austrian digital cinema distributor who also organizes a growing network of a couple of hundreds cinemas in Europe that are all equipped with digital projectors and can present digital copies of films. It is a project subsidized by the EU and the Berlin based distributor also acts as

commissioning editor. For the first time, a distributor was not interested in viewing our film on DVD, but offered to convert the film into the proprietary format only used with the digital cinema servers of the network. Of course it would cost but it was still less expensive than to convert our digital master into a 35 mm film copy. The problem was that we were not allowed to do this by ourselves, besides there was no guarantee that after the costly conversion our film might have been considered by the commissioning editors at all. And if you take into consideration that they had been the first that didn't want to see the film, well, you can draw your own conclusions! We decided to find another digital cinema server vendor that perhaps needed content and then, our documentary on a famous computer pioneer perfectly fits in an all-digital cinema projection and so we finally found our first sponsor, a company that was looking for promising films to be converted for their cinema servers. The company also agreed to support our premiere in November 2006 in Jena, at the university where we had been a year ago.

3. SLOW-BUDGET-FILMMAKING

3.1 Concept and Landscape

Silvia Holzinger coined the term "*one-man-cinema*" in her master thesis on Roman director and filmmaker Nanni Moretti. Consequently, we called our cooperation, Il Mare Film, the "*one-man-and-one-woman-cinema*" since we do everything by ourselves. The concept of "*slow-budget*" first of all says: There IS a budget! We guess that we've invested between 30.000 and 35.000 EUR. Our film is refinancing the effort while presented in cinemas, universities and above all through DVD and license sales. Of course, it involved taking a lot of risks. Within the following paragraphs we want to explain our concept more precisely and share it with others. We will also show that we consider our approach a huge success. Perhaps, other filmmakers and artists will profit from that experience and may avoid our mistakes and will develop the concept even further themselves. The *slow-budget* approach also offers various advantages such as complete independence from production companies and institutions, in particular independence from TV and its commissioning editors, or independence from distributors and so-called program coordinators. The concept allowed us to find our way into cinemas and lecture halls even though the institutions mentioned above had rejected the project several times. It is of course an advantage that we still have 100% of the film rights: We didn't get neither public support nor funding but in return we did not give away our rights. That's an enormous advantage in a landscape of documentary filmmaking where mainly technically driven paradigm shifts offer as much new opportunities as new insecurities. There are countless opportunities for marketing digital content since television and Internet converge. With digital projection the number of competing film formats has risen. For filmmakers who control their film rights alone and who are able to convert content themselves, yet other opportunities pop up. We are in the middle of a rapidly changing landscape. Traditional biospheres such as public TV and public film funding are under huge pressure. Publicly subsidized TV may disappear completely or at least will suffer under dramatic reconstruction, the number of competing channels will still rise and diversify while at the same time the diversity of technical transmission and delivery techniques rises. Uncertain times and rapidly changing general conditions are good for the risk takers and the newcomer!

3.2 Success

In order to enhance credibility we have to explain what we consider "*success*". For us completing the film we actually wanted to complete is a huge success. To have stayed independent and to own all film rights proved successful as DVD sales and license sales grew. To be able to make a living out of the first feature-length film is quite a success even though we have cultivated a fairly modest way of life. To us, *profit* is not a synonym for *success*. In January 2007 we licensed our film to a German documentary Pay-TV channel and realized some limited income that surprised us. The film was shown in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and was selected *Documentary of the Month*. Our film was invited to festivals, such as the *transmediale* in Berlin, the *European Media Art Festival in Osnabrück* and, of course to *Digital Art Weeks* in Zurich. While festival appearances and a growing community increased our publicity numerous unexpected opportunities popped up. It all started when Weizenbaum fans sent us fan letters and said they love the project and that they couldn't possibly wait any longer to actually see the film. And then we observed a phenomenon that we described as "*guardian angels*", people who were so enthusiastic about the film that they committed themselves to support us the one or other way. One suggested our film to the *Wolfgang von Kempelen Award* on cultural contributions to the history of computer science. And we've actually won the award! Many supporters acted like local champions within universities and more than 50 universities and institutions contacted us to present the film. Consequently, we organized a tour through entire Germany and to selected Austrian universities presenting the film personally and then discussing the project after the presentation and local promoters helped us. We've reached more than 2.000 viewers within a couple of weeks. And after the discussion we've sold the DVD directly to the audience. More than 500 DVDs have been sold until today and we are still counting. Many universities and libraries have acquired the documentary film, teachers and school institutions are using the film for educational purposes and we received a dozen invitations to Jewish film festivals, mainly in the US. That's what we consider a huge success even though the Weizenbaum film will most likely not be profitable and even though we didn't finish the international version of the film.¹

3.3 No Roadmap Required

The metaphor of roadblocks suggests that there is a *road*. We think in our case there was no road at all. We did find pathways and had to reinvent the project many times from scratch or we had to turn around or whatsoever. The suggested concept of *slow-budget-filmmaking* consequently does not offer a roadmap. It should be regarded as a preliminary and incomplete survival kit for the risk-takers and the brave. So, no guarantee at all that the following advice might work for you and your project. We are looking forward to meet our peer group in digital filmmaking and we hope to leave our island soon that's why we publish our secrets quite frankly.

3.4 Cost of Living

Since we arranged our life according to the project's requirements our personal cost of living determined the bottom line of our documentary film economics. We maintained a very low standard

¹ Visit our website at <http://www.ilmarefilm.org> to buy a DVD.

of living for many, many months. Our advice: Keep your cost down! While shooting and editing we had no car, for example. It is also a good idea to have a very small team, thus, the two of us created the entire film project alone. It is a common prejudice that filmmaking involves many people standing around the whole day and that nothing is more important than specialization and the division of work among “professionals”. But we don’t think of filmmaking in terms of an industry and profitability. As public film funding and publicly funded films have more and more become subsidized undertakings, often simply local employment incentives, the absolutely misleading directive of “professionalism” is understandable. It is, to get as many “professionals” out of the unemployment statistics as possible. The contrary is necessary: Create more independent documentary films with little to none compromise. Do not rely on mainly subsidized institutions because they may be the epicenter of a major crisis sooner or later.

3.5 Website and Film

We developed the documentary film along with the website. Sometimes our website was in advance and helped to create the storyline of the film. Our advice: Consider the film website and the film itself one and the same project! To achieve this, create your website yourself and don’t give it away to specialists after your film is finished. A growing project website offers various advantages and is best suited to present unfinished work to others. But also, in our case, it attracted a supportive community early on and helped to shape the communication strategy necessary to promote the film. A good film website is not an appendix to the film!

3.6 Distribution Lists

Our growing distribution list was a reliable indicator of direct DVD sales. In the beginning we received 2-3 DVD orders for every 100 e-mail addresses we’ve collected. Today we’ve more than 10.000 individual e-mail addresses in our lists. Depending on the issue we can send out our news regionally and within minutes 1.000 individuals receive a personal, private invitation for a film presentation. Our advice: A distribution list is cheap and effective, it is the best direct communication tool to reach your target group and it is absolutely indispensable to create and maintain a community. The newsletters we’ve sent out created tension many months in advance of the premiere. If the newsletters and press releases tell a good story it is very likely that readers start to listen and think about the film, thus creating what feeds us all, curiosity.

3.7 Free Resources

For our documentary film the extensive use of royalty-free material from various Internet sites was essential. Use the Internet archive, ourmedia.org to get free archival material. But also: Give back what you can give back. We published our first documentary, ROBA FORESTIERA, under a Creative Commons License and everyone can download the film as a MPEG4 file. Our film website also offers a huge download section with free material ranging from stills, MP3 files to video files and a bonus track collection. We did also publish the transliteration of the entire film, one in German, and the translation into English. It is not that folks have waited for this but it is a valuable service that may make the project website more interesting and complete. Our advice: Try to connect your website and your material with popular sites that fit. We did upload material to the Internet

Archive, to ourmedia.org, YouTube, Google Video, flickr, delicio.us and others. And above all: Try to add a link pointing to your project site to various wikipedia articles, many of them have a section for external links. Wikipedia and Google drives a lot of traffic to our website, more than 50% of the visitors did find our project via Google or wikipedia. Every external link helps to enhance the site rank at Google or other search engines. The better the rank, the more likely the site will be visited. Our site has reached site traffic of 5.000 to 8.000 user sessions per month.

3.8 Blogs and Multipliers

We did contact interesting weblogs directly and suggested that they may take a closer look at our project site. A decent weblog article is a very good multiplier! We also contacted almost everyone who ever had conducted any event with Joe Weizenbaum involved. We wrote to universities that had given him a doctor of honors, we conducted an intensive search on online articles and contacted both the editors and the authors to inform them about our project. We identified useful news lists that may multiply our regular newsletter indirectly. We also contacted all institutions that may have any interest in a film project about Joe Weizenbaum, companies he had visited, associations and societies he was involved with, simply everything! Our advice: Try to get multipliers that spread your news regularly. It enhances credibility, enlarges the reach of your distribution list and the publicity of your project, and above all, it doesn’t cost anything except your time. We already had created a distribution list with all commissioning editors of European television channels and with their colleagues dealing with acquisitions of content and why not informing them that our film was finally finished? So we did.

3.9 Press Releases

Once in a quarter we published our own press release. Mostly we waited until an appropriate occasion so that we had *real news* to tell. And then, again, the story we told within our press release was connected to the overall story of the project, which is, it referred to what had happened before and it always tried to make the reader even more curious what might happen next. We considered our press communication and the website and the documentary film itself belonging to one single 2-year communication project. Our advice: Use Internet press services, such as OpenPR, businessportal24 or news4press as common and free multipliers, you don’t need a company to do so. We preferred joint press releases with more than one party involved. Universities have usually a Public Relations department, therefore, a joint press release with a university is helpful. The more parties spread the good news, the more effect it will have. But then, we also found that authors will mostly copy parts of the press release and we did find sections of our text anywhere on the web. Our best advice is that you put only phrases into a press release that you really want to read a hundred times on the Internet, no kidding, you probably won’t get rid of them again.

3.10 Film on Tour

The positive responses to our newsletter encouraged us to organize a film tour. We had several invitations, mostly from universities and we started to formalize the process. We wrote a small contract, we equipped a computer with a freshly rendered version of the film that offered way better quality than a DVD and we called university decision makers directly to negotiate an agreement. It turned out to be advantageous to project the film in

an appropriate lecture auditorium. Cooperation with local cinemas didn't work at all except once in Potsdam, at the *Film Museum Potsdam*. Cinemas and program coordinators behaved very much 35-mm-oriented and proved very inflexible. For them our documentary film was something strange that resides outside the common system; it was not offered by a distributor, it was all-digital and it did not fit at all into their scheme. To move into lecture auditoriums proved highly successful and attracted large audiences. All auditoriums were equipped with digital projectors, large beamers and a large canvas screen. Technical advisors from the university helped to master a technical rehearsal. Local promoters helped to print our film poster and besides, a documentary film about a computer scientist who has spent his entire life in auditoriums suits well into an auditorium. We created happenings that were more than just a film projection. We discussed with the audience after the film, sometimes there was a panel of specialists debating. Often we had Joe Weizenbaum on-board to join us and he held guest lectures. The presentation in general was more like an event and it paid off. The audience acknowledged that we attended each presentation of the film. Our advice: It is a good idea to identify suitable presentation locations very early on and to be flexible enough to integrate the film presentation into existing events. In our case we did present the film as part of bigger events, such as *The Day of Informatics in Erlangen* or a *Pupils Conference in Kassel*. We think that the audience did like a fresh new way of digital cinema where it was easy to get into contact with directors and the main protagonist. Sometimes the success was overwhelming, we filled lecture halls with more 350 viewers. In Weingarten, at the Bodensee, the event began at 6 pm and ended almost at midnight. That's more than 5 hours! In Innsbruck, e.g., our first film was presented within a 2-day event and after the film presentation an Italian buffet was arranged. Digital cinema will not necessarily take place in common cinemas! With better digital projection technology available many new locations will become digital cinemas, well, and thus competitors to traditional cinemas.

3.11 Dedication and Risk

Most of the time during the Weizenbaum project none of us worked for another project or had a side job. We tried to dedicate almost 100% of our energy and time to the project. We think that this is necessary and an important film project deserves it. Time is the most valuable resource and the fact that we did stay about 14 weeks in Berlin was key to success. Any compromise would have been a failure. There are no short questions and short answers with Joe Weizenbaum. And then, to work for so many weeks with an 84-year-old protagonist involved a lot of patience and dedication. Time pressure would have been fatal. In our case the fact that our financial resources were mostly limited did not prevent us from investing our time relentlessly. The resulting loans were easy to pay back once the film was finished. Therefore, it is important to consider risk not only in terms of

financial risks. There was no compromise than to go to Berlin for 14 weeks. Our advice: Take risks, avoid compromises that turn out to be fatal to the project and dedicate your time relentlessly. To be able to stay longer and have time often is a huge advantage over industrialized documentary production.

3.12 Open Research Filmmaking

We considered our film project with Joe Weizenbaum a common research project. We did not write a treatment in order to stay open-minded. We did not develop a classical storyline in order to be able to be surprised. We did not anticipate what the film will look like or what the protagonist will tell us in front of the camera. We even didn't confront Joe Weizenbaum with too many direct questions. When we worked with the camera we would rather start with very basic ideas about the possible direction of thought, about a more general topic to be reflected. And then Joe Weizenbaum did think about things first and slowly started to recall memories and stories popped up and it was quite comparable with a therapy set-up. We did not interrupt, sometimes he continued for more than an hour and we and the camera and microphone simply listened. We tried to avoid too much intervention. But at night, when we came back to where we lived in Berlin, we reviewed the daily footage and discussed it thoroughly. The creation of the film was research. And since we are publishing much of the results we are making our research open, a little bit comparable to an open-source approach in software development. We believe that this approach raises lots of interesting questions and that following an open approach while creating a documentary film ultimately leads to more complex and more interesting films. And if the mentioned independence meets with an open research approach a lot of really interesting questions may be raised in the future! It does not make sense to wait for public television dinosaurs until they will fulfill their educational obligations again.

4. CONCLUSION

Maybe, the proposed definition of *slow-budget-filmmaking* can be widened because the slow pace of our film resembles to the *slow-food* movement. Surely, a time budget is more important than other budgets. All our ideas and well-intentioned advice make sense under the sole condition that there is a relevant, politically and socially relevant topic that justifies effort and struggle. If this is the case we suggest considering any documentary film project that complies with the principles of *slow-budget-filmmaking* the seed crystal of a community that is waiting for the film and will prove highly supportive.

Peter Haas and Silvia Holzinger, Il Mare Film, June 2007